Family Values in French and British Occupation Novels

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Abstract

In the West, the Second World War is remembered for the mythic victories of the Allies or the destruction of Europe at the hands of the Nazis. In the first years of the war, however, victory was never certain. In both Britain and France—divided between German-Occupied Northern France, Vichy in the South, and the Free French Forces abroad—much of the attention of ordinary citizens and government officials was focussed on preserving the integrity of the nuclear family. This endeavor was closely tied to the prospect of victory. This thesis attends to the treatment of family, sexuality, and gender in four British and French novels written between 1940 and 1943, the period between the Fall and Liberation of France. Vercors' *Le Silence de la Mer* (1943) and Irène Némirovsky's *Suite Française* (2004) were written in very different conditions than Nevil Shute's *Pied Piper* (1942) and Storm Jameson's *Cloudless May* (1943). Vercors and Némirovsky wrote clandestinely after their nation had submitted to Hitler; Shute and Jameson, fearing a similar fate, wrote during the Blitz. None of the authors seek a practical solution to the war in their novels. For them, the maintenance of traditional family values will ensure the endurance of the nation.

Résumé

Dans le monde occidental, la Seconde Guerre Mondiale est connue surtout pour les victoires mythiques des Alliés ou pour la destruction de l'Europe causé par les Nazis. Dans les premières années de la guerre, cependant, la victoire ne pouvait pas être pris pour acquis. En Grande-Bretagne et en France—divisé entre zone occupée, zone "libre" de Vichy, et le gouvernement en exile des Forces Françaises Libres—les citoyens ordinaires se concentraient sur la préservation de la famille nucléaire. Cet effort était lié à l'espoir d'une victoire. Cette thèse porte sur le traitement littéraire de la famille, de la sexualité et du genre dans quatre romans britanniques et français écrits entre 1940 et 1943, la période entre la bataille de France et sa libération. *Le silence de la mer* de Vercors (1943) et *Suite française* d'Irène Némirovsky (2004) ont été écrits sous des conditions très différentes de celles sous lesquelles *Pied Piper* (1942) de Nevil Shute et *Cloudless May* (1943) de Storm Jameson ont été écrits. Vercors et Némirovsky écrivirent clandestinement après que la France ait capitulé; Shute et Jameson écrivirent pendant le Blitz, craignant des circonstances similaires. Aucun des auteurs ne cherche une solution pratique à la guerre dans leurs romans. Pour eux, le maintien des valeurs familiales traditionnelles assurera la survie de la nation.

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Family Values in French and British Occupation Novels

In Britain and France during the Second World War, the threat of German invasion was accompanied by the threat of social disintegration. Efforts to mitigate a possible collapse centered on preserving the institution of the family and strengthening what can be loosely termed as nationalist "family values." Novelists on both sides of the Channel were attuned to this emphasis on familialism—that is, an ideology that prioritizes the nuclear family above all else. In Vercors' *Le Silence de la Mer* and Irène Némirovsky's *Suite Française*, the subjugation of France to the Germans is explained as a product of "feminine" weakness at a national level, a weakness characterized by *dénatalité* and unrestrained sexuality. In Storm Jameson's *Cloudless May* and Nevil Shute's *Pied Piper,* the Fall of France functions as a warning to Britain either to unite as a family or to fall apart like its ally. While each novel discusses different social concerns complicated by the Occupation—femininity as vulnerability, infidelity as treason, feminism as pacifism, and patriarchy as heroism—they all share a common impulse to preserve the nation by anchoring it in familialism.

The Second World War threatened French and British families like no war had before. In the First World War, parts of Northern France had been occupied and London had experienced air raids, yet there was a well-defined frontline dividing ally from enemy. Between the Fall of France in 1940 and the D-Day invasions of 1944, there was no such frontline in the West: the English Channel separated British families from German soldiers, but aeronautical advancements made this barrier uncomfortably permeable. In France, the invasion of the country was coupled with the intrusion of the home: enemy soldiers slept in the beds of French prisoners of war. In Britain, civilians had to contend with new and even more invasive weapons like the V-2 rocket and poison gas. Homes could now be invaded before German troops landed on British soil.

Novels written during the Occupation show the effects of this intrusiveness; they present the war as a domestic affair and show the conflicts in relationships and family life that were aggravated by warfare and were themselves, symbolically or practically, the causes of civil warfare.

Since the Liberation of France, the dominant narrative of the Occupation has undergone several major transformations. According to Charles De Gaulle, France was a nation of underground resistors; only a few bad apples had collaborated (Gordon 501). Upon entering Paris in 1944, he proclaimed that Paris had been "libéré par lui-même, libéré par son peuple" (De Gaulle 440). According to Gildea, this pronouncement was the beginning of a "resistance myth [that] was military, national and male" (*Fighters in the Shadows* 3). It did not take into consideration the contributions of Allies or women in the Resistance and Liberation. In 1972, Robert Paxton published *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944*, a study that cast doubt on De Gaulle's revisionist fantasy. Since the 1970s, historians like Henry Rousso, Miranda Pollard, and, more recently, Robert Gildea, have investigated the complexities of the Occupation. The publication of Irène Némirovsky's lost novel, *Suite Française*, in 2004 reinvigorated the debate about what "really" happened between 1940 and 1944. Kershaw says that Némirovsky's novel "contribue au débat actuel sur les stratégies narratives ou fictionelles qui rendent possible (ou non) une représentation du passé historique traumatique," thus reopening an old wound in historiography (85).

The historiographical and epistemological problem at the center of these studies, whether recognized or not, is one of competing and inconsistent narratives. Hayden White argues that history is created in discourse and represented in imperfect narratives, or "fictions of factual representation" (*Tropics of Discourse* 121). For White, historians and novelists share the same "aims," "forms of discourse," and even compositional "techniques" (121). They each "wish to

provide a verbal image of 'reality,'" although the novelist does so indirectly, relying more on metaphor and irony (122). While this debate has existed for over forty years, only recently have literary studies begun to consider works written during the Occupation—one of the most contested and controversial topics in modern history—as historically significant contributions to the overall narrative. Lloyd, the critic leading the conversation about fictional representation of the Occupation, writes that "if one is writing about memoirs, novels and films because of the fascinating things they have to tell us about war and occupation, perceiving them as social documents as much as aesthetic forms, one needs to determine what their status and value are as representations of historical events" (*Collaboration and Resistance* 1). He presents two interpretative frameworks. The first is to "treat literary and artistically created texts as one would other historical documents" (2). The second related approach is to follow White's post-modern lead and consider literature as yet another genre of discourse, equivalent to history and "equally valid or invalid" (2).

The post-modern emphasis on relativism and its consequences for "scientific," as opposed to "artistic," historical study has frustrated historians such as Richard J. Evans, who denies that history is either discourse or fiction: "Auschwitz was not a discourse. It trivializes mass murder to see it as a text" (124). Evans misses the point: history is not to be confused with reality, whether past or present. As Conan and Rousso point out, history is limited

> by lack of documents, by the subjective nature of interpretation, or by the impossibility of approaching what really happened in the past other than by groping at bits and pieces and by viewing it through the prism of the present day. All historians know this, even if they sometimes have to forget it in order to practice their profession: they cannot describe "what happened"; they can only, by

> means of traces available to them, reconstitute a plausible scenario meaningful for their contemporaries. (113)

In White's words, "the historical real" or "the past real" is only accessible via "an artifact that is textual in nature" (*Content of the Form* 209). Because language itself is "indexical, iconic, and symbolic," the "indirect referentiality" of the historian to history, mediated by texts, is falsely taken for "direct referentiality" (209). It is thus necessary for the historian to recognize that the object of study is the "reflection, not the thing reflected," which calls attention to the "process of meaning creation" (209).

Drawing on the growing historical scholarship of the Occupation and of the Second World War in Britain, this thesis considers the literature of the Occupation as textual artifacts of a discourse that circulated during the Occupation which linked social and domestic concerns with global consequences. In other words, it considers novels as "reflections" involved in a "process of meaning creation" (White, *Content of the Form* 209). In this regard, the thesis contributes to the growing scholarship about Occupation-era literature marked by recent texts by Bracher (2010), Dambre *et al.* (2013), Lloyd (2003), and Plain (2014), among others. Attention is paid to novels created while France was occupied by Germany, leaving out novels written after 1944, such as the works of Modiano, which deal with memory rather than history. Selection of a limited corpora of texts written between 1940 and 1943 circumvents the pitfalls posed by De Gaulle's post-war revisionism. While previous studies of literature written about and during the Occupation have often considered works written in France isolated by their peculiar context, this thesis contends that novels written inside and outside Occupied or Vichy France all consider the war in terms of a threat to "normal" family life. Whether they wrote as victims of Nazi

domination in France or as distant observers and potential liberators in Britain, these authors reach a similar, conservative conclusion.

In the context of this thesis, "family values" is a functional term that refers to a constructed set and system of conservative ideals about sex, gender, and sexuality. According to the *OED*, family values are "values attributed to or derived from family life" and more specifically, "values allegedly learnt or reinforced within a traditional, close family unit, and typically relating to moral standards and discipline." They encapsulate the social valuation of rigid gender roles, patriarchal family structures, male heredity, female chastity, traditional marriage, and the nuclear family. They primarily refer to "proper" conduct in the domestic sphere but they figure into political, philosophical, and economic policies, like French and British positions vis-à-vis population decline, guided by familialism. For Pollard, "family values do not just substitute for political beliefs. They enfold and reshape them, directing them toward the 'private sphere'" (115). In this sense, "family values" are at the heart of Vercors', Némirovsky's, Shute's, and Jameson's novels: they inform the authors' attitudes towards the war and prompt a reconsideration of the ways in which the maintenance or neglect of these values benefit or hinder the war effort.

Lloyd says that a study of imaginative works relevant to a historical inquiry of the Occupation is limited by the quantity, quality, and "range" of fiction produced during the war (*Collaboration and Resistance* 10). Yet this endeavour is important given literature's "significant role in the creation of our imagined and historical memory of the war" (10).[1] This thesis seeks to circumvent these limitations by focussing on four very different novels that are, nonetheless,

[1] Other types of fiction—namely, film and radio drama—contributed to the public memory of war. An exhaustive study would take all fiction produced during the war into consideration, including the film version of the novels studied here (*Le Silence de la Mer* and *Pied Piper*).

thematically similar. Vercors' novella, produced in the Occupied-zone and disseminated via underground Resistance channels, is a dense, symbolic oeuvre that was immediately popular in literary networks in France and abroad. Despite revealing, as Lloyd says, "the disunity and problematic nature of resistance (which also reflects a far more interesting and historically relevant approach)," it has been hailed as the resistance story *par excellence* (10). Némirovsky's novel, on the other hand, was not discovered until well after the war and only published in 2004. Némirovsky was a popular novelist before the war—unlike Vercors, who had not written fiction before—but she was not involved in the Resistance and, in fact, has been posthumously accused of mixing with fascists and denying her Jewish heritage (Bracher xii). She was deported to Auschwitz by the French, where she died.

The other two novels about the Occupation come from across the Channel. They were also written after the Fall of France when Germany had set its sights on an invasion of Britain. They are, in effect, responses to the Nazi Occupation of France and the threat of invasion. For Shute and Jameson, the Occupation of France was a case study to examine Britain's own frailties. Jameson was a prolific author, but she never attained wide public recognition. Unlike the other authors studied, however, she was an outspoken commentator during the war because of her role as president of English PEN. A Francophile who spent time in France during the Phony War and vacationed often in the Loire, where her novel is set, Jameson understood the dynamics of French politics and recognized the relevance of the situation in France to the possible outcomes of the war in Britain. Shute, on the other hand, was a popular novelist who worked for the British government during the war both as an aeronautical engineer and as a reporter on D-Day. Save for this thesis, Shute's novel has been neglected in contemporary discussions of the Occupation. This list is comprised equally of French and British, male and

female, well-known and obscure, and popular and literary authors. Wieviorka states, "No discourse, no place, no symbol can, by itself, account for the plurality of ordeals undergone by the forty million contemporaries who lived through the dark years" (6). The variety of this admittedly modest corpus is intended to provide a more comprehensive—but not exhaustive—understanding of the similarities and divergences in representations of the Occupation from both sides of the Channel.

Chapter one discusses the gender stereotypes with which Vercors structures his short novel, *Le Silence de la Mer*. By the time Hitler marched into Paris, France had suffered a unique identity crisis: it could no longer be considered a "masculine" nation, for its men were prisoners and its women were surrounded virile, German conquerors. The gendering of France as feminine and Germany as masculine did not suddenly enter the public consciousness in 1940; it had been part of war-time discourse since at least the Franco-Prussian war in the late nineteenth century when, according to Nye, France had been frequently portrayed as a "victim of … rape" (79). Demographics of the early twentieth century seemed to parallel this caricature: France suffered from *dénatalité*, which many had feared would result in a weak army. Shennan says the perceived consequences of this demographic decline were dire: "If at any point between 1940 and 1946 a poll had been taken to determine the most popular explanation for the nation's problems, it is highly likely that *dénatalité* … would have headed the list" (202). The swift Fall of France, was perceived as a definite confirmation of this scientific fact (203). The intrusion of the masculine enemy into feminine France is paralleled in *Le Silence de la Mer.* When Ebrennac, a Nazi officer, is billeted with the narrator, an old Frenchman, and his daughter, they choose to resist this invasion of their domestic sanctuary with silence. While the novel has been called "a rousing call to resist" (De Ornellas 194) and has long been held up as the first Resistance novel,

it advocates for a diluted and passive form of resistance, or more accurately, persistence. Vercors regurgitates popular fascist discourse regarding the subservient relationship of France to Germany by characterizing passivity as feminine. Virgili, discussing the revirilization that occurred in France during the Liberation, quotes a right-wing Nationalist Front tract that reads, "Action alone is virile. Struggle is fertile" (239). Vercors, conversely, advocates inaction and emasculated resistance. Vercors criticizes this traditional feminization of the nation, but he ultimately suggests that, given the French people's retreat from the frontline to the homefront, a feminine form of resistance is the only viable option.

Chapter two examines the social and political implications of infidelity in *Suite Française* by Irène Némirovsky. It describes the conflicts faced by French women living under Occupation who developed social and sometimes amorous relationships with the enemy while their husbands were imprisoned by the Germans. Némirovsky is sympathetic to this dilemma, which encapsulates "the embarrassing reality of the many French women who without political motivation found Germans sexually attractive" (Bracher xxi). Like Vercors, Némirovsky shows that the Occupation was more than an invasion of the nation, it was an invasion of privacy; it exposed the secrets of regular French men and women that were normally kept behind closed doors. In particular, this chapter looks closely at the hypocritical reactions by secondary characters to the infidelities of Lucille Angelier, her husband, and Madelaine Sabarie, which echo the popular discourse about "horizontal collaboration" used across the political spectrum. While men are excused for their adultery, women—especially lower class women—are accused of treason for theirs. These reactions reflect gender and class divisions within French society more than they do political stances towards the Germans. According to Rousso, "the civil war" in France "played an essential if not primary role in the difficulties that the people of France

have faced in reconciling themselves to their history—a greater role than the foreign occupation" (9). In *Suite Française*, the discourse of transgressive sexuality directs criticism away from severe social ills inherent in French society, like classism and sexism, that created this "civil war." Némirovsky rejects the premise that sex is inherently a political act; nevertheless, her novel proves that it is impossible to depoliticize the relationships between occupier and occupied. In her problematic portrayal of "horizontal collaboration," Némirovsky articulates how anxiety stemming from domestic discord was unfairly directed at transgressive female sexuality.

Chapter three builds on the theme of transgressive sexuality as an indicator of national vulnerabilities in Jameson's *Cloudless May*. The novel dwells on behind-the-scenes politicking that results in the surrender of Seuilly, a town in the Loire Valley that serves as a microcosm of France as a whole. Like the French, the British feared social disintegration before an imminent invasion. According to Rose, "diverse public conversations and widely disseminated representations depicted the British people as belonging to a unified and national community that shared a common national identity. In important ways, this unified national community… was imagined to be a family" (107). She says female sexuality was perceived as a threat to this unity:

> If the nation was being imagined as a unified community of people capable of putting the national interest above their own needs and desires, then fun-loving, sexually expressive women and girls threatened that sense of unity that was imagined to be the essence of Britishness in wartime. This was a temperate but heroic nation, one exemplifying not only self-sacrifice but also 'impartial reason', that defined itself against the feminine. (90)

Britain's wartime concern for female sexuality was not radically different in this regard from France's, or even Vichy's.

Jameson critiques these concerns in her novel when she establishes a correlation between collaboration and a "feminine" search for security. She engages with the regressive discourse of the period that associated femininity and feminism with passivity and pacifism. While feminism and pacifism flourished during the inter-war period—a period marked by Chamberlain's appeasement policy—they were not as welcome between 1939 and 1945. Much of the novel focusses on Marguerite de Freppel, a former prostitute who climbs the social ladder while manipulating and being manipulated by the men of Seuilly in a struggle for power and security. Freppel reflects "contemporary French anxieties about women using their sexuality to manipulate men and, in particular, to lure them into betraying the nation" (Cooper 170). These anxieties were not only French; using the Fall of France to model an identical scenario in Britain, Jameson suggests that the threat of invasion requires a strong, public, "masculine" response—like that of Colonel Rienne, the admirable idealist and nationalist. While Jameson does critique these regressive gender politics, she justifies them in the name of national preservation.

Chapter four focusses on efforts to reunite the European family in Shute's *Pied Piper*. Like France, Britain saw a period of population decline leading into the Second World War as evidenced in the Royal Commission on Population of 1943; like its French equivalent, the British government responded with pro-natalist campaigns devoted to familialism. Rose says, "The idea that a woman's obligation to her family was also an obligation to the nation was a frequently rehearsed theme that reinforced the conception that women's 'true' position was in the private sphere of the household performing their roles as mothers" (137). Mothers were expected to solve the population crisis—paradoxically—while the men were away, but their husbands were expected to defend the national family and, by conquering or creating alliances with other nations, add new members to that family.

Shute's novel attempts to provide a symbolic solution to war—figured as a fracturing of the European family—with the tale of a British patriarch named John Howard who gathers the traumatized children of Europe and provides a new home for them across the Channel. This new family compensates for Howard's personal sense of isolation, brought on by the loss of his own son, John. Howard comes to grips with this loss when he meets Nicole, John's French fiancée, who helps the motley troupe cross to Britain. While the other novels refuse a satisfying resolution to the problems of the Occupation, the proliferation and salvation of children in *Pied Piper* resolves the stunting of the Howard family tree. Personal calamity and international cataclysm are related; the fate of the family is tied to the fate of Europe. Shute's conclusion is not only a call to the paternal British to save their European children, it is also a direct response to the particular concerns of the French regarding separation and sacrifice of youth.

This examination of cross-Channel fictional narratives of the Occupation will show that although the French and British experienced the war from two very different perspectives, they demonstrate a shared impulse to return to "family values" to strengthen the nation. Through this familiar filter of the family, these authors are able to distill the complex experience of war in an imaginative way. The novels produced from these binary vantage points give insight to an intimate experience of war that remains elusive in contemporary historical narratives.

Chapter One: Feminized France in *Le Silence de la mer*

Le Silence de la Mer is a novella about an old man and his niece who refuse to speak to the German officer billeted in their home. Known today as the first work of resistance fiction to come out of the Occupation, it recycles traditional gender stereotypes of France and Germany prevalent in left and right wing discourse from the late 19th century until the Liberation and undermines France's ability to actively resist. In Vercors' novel, Germany, represented by Werner von Ebrennac, is stereotypically masculine: dominant, virile, active, and aggressive. France, on the other hand, represented by the old man and his niece, is feminine: submissive, impotent, passive, and weak. This gendering of nations was a part of a long narrative that began with the Franco-Prussian War. Since 1870, France had been managing a unique identity crisis. According to Nye, "the iconography and caricature that flourished during and after the [Franco-Prussian]war" represented the German "as a brutal and physically domineering Uhlan soldier, while 'France' was pictured as a provincial maid, a victim of aggression or rape" (79). Years later, French fascists such as Drieu la Rochelle and Charles Maurras believed modern decadence had stripped France of its masculinity and turned it into an impotent country. By the outbreak of the phony war, France's perception of its own masculinity ebbed drastically: birth rates refused to rise and governments struggled to put together an army strong enough to combat the Germans (Nye 78). When Germany circumvented the Maginot Line and took Paris after an embarrassingly speedy six-week invasion, gender conventions were confirmed. France now lay prostrate beneath the manly German army.

Jean Bruller, who wrote under the name Vercors, was attuned to these national concerns when he began writing *Le Silence de la Mer*. He situates his novella within this vision of weak, feminized France. Injured while digging trenches before the Blitz, Bruller looked on helplessly

as the Germans marched across the country (Vercors *Battle of Silence* 52). He later remarked in his autobiography that French men had failed to protect their country:

> I felt utterly swamped in counterfeit, pastiche, mockery and indecency. A defeat, a lost battle, are the hazards of war. But this long-drawn-out rout was besmeared with ignominy…. [There were] reserve officers of the upper and middle class deserting their men to flee with their wives, children and valuables in army cars. Perhaps they reasoned that in putting their duty as husbands and fathers before their duty as soldiers they were displaying time-honoured French virtues…. The collapse of these virtues in the great national stampede seemed to be the outstanding feature of the debacle. (*Battle of Silence* 79)

For Vercors, the protection of Marianne—the emblem of France—was a paternal duty more important than the protection of one's own family. Without men to protect it, France fell into German hands. Rather that combat a feminized view of France, Vercors reaffirms it and uses it to promote an "effeminate" or inactive form of resistance. By embracing France's traditional gender role, Vercors suggests, France can survive the Occupation until a worthy suitor in the form of an allied, democratic government like Great Britain or the United-States presents itself.

In *Le Silence de la Mer*, the uncle and niece passively defend their domestic space that has been penetrated by the enemy. Like many Frenchmen during the Occupation and like Jean Bruller himself, the old man in Vercors' novel does not display his honour and fortitude on the battlefield. Instead, he takes refuge in the domestic sphere. Isolated from any burgeoning resistance cells and weakened by age, the old man can only defend his home with non-violence. This form of resistance was advocated by De Gaulle, who called upon "les Français libres de continuer le combat, là où ils seront et comme ils pourront" (8). They choose not to lock the

door, which allows the officer to enter the home effortlessly. Explaining the decision to leave the doors unlocked and to remain silent, the narrator says that "by a tacit agreement, my niece and I had decided to make no changes in our life, even in the smallest detail, just as if the officer didn't exist, as if he had been a ghost" (6). Kidd compares this policy of silence to that promoted in Jean Texcier's *Conseils à l'occupé* in 1940: "Tu ne sais pas leur langue, ou tu l'as oubliée. Si un d'eux t'addresse la parole en allemande, fais une signe d'impuissance et, sans remords, poursuit ton chemin" (qtd. in Kidd 20). To make the occupier speak the language of the occupied is to regain some control over the situation. Unfortunately for the two protagonists in Vercors' novel, this tactic is not effective because Ebrennac speaks French. They resort instead to silence, but he responds by filling the void with his own voice.

Ebrennac praises French artists and expresses romantic ideations of an imminent political marriage between Germany and France. The uncle is actually relieved by Ebrannac's voice, for he considers the silence to be unnatural and stifling. The narrator says that "sometimes he would let the silence, like a heavy unbreathable gas, invade the whole room and saturate every corner of it, it was he of us three who used to seem the most at ease" (19). Their silence exposes their own vulnerability to this "unbreathable gas." Ebrennac's voice is said to "filter" the oppressive gas like a mask, which allows them all to breathe easier (19). The metaphor employed by Vercors recalls the gas attacks on Allied trenches during the First World War and the masks that were eventually distributed to protect against them. The haunting image of the gas mask remained ingrained in the public consciousness long after the First World War. According to Panchasi, "the gas mask figured as a central icon of threat and 'passive defense,'" but more importantly it had the "metaphoric power to represent total vulnerability" (96, 100). Ebrennac's voice neutralizes the silence and consequently reveals a vulnerability in the defense mounted by the

uncle and niece. The "paradoxical consequence" of their silence, says Kidd, is "their dependence on the invader to liberate them" (32). Because Ebrennac is allowed to speak without end about his love for France, the narrator and his niece exhibit a reluctance to continue their passive defense. After Ebrennac's sincere confession of his disillusionment with Germany's propaganda, the old man welcomes him into the home by addressing him as "monsieur" (29). When Ebrennac leaves for the Eastern front, the niece bids him "Adieu," to which he smiles as if he had finally conquered her (40). As "good" as Ebrennac may seem, his success in breaking through the defense of the old man and his niece marks another defeat for the French.

Although Ebrennac is resilient, he is nonetheless affected by the silence of the home. He, too, seems to be a prisoner in silence. When Ebrennac enters the home for the first time, for example, the narrator says that the Nazi's words, "I am extremely sorry," "fell into the silence" (3). Ebrennac's unconscious movements are repetitive and lulling. Because of his lame leg, Ebrennac's pacing across the floor above the couple resounds in a trochaic rhythm: the narrator says "the German's steps, one heavy, one light, echoed down the corridor" (4). It is both unnatural and sing-song. In the film version directed by Jean-Pierre Melville in 1949, this rhythm is underscored by a pendulum clock that tick-tocks throughout the film (Kidd 42). These noises contribute to the silence instead of breaking it. At the end of one speech discussing the silent welcome he received from the French public, Ebrennac says he intends to "overcome that silence. Overcome the silence of all France" (14), but ironically his speech is followed by more silence. Immediately after concluding his speech, the narrator notes that Ebrennac looked at the niece "silently, with a grave and persistent expression" (14). The more silence Ebrennac inhales, the more silence he exhales.

Ebrennac unleashes his torrent of propaganda onto the couple throughout his stay, but

like his metronomic steps, his propaganda is mere sound without meaning. Not even his voice stands out against the silence. “His voice was rather colourless, with very little resonance, and his accent was fairly slight, only noticeable on the harsher consonants,” says the narrator, recalling the trochaic footsteps. “The general effect was of a kind of droning sing-song” (8). Later the narrator remarks that Ebrennac’s

> droning voice would quietly make itself heard and, for the rest of the evening, there would be an interminable monologue on the subjects …[but] not once did he try to get an answer from us …. He would utter a few sentences, sometimes broken by silences, and sometimes linking them up with the monotonous continuity of a prayer. (11-12)

While the narrator says Ebrennac’s voice filters the silence, it is merely a different kind of silence. Ebrennac’s position is still somewhat ambiguous. While he has clearly been affected by the gas-like silence, he has also contributed to it. The silence is a prison for each character, but it is nevertheless true that Ebrennac is first and foremost a gaoler. He instinctively embraces this role when he recites German propaganda and avoids any real attempt at conversation with the couple.

The most dangerous propaganda is that which goes unnoticed and fades into the background. The Petrarchan courtly love motif in Ebrennac’s propaganda is particularly dangerous. It is not until his trip to Paris, where other German soldiers tell him the courtship of France is a fantasy disguising more sinister plans, that Ebrennac becomes aware of the absurdity of his romantic ideas:

> “There is no hope.” Then in a voice which was even lower, more hesitant and more toneless, as if to torture himself with the intolerable but authentic fact: “No

> hope. No hope …. No hope!" After that, silence. I thought I heard him laugh […]. "No French book can go through any more …. None whatever! … "Nothing, nothing, nobody." And as if we had not yet understood or weighed the full measure of the threat: "Not only our modern writers!" (33-35)

The silence of France—defined here as an interruption in the production of literature—overwhelms Ebrennac, causing him to repeat meaningless "nos" and "nothings." He prefaces his last rant by telling the couple to "forget it all" and in doing so acknowledges that he should have remained silent too (32). What is most absurd, as Koestler commented in 1945, is that the Nazi has not realized the absurdity of his own speeches until this point (Koestler 26). Despite the German's plea to "forget it all," the reader must grapple with the content of his speeches, which contain variations on the delusional theme of marriage between France and Germany.

Vercors entertains aspects of a comedic marriage arc until the tragic turn of events in Paris. Ebrennac frequently returns to a refrain that France will succumb to Germany's courtship and the two countries will wed and live happily ever after. The niece is presented as an ideal bride according to the period's and nation's gender expectations: young, passive, and domestic. She has few chores: she knits and serves her uncle coffee.[2] Given the emphasis on building large and strong families in France, her only fault is that she is childless and husbandless. According to Childers, Vichy France asked that the people of France return "to time-honoured traditions of family life with clearly distinct gender roles and hierarchical relationships. Women were to return to their 'natural' roles as mothers" (84). During the Occupation, mothers were symbolic for the renewal of France. Pétain's *femme au foyer* policies relied on this gendered symbolism

[2] Kidd problematizes this reading of the niece's domestic obedience: "it overlooks the fact that she initiates the resistance to [Ebrennac] and shows fortitude in persisting in her stance despite the uncle's scruples" (31). Kidd's interpretation ignores the inherent passivity of her resistance and the covert signs of her hesitancy. She resorts to a conventional feminine role as a form of resistance to conserve the status quo.

(Pollard 10), as did the fascist literature of the Occupation. Carroll says that in this literature "the ideal woman must also be a fertile mother to ensure that death and sterility no longer dominate and that France will no longer be without children, without force…" (166). This position, however, was not held exclusively by fascists. De Gaulle put much emphasis on women's' roles in determining the future of the country: "as long as the French people do not reproduce, France will be nothing more than a bright light that vanishes away" (qtd. in Pollard 201). This supposed "resistance" novel—that is, resistance to fascism—recycles many of the gender stereotypes manipulated by fascists to explain France's inferiority.

The niece's unaccomplished duty to France is the unspoken pretext for Ebrennac's attempted courtship. To be a mother for France, she must be first legitimized by becoming a wife. One evening at the fireside, Ebrennac discusses his reluctance to "conquer" France without her will: "She has to offer you her breast, like a mother, with an impulse of maternal feeling…. I know how much that depends on us…but it depends on her too. She must agree to understand our thirst, she must agree to quench it, and she must agree to unite herself with us" (18). Within a single speech, France is depicted as both a mother and a bride. This highlights the two interrelated obligations of the niece—to become wife and then mother—not, as Frost says, the "shift" away from mother of France to bride of Germany (81). Through Ebrennac's speech, which appeals to the ideals of womanhood he hopes to find in the conquered country, Vercors deliberately associates the niece with France itself as a binary figure of wife and mother. He presents her as an embodiment of a conservative ideal of womanhood.

The courting of the niece is symbolic of Germany's "courting" of France. Brasillach wrote, for example, "We belong to those few French people who, having thought about it, slept with Germany and the memory of it is sweet" (qtd. and trans. in Virgili 239). Sartre wrote that

collaborators commonly spoke of the Occupation in matrimonial terms: "One can pick out … curious metaphors which present the relations of France and Germany under the aspect of a sexual union where France plays the role of the Woman" (qtd. in Frost 87). There was nothing curious about these metaphors, which had been recycled from the late nineteenth century—and not only by fascists, as Sartre maintains.

As a resistance novel, *Le Silence de la Mer*, circulates the same stereotype with a German who is an ideal suitor except for his nationality. He is "huge and very thin" with a handsome and "very masculine" face (3). He physically dominates the house and its residents. As the narrator remarks, "he could easily touch the beams by raising his arm" (3). Leaning over the fireplace with his head on the back of his hand, Ebrennac is "so tall that he had to stoop a little. [The narrator] wouldn't even have caught the top of [his] head there" (8). Ebrennac and the niece represent "the iconography and caricature that flourished during and after the war," as described by Nye: Ebrennac, the "physically domineering Uhlan soldier" and the niece, "the provincial maid, a victim of aggression or rape" (79). Furthermore, Ebrennac is presented as a phallic symbol penetrating the nation's most private space. He dresses casually when in the couple's home, but when he enters the home for the last time he wears his uniform and stands in the doorway "so erect and so stiff" (30). The narrator interprets this change in dress as "the deliberate intention of thrusting it upon us" (30). When the narrator invites Ebrennac, into the home, he is inviting the German to penetrate the familial, domestic sphere for the first (and last) time. According to Frost, "the figuring of the *boche* has phallic or sexual overtones: the *boche* usually stands erect and the French victim is supine" (91). Vercors describes the conqueror in stereotypical terms to show how truly supine the niece and her uncle are when they finally accept the German into their home. In this moment, the old man accepts the German, at least

unconsciously, as a candidate to be his niece's husband.

It was the patriarch's duty to weed out unsuitable husbands based on what were considered physiological signs of masculinity. Nye discusses the eugenics prescribed by one French doctor, Dr. Jacques Bertillon, when medical and scientific attention turned towards maintaining and improving "the bodies and masculine qualities of men" (97). Quoting from a medical guidebook authored by Bertillon, Nye says the doctor

> offered advice to a father on how to choose his prospective son-in-law. If he should display "doubtful traits of virility," a high or broken voice, sparse beard, effeminate or ambiguous physique, the wise future father-in-law should escort him to a physician. If the examinations revealed no testicles, or only one which was "shrunken and flaccid," then, Bertillon urged, "…this so-called man who is soliciting a wife may be capable of erection or lasciviousness, but not of true virility or of fertile embraces. He is someone who … should remain innocent of the matrimonial state." (97)

Similarly, Adolphe Pinard, an early twentieth-century obstetrician, presented a bill to the French Chamber of Deputies that would have imposed mandatory medical examinations for men before marriage. The purpose was to "sift the 'unfit' out of the available pool of breeders," according to Tumblety (49). "He likened the process … to the medical screening process … which preceded a young man's incorporation into the army on military service" (50). If men could not serve and protect their country, they should not be allowed to marry French women.

With the men of France either injured, dead, or taken prisoner by Germany, Ebrennac is one of few potential suitors to the old man's niece. It is the uncle's patriarchal responsibility to ensure the growth of the family tree *pour la patrie*. Likewise, it is the niece's duty to *la patrie* to

produce strong men. While an enemy would not be considered an appropriate suitor, the long absence of young Frenchmen suggested a more appropriate suitor might never arrive. For the narrator, it may be that a relationship between his niece and the enemy is unthinkable, but a relationship with a young and virile man, who happens to be German, is more palatable. His invitation for Ebrennac to enter his home cannot be confused with explicit consent, but the symbolism of this moment does reveal unconscious motivations that, had Ebrennac been French, would have led to marriage.

Ebrennac, too, has his own obligations to father and fatherland. He does not only follow Hitler's orders; he must also fulfill his dead father's wishes. Early in his courtship he tells the niece and the narrator that his love for France flourished because of his father, who fought in World War I. Ebrennac says his father "was intensely patriotic. The defeat was a great blow to him," as it now was to the French, "And yet he loved France" (9). Ebrennac goes on to tell the couple about his father's admiration for Aristide Briand, who served as the French prime minister for eleven terms between 1909 and 1929 and who succeeded in briefly bringing hope of peace to Europe. Ebrennac's father said Briand would "unite us like husband and wife" (10). After the defeat of Briand by the "heartless grands bourgeois," Ebrennac's father made him promise to "never go to France till [he] can go there in field-boots and helmet" (10). Ebrennac's implied marriage proposal to the niece, in reality an extension of the German conquest of France, is thus his duty to two patriarchs: the national leader and the family leader, who both insist on a violent "marriage."

The narrator reveals little of his or his niece's true thoughts, but her unconscious movements suggest an inner conflict regarding Ebrennac's overtures. When Ebrennac tells the couple of his hope to conquer France's silence, the niece blushes and breaks her concentration by

plucking the needle too fast and "risking a break in the thread" (14). Her resistance is also at risk of breaking. The narrator notices during Ebrennac's following speeches that the "spirit" of his niece stirred "in that prison which she herself had built for it," indicated by a "faint fluttering of her fingers" and other "signs" of her attraction to Ebrennac (19). When Ebrennac tells the couple of a "very beautiful and very sweet" German woman he almost married before the war, the niece snaps her thread (20). The uncomfortable sexual tension abates when Ebrennac says that one day the woman cruelly tore the legs off a mosquito. Her gesture drove Ebrennac away from German girls, who he describes as stereotypically aggressive and masculine (21). The niece's reaction exposes her as an eager competitor for Ebrennac's attention; Ebrennac's reaction to turn away from aggressive German girls confirms that he is attracted in particular to the docility of the niece. Her silence therefore does little to defend against Ebrennac because it only makes her more attractive. The niece's passive defense fails because her unconscious gestures betray her true feelings and because her resistance is easily confused with submission.

Literary allusions make up a large portion of Ebrennac's propaganda. For the German, these allusions justify his invasion of France; for the reader, they highlight the truth underlying his marriage proposal, which is that Germany does not intend to "marry" France. Ultimately, Ebrennac misreads the literature to which he alludes. Only after being told the truth behind the Nazi propaganda he has been fed does Ebrennac recognize he is playing the part of a villain, not a charming prince. Using the irony that these literary allusions produce, Vercors reaffirms the traditional gender role of France, implying a "marriage" is indeed needed to save France, but not a marriage with Germany.

Ebrennac first alludes to "The Beauty and the Beast" after announcing his hope to "overcome the silence of all France" (14). The story, as he says, is familiar to all: "Beauty," like

France and the niece, "has hardened her heart" (15). The Beast, like Ebrennac, is "clumsy and brutal.… But he has a heart" (15). Eventually, Beauty recognizes the "supplication" and "love" of the Beast and with her love transforms him into a knight. According to Ebrennac, the story ends with their children "who combine and mingle the gifts of their parents [and] are the loveliest the earth has borne" (15). In the original version of the story by Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve, no children are mentioned. This may mean that this particular dimension of the tale is highlighted by the German for propaganda.[3] The fruitful marriage of the Beauty and the Beast appeals to French fears of *dénatalization* as did much Occupation propaganda disseminated by Vichy and Germany. The tale ends by attempting to persuade the niece into marrying Ebrennac—and the uncle into allowing her—by taking advantage of French fears of national impotence and proposing a fairytale ending to France's predicament. The comic ending of *Le Silence de la Mer* foretold by "The Beauty and the Beast" and anticipated by Ebrennac is based on a false premise that the reader cannot help but recognize: the Beast (Germany) never intends to marry Beauty (France) but to rape her.

Frost argues that "instead of telling another story of Germany's 'rape' of France, Vercors tells a story about a romance. The interpolated fairy tale in *Silence of the Sea* does so as well" (87). *Le Silence de la Mer* only resembles a romance and the truth of Germany's violent plans interrupts the fairytale ending. Ebrennac's telling of the story is rich in dramatic irony. Although he acknowledges that the Beast "holds her at his pleasure, captive and powerless" (15), he treats the Beast, representing himself, as a prisoner of misery while he, the occupier, is clearly a gaoler. Vercors' novel resembles the tale in many ways—the young woman remains faithful to the old

[3] While variations of this tale circulated in Germany and elsewhere, Vercors was likely familiar with the traditional French version of the tale, or its simplified variation by Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont, neither of which mention the couple's children.

and weak family patriarch until she is taken prisoner by a masculine suitor—but the Nazi spell that transforms Ebrennac into a Beast cannot be overcome by love or marriage. Forced to confront the absurdity of his own propaganda, Ebrennac learns that the Occupation is in reality an effort to "make a groveling bitch out of" France, "to destroy" her "soul" (33). The irony in Ebrennac's allusion to "The Beauty and the Beast" highlights the similarities between Beauty and the niece, but also exposes the dissimilarities between good-hearted but disfigured Beast and handsome but corrupt Ebrennac.

Allusions to Shakespeare indicate another marriage is yet capable of rescuing France, the traditional damsel in distress. *Le Silence de la Mer* alludes to *Romeo and Juliet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth*, and *Henry V*.[4] While the latter is never explicitly referred to in the novel, there are many significant parallels. De Ornellas, discussing the importance of Shakespearean allegory in Vercors' construction of the "good German," summarizes the final acts of *Henry V*, a play about the victory of the English over the French at Agincourt: "Henry has defeated the French. He has one more personal and political goal: to marry the daughter of the French king in a symbolic expression of union between the masculinized winning nation and the feminized losing nation" (189). The siege of Harfleur is presented as a rape. Henry warns the people of France of what will come should they refuse to surrender saying "What is't to me, when you yourselves are cause,/ If your pure maidens fall into the hand /Of hot and forcing violation?" and "in a moment

[4] Only the latter two will be discussed in depth here. The allusion to *King Lear* that is implied touches on the theme of politicized love; like Shakespeare before him, Vercors asks whether a woman can love both her father/uncle (and fatherland) and husband. That Cordelia marries the Duke of France and leads the French army into Britain to restore the king to the throne is also relevant. *Othello* is alluded to in the title for the English translation, *Put Out the Light.* The words are spoken by Othello when contemplating the murder of Desdemona, believing she has been unfaithful (V.ii.8). This likely refers to the problem of France's collaboration (infidelity) that Britain faced. If so, these words may be read as a call to the British to ensure the light of France is not put out. For *Romeo and Juliet*, see Farchadi (986 n.7). Less than six months after the Allied invasion of Normandy, Laurence Olivier's famous film adaptation of *Henry V* was released, reminding viewers of the historical symmetry of the Battle of Agincourt and the Normandy invasion.

look to see / The blind and bloody soldier with foul hand / Defile the locks of your shrill-shrieking daughters" (III.iii.19-35). Later, a member of the French nobility says that those who do not wage war against Henry are figuratively holding open the chamber door whilst the English "contaminate" their daughters (IV.v.14-16). Henry's marriage with Katherine is simply a more palatable way for an English audience to digest what is effectively the rape of France. For Wilcox, Katherine is "the flesh-and-blood representative of the civilian population" (66). When Shakespeare presents the marriage as consensual he exonerates the English of wrongdoing in Agincourt. After all, as it was once believed, "When is a rapist not a rapist? When he's a husband" (Wilcox 66). The affinity with Vercor's Occupation novel is apparent: Ebrennac is Henry V because he wishes to marry the niece to camouflage what is really rape. In addition, as De Ornellas notes, "Henry's desire to conquer France is in essence patrilineal," because he needs to justify his reign, given that his father Henry IV "violently deposed Richard II" (190). This recalls Ebrennac's duty to his father and fatherland.

When Vercors began writing his novel in 1941, Pétain had already signed a peace treaty with Germany that crystallized the marriage contract between Vichy France and the Nazis. This was a marriage contract signed under duress like the one between Henry V and Katherine. De Gaulle, who would soon become post-war France's victorious father-figure, fled to London and promoted a different alliance there between Britain and the Free French Forces. Interestingly, Vercors demonstrated a fondness for De Gaulle early in the Occupation, even when a large number of French people opposed to the Occupation were skeptical about his motives (De Bartillat 66).[5] Vercors, De Gaulle, and Pétain all believed that because of France's feminized role in the war, a figurative marriage to Germany or Britain was France's only hope for survival.

[5] Vercors even naively asked his colonel for authorization to leave for London to join the Free French, which caused the colonel to "avaler son képi," according to De Bartillat (66).

Germany now played the role of violent husband that Britain once did at Agincourt; Britain was in a position to liberate its hereditary enemy, the French, from a Henry V-like figure, Hitler. Still, an alliance with Britain was not easy for the French or the British. De Gaulle was not entirely comfortable about his alliance with Churchill and vice versa. Years later, he said bitterly "Notre plus grand ennemi héréditaire, ce n'était pas l'Allemagne, c'était l'Angleterre…. Il est vrai qu'elle a été notre alliée pendant les deux guerres, mais elle n'est pas portée naturellement à nous vouloir du bien" (qtd. in Peyrefitte 153). Disagreements about German rearmament and remilitarization of the Rhine in the late 1930s, the Dunkirk debacle, and the attack on Mers-el-Kébir did little to combat the Anglophobia encouraged by the Germans and the Vichy regime (Guiffan 167). Although De Gaulle would later announce that France had been liberated by its people—without mention of the Allies or Communist resistors—it was clear that his role in the Liberation would be something closer to that of Malcolm in *Macbeth.* Vercors also hoped for this, as suggested in an allusion Ebrennac makes to the play.

One night, before leaving for Paris, Ebrennac reads a passage from *Macbeth* when Macbeth's men begin to understand his downfall is imminent. He quotes Angus, a Scottish thane, who says of his leader, "Those he commands move only in command, / Nothing in love." Ebrennac then remarks, "Isn't it just that which must be keeping your [France's] Admiral awake at night? … A leader who has not his people's love is a very miserable puppet" (23-24). The irony would of course be clear to any reader who was not sympathetic with the Nazis: Admiral Darlan, prime minister of Vichy France, ruled no more by command than Hitler, a true tyrant (De Ornellas 193). In the first act of the novel, Ebrennac does not recognize this irony, but after his return from Paris it is all too clear that he is "a participant in a tragedy" that ends "with [Germany's] consummate failure to mate with the feminized France," as De Ornellas says (192).

There is no wedding as Ebrennac had foreseen, yet the novel indicates the possibility of a different political marriage with Britain. If the real-life Macbeth figure is Hitler, and Angus, being the loyal servant, is Ebrennac, then Malcolm, the true heir to the throne who flees the country after Macbeth's rise to power, musters the English army, and returns to reclaim the throne is Charles de Gaulle. *Le Silence de la Mer* lacks a Malcolm character, but the allusion to *Macbeth* indicates the need for allied assistance in vanquishing the tyrant, which cannot be done by silent and passive resistance alone. Someone must defy the odds and bring Birnham Wood to Dunsinane. These allusions in Vercors' novel therefore introduce the reader to a positive alternative to the figurative marriage with Germany that the novel foregrounds: an alliance with the British and de Gaulle's Free French Forces.

After Ebrennac leaves for the Eastern Front, the couple remain silent. They await either another German or a liberator. The day after Ebrennac's departure, the narrator says, "My niece had got breakfast ready as she always did. In silence she got breakfast ready as she always did. In silence she helped me to it and in silence we drank" (40). Their silence has created a vacuum in the home that persists even in the German's absence. That the silence of France would cause an epiphany among Germans soldiers and provoke a voluntary withdrawal as it does with Ebrennac is unrealistic. Ultimately, *Le Silence de la Mer* calls for inaction and passive defense in anticipation of a different male savior like Malcolm, De Gaulle, and Churchill. It reaffirms traditional values of the family by embracing France's traditionally feminine role as a passive victim in need of a marriage with a more powerful, manly state like Britain. Passive, feminine resistance is only a temporary solution, but it is the best solution France can afford given its surrender to Germany.

To call *Le Silence de la Mer* "a rousing call to resist" for France, as does De Ornellas, is

an exaggeration fed by what we have since learned of Vercors' Resistance activity and the novel's postwar reputation (De Ornellas 194). While it is true that the novel was brought to the public "at the personal expense and peril of a patriotic Frenchman," as the publisher's note in the first English edition indicates, nowhere within its pages does the author call for open, active resistance from the French public. The novel considers a realistic assessment of France's position during the Occupation, but this assessment is described in stereotypically gendered terms. Although the novel was written in 1941, printing delays forced its publication into 1942 just as active Resistance, supported by Britain and the Free French, became possible in some locations. In 1941, Vercors may not have anticipated active resistance in Occupied France. He likely did not anticipate the active role many women would play in the Resistance. After the Liberation, women who had slept with the German occupiers had their heads publicly shorn as a symbol of their "horizontal collaboration" (Gildea *Marianne in Chains* 51). This was a part of the re-virilization of France, which sought to tie collaboration with femininity and resistance with masculinity (Capdevila 445). This vilification could not be further from the truth. While many women had pursued relationships with Germans, women also participated in the Resistance. Irène Némirovsky's novel *Suite Française* shows exactly how closely some women walked the line between collaborator and resistor.

Chapter Two: Treasonous Infidelity in *Suite Française*

Irène Némirovsky's *Suite Française* is a project of Balzacian scope that describes the Fall of France and the ensuing Occupation as it was experienced by French men and women. Némirovsky does not limit herself to a "descriptive rather than analytical" account of the Occupation, nor does she shirk from the task of grappling with the "underlying causes" of France's capitulation, as Lloyd says ("Irène Némirovsky's *Suite Française*" 169). For Némirovsky, the French were too divided against one another to defeat the Germans. She depicts two conflicts: the rift between groups within French society, and the hostility between occupied and occupier. While the first part of the novel, "Tempête en Juin," depicts the disintegration of French families during *l'exode*, the second part, "Dolce," focusses on "horizontal collaboration," the sexual relationships between Frenchwomen and German soldiers that the French public charged with political meaning. Together, the two parts show how frustrations from deeply entrenched social divisions are directed outwards at the occupier and those who associated with them. By contrasting fragmented French families with passionate relationships between enemy lovers, Némirovsky demonstrates how horizontal collaborators were scapegoated for issues that had long been present in French society—namely, classism and sexism. Her novel suggests that French society was divided long before the Occupation, but the Occupation provides an opportunity to reunite the "family" of France through resistance.

A reading of *Suite Française* is complicated by two related historiographical problems: first, the death of the author before completion of the novel; second, the disappearance of the manuscript for sixty years. The first two parts of the novel were written in 1942, but the remaining three that were planned, according to the author's personal notes, were never written because Némirovsky was arrested by the French police and killed in Auschwitz that same year.

The manuscript did not surface until 2004, so the novel escaped both war-time censors and post-war revisionists. Because of these hurdles, the novel resists being categorized on the collaboration-resistance spectrum.

Since its publication, *Suite Française* has been criticized for its sympathetic portrayal of the Nazis and for its muted response to the plight of French Jews. For a novel written during the Occupation by an author forced to wear the yellow Star of David before being deported by the French, then killed by the Nazis in Auschwitz, *Suite Française* is silent in addressing many of Vichy's collaborationist policies. Certain critics like Weiss and Franklin go so far as to condemn Némirovsky for "historical agnosticism" and "indifference to politics and to the Jewish question" and figure her as a self-hating Jew with ties to French fascism (Bracher xii). In an interview with Golsan and Watts, Olivier Rubinstein, the publisher of *Suite Française,* recounts a hostile conference in Israel with Denise Epstein, Némirovsky's daughter. He says that a journalist "showed extraordinary hostility" toward Epstein and "denounced, with an unparalleled contempt, Némirovsky's cowardice, baseness, and absence of courage without taking into account the historical context" (qtd. in Golsan 109). If Sartre admonished Vercors for his obligation to depict the Germans realistically as tyrants, he certainly would have disliked Némirovsky's romance between Bruno von Faulk, a German officer, and Lucile Angellier, the French wife of a POW. On the other hand, reviewers of *Suite Française* are also at risk of skimming over the nuance of Lucile's love affair and classifying it as a brave—if not naïve—renunciation of politics in the face of true love. Because three-fifths of the novel were never written, this tension can never be resolved; that said, the novel in its published form does not radically advocate that "love conquers all." Rather, it shows that during wartime, personal freedom, figured as female sexuality, must be suspended to foster social unity.

Némirovsky was interested in the tension between individual destiny (often characterized in terms of sexual passion) and social responsibility (often characterized in terms of familialism). Throughout her life, she struggled to reconcile her cultural identity with her national or legal identity: she was a Jew who emigrated from Ukraine in 1919, fashioned herself into a French author, converted to Christianity, broke bread with right-wing anti-Semites, but was ultimately denied French citizenship and exported to the gas chambers by her own people (Weiss 172). In June 1941, she wrote in her journal, "My God! What is this country doing to me? Since it is rejecting me, let us consider it coldly, let us watch as it loses its honour and its life…. Empires are dying. Nothing matters. Whether you look at it from a mystical or a personal point of view, it's just the same. Let us keep a cool head. Let us harden our heart. Let us wait" (*Suite Française [Appendix]* 341). In *Suite Française*, she questions the individual's role in society by examining the effects of the exodus on families and independent young women who often had opposite experiences of exodus; while families were torn apart, individuals without familial responsibilities thrived in the chaos. Individual experience in the novel is, according to Bracher, "inextricably tied to the plight of the French nation as a whole… each individual calamity provides a contrapuntal development of the overall depiction of the fall of France" (35). Némirovsky not only parallels the division of France with the separation of individuals from their families, she also uses this cataclysm to reconsider familialism itself, the dominant ideology shared by inter-war, Vichy, and Liberation era governments. The national family of France was divided against itself because of economic inequality, which pitted the rural lower classes against the bourgeoisie, and because of rigid gender roles, which called for the sacrifice of men on the frontlines and the persistence of women on the homefront. Némirovsky shows that instead of trying to cure these deep-seated social ills dividing the nation, the French targeted horizontal

collaboration as a scapegoat for the internal troubles of French society.

In 1940, the exodus from France's northern urban areas into the south of France represented a collective admission that France was too weak to respond to the German attack. France was now a nation that retreated in the face of adversity. During the exodus, mothers and their children suffered tremendously. Risser says French female refugees "experienced the exodus, defeat, and occupation as directly as had soldiers" (177). Nearly two million French soldiers were taken prisoner in 1940, but one million did not return until the end of the war (Desmarais 57).[6] The absence of men during the Occupation meant Frenchwomen had to take over their husbands' duties while managing the family and continuing their domestic chores. This added stress was magnified during the exodus when mothers had to lead their children south, often on foot and without much food or many supplies. Risser describes the scene: "millions of refugee women retreated with children, grandparents, and the few household possessions that managed to hastily pack….Unwilling, or unable, to distinguish combatant from non-combatant, German pilots fired upon the civilian innocents, claiming another 10,000 victims before the battle's end" (2). This collective struggle did little to unite the French; the nation remained divided long after the Liberation by class and gender politics exposed in the catastrophe of 1940. Most importantly, the nation remained divided between resistors—or those who claimed to be resistors—and collaborators.

The exodus, coinciding with France's geographical and political division, exposed deep-seated divisions within French society. When the dust had settled, women had to adjust to living under intense scrutiny from Germans and their fellow Frenchmen. Pollard says "most

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[6] Yves Durand estimates that around 600,000 prisoners either escaped or were released before 1945, not one million as Desmarais suggests. 90,000 of those released were part of the *relève* program, which exchanged prisoners for healthy labourers. Others released were either sick or injured, respected veterans of the First World War, or farmers whose crops would be sent to Germany (324).

heterosexual French women, married and single, found themselves in a strange world, where normal social relations had been disrupted, where food, clothing, and fuel were in drastically short supply and home life was precariously negotiated" (177). During the war, men had been expected to protect their women and defend their country by killing Germans on the frontlines; when they were taken prisoner, the women left behind were expected to draw battle lines around the bedroom, the new "no man's land." Despite Vichy's collaborationist agenda, the government officially denounced liaisons with the occupier, which, to them, signified the moral deficiency of its women.[7] If French women were morally bankrupt collaborators, the children they produced would also be impure and would weaken the country. For this reason, abortion, outlawed since 1920 to combat *dénatalization,* became invested with political consequences (Pollard 175). In February 1942, abortion became punishable by death in Vichy and, as Pollard says, "synonymous with treason" in Vichy (174). It was treasonous because it might conceal "adultery, infidelity to a POW husband, sleeping with German soldiers, 'living it up' under the Occupation" (Pollard 174). Infidelity in particular had political consequences in Vichy: "If POWs were rendered powerless, 'cuckolded,' for example, then so was Vichy…. If Vichy had failed in its plans to return women to the home, to bring back the prisoners, to return families to the land, or to foster new social harmony, it could at least declare war on some women who were conspicuously 'of dubious morality'" (Pollard 193-4). During *l'épuration* that followed Liberation, women suspected of having relations with Germans were paraded through the streets in charivari-like fashion. Their heads were then shaved to desexualize and ostracize them. Virgili says that men and women were punished for alleged collaboration during the Liberation, but "it

[7] Germany also prohibited relationships between their soldiers and Frenchwomen to retain German racial purity, although the issue of interracial relationships was taken more seriously in the case of foreign labourers impregnating German women (Ginsborg 389).

was only in the case of women that sexuality became a particular issue" (192). Némirovsky exposes this scapegoating for what it is by contrasting relatively benign "horizontal collaboration" with more problematic, traditional marriages.

Némirovsky's portrait of the exodus shows that women in general and mothers in particular were forced to take on additional responsibilities that required tremendous sacrifice. When young René tells his aunt he plans to run away to the frontline, he adds that war "is not a matter for women" (70). Like René, young Hubert Péricand believes that "women were inferior creatures; they didn't know the meaning of heroism, glory, faith, the spirit of sacrifice. All they did was to bring everything they touched down to their level" (71). Yet the exodus, much like the Blitz in Britain, marks the moment when war suddenly and violently reached the homefront. On the road out of Paris, Jeanne Michaud meets two sisters whose husbands are missing. One of them is "pregnant and pushing a sleeping child in a pram" while she searches each convoy of soldiers for her husband (52). In addition to the physically and mentally exhausting experience of the exodus, women needed to maintain the status quo, which meant doing the work of their husbands, fathers, and sons while also managing life at home.

As in all wars, the sacrifice of sons, husbands, and fathers overwhelmed families at home: "They felt hopeless," says the narrator. "'If only the men were here,' cried the women, 'the men!' but the men were far away and the children were running, screaming, rushing about, causing even greater confusion" (99). The women in *Suite Française* are prepared to offer this sacrifice for their country. One woman summarizes this traditional contract of war: "You know I love my husband… we love each other, he's all I've got, but even if they told me, 'You'll never see him again, he's just died, but we won…' well, I'd rather have that, oh, I'm telling you, I'm not kidding, I'd rather have that" (67). Yet the feeling of abandonment by their husbands

combined with the exhaustion of managing tiresome children imbued many Frenchwomen with resentment towards those who promoted familialism. Vichy readily exploited *la femme au foyer* to encourage growth and promote antifeminism, but it was unable to ensure the right to eat for these mothers and their families (Pollard 139). Much of women's frustration in *Suite Française* is directed towards the pro-natalist patriarchy that encouraged large families but failed to provide welfare support. One woman mentions a friend who gave birth three weeks before the exodus and "hasn't had anything to eat since yesterday and she's breast-feeding her kid. And they tell you to have children, dammit. Children, sure! Don't make me laugh!" (63). While families were promoted by the government as a cornerstone of the nation and its revitalization, families often suffered tremendously during the war.

The sacrifice of men was to be expected, but many other sacrifices stemmed from this basic rule of war. Even if the men survived, their families were forever damaged by the experience of the exodus and Occupation. Mme. Péricand does her best to keep her family together. "She needed to feed and protect her own children," says the narrator. "Nothing else mattered any more" (48). Despite Mme. Péricand's efforts, her family is irreversibly damaged in the chaos. Hubert, full of romantic ideas of masculine heroism on the battlefield, runs away to assist in the hopeless battle: "he was sacrificing not just his own life, but the life of everyone in his family to his country. He marched towards his destiny like a young god bearing offerings. At least, that was how he saw himself" (72). When the time comes to meet the enemy and defend a bridge, he is overwhelmed: "He had no weapon. All he could do was stand there. They were fighting and he just stood there, arms folded, inert, useless" (82). When the order comes to retreat, Hubert faints in a field. His emasculation at this moment of sacrifice is ironic given his sexist comments about female cowardice, which Némirovsky proves to be false in her depiction

of countless tenacious mothers. Hubert's foolish escapade, while not a personal sacrifice, does contribute to the erosion of the Péricand family, with whom he can no longer identify: "The people around him, his family, his friends, aroused a feeling of shame and rage around him. He had seen them on the road, them and people like them…. He judged his family with bitterness and a painful harshness" (142-43).

Similarly, Hubert's eldest brother Philippe, a priest, believes it is his holy and heroic duty to shepherd a group of orphans to safety, despite his thinking that they "were children of Satan" (22). It is important to consider Philippe as a warrior analogous to his brother; Philipponnat and Lienhardt say that in a draft of the novel, "he die[s] in battle" (328). For Philippe, the task before him is more important than the Battle of France because he is called to wage a spiritual battle "to gather liberated souls around him" (127). Yet "he only wanted one thing: to be rid of them as soon as possible, to be relieved of his responsibility…. The duty of love which, until now, he had felt was almost simple, so great was the Grace of God within him, now seemed almost impossible to feel" (126). When the children mutiny and drown him, he is denied an honourable death. Both these men fail to offer a meaningful sacrifice, but they do contribute to the destruction of the prestigious Péricand family. The chaos of the exodus causes another fracture in the family when Mme. Péricand accidently abandons her dying father-in-law in a nursing home where he dies alone (103).[8]

Mme. Péricand justifies the deaths of these men by framing them within a larger national and cosmic narrative. Before learning that Hubert is still alive, Mme. Péricand attends a special

[8] This was not an unusual occurrence during the exodus (Risser 119). Risser describes one family that had to abandon a grandmother with a car that had run out of gas (117). She describes another case where a man, returning to his home briefly before fleeing south, packed his car full of Chinese porcelain, but "judged that only enough space remained for either the family dog or [the family's elderly] schoolmistress [whom the family had mistakenly left behind]. He remembered, without much regret, that he chose to take the dog and leave the spinster behind once again" (118).

mass for the broken family. She somberly says, “I have given birth to a saint and a hero…Our sons are making sacrifices for other people’s sons…my heart is breaking. You know that I lived only for my children, that I was a mother, nothing but a mother… but I swear to you, the pride I feel makes me forget my bereavement” (136). When she is commended for being “a true Catholic,” she responds, “Just a good Frenchwoman” (137). Being “nothing but a mother” makes Mme. Péricand, in her own opinion, “a good Frenchwoman”; however, to retain that status she had to risk sacrificing her sons. For her, this as a patriotic success: her sons were motivated by masculine ideals of heroism and holiness, but ironically neither is successful. Tragically, the family is torn apart in the process: one son is brutally killed, another is alienated from his family, and the patriarch dies alone after writing his family out of his will. The perverse duty of the mother, Némirovsky implies, is to nurture the family and prepare to offer it for God and country.

The constant struggle of mothers is ironically juxtaposed against the relative comfort of independent and wealthy women like Arlette, a dancer and mistress to the rich banker, Corbin. Cowman describes how Arlette’s independence is both a blessing and a curse: “Arlette lacks the security of marriage, and when the danger of war force her lover to prioritize his marital obligations, she has no choice but to look after herself and rely on her transported wealth until the situation settles down” (191). Arlette leaves Corbin during the exodus, steals his car, and manages to find good food and lodging because of her social standing. She is able to find comfort in the crisis while poor and pregnant mothers walk from Paris to the unoccupied zone. After leaving Corbin, Arlette “was convinced that, from now on, she could survive any situation, that she was gifted with a real genius for obtaining maximum pleasure and comfort regardless of the circumstances. Her flexibility, lucidity, detachment were qualities that had been of enormous use to her in her career and relationships, but until now she hadn’t realised they would be just as

useful in a crisis" (89). It is clear, however, that her social standing and wealth and her sexual freedom—"her principle assets were her legs, her figure, her scheming mind" (90)—are advantages that derive from her independence.

Further examining the tension between the individual and society, Némirovsky shifts from the epic scope of the exodus—the "mystical" point of view—to a more private affair, the horizontal collaboration of Lucile Angellier in "Dolce." While Némirovsky appears to abandon the exhaustive and panoramic narration of "Tempête en Juin" by concentrating on a more intimate dilemma faced by one woman, she maintains her narrative distance and gives voice to *la foule*, the divided community of Bussy. In "Dolce," the war becomes a backdrop for the conflicts between members of French society. As Bracher notes, "instead of opposing the French people and their enemy aggressors, these local conflicts put husband against wife, wife against mother-in-law, bourgeois mother-in-law against aristocratic viscountess, and viscountess against tenant farmer" (141). In examining these divisions, Némirovsky questions the political significance of sexual liaisons and calls out the popular discourse in French society that scapegoated young, independent women and identified their sexual activity with treason.

Némirovsky addresses the scandal that was horizontal collaboration with a confrontation between Lucile, who hypocritically pontificates against such a relationship, and a dressmaker. Underlying the conversation is the economic inequality of the two French women, which divides them more than their political allegiances. Lucile presents fine silk to the dressmaker and the dressmaker responds with a wink, "I can see you know how to get by…Well done" (254). In effect, the dressmaker calls attention to Lucile's class privilege that allows her to acquire rare goods during the war. Lucile sees a German soldier's belt lying on the dressmaker's bed and accuses her of horizontal collaboration. The dressmaker then explains how her relationship with

the German is outside the realm of national politics and war: "German or French, friend or enemy, he's first and foremost a man and I'm a woman…. Our lives are complicated enough with all these wars and bombings. Between a man and a woman, none of that's important" (254). The juxtaposition of these two accusations is significant because it demonstrates how certain legitimate concerns, like the unfair privilege of the bourgeois class, were swept under the rug while sex was held up as a political act that defined a woman's—and therefore France's—treachery and moral weakness. The dressmaker says to Lucile, "You're educated. You see people. For us, it's nothing but slaving away at work. If it wasn't for love, we might as well just throw ourselves in the river" (255). For the dressmaker, the relationship that she has with the German is both a product of and escape from class inequality; to her, French society is a worse enemy than the German army. Lucile ignores the indictment of the bourgeoisie and belittles the dressmaker by addressing her as "my poor girl." As a member of the middle class, she is out of touch with the every-day struggle of women like the dressmaker. She does not see what Némirovsky makes so apparent: what divides them is not "collaboration" or "resistance" based on their sexual partners, but the inequality ingrained in French society. Lucile, however, soon experiences empathy for the dressmaker when she develops an attraction to the enemy.

When Lucile learns of Gaston's infidelity and falls in love with Faulk, she learns what it is like to be accused of political collaboration for an innocent affair. Lucile and Faulk never have sex, but their relationship, according to Bracher, "clearly constitutes intercourse in the wider, traditional sense of the term" (215).[9] She is reprimanded by her mother-in-law for showing him common courtesy: "How could you, here, in [Lucile's husband's] house… how could you smile

[9] According to Adler, actual sexual contact was not required for a woman to be labeled as a horizontal collaborator: "any type of service they had provided, as shopkeepers or domestic servants, for instance, was immediately interpreted through a prism of sexuality" (47).

at a German, speak with such familiarity to a German?" (237). Mme. Angellier accuses Lucile of marrying Gaston, her POW husband, for his family's wealth. She is not entirely wrong. Lucile responds by saying that she "got married because I was a little goose, because Papa said, 'He's a good man. He'll make you happy.' I never imagined he'd start being unfaithful to me with a hatmaker from Dijon as soon as we got married!" (238). Mme. Angellier is not appalled that her son is unfaithful, but she is taken aback when she learns he has spent money on his mistress. She later imagines a conversation with her son:

> Together, though, we'll be able to bend [Lucile] to our will better than I could do alone. She eludes me with her long silences, whereas you have the right to ask her what she's thinking. You're the master of the house: you can demand to know. Go, go and see her! Take from her what's rightfully yours: her beauty, her youth… I've heard that in Dijon…You shouldn't, my dear Gaston. A mistress is expensive. (284)

The inequity is perhaps to be expected of a mother defending her son, but it is also characteristic of the double-standard conveniently applied to sexuality during the Occupation. For Gaston, infidelity is an unwise fiscal decision, but for Lucile it is a sign of her moral inferiority and dangerous promiscuity. According to Margaret and Patrice Higonnet, "Women who consort with the enemy are stigmatized, humiliated, even executed, while soldiers' romantic interludes in enemy territory are idealized" (37).[10] Lucile is expected to remain faithful even though that faith is not necessarily reciprocated. In this regard, Némirovsky criticizes the unwritten rules of marriage. For many, such as Mme. Angellier, the quality of the relationship between husband

[10] Soldiers' "romantic interludes" were not always limited to enemy territory, of course, nor were they always consensual. Diamond says that some women seeking help from retreating French soldiers "were expected to offer sexual favours in exchange for this protection. If they demonstrated any reluctance to do so, these soldiers did not hesitate to take it by force" (*Fleeing Hitler* 77).

and wife is not what is truly important; it is the semblance of unity and the expression of the wife's dependence on her husband. For Némirovsky, the accusation of horizontal collaboration is a symptom of misplaced moral outrage in society. By complicating the association of sex and politics manipulated in the popular discourse of Vichy and the Resistance, Némirovsky shows how infidelity is not inherently a form of treason. Nevertheless, it does expose vulnerabilities in French society, especially male fears of sexual humiliation.

During the Second World War, the absence of Frenchmen and the appearance of German men fuelled a fear of infidelity in France. According to Gildea, "It was not that the conquerors assumed the right to rape the women of the defeated nation, but the power to seduce was one of the fruits of victory" (*Marianne in Chains* 50). However, "To have sex was a challenge to the French family, community and country" (51). Vichy passed a law in 1942 to punish the adultery of POW wives with a maximum jail term of three years and fines up to 1,500 francs (Fishman 187). Némirovsky addresses these anxieties in her novel. For instance, Benoît is afraid that Bonnet, the officer billeted in his home, is chasing after his wife, Madelaine. He visits Lucile, hoping that she can convince Faulk to put an end to Bonnet's advances. Faulk says, "Of course I can punish him if he bothers your wife, but if she likes him…" (249). Faulk throws salt on the wound: "Well, you should have thought about defending your women before, my friend." This insult to Benoit's masculine-warrior identity echoes Bonnet's earlier warning: "Man is made to be a warrior, just as woman is made to please the warrior" (216). Benoît, an escaped prisoner of war, is particularly sensitive to the threat of cuckoldry posed by the victors.

Benoît's anxiety about Madelaine's potential infidelity is even more significant when one considers that it originated not from Bonnet's advances, but from Madelaine's past love for a French soldier she nursed to health, Jean-Marie. Madelaine is smitten by aspects of Bonnet that

remind her of Jean-Marie, namely his higher social standing: “Both were clean shaven, well brought-up, with pale hands and delicate skin” (212). Benoît recognizes Madelaine’s lingering feelings for Jean-Marie; the narrator lays bare Benoît’s insecurities saying that “every allusion to what had happened that past summer pierced straight through his heart like an arrow, but it was his business, no one else’s” (227). Benoît then tells Bonnet, simultaneously thinking of Jean-Marie, “If something bad happened to you, for example…. Around here, we lay out our dead on beds like this” (227). Benoît’s bloodlust is for both Bonnet and Jean-Marie, whom he fuses together as a single enemy to his masculine-peasant-warrior identity. This fusion highlights what is truly at the heart of Benoît’s anxieties: his lower class. He tries to seduce his wife with the rough romance of a peasant:

> He pulled her towards him. She struggled and pretended to laugh, but he could sense, by a kind of stiffening throughout her body, that she didn’t really want to laugh, that she didn’t find it funny, that she didn’t like being thrown down in the hay and cool straw, she didn’t like it…No! She didn’t like him… She got no pleasure from him…. She let out the despondent little moan that made him want to cry and kill her at the same time. (229)

Benoît’s attempt to have sex with his wife is a response to Madelaine’s apparent attraction to the stereotypically hyper-masculine and violent German. Benoit confuses passion with violence and fails to seduce her. He then accuses her of infidelity because she refuses to have sex. They go to bed, but “that night he didn’t try to take her. They lay awake, motionless, listening to the German’s breathing above their heads, the creaking of his bed” (230). He is further emasculated by the presence of Bonnet above his bed. The irony of his wish to conceal his anxiety about Jean-Marie and Bonnet—to keep it “his business, no one else’s”—is carefully crafted by

Némirovsky. Benoît represses the true source of his anxiety—the competition between the classes in French society—and directs his fear and violence externally at Bonnet and the Germans. Némirovsky makes Benoît's inner conflict the reader's business so that she may show the hostility within French society that was aggravated during the Occupation.

Much of Benoît's identity is tied up in violent efforts to assert his masculinity, which he associates with military experience and peasant labour. Having lost the war, Benoît struggles to identify as a warrior. He refuses to requisition his hunting rifle, which is a symbol of his identity as a man, a peasant, and a soldier. In an altercation with the viscountess, Benoît tells her that he uses his gun for good: not only to kill Germans, but to hunt in the viscount's grounds. Benoît accuses the viscount of using his gun to collaborate with the Nazis, not to resist them, when he hunts with the German command. Benoît further insults the viscountess by saying that her husband refused to pick up a gun during the Battle of France: "Listen, I've seen them Boches up close, I have, in Belgium and at the Somme. I'm not like your husband. Where was he during the war? In an office, where he could treat everyone like shit…. That's his idea of war" (291). By using his gun to steal from his French collaborator enemies, he is able to continue his military career despite his injuries because he is committing an act of patriotism.

Benoit's murder of Bonnet is directly related to the enmity between him and the viscount. Bracher says "Benoît's defiance of the Germans' ban on firearms seems to stem much less from abstract ideological stances than the age-old rancors arising from the aristocrats' haughty social and material domination" (189). Kedward, too, emphasizes the material conditions for Benoît's resistance: "this is an imagined event which had countless real enactments or similarities in the history of resistance in France…. Némirovsky's tragedy…was not to have acted on her intuition that resistance to the occupiers could derive from reasons which were neither ideological nor

political. Personal obstinacy, reflex action, chance, anger, illegality, pride and inventiveness were all players in the origin or resistance" (12). Critics tend to overlook the major ideological, social, and political factors at play: economic inequality and rigid gender roles. The "age-old rancors" that propel him towards resistance are closely related to his fragile masculinity. Benoît's fear of emasculation by Bonnet and of losing his gun—further emasculation at the hands of the enemy—propels the narrative. After proudly telling the viscountess about his illegal rifle, she informs the Germans, who search his home. This gives Benoît an opportunity to kill Bonnet. As Bracher notes, Gaston's murder of Bonnet sets *Suite Française* on a course towards open resistance by forcing Lucile, the supposed collaborator, "to determine where her true allegiance lies: ultimately, she must choose between protecting a compatriot or abandoning him to a German firing squad or worse" (193-94). She chooses to protect a countryman and betray her lover. Lucile has reason to sympathize with Gaston: both confront the possibility of an unfaithful spouse.

Lucile and Gaston's marriage is similar to Madelaine and Benoît's in that they are both economic alliances out of necessity, not love. Lucile and Gaston each seek extramarital affairs, although Lucile ultimately rebuffs Faulk's advances. According to social expectations, theirs is a failed marriage because "Lucile's father had gone on to make some bad investments, lost his fortune and mortgaged his land; the marriage was, therefore, not the most successful; she hadn't had any children, after all" (196). The blame is put on Lucile and her family, not on Gaston. Their marriage, predicated on an economic agreement between two fathers and upon the assumption that it will produce children, is sexually and emotionally unsatisfying and therefore socially frustrating.

Other traditional arrangements, like the one between the viscount and viscountess, are

also failures. The narrator says, “there was no hope in the Viscount satisfying her, since he had little interest in women in general and her in particular” (244). Corte, the aesthete writer, is also a disappointment to his mistress: “for a man and woman in their position, and at their age, love was a contract. She had given herself to him because she hoped he would take care of her—not just materially but emotionally. Until now she had been dutifully repaid: he had given her wealth and prestige. But suddenly he seemed to her a weak and despicable creature” (60). Némirovsky presents a series of relationships that are at their core economic or political alliances and are therefore destructive, unproductive, or depressing when compared to the passionate love that transcends economics and politics.

For Némirovsky, love can never be fully divorced from politics. Like Vercors, who presents Ebrennac as a worthy suitor in every aspect except his nationality, Némirovsky presents an ideal romance between star-crossed lovers Lucile and Faulk. By having Lucile actively resist by smuggling Benoit into Paris, Némirovsky denies the romantic resolution that has been anticipated, as Vercors does. The catalyst for her resistance is Benoît’s anxiety, exasperated by the many threats to his masculinity. Benoît shoots Bonnet to defend himself from his sexual competitor. Madelaine calls on Lucile to help, hoping her relationship with Faulk allows her special privileges: “I’ve heard he’s in love with you and that you can do whatever you like” (303). At this moment, Lucile rather abruptly changes from collaborator to resistor. She hides Benoît under Faulk’s nose and she lies to Faulk in order to procure documents to cross the demarcation line. From the moment Lucile accepts her role in the Resistance, her relationship with Faulk is rewritten to fit this new narrative. Earlier, an old woman congratulates Lucile for standing up to a group of soldiers who destroyed a friend’s home that had been requisitioned. When Faulk joins her to meet the soldiers responsible, he says ironically, “They think you’re

Judith going to murder Holofernes in his tent. I hope you don't have the same evil plan!" (271). Lucile never murders Faulk, but she does become a double agent.

Lucile's decision to resist manifests itself physically when Faulk tries to consummate the relationship: "He pulled her into his arms with a violence he couldn't control, tearing at her clothes, crushing her breasts. 'No, never!' she cried out. 'Never!' Never would she be his. She was afraid of him. She no longer craved his touch.… He was whispering to her in German. Foreigner! Foreigner! Enemy, in spite of everything!" (321).The violence Faulk exhibits echoes Benoît's own attempt to initiate sex with his wife. For Némirovsky, Faulk's violence is a sublimation of the evil within each German, which, like with Ebrennac in *Le Silence de la Mer*, is latent throughout most of the novel. When Lucile hears Faulk speak German, she thinks that his voice "especially with that commanding tone … gave Lucile the same pleasure that a slightly rough kiss might—the kind of kiss that ends with a little bite" (273). In the end, what makes Faulk exotic and "commanding" only reminds her of his foreignness. Faulk has not changed; he is still the same "good German." It is, rather, Lucile who has changed by now committing herself to the Resistance.

In her notes for the unwritten sections of *Suite Française*, Némirovsky shows plans to have Lucile and Jean-Marie fall in love on a Resistance mission in Paris. She notes that this is for "practical purposes" and the form of love is "sad, unrequited, undeclared, completely conflicted," although she gives no indication as to whose love is unrequited and who is conflicted (355). Those descriptors could equally apply to Lucile's relationship with Faulk, or Madelaine's with Jean-Marie. It is impossible to evaluate a work that has not been written, but if "Captivity" had been written according to her notes, the novel would have continued in a decidedly conservative and romantic direction by uniting characters from the same class with a

shared, nationalist destiny—though, the divisions in French society exposed in parts I and II would persist. She writes that in this third part "collective destiny and personal destiny are strongly linked" (352). "Tempête en Juin" and "Dolce" both show how characters' deny their place in the nation's "collective destiny," but cannot escape it. Lucile's love for Faulk is this kind of denial. Bracher says, "Némirovsky's narrative ultimately shows Lucile's renegade stance to be untenable" (237). Némirovsky shows that during wartime, love does not conquer all. While she criticizes familialism and the repression of sexuality it entails, she also concedes that women must temporarily submit to social pressures for the greater good of the nation.

Chapter Three: Seductive Surrender in *Cloudless May*

Storm Jameson's *Cloudless May* is about a small group of French provincial politicians who negotiate the fate of Seuilly, a small town faced with Nazi invasion, by either collaborating, resisting, or fleeing. Although it takes place in France, the novel confronts the notions of collaboration and occupation from a British perspective. It was written between 1941 and 1942 when, as Jameson says in her autobiography, "we were now so certain that the Germans would invade … that we expected the first landing every mortal day of that time" (68). By the time the novel was published in 1943, France had been occupied for nearly three years, bombs had dropped across Britain—killing Jameson's sister Dorothy in one campaign in Reading—and Operation Overlord was in early planning stages. The fate of the Island was uncertain. In her novel, Jameson looks to when France faced similar doom; doing so, she uses what Pong calls "retrospective anticipation … to gather sympathy and support from a primarily British readership" (34). Looking across the British Channel to the events that led France to capitulate in 1940, Jameson questions what aspects of British society might lead to a similar outcome. In particular, she resists the regressive gender politics of France and Britain during the war, while also criticizing pacifism, which is for her a weakness similar to collaboration.

Among the novel's major characters, only Colonel Ollivier and Colonel Rienne openly resist the Nazi invasion. Thiviers, a local industrialist, has attended the banquets of the Nazi elite (188). He conspires with Labenne, the mayor of Seuilly who wishes to avoid the destruction of his château, to persuade Bergeot, the Prefect, to surrender the town. Bergeot himself is undecided for the majority of the novel and is caught between the duty to his town and the impulse to save himself and his mistress, Marguerite de Freppel. While Bergeot makes efforts to protect the town early on, he also secretly transfers his funds to the United States when prompted by Freppel. She,

concerned only for her personal well-being, eventually convinces Bergeot to flee. The men who control the fate of Seuilly from behind the scenes have their own selfish motives for either abandoning or protecting the city. Their attention, however, is often not directed towards the military or logistical challenges of the war, but towards the threat of women who interfere in their affairs. Underlying the military and political threat of occupation is this equally important—even coterminous—social and sexual threat.

Women in *Cloudless May* are under constant supervision by men. Some—such as Thiviers' invalid wife and second cousin, Nini, who was disfigured in an auto accident shortly after their marriage, or the restaurant owner, Marie, who faithfully awaits the return of her soldier husband—are completely under the thumb of their husbands. Others, like Mme. Vayrac, a wealthy brothel owner, and Mme. Freppel, a former prostitute, exhibit what the men consider dangerously subversive tendencies. As opposed to *Suite Française,* in which the author illustrates the contemporary fear of weak women easily seduced into collaborating with the Germans, *Cloudless May* addresses "contemporary French anxieties about women using their sexuality to manipulate men and, in particular, to lure them into betraying the nation" (Cooper 170). Jameson situates this problematic discourse both within pre-Occupation France and mid-Blitz Britain by melding French and British landscapes, history, and geography. She is then able to discuss the source of this fear and criticize it while maintaining the stance that pacifism, figured as the feminine antithesis to masculine violence, will lead to Britain's capitulation to the Nazis.

In the 1930s Jameson was an ardent pacifist. She was a sponsor of Dick Shepherd's Peace Pledge Union (PPU), an organization that pushed for German appeasement until the Fall of France. As Germany began to rearm and reoccupied the Rhine, setting its sights on Jameson's

beloved France, she decided that war was inevitable and pacifism was no longer a viable option (Birkett 153). The Fall of France made her decision to renounce pacifism clear; she resigned from the PPU immediately (Birkett 192). She writes in her autobiography of a German woman who had pleaded with her to flee to the United States:

> In the last war I felt a cold respect for conscientious objectors who bore witness to their hatred of war in prison, and contempt only for the obscene women safe in England who handed white feathers to young men in civilian clothes. It is harder to feel respect for a witness living two thousand miles out of danger…. My flesh shrivelled at the thought of falling into the hands of the Gestapo, but… between the wars I had been a pacifist, and I had not had the moral firmness to stand by my pacifism in this war. To run away would make this worse. (63)

While pacifism is, for Jameson, the more noble position, the prospect of Nazi domination is too threatening for Britain to avoid war. Handing out white feathers while Europe is under Hitler's control, therefore, is more contemptible than ever. Pacifism in this war, for Jameson, is akin to collaboration.

During the interwar period, pacifism became closely associated with femininity and feminism according to Grayzel. She cites Swanwick's 1916 treatise *War and Its Effect on Women* as an example of how women's supposedly innate maternal role in society was central to the movement: "war victimized women not only by killing their sons and thus destroying their 'very life-blood' but also by destroying their potential offspring, that is, the children who would never be born to a lost generation of fathers" (*Women's Identities at War* 159). Because all women were viewed by the state as current or future mothers, they were responsible for raising the next generation of soldiers, but they were also capable of undermining the war effort if they

demanded security instead of sacrifice for themselves and their families. This was as true in Britain as it was in Vichy France.

Like many others in Britain and France during the war, including Vercors, Jameson considered pacifism and collaboration to be a feminine response to war, as indicated partially by her contrasting opinions towards male conscientious objectors and female pacifists. Jameson's treatment of Freppel, who exemplifies the destructive potential of pacifism, is consistent with the sexist rhetoric that war is men's business, a view stated by Rienne's sister when she tells Rienne that "women should not influence men" and that a woman "is there to soothe [a man] if he is hurt…. If you ask my opinion … the world is no better for women running about in it as they do. It would be better if they kept quiet, and simply loved" (177-8). While Jameson was a feminist—once praised by Jo Stanley in the *Morning Star*, in the 1930s, for being "the nearest thing there was to a feminist novelist"—she was highly critical of "feminism" as a monolith (qtd. in Birkett 343). She supported women's right to vote and right to a career, but firmly believed in, as Birkett says, women's "responsibilities as mothers" (12). In 1929, she published "The Soul of a Modern Woman," in which, according to Birkett, she "set out her conviction that a woman's priority should be marriage. She believed, she said, in loyalty, kindness between husband and wife, and service, and thought that a wife working for her husband's success was happier than one working for her own" (97). Despite her particular feminist convictions, then, it is possible to understand her characterization of Freppel as a critique of feminist pacifism, which threatened to hand Britain over to the Nazis at the time she was writing *Cloudless May.* Jameson, however, shows that the patriarchy is ultimately to blame for women's aversion to warfare: the marginalization of women can only result in their indifference towards the society that marginalizes them.

Jameson was the president of the British branch of PEN during the war. At a 1941

International PEN conference, she emphasised that Europe, while in the control of Hitler, would be relocated in spirit to London: "Here we are and here we intend to remain, Europe in England and England in Europe" (qtd. in Pong 40). For a British author writing to a British audience, Jameson spends much time situating *Cloudless May* firmly in the Loire valley. The regionalism with which she colours her invented town of Seuilly does contribute to the sense that it is a shared space—that is, it occupies a place in British history and culture as well. According to Pong, Jameson superimposes the two topoi of "the regionalism of France and the regionalism of Britain" (41) to create an "international regionalism" (39). Jameson uses Seuilly as a "sounding" to represent France and therefore Europe as a whole (Pong 40). By focussing on this sounding, Jameson enables the reader "to gain insight into a problem, issue, or crisis by inspecting a sample community or specimen through which the larger entity might be seen or understood" (40). The object of Jameson's study is twofold: to understand France's capitulation and to appreciate Britain's responsibility and shortcomings when faced with the threat of invasion. As a Francophile and British patriot, and as a proponent of globalism and international unity, Jameson understands that a nation's territory extends beyond its official borders.[11]

Within *Cloudless May*, Jameson encodes a particular sense of nationalism rooted in the earth, fertilized by the corpses of soldiers who fought for the country and hydrated by the rivers that have historically defended it. When Bergeot is first faced with the question of surrendering Seuilly, he tells Labenne the town must resist because he cannot stand the thought of Germans marching on French soil. He is preoccupied with the thought of German footsteps tamping down

[11] Jameson's opinions on feminism, pacifism, and isolationism throughout her long career are unusually inconsistent. In her first novel, *The Pot Boils*, according to Birkett, "she attacked 'the growth of a spurious internationalism,' and wrote her first and last patriotic paragraph in praise of national boundaries and partisanship: 'The most deep-rooted instinct of a man is the love of one particular place and a desire to glorify it above the rest of the world'" (53).

the soil that safeguards national memory. He considers the German invader whose "heels would cut off the voices rising under the roots" (54). In the soil of France itself, there is an accretion of dead soldiers. The ground, rich with history, is compressed by the footsteps of the dead and living. For one bishop in Jameson's novel, sacrifice in war is meaningful because it fertilizes the ground. One must be careful when walking so as to avoid disturbing those beneath. He warns the minister, "Be careful how you move…. You could easily crush someone…. How Foch must have enjoyed stretching his limbs in French earth, after his life. How thankful he must have been to know that these roots he felt near him were sending upwards a life to be caressed by the air of France. There couldn't be a better use, the Bishop thought, for one's body" (76). Rienne reflects on how the nearby town of Thouédun is "French not simply in its walls…. But French still more in the roots plunging deeply into its earth, in the dead who never left their descendants' elbows…. All this death thrusting into them tightened the shabby houses to stand together against the fierce light. They were tougher than the strong columns of the church. They, and not the church, were France's immortality" (91-2).What defines and strengthens France is an ecosystem containing earth, plants, and corpses.

To grow a nation out of this fertile soil requires irrigation. For Jameson, the rivers of France are integral to the history and future of the nation. Together with the rich soil, the rivers of France feed old grape vines. French wine is culturally significant because it is literally rooted in the country's past. Labenne, however, does not believe that the French soil watered by the Loire is fertile. He contrasts it with the Rhine:

> He was convinced that France, like his wife, was past the age of child-bearing. The future had the hands of the prolific Germans. Why not, since it was springing from German bodies? Very well, he would be a German. But a German with a

> French stomach, who lived in France. Exchange a Loire salmon, peaches from his wall at Thouédun, wine from his vineyard, for anything watered by the Rhine? What a bargain! (459)

Labenne implies an exchange of culture in his gastronomic metaphor, but he also suggests an exchange of bodies. Not only does the future "spring" from German bodies—which are, according to the stereotypes fostered by propaganda, more virile than those of the French—but the peaches and the wine grapes to which Labenne refers literally grow from the corpses of Germans as well. French bodies are not the only ones fertilizing the country's vineyards: German—and British—bodies from past wars lie underfoot as well.

After the First World War, the names of France's rivers became ingrained in the public consciousness in Allied nations. The Loire, Marne, Meuse, Rhine, Rhone, Seine, and Somme were historically key strategic elements of France's defense. In *Cloudless May,* Jameson draws on the mythical status of these rivers in the British consciousness. These rivers were arguably more revered by the British than the French. In her autobiography, Jameson recalls meeting a Frenchman in 1941 who said, "Sacrée Dordogne… It's a river, not a reason for going into a swoon" (108). Still, the rivers were thought to be at least strategically important during World War Two. Another Frenchman Jameson met in Paris in 1939 said to her, "You have your coasts to protect you…we rely on our rivers" (57). Once Germany circumvented the Maginot, tradition led many to believe France's rivers would once again prevent the Germans from reaching Paris, although this did not take into account the threat of aerial warfare. Bergeot reflects on their historic importance in terms of pagan sacrifice: "In this moment of her greatest danger, her rivers themselves were letting France down. There—where the Romans used to try to discourage savages from offering a human sacrifice to the floods—century after century, almost generation

after generation, the sacrifices have been offered; to the Somme, the Aisne, the Marne. This time it might be the Loire" (120). Seuilly, an island in the Loire, is therefore a symbolic location for a last stand against the Nazis.

The island of Seuilly is a microcosm of France as a whole, but it also represents the island of Great Britain. The Loire, what Jameson's narrator calls the last "watershed between France and Germany," is analogous to the English Channel, which after the Fall of France and the relocation of the Free French to London symbolically became the last "watershed between France and Germany" (493). The connection between the Loire and the English Channel is made explicit in the climactic battle. A few men, including Ollivier and Rienne, try to defend the bridge to Seuilly. Ollivier, who later sacrifices his own life to blow up the bridge, says before the battle, "I've a good mind to blow this bridge now…. I have two of my children on the island waiting to set it off at the last minute. The question is—will they know which is the last?.... No—we must keep a bridge open for you on England" (489). He only blows up the bridge after Rienne crosses back into Seuilly; this ensures him a safe passage to England. Thus, in this final moment when the bridge to Seuilly is destroyed, a new bridge to Great Britain, the last stronghold of the French military, is opened.[12]

In her sentimental descriptions of Seuilly, Jameson articulates what is at stake for Britain if France loses the war. Pong says that Jameson's mythologizing technique is in the same mode as much of the popular literature and film from wartime Britain (43). When Rienne "sees the fate of his own village as inextricably linked with that of his country, with their entire history … as

[12] Jameson likely had the Battle of Saumur in mind when writing the scene. In her autobiography, when discussing the origin of *Cloudless May*, she mentions "the bridge at Saumur" as a scene she took note of in the planning stages (93). This battle, having taken place the day after Pétain called for the French to lay down their arms, represented the first act of resistance in France. Jameson attempts to use this moment as a source for British sympathy and French patriotism.

well as their culture being at stake," Pong says, he is "mythologizing his town and country, to say the least" (43). Pointing to numerous propaganda films during the war, Pong says that Jameson "uses a common trope in the cultural expression of the day to stress a very British preoccupation: war's threatening of national-cultural chronology, its severing of the redemptive connection between people and place" (43). In *Cloudless May*, Pong adds, "the intense absorption in the locale of Seuilly is meant to evoke the same kind of absorption in the English landscape that characterised the British cultural consciousness" (41). The invention of Seuilly is a way for Jameson to look at France before it fell and Britain as it fights to avoid that same fate.

Jameson previously attempted to create a space shared by Britain and France in an earlier short novel and radio play for the BBC, *The Fort*, in which British soldiers, French soldiers, French peasants, and a German POW hide in a fort.[13] The various characters discuss their opposing opinions of the war and as the German frontline nears the situation devolves until all except a young British officer have died or fled. He speaks with the ghost of a British soldier who fought in the First World War and who hid in the same fort. The ghost says, "I know every shell-hole and every stone, almost every smell. I very much doubt if the natives know their roads as well as the English army knows them" (159). For Maslen, "the dead of the two wars, fought over the same ground, greet each other" (40). Birkett echoes Maslen when she says the ending draws "together the old ghosts of the past and the new ghosts in a lyrical promise of victory to come. The true fort is the landscape of memory, where the home places of England are fused with the shell-holes, trenches and roads of France" (222). In *Cloudless May*, Jameson again reminds readers that the land of France is shared with the British who defended their allies in the

[13] In 1945 she would return to this same technique with *The Journal of Mary Hervey Russell* in which, according to Birkett, "the prehistoric caves of Vézelay, the flickering light of the Loire, and the old towns on the river's banks, are the frame in which old England, and the ghosts of her English family, are brought back to life, to join her in the hopeful vision of a new beginning" (116).

last war. Neither the First nor the Second World War touched British soil, but both trampled over France. Many of the corpses that fertilize French grapevines are British and the rivers that defend France also defend Britain. Because of the immense sacrifice Britain made in France between 1914 and 1918, Jameson's descriptions of France incite a nostalgic attitude in a British readership who, like Rienne and Bergeot, are reminded in the French soil and rivers of the cost of war. Furthermore, they remind readers that although Britain has escaped fighting on its own land, the Occupation of France leaves little space between the British coast and the frontline. If the France that Jameson depicts in *Cloudless May* also represents Britain, her fictional study of the causes for France's capitulation are relevant to a British readership as well. For Jameson, capitulation and collaboration are the fate of a nation that is unwilling to sacrifice security for victory.

On both sides of the Channel there was heightened concern surrounding female sexuality and its implications on a national scale. British and French governments targeted prostitution more than usual during wartime for fear of venereal disease spreading through the ranks and weakening the military. During the First World War, for example, Britain revived certain abolished laws that prosecuted women who infected soldiers with venereal disease. According to Grayzel

> The British and French governments and many social commentators viewed preserving the strength and fitness of fighting men as their overarching goal. One result of this was a shared and intense focus on women in debates about the perceived decline in moral standards and behavior, and the related increase in prostitution and venereal disease in France and Britain. (*Women's Identities at War* 122-3)

After the First World War, the British took a more relaxed approach to prostitution, much to the displeasure of the United States military stationed there (Laite 159), which thrived during the interwar period and during World War II. However, the government's hands-off approach to does not mean that prostitution was not a major concern. Contact between "immoral" women and soldiers, especially high-ranking officers, was particularly dangerous because classified information could be exchanged just as easily as money. While infection remained a central concern, the fear of prostitutes being "spies for the enemy, or 'swallows': women who seduced military men for information" was another prominent source of anxiety (Laite 158). The social anxiety prevalent in the popular discourse of the time plays a significant part in *Cloudless May*.

Throughout the novel, Mme. Freppel is a constant concern for the male politicians and military elite; Jameson emphasizes their concerns about Freppel to such an extent that concrete, logistical military decisions are comparatively minor considerations. As a former prostitute, corrupt lobbyist, and pregnant mother, Freppel embodies the many concerns regarding women during the period. While she was a prostitute, Freppel used her body as currency; she traded her sexuality for economic independence. Freppel's stigmatized identity as a former prostitute makes her a potentially volatile intruder within the male political circle of Seuilly. During the novel, she engages in an implicit form of prostitution wherein she is rewarded for her love for Bergeot with financial security and important business contacts. Freppel is considered a threat because her allegiance is never fixed.

Freppel was once a mistress to Thiviers. She recognizes that the sexual dissatisfaction he must endure because of his invalid wife can be used to her advantage. To subdue Thiviers, Freppel teases him with what he cannot have. She defends Bergeot against one of Thiviers' attacks by telling him that Bergeot "has ten times your brain and your vitality—and you know it.

And let me tell you, he hasn't an invalid for a wife" (128). Freppel ridicules his forced chastity and marriage and reminds him of his repressed lust for her. Later that night, as he prays in bed with his wife, Thiviers thinks of his former mistress: "Mme de Freppel's shoulders were traced on the inside of his eyelids" (131). When Thiviers tries to convince Freppel to persuade Bergeot into abandoning Seuilly, she seduces her adversary to even the playing field. The narrator says,

> Mme de Freppel seized his hand in both hers and leaned forward so that he found himself looking in her eyes, at the gleam of animal brightness under their soft black. She knew the effect she had on him. She was using her body to subdue him, without shame—you use, or defend, what you have: one woman is quicker to use, another to defend. There were things Mme de Freppel was passionate to defend, but her body was not one of them. (258)

Her apathy in this regard directly relates to the political danger she represents. As she is willing to sacrifice her body to secure her own comfort, so she is willing to sacrifice Seuilly and, by extension, France.

Freppel's sexual and political indecency are intimately linked. In a meeting between the generals, Woerth derides Bergeot for leading an "immoral life" with Freppel (195). This moral outrage has political implications. He says, "I suspect strongly that Madame de Freppel interferes with the administration …. An insult…. When millions of men are leading celibate lives, it's damaging and disgraceful for a responsible official, the civilian head of a Department, to sink into an irregular affair. When you get infection at the top, you can't say how far down it will go. They disgust me" (195-6). Of course, many of the millions of men on the frontlines were not celibate; prostitution, infidelity, and rape were not uncommon among the troops as historians have shown (see Roberts and Virgili). The metaphor describing Freppel as an infection is in

keeping with the real concern in wartime Britain that prostitutes could undermine the military by infecting soldiers with venereal disease. Like a soldier clandestinely visiting a prostitute, General Woerth meets with Freppel "for political reasons" and "for the sake of public order" but walks away from the meeting with a fear that he was "only spreading infection" (196). Contact with such a woman, he believes, infects the male military and political spheres.

Freppel is not only dangerous because she is a prostitute. As a woman entering into politics, an affair for men, she promotes collaboration for her own selfish reasons. Huet calls her "the power in front of the throne" (68). As the Prefect's mistress, she is privy to important information about the town's defensive plans. Bergeot has allowed her to have a room in the prefecture with a separate entrance to his office. This allows her to overhear a conversation between Bergeot and the generals about plans to defend Seuilly. In addition to her own plans to profit from the war—for example, she participates in a scheme devised by Sadinsky to exploit women who fear "the dangers that threaten France" by creating a Joan of Arc League for Women (37)—she interferes with these defensive plans by undermining Bergeot and openly supporting collaboration. For Cooper, "her confident interjection and her self-assurance in this male-dominated environment are particularly offensive to Bergeot's associates. Her support of their plan challenges the legitimacy of both the space and the business taking place within it" (173). At the moment this interruption occurs, Bergeot is planning to mount a civic defense. He encapsulates the "attributes of the ideal French citizen … all the attributes Jameson herself admired in the French Republic," but Freppel's intervention jeopardizes this plan and undermines his masculine authority (Cooper 174). Her entrance into the male political realm, which unsettles Bergeot's position, leads to the defeat of Seuilly. She is not propelled by feminist convictions but by fear and by powerful male politicians.

When Freppel's seduction of Thiviers does not allow her to flee Seuilly, she emphasizes instead the maternal aspect of her sexuality by lying to Bergeot that she is pregnant. She manipulates the feminist rhetoric of pacifism to disguise her selfish motives: "I mind nothing—for him, for you, for myself—except poverty. I can't be poor…. And all the … mucus of life swamping us. Our son—why not our sons?—must be safe from that. And from war. You won't ask me to have him in an air-raid shelter or a ditch? Oh, my love, let us have peace and a son" (281). As she exploited women in Sadinsky's scheme, here she exploits her supposedly innate, maternal need for security to convince Bergeot to surrender Seuilly. She tempts him with the falsely patriotic hope that she will produce a soldier for France to compensate for the defeat. She then makes the feminine call for pacifism explicit, even as she blames men for war: "Women alone would never risk the deaths of their sons and husbands" (282). Freppel later admits to Vayrac that she did not actually intend to start a family: "I was being clever…. Yes, I thought it would convince him that he ought to be against this war" (301). This line of thinking awakens Freppel's maternal sensibilities and she decides that given her age, motherhood is the best way to ensure her own comfort.

After a life of instability as a poor prostitute, as a wife to a dispassionate banker, and as a mistress to both Thiviers and the Prefect, Freppel chooses a stable family life. Abbé Letourneau says to Rienne, "Women have more need of stability…. An unstable woman does so much harm" (435). When Freppel decides to become a real mother—not the absent mother she was to Catherine—her maneuverings and manipulations can retrospectively be understood as attempts to secure herself in a society that limits the advancement of women. Thiviers voices the social concern of prostitutes being mothers when he tells her, "You have no right to children—a woman like you" (417). There is no hope for Freppel to become a legitimate member of society;

even after she succeeds in convincing Bergeot to flee, she dies before she can give birth to a son.

Jameson criticizes the fear of powerful women in her novel by reminding the reader that women like Freppel who intervene with "men's affairs" are victims themselves, a point also made by Cooper when explaining that Thiviers, Labenne, and Huet "fuel Marguerite's fears about her financial security under German rule … to secure her support for their plan to surrender Seuilly" (178). Freppel uses her sexuality to take advantage of the situation in Seuilly because the men in control do not value her in particular or women in general. Cooper says, "her femininity is simply a way of making up the personal agency lost through her position as a woman in a world controlled and dictated by men" (172). As does *Suite Française*, *Cloudless May* presents the infighting that lead to defeat as a consequence of unrestrained female sexuality. Unlike Lucile Angellier, Marguerite Freppel does not use her sexuality to manipulate the German enemy: "she uses this performance [of femininity] to influence the male-dominated political sphere at home, implying that it is these Frenchmen and not the invading Germans who are her enemies, as they both place her in danger and prevent her escape" (Cooper 172). While this formulation overlooks the fact that Freppel's enemies change depending on the situation and that she often attempts to create alliances with "enemies" like Thiviers and Labenne, it is nonetheless true that Freppel's effort to surrender Seuilly stems from the poverty of her early life, not from Nazi sympathy and fascist ideology as it does with Labenne, for example.

Freppel's power depends on her relationships with men more powerful than she is. She manipulates Bergeot for her own security, but only at the behest of Thiviers. During a confrontation with Freppel, Thiviers attempts to regain some control over her. He reminds her that when she was his mistress he had asked her "to corrupt Bergeot" (321). Later, he cannot help himself from telling Bergeot about the affair: "You don't imagine [Freppel] wants to share

your disgrace—? ... You don't know her. You don't know that she was my mistress for three years; it was because I wanted to influence you through her—you were getting out of hand, with your imbecile notions—I set her on to you" (425). Bergeot's immediate reaction is to wound Thiviers male pride. He says, "I don't believe it….no woman could make herself live with you. Besides, you're impotent, aren't you? I've always supposed you were" (425), a phrase that echoes Freppel's earlier quip that Bergeot "hasn't an invalid for a wife" (128). Freppel is reduced to a tool used by men in their masculine contests for dominance over one another.

Much of the politics in *Cloudless May*, in fact, is determined by the maintenance or wounding of masculine pride. At the climax of Freppel and Thiviers' confrontation, Thiviers submits to the jealous impulse to punish her and make her "suffer for her vices" (320). In what the narrator calls a "ridiculous" fit of jealousy, Thiviers throws himself upon his former mistress. He tells her that he wants to kill her, but she replies that he wants "to hate me by making love to me" (321). Women are not the only ones capable of using their bodies to advance their personal agendas, but with men it is always figured as a violent response to jealousy or infidelity. Marie, the dedicated wife of Pierre, a soldier stationed at the Maginot, is constantly concerned for her husband's well-being and asks Rienne multiple times, while "weeping like a child, uncontrollably," when he will return home (22). However, she is the victim of her husband Pierre's cuckold anxiety. While he is at the Maginot Line, she receives an extortion letter telling her to write to the government in favour of collaboration or Pierre will be told a lie that Marie is having an affair. Rienne later finds Pierre covered in Marie's blood: she did not submit to the threat. She is killed by the fascist collaborators in Seuilly, but more importantly by her husband whose insecurity was exacerbated by wartime tension and isolation.

According to Cooper, Freppel's position as an instrument of the patriarchy "can be seen

to undermine any power she may have had over her own fate" (178). Cooper counters this position and concludes that it is Freppel "who decides in the first instance that she wishes to leave Seuilly." Her treachery results in the capitulation of Seuilly and her escape, but it also causes her fatal car crash as she flees the enemy:

> The fact that she was driving the car implies that it was her own desire for control over her fate and her willingness to betray France to do it that led to her death. However, … this passage points to a need in wider French culture at this time to dispose of the threatening female presence and the reestablishment of patriarchal values…. After her death she is rendered powerless and manhandled into the back of a truck, in a reference to the continued devaluing of women within the political system and their continued suffering as victims of it. Whereas Marguerite's death can be seen as a punishment of her attempts to undermine France, the construction of this passage and, in particular, Bergeot's reaction to her death, indicate that it is for him, for the French nation he symbolizes, and the political system he defends that Marguerite must be punished…. Marguerite's death and the disposal of her body emphasize the futility of female agency…. (Cooper 177)

The conclusion to Jameson's novel is much more ambiguous than Cooper says. While it is fitting that Freppel dies just as she succeeds in her plan, her pleasure in the defeat of Seuilly is immensely troubling, especially for British readers at the time of the novel's publication—after all, the urgent capitulation of France left the door open for a German attack across the Channel. The narrator says as Rienne sees Freppel driving away, "her smile promised nothing good. In any case, what goodness could come of a day on which German guns had fired onto Orléans…. It was worse than defeat" (471). It is worse than defeat because the French, like Freppel, were

complicit. That she drives away from the town smiling can only be an insult to those thousands who were forced to march south on foot and under fire while also burdened with familial responsibilities. Furthermore, the handling of Freppel's corpse is not plainly a case of men disrespectfully manhandling women, nor a sign of "continued devaluing of women within the political system and their continued suffering as victims of it" (Cooper 177). It is a frank depiction of the unceremonious disposal of civilians on the roads out of Paris in 1940. Freppel, who represents the scheming and selfish collaborators who refused to fight the Nazis, is a victim of a disaster that she helped create.

Cooper criticizes Bergeot's reaction to his mistress' death, but the narrator tells us that Lucien saw him in a moment of "grief and collapse" (509). In fact, Bergeot had been mourning the loss of Freppel throughout the night: he did not leave her side until his assistant Lucien encountered them on the side of the road (508). When a lorry driver stops, Lucien asks him to take Bergeot and Freppel; the driver responds slyly before accepting to take them, "And do you think I look like an undertaker? Thanks. Yesterday I was taken for a midwife" (510). Far from being a criticism of misogyny in France, this passage is a reflection on the chaos of the exodus, which primarily affected women. It also situates Freppel's death within a larger regenerative cycle.

Freppel's death is a direct consequence of her conspiracy to surrender the town by ensuring the defeat of the French. When Rienne still expects the town to mount a historic defense, Abbé Garnier supports him, but warns him also of the popularity of collaboration. He tells Rienne, "Do you know what is the real vice of our time, the worm that may destroy us? The passion for security, my dear sir" (14). Although Jameson shows that Freppel had legitimate reasons for wanting to ensure her own comfort and security, she also shows that her selfish

actions have consequences on a much larger scale.

Like *Suite Française*, *Cloudless May* questions the role of the individual in society and ultimately affirms that during wartime one must sacrifice personal freedom. Jameson considers the Kantian notion that individual selfish actions accumulated and led to France's defeat. Freppel acts selfishly, handing over an entire town to the Nazis for her personal security; this attitude, extrapolated across all of Europe, resulted in occupation. A pacifist stance on Hitler's domination of Europe could lead to the domination of Britain as well. Matthieu says to Rienne, "something is wrong with a country at war when women cry to have their husbands sent back" (22). Rienne responds to this saying that "it's natural," meaning both that it is natural for wives to miss their husbands and that it is natural for women to oppose war. Matthieu says, "One doesn't ask women to be natural in a war. They're asked to be unselfish and quiet…. They might remember they're unimportant: France is made up of myriads of dead French men and women and a handful, a few million, of living. If some of these join the rest it can't matter much" (23). The sexism of this statement is troubling, but what Jameson is trying to convey is less so: that civilians—in general, women—must be prepared to sacrifice themselves and their families for the nation as soldiers do. War requires a suspension one's "natural" desire for peace because peace cannot come until the war is won. For Jameson, pacifism must paradoxically be relegated to peacetime.

Chapter Four: Family Reunion in *Pied Piper*

Nevil Shute, a successful aeronautical engineer, worked for the Admiralty as a lieutenant in the Department of Miscellaneous Weapon Development (D.M.W.D) (Smith 55). According to Sir Charles Goodeve, *Pied Piper*, one of several novels Shute wrote for relaxation during the war, is "one of the D.M.W.D.'s most successful by-products" (qtd. in Smith 56). Written in 1941 in the middle of the Blitz and published in 1942, it is the story of an old Englishman, John Howard, who finds himself escorting a motley group of children from war-torn France back to his own country. Along the way, Howard struggles to keep the "family" together as the Germans swiftly occupy the land between them and the Channel. Trains are cancelled, a bus is destroyed by German bombs, and a boat launch is suspended when Howard is interrogated by a Nazi. Difficult as the road may be, it affords Howard the opportunity to cope with the loss of his son, also named John, when Howard meets Nicole, the woman who would have become his daughter-in-law. The real events of the war faced by the French and British are significant plot devices in *Pied Piper*, but Shute also uses them to convey the macrocosmic significance of his plot. The novel reframes the Battle of France from the perspective of the British, who fear invasion themselves, and suggests that only Britain can save Europe from the Nazis. Shute presents Britain, embodied by Howard, as the masculine saviour of Europe's children and thus the defender of family life and the future of Europe. Using common tropes of youth and renewal, paternal leadership, and marriage alliances, Shute shows that Europe can be united by the fatherly British.

Smith summarizes *Pied Piper* as a universal "allegory of human resources and capabilities" (57); although this is true, the novel is first and foremost a direct response to the Fall of France, the Dunkirk evacuation, and the Blitz. In responding to these events the novel

presents a narrow, British vision of a future Allied victory. The novel immerses the reader in several important events of the war. In the frame narrative, the narrator meets Howard in a private London club after he has returned from France. As the city is attacked by German bombers, the two men casually discuss over wine Howard's escape from the Continent. The framing device grounds the action of the novel, which takes place entirely in France, in the collective experience of war that emphasizes stoic and masculine British heroism.

The Dunkirk evacuation is perhaps the most significant event underlying the novel. Smith says the novel is about "the 'Dunkirk' of one old man" (58). It marked, for the British at least, the turning point from the phony war into World War II; in the novel, Dunkirk finally prompts the stubborn old man to end his vacation and commence his own personal evacuation (32). The fraught escape across the Channel recalls this decisive moment in the war, which for the French epitomized the abandonment of allies, not the resilience that the British thought it exemplified.

Shute also integrates French and British civilian evacuations into his novel. When the trains stop running, the group is forced to join the exodus on foot. For British readers especially, their retreat is a reminder of Operation Pied Piper—the evacuation of British children from cities to the countryside—and the evacuation of Jewish children from Europe led by Britain. The novel alludes to the Pied Piper of Hamelin, the legend of a rat catcher hired to rid Hamelin of rats that have caused a plague. When the mayor refuses to pay the man, the catcher lures children away from their families by playing his flute. The children never return. While the allusion to this legend for Britain's Operation Pied Piper appears unsuitable—why would the government want to remind parents that their children may never return?—it reinforces the concept of British generosity in Shute's novel: Howard, the piper, saves the children from the warfare that turns Europe into a battleground, but he expects no payment in return. Shute integrates all these events

into his novel to remind British readers of their position as a leader in the war and their paternal responsibility to weaker and more vulnerable nations.

Refugees fleeing Europe looked across the Channel for a new home and, often in the case of orphans, a new family. Trains full of Jewish children from German-occupied countries made their way to Great Britain between 1938 and 1940 in a movement called the *Kindertransport.* According to Fast, "People from all walks of life accepted children…. The British public's generosity was overwhelming" (45). The evacuation was a success, but when many families opened their doors to these strange children they were often forced to confront linguistic, socio-economic, cultural, and hygienic barriers that caused some families to regret becoming fostering refugees. Judith Gruenfeld states, for instance, that many thought

> They had been cheated in the fulfillment of their national duty. They had wanted to take little evacuees to their homes, to their hearts, to their churches and Sunday schools. They had intended to make them a part of their own family. But with these children this was simply unthinkable. They were so totally different from what they had expected them to be and some of the little ones cried all the time … they could not communicate but had the look of haunted animals. (qtd. in Baumel-Schwartz 163)

The responsibility of taking in refugees and ensuring the survival of Europe's future was not one that most British people had prepared for, but one they accepted as part of their wartime duty. It is important to note, however, that families did not take in refugees because of a sense of patriotism exclusively. Fast notes that families sought to replace their own children who had grown up and moved out, to provide companions to their own children, or to take advantage of cheap labour (50). Nevertheless, these new family members were first and foremost refugees

who had left vastly different cultural environments and who carried with them the trauma of living under Nazi rule.

The children whom Howard takes in are capable of redeeming a future Europe of its inglorious present. Shute makes it clear that Howard is in search of vitality when he first travels to the Jura to fill the void left by his dead son:

> He wanted to see the spring, this year…. He wanted to see all that new life coming on, replacing what is past…. He wanted to see the hawthorn coming out along the river banks, and the first crocuses in the field. He wanted to see the new green on the rushes by the water's edge gleaming through the dead stuff. He wanted to feel the new warmth of the sun, and the new freshness of the air. He wanted to savour all the spring there was this year—the whole of it. He wanted that more than anything else in the world, because of what had happened. (16-17)

The new life that he finds in the Jura is threatened by war, but he is able to find another source of vitality: children. The association of Howard's troupe with this natural vitality for which Howard yearns is made clear in a single image of them bathing naked in a stream surrounded by broken down and bombed cars (116). Even Pierre, the little boy who had witnessed his parents' deaths only a day earlier, frolics in the water. To the dismay of British soldiers who need clean water for their radiator, the children stir up mud in the stream as they play. The children are indifferent to the adult dilemmas that surround them: the war cannot inhibit the spread of their vitality into the world around them. By rescuing these children, Howard attempts to rescue this vitality lacking in Britain: it is necessary to continue the fight.

The children, who represent a generation innocent of war, act as ambassadors for their nations as if they form an ideal, international, post-war family. The first two children accepted by

Howard are Ron and Sheila Cavanaugh. Their Swiss father works for the League of Nations; despite the threat that a Nazi invasion of Switzerland would pose to the League, he decides to stay behind. His British wife prefers to stay with her husband and sends the children with Howard. The Cavanaghs thus risk the destruction of their own family to try and preserve an international "family" of nations; in doing so, they also symbolically contribute to another growing "family" composed of different nationalities and presided over by the British elder, John Howard.

The other young refugees who join the group come from all nations and classes, and the catastrophic events that lead them to Howard are all different: some are sent willingly by their parents, others are orphaned, and one is from a family of Nazis. Rose, the daughter of a French widower living in England, joins the group and acts as a surrogate mother (76). Pierre witnesses his parents' deaths in a Luftwaffe raid during the exodus. He has the look of a "haunted animal" that Gruenfeld described (in Baumel-Schwartz 163): "He was dressed in grey, grey stockings above the knee, grey shorts, and a grey jersey. He was standing absolutely still, staring down the road towards them. His face was a dead, greyish white in colour" (97). Not only does he represent orphaned victims of war, he personifies the lifelessness of war that so troubles Howard. Willem, a "tattered, dirty [Dutch] child that might have been of either sex," is found eating part of a dead horse in a gutter (125). The townspeople falsely suspect the boy is a German spy and treat the boy like a rat by throwing stones to chase him away. Like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, Howard saves the boy from the plague of war while ridding the town of a misunderstood scapegoat. Marjan is the son of two Polish Jews taken to extermination camps by the Nazis (216). He is unlike the other children in that he reacts violently to the separation from his parents: he is bloodthirsty and hopes to return to Europe when he is older to avenge them. Anna,

the niece of Major Diessen, the Gestapo officer who interrogates Howard, becomes an orphan because of a conflict between her parents and the Nazis. According to Diessen, her mother "was not wholly Aryan, and that never works. There was trouble, and she died. And now Karl [her father], too, is dead" (286). The passive voice is only superficially deceptive; Shute uses it to highlight Diessen's refusal to admit his niece is a victim of Nazi ideology. That Diessen entrusts an Englishman with his niece indicates that even Nazis see the British as saviours of Europe, at least in Shute's melodramatic version of international politics. Altogether, the diverse group of refugees transcend their personal trauma to form a new "League of Nations" to rebuild Europe after the war.

Howard cannot communicate well with the children; his cultural and linguistic isolation—being from Britain, he only speaks English and poor French— and his age prevent him from truly understanding them and vice-versa. When he fails to speak with Pierre, the narrator says, "Not for the first time he was reminded of the gulf that separated him from the children, the great gulf that stretches between youth and age" (102).The narrator says that because of these limitations, "Howard felt singularly helpless. His way with the children had been to talk to them, to treat them as equals. That simply did not work at all, unless you knew the language, and he knew no word of any language that this little Dutch boy spoke" (192-3).

Although Howard is often unable to talk with the children, he does enable communication between them by crafting a whistle for each. This is a significant deviation from the flute that the rat catcher plays in the legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin. A flute can only be played by a musician, as opposed to a whistle, which produces only one note and can be easily "played" by anyone. Because the Pied Piper is talented, he is capable of leading the children away by playing an entrancing song. The flute represents an instrument of power over the easily

charmed children. Howard's whistle on the other hand sounds a single note that children and adults can play. For the children, the whistles come to be "the panacea for all ills, the cure for all diseases of the spirit. They seemed to be completely in agreement on that point" (103). Along the difficult journey Rose encourages Pierre to whistle to pull him out of the state of shock induced by his parents' deaths; later, the whistles help them endure the air raids. Thus, a single sustained note, "pure and clear," cuts through the din of the war and unites the children. With this instrument, Howard creates a unifying and universal language.

Despite their different nationalities, cultural identities, and experiences of war, all the children are able to communicate amongst themselves. Pierre speaks little during the novel. The narrator says Howard "had not heard a word from the little boy; indeed, he had been secretly afraid that he had lost the power of speech" (102). When he first joins the group, nobody knows his name until Sheila mentions it, having apparently broken through the language barrier. When the group meets Willem, Howard is again unable to make the child speak. The children, however, do not perceive language as an obstacle. Howard asks Sheila and Ronnie how they learned the boy's name without speaking Dutch; the narrator says, "The children stared at him, uncomprehending, a little impatient of adult density. 'He *told* us,' they explained" (166). When Howard asks if he had mentioned what happened to his parents, they become confused and Sheila says, "But we can't understand what he *says*" (166). Emphasizing the importance of communication, Shute contrasts the responsiveness of children with the incompetence of some adults. The woman who tosses a stone at Willem—because she cannot understand him and because she assumes that he is a German spy—exemplifies the aggressive nature of adults whose empathy is limited by an inability to communicate verbally. The children share a telepathic ability to communicate across linguistic, political, and cultural barriers, an ability that Shute

suggests adults should learn to apply on an international scale.

Howard is symbolically an adoptive father to these children. He is an old man who has neither his son nor daughter in his life: John is dead and Enid is married and living in the United States. During the evacuation he is constantly reminded of his own two children, for whom he also carved whistles. By carving whistles for his "new" children, he is including them in a Howard family tradition. In transporting these other children to Britain, he is welcoming them into the larger British family, but he is also adopting them into his own. Howard tries to make the adoption official by writing the children and Nicole into his will after he is captured by the Nazis (264, 267).

Howard is a soldier, patriarchal leader, and father all at once. As an ordinary soldier, which he likely was during the First World War, he represents the many British fathers who were saved from annihilation on the North coast of France during the Dunkirk evacuation and who returned home to raise the next generation and continue the fight. As a patriarchal leader, Howard resembles Churchill, the defiant British bulldog. He embodies the values that Churchill believed the British people should find in the Dunkirk evacuation and the Fall of France, namely the "Dunkirk spirit," defined by the many civilians who offered their boats and were willing to sacrifice their lives to rescue the soldiers at Dunkirk (Summerfield 791). An old man, Howard is not afraid of death; he is "not a brave man…Only a very old one. Nothing you can do can take much from me, because I've had it all" (278). Like Churchill, who announced on the eve of war that he had only "blood, toil, tears, and sweat" to offer to the British people, Howard is prepared to offer his life for the survival of the next generation. In addition, Howard is forced to act as the father for this new international family in the absence of the children's true parents. Likewise, Churchill was thrust into the Prime Minister's office on the eve of war because of Chamberlain's

resignation. He, too, became the head of an international family based in London and commanded the lion's share of the Allied military. With the capitulation of many European governments, Churchill worked closely with foreign governments in exile, most notably De Gaulle's Free French Forces.

Shute emphasizes Howard's fatherly role in the evacuation, yet the old man is hardly capable of taking care of the children. Despite having been a father to two successful children, he lacks a "maternal" touch. According to Smith, Shute himself "had very little empathy with children" and may have written *Pied Piper* "because he was separated from his own," not unlike Howard (57). In several occasions, Shute subtly discredits Howard's parenting abilities, which only women can correct. When Nicole comforts Willem one night, the narrator remarks that Howard's gender is partially responsible for the disconnection between him and the children: "Left to himself he might have taken him upon his knee and talked to him as man to man; he could never have soothed him as this girl was soothing him" (193). His insecurity as a father expressed in this sentiment suggests that while fathers "lead" the family and are an important symbol of unity, only mothers can truly rear children; while parenting is expected of women, it is an exceptional accomplishment for men.

According to King, the perception of fathers, normally indifferent to their children, as "spare mothers" in exceptional circumstances transformed in the inter-war, World War II, and post-war periods (78). It slowly became more acceptable to see fathers as family men, not simply as providers; however, there was a regression in this trend during the war itself (King 135) and fathers, unlike mothers, "could choose to disassociate themselves from aspects of family life they did not enjoy" (3). In *Pied Piper*, Shute illustrates this changing father figure by having a hero who, unlike the stern and authoritarian Victorian fathers, attempts to engage with the children,

play with them, and teach them—often unsuccessfully—yet retains the traditional, symbolic place at the head of the family. Mothers raised children in the domestic sphere, but fathers contributed by leaving the home to either work or fight. A soldier's sacrifice was figured as a father's duty to his family *par excellence*: not only did it provide money and a future for his family, but it ensured the preservation of the national family (King 156-165). Shute's emphasis on paternity and patriarchy during wartime is undermined by Howard's lack of innate parenting ability. However, Shute shows that Howard's heroism in the evacuation is itself the fulfillment of his paternal duty. His adventure across France is an example of men forced to work outside their purview during wartime by taking on parental duties normally assigned to women.

The British government supported the evacuation of Jewish children from Europe and was more than willing to take credit for its success, but the movement was mostly organized by the Jewish and Quaker communities of London; a few notable men like Nicholas Winton, called "England's Schindler" (Fast 23), or Lord Samuel; and many "middle-aged women with a modicum of background in children's affair," like Dorothy Hardisty, Elaine Laski, and Lola Hahn-Warburg (Baumel-Schwartz 77). While women were expected to take care of the children as the men waged war, according to Baumel-Schwartz, "the rescue scheme was usually associated with the names of the men behind it …. This was typical of many social welfare, education or health organizations throughout the Western world, whose figureheads were men while their major activists and daily volunteers were women" (77). Shute prioritizes the role of the patriarch in saving these children, but like the real efforts made by Britain in the *Kindertransport* and Operation Pied Piper, men were the figureheads and women were usually the custodians who actually carried out the operation.

Throughout the novel there are mother figures who, while being secondary characters, are

nonetheless essential to the success of the evacuation. When Howard, Sheila, and Ronnie first depart by train, there a several judgmental mothers who are upset with Howard because he does not notice that Sheila is sick. One French woman rudely brings this to his attention and he, realizing she is right, asks what she would do "as her mother" (46). Before taking Sheila in her own hands, she says, "I would say, let children of that age stay with their mother …. English children are very often ill. The mothers do not look after their children properly" (46). This condemnation of British mothers is a caricature of Anglophobia in France, yet it also demonstrates an impulse to blame the mother; the father is more easily exonerated because he cannot be expected to take proper care of children. This is why Howard is the hero of Shute's tale: he fulfills the symbolic role of patriarch, but also goes over and above the call of duty by caring for the children even when he is unsure how to do so. The woman on the train is not the only mother figure to expose Howard's shortcomings; yet none of the women in *Pied Piper* match his almost legendary stature.

After the train incident, the group stays in a hotel where they are helped by yet another mother figure, a hotel maid. Howard is distraught when Sheila begins crying from her fever. The maid "began a stream of motherly chatter to the child, who gradually stopped crying. In a minute or so Howard had surrendered Sheila to her, and was watching" (49). Howard, the leader of the troupe, assumes a passive parenting role. The maid cannot travel with the group, but she asks Howard to take her niece, Rose, who has "an advanced maternal instinct" (60). The maid transfers her maternal duties to *la petite* Rose, who is repeatedly described as a surrogate mother for the youngest children despite being only a child herself. To convince Howard that Rose will be helpful and not an added burden, the maid reassures Howard: "Truly, she is a little mother, that one" (61). Later, Rose entertains Ronnie "in a motherly fashion" (101). Unsurprisingly,

when Nicole wonders what each child will become in the post-war world, she says the boys will either be engineers, soldiers, lawyers, or doctors, but Rose will "be a mother certainly" (290). The insistence on Rose's fate implies that some girls are born innately maternal and take up this social role early in life. It also emphasizes the need for mothers in post-war reconstruction while undermining the peacetime role of the father. When Shute wrote *Pied Piper*, fatherhood was still not as central to men's identities as it was to women's. After the war there was an increased "desire to locate fathers as full family members," according to King (147).

Nicole is the most important mother figure in the novel because Shute suggests that she should have become a mother to John's children and Howard's grandchildren, had there not been a war. The couple had premarital sex during their trip to Paris: Nicole tells Howard, "He told me [of his sister in America] very early one morning, when we could not sleep," which makes Howard rethink "the nature of that week in Paris" (227). She directly addresses the issue when she tells Howard, "What we did was wrong—very wrong…. Truly, I did not mean to do wrong when I went to Paris, neither did John…. It was nobody's fault, neither of us. Also, it did not seem wrong at the time" (250-1). This prompts Howard to ask if John asked to marry Nicole, and she explains that they almost married during a short trip to Paris, but Nicole was afraid of Howard's disapproval of her and of a hasty wedding (252). For Howard, this news is all that is needed to welcome Nicole into his own family as a daughter-in-law. The pre-marital sex of John and Nicole is legitimized by her continued devotion to and mourning for John and by her alliance with John's father in saving the children.

Undoubtedly, the children she rescues lead her to think of the family she almost started with John. Before Nicole tells Howard of the relationship with John, he apologizes for the trouble caused by the group of children; Nicole responds, "Children will never trouble me,

monsieur" (177). She eventually tells him that there was "nobody but John," which prompts him to ask if her love of John has led her to help him with the evacuation; she cryptically answers, "No…that was because of the children" (190). Given the context of her relationship with John, this means both that she naturally wants the European children to reach safety and that she imagines the family she could have had with John. She feels personally responsible for them. Nicole helps the children reach England because of a maternal instinct enhanced by the identification of John Howard Sr. with his son. She directly compares the father and son: "I did not think there could be any one so kind and brave as John…. But I was wrong, monsieur. There was another one. There was his father" (191). The war has upset and upended the inheritance of responsibilities between generations: Howard must thus take up the heroic duty of his son who can no longer fight the Germans and he must love and comfort the woman his son was to marry. Nicole is symbolically a mother to Howard's new European family; her involvement in its evacuation allows her to experience the motherhood that she was denied by war. It also allows her to spend more time with her dead fiancé vicariously through contact with his father. She thus has two types of relationships with Howard: as a daughter-in-law and as the "mother" of his "adopted" children. As she says, "one marries not only to one man but to the relation too" (252). Although the marriage between her and John was never formally sanctioned or recognized, the couple's sexual intimacy, nuptial intentions, and approval from parents all cause their relationship to be realigned.

John and Nicole have sex and plan on marrying and starting a family; however, she does not conceive before John is killed. Symbolically, Nicole's involvement in the evacuation resolves this conundrum in the plot. For her, the new family she has created with John's father allows life to flourish despite John's death. Nicole regards her relationship with John as the

catalyst for the creation of this new family. She tells Howard near the end of their journey

> It was intended that we should do wrong. And now, through John and me it is intended that these children should escape from Europe to grow up in peace…. This may have been what John and I were brought together for…. In thirty years the world may need one of these little ones …. But when that happens, monsieur, it will be because I met your son to show him Paris, and we fell in love. (290-291)

Their premarital sex is unfruitful, but for Nicole it results in the rescue of innocent children and the creation of an international family even though John has very little to do with the evacuation. The relationship between nations allows hope for a future where the peoples of all nations can live together in peace.

The evacuation of European children figuratively corrects the damage done by the war on both micro and macro levels. On a microcosmic level, the proliferation of children compensates for the death of John, giving Howard an opportunity to reprise the role of wartime father and allowing Nicole to be welcomed into a new British family. Furthermore, Nicole's adoption into the Howard family compensates for the loss of her father, who was either killed or taken prisoner while stationed on the Maginot line. The resolution of these personal tragedies provides a figurative solution to the macrocosmic tragedy facing Europe. John is only one of countless young men who sacrificed themselves for their country during World War II. His death represents the widespread severing of family lineages in Europe and Britain. It prompts his father to vacation in France and therefore indirectly results in the survival of seven children. While young soldiers killed during the war were never able to start families or raise children, they did ensure the survival of many other families in the future.

Shute makes it clear that a marriage between John and Nicole would have made her a

British citizen. Nicole herself raises this point numerous times with Howard, saying once that "if John and I … had married, I should have been English and then it would be different. But now I am not to be English, ever. I could not learn your different ways, and the new life, alone. This is my place that I belong to, and I must stay here" (229). She again expresses her wish to be English when she says, "I loved John very much…. Above all things, I wanted to be an Englishwoman. And I should have been one, but for the war…. I believe this, that there was nothing shameful in my love for John. I think that if we had been married, if I had become an Englishwoman, I should have been happy for the remainder of my life" (240-1). Nicole is denied British citizenship, but her symbolic marriage to the Howard family ensures her a home and a father across the Channel: "This is a very precious thought, monsieur…. I have regained the thing that I had lost. I shall not lose it again" (241). Her newfound family compensates for the loss of John and the impossibility of her legally gaining an English identity. While only a legal marriage to John could have made her a British citizen and member of the Howard family, Shute emphasizes her symbolic adoption by the British family that she has earned by saving the British and European family. Howard invites her to live with him in England, in part to replace his son (229), and he unsuccessfully tries to write her into his will (264). That he cannot write her into his will for lack of a proper witness highlights the symbolic importance of Nicole's relationship with the Howards: although it is lacking formal recognition by the state, it is nonetheless a true marriage. The war inhibited plans for a formal alliance between the British and French characters, but Howard's adventure miraculously reunites these two families in a symbolic marriage with a common mission.

Pied Piper aims to set the record straight about Britain's perceived failure to protect its ally across the Channel at a time when Allied power was consolidated in London but relations

remained strained. France and Britain were committed to collective defence, but many French people considered the British evacuation at Dunkirk—and, later, the attack at Mers-el-Kébir—to indicate Britain's abandonment of its ally. Howard's intervention reassures readers of a persistent post-Dunkirk union between London and foreign governments in exile—in particular, De Gaulle's Free French Forces. Not only does he resolve the broken engagement of John and Nicole by reuniting the two French and British families, but he also depicts evacuation as a victory in uniting Britain and Europe. Shute shows Britain is committed to fulfilling its "marriage" vows to its closest ally—as Churchill asserted in his famous June 4, 1940, speech following Dunkirk when he said France and Britain, "linked together in their cause and in their need, will defend to the death their native soil, aiding each other like good comrades to the utmost of their strength" (Churchill "We Shall Fight on the Beaches"). In restaging this event as "the 'Dunkirk' of one old man," as Smith says (58), *Pied Piper* reframes evacuation as a heroic and paternal effort, thereby justifying Britain's actions in 1940.

To present this heroic tale of Britain's commitment to and self-sacrifice for Europe, Shute recycles traditional notions of national genders, as Vercors does in *Le Silence de la Mer*, to emphasize Britain's "paternal" duty to Europe. In doing so, he undermines important contributions made by the "maternal" French, which the many French mothers in the novel embody. Shute's unbalanced representation of the two nations' gender roles in warfare is typical of the British post-Dunkirk consciousness, which held up Operation Dynamo as an example of British gallantry while understating the role of the French who held the line and ensured the operation's success. Clearly there were two views of Dunkirk. Gates says,

> Dunkirk united the British as never before, inspiring an optimistic determination to fight on no matter what the cost. But if in a sense Dunkirk constituted a victory

> for the British, or at least a deliverance that occasioned solemn rejoicing, it could not but spell something very different to the French. England could take refuge in its splendid isolation and feel exhilarated by the threat from without; France, with the threat on its doorstep, could only feel divided and bowed under. (118)

However, the other meaning of Dunkirk was not lost on the British: only the Channel stood between them and the Germans. They could not take their isolation for granted, just as the French should not have assumed protection by France's rivers and the Maginot line. In presenting the story of a regular British man trying to find a way to lead his "family" from the Continent to Britain, Shute narrows the Channel between the frontline and the homefront. In its representation of the paternal British who, despite the odds, manage to preserve the European family by taking refuge across the Channel, *Pied Piper* sustains a myth that was necessary for a country that, when it was published and set during the Blitz, was soon to be invaded like France before it.

Conclusion

In the novels of Vercors, Némirovsky, Jameson, and Shute, the institution of the family is destabilized by the danger of invasion and occupation. Each author proposes that family values provide a reliable defensive measure against invasion and occupation even when those values are themselves eroded by war. Whether they wrote under Nazi rule or as free citizens across the Channel fearing invasion, these authors share a common vision of war as a domestic threat to families. With this vision, they imaginatively narrate the experience of war as a social conflict fought on the homefront by mothers, fathers, and children as much as on the frontline by soldiers, generals, and commanders.

In Vercors' *Le Silence de la Mer*, the intrusion of Ebrennac into the narrator's private home is a synecdochic re-enactment of the Fall of France and ensuing Occupation. Vercors depicts the epic conflict between nations as a domestic affair where two men negotiate the terms to the pragmatic yet deplorable marriage of a young, passive woman. Vercors' intimate portrayal of the Occupation promotes a "feminine" form of resistance that is inactive and ultimately ineffective. Because France is characterized as a "feminine" nation—a stereotype thought to be confirmed by a plummeting birth rate and military failure—she is limited to a passive response to Occupation. For Vercors, this stereotype explains Pétain's alliance with Hitler, but it does not justify it. Because the Occupation is conceived as an assault against the French family and a breach of French homes, the appropriate response according to Vercors is not forcibly to evict the intruder but to take refuge in tradition and exhibit the conservative values that define French society.

Némirovsky's *Suite Française* portrays the Occupation in a different light. Instead of showing how the experience of Occupation might elicit a unified, albeit impotent, response,

Némirovsky describes the fractures that were exposed within French society in 1940. Once again, the intrusion of the Germans into French homes was perceived as an invasion of privacy. In *Suite Française,* however, this invasion of privacy airs the dirty laundry of French society. As a result, deep-seated divisions within France become visible. Némirovsky shows that class and gender inequality were at the center of many wartime conflicts. Rather than address these complicated issues, the popular discourse simplified France's internal conflict as a battle between resistors and collaborators. This conflict was gendered: because of the absence of French men and the presence of German soldiers, sexually active women were scapegoated and labelled traitors. *Suite Française* complicates this "common sense" narrative by contrasting loving relationships between French women and German soldiers with several caustic relationships between French people. To reach a satisfying conclusion to "Dolce," however, Némirovsky denies the sexual freedom of her protagonist and reaffirms national, social, and "family" values; the following part of the novel would have paired her with a French, male resistor of equal social standing. Ultimately, for Némirovsky, the individual's responsibilities to the greater national family trump individual freedom. Familialist discourse in French society reified the notion of horizontal collaboration; to strengthen an already fractured nation, Lucile accepts the responsibilities prescribed by this discourse.

Cloudless May also questions this eagerness to regulate female sexuality in response to war, yet the novel reaffirms the conservative message that subversive female sexuality is at least symbolically linked to pacifism, defeatism, and collaboration. In doing so, the novel reproduces the discourse it problematizes. This regressive discourse circulated on both sides of the Channel. During a mid-war discussion about population decline in the House of Commons, Sir Francis Freemantle argued that women—by demanding equal opportunity in the workforce—were

selfishly working against the nation interest by neglecting family life. He lamented, "the family instinct is gradually being suffocated by the love of comfort and pleasure" (qtd. in Rose 121). Jameson shares Freemantle's unease about the decline of family values. Jameson's novel criticizes, in Cooper's words, "the futility of female agency" (177). More importantly, it shows that the self-interested exercise of this agency can dangerously work against the national interest by unsettling the male political sphere and by obstructing an active, violent, and "masculine" defense.

Shute, like Némirovsky, views the separation of families as an apt metaphor for the war. Not only were families torn apart when the Germans invaded France, the nation itself was divided into multiple territories and governments. When bombs fell on London, the British considered whether their national and international families would unite or disintegrate in the battle. As Churchill said in his speech on June 18, 1940, it was up to the British to save not only Europe but the world from Nazi tyranny: "If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be freed and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world … will sink into the abyss of a new dark age" ("This was their finest hour"). Shute uses the trope of the family to reiterate Britain's commitment to protecting the people of all nations. Enlisting a weathered patriarch to reunite the family of Europe, Shute proposes a hopeful end to the war facilitated by the aged but able British.

These four narratives not only share a common concern for "family values" in general, they also respond to one another. Vercors, Némirovsky, and Jameson emphasize the regulation of female sexuality, but they each address the wider significance of this controversial subject differently. For Vercors, female sexuality is at the heart of a metaphor that rationalizes France's relationship with Germany. For Némirovsky, sex simultaneously divides French society and

conceals more dangerous divisions in society. It is not inherently political, but in the hunt for a scapegoat it has been charged with political meaning. For Jameson, female sexuality encapsulates the danger of pacifism and collaboration. As for Némirovsky, it helps to differentiate those who seek personal security and those who seek cooperative victory. In each of these novels, what is really at stake is social cohesion or what Rose calls "the pull of unity—of absolute belonging—the desire to be part of a grand, unified collective" (7). Shute responds to this concern raised by the other authors by providing a male, British saviour to revive the myth of a unified family.

Each novel displays the symptoms of an anxiety that national family values are at stake in the Second World War. Consequently, dedication to those values is thought to strengthen the nation and defend the homefront from foreign assault. This is not to suggest that these authors see a simple yet all-encompassing ideological solution to war. In fact, each work calls attention to the complexity and variety of experiences of war, invasion, and occupation; they resort to the theme of the family as a framing device precisely because the experience of war resists full representation. That Vercors, Némirovsky, Jameson, and Shute focus on the family—and the associated themes of gender, sexuality, and marriage—to represent the far-reaching cataclysm of war is indicative of a wider discourse during the period that conceived of war as a threat not just to life, but to a way of life. This discourse was not unique among those who suffered under German rule; those who watched their allies across the Channel endure the hardships of Occupation were also engaged in this discourse.

By examining the war through this thematic lens of the family, these four authors are able to discuss a number of convergent social issues that percolated on both sides of the English Channel during the war: population decline, revirilization, pacifism, and refugees, to name only a

few. They not only wove these issues into their own narratives, they reformulated them as part of a narrative of the war that is still being uncovered. Until recently, novels written during the Occupation were neglected in the scholarly conversation about this larger narrative. Historians like Pollard, Rose, and Virgili have furthered a nuanced understanding of the aforementioned issues that divided Britain and France, citing government documents, political speeches, propaganda, and testimonials. A study of fiction, however, reveals that these social concerns did not merely inform everyday wartime experience, but they also shaped people's vision of and response to war. Although further inquiry is needed, it is likely that the wartime discourse about the family and family values contributed to the post-war emergence of the welfare state in Britain and the development of social security in the French Fourth Republic. Pollard says that "family values do not just substitute for political beliefs. They enfold and reshape them, directing them toward the 'private sphere'" (115). It can also be said that family values enfold and reshape the narrative of war in which these novels participate.

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