# From Existentialist Anxiety to Existential Joy: Gendered Journeys Towards (Re)commitment in *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* as Evidence of Simone de Beauvoir's Influence on Alba de Céspedes' Writing

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Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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June 2010

*Cette thèse est dédiée à ma mère qui éclaire le chemin,*
*et à ma fille qui m'incite à le suivre.*

## Abstract

Whilst Simone de Beauvoir has become an icon of feminism, and *The Second Sex* in particular been recognized as a point of reference for writers and philosophers worldwide, her reputation in Italy was not established immediately, and there she remains a controversial figure. This study focuses on one aspect of her influence in Italy: the relationship between her writing and that of the Italian best-selling author, Alba de Céspedes. It is the first in-depth analysis of the complex pattern of influence evident in the relationship between what the two authors have described as their most important novels, *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso.* Part I deals with the historical and theoretical backgrounds to this research. It provides a study of the socio-political events that are relevant to the narrative contents, and an overview of different theories of intertextuality. Part II is a detailed comparative analysis of the novels and establishes for the first time the precise nature of the relationship between *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* ideologically and philosophically, as well as intertextually. In particular, this work explores a number of superficial resemblances between the novels' structures, characterization and thematic content, and it also reveals a more sophisticated relation that is not manifest in the similarities, but rather in the way the texts differ from each other. This thesis brings two significant contributions to literary research: firstly, it will become evident that studies of de Céspedes' life and works should include close attention to de Beauvoir; and secondly, it is an addition to a popular area of de Beauvoirian studies, that of the charting of the extent of the French author's philosophical and ideological influence and of its legacy worldwide.

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# Acknowledgement

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Penelope Morris, for all her help and support throughout the years, and for her level-headed presence in times of adversity.

# Introduction

In her study of the Italian novel between 1945 and 1965, Caesar stresses the importance of women's writing in this period of time because of its instrumental role in the 'deprovincialisation of Italian culture'.[1] This female literary production bears the marks, both stylistically and thematically, of their authors' 'long apprenticeship served as readers and translators of the best that European literature could offer from the previous decades'.[2] Caesar also puts emphasis on the significance of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* for female authors of the time, as a symbol of their commitment to writing and the difficulties encountered in a predominantly male literary establishment. While she includes Alba de Céspedes in her list of Italian women writers who may have come into contact with works of major European authors such as Woolf, Gide or Joyce in the literary journal *Solaria* — namely Anna Banti, Elsa Morante, Natalia Ginzburg, Lalla Romano, Anna Maria Ortese, Maria Bellonci, Gianna Manzini and Fausta Cialente — she also comments that 'it is noticeable that where other writers turn to Virginia Woolf, de Céspedes is much closer to Simone de Beauvoir' and that *Il rimorso* has affinities with *Les Mandarins*.[3] The resemblance between these works has been the object of further scholarly remarks in fact. For example, Merry sees *Il rimorso* as the Italian version of *Les Mandarins* when he asserts that the text has 'all the hallmarks of the *Mandarins* and the intellectual novel which Calvino declared was missing from the Italian tradition',[4] and Nerenberg observes that 'both novels were written in a like vein'.[5] Yet, these are two works that were published nearly a decade apart. By the time *Les Mandarins* came out in France in 1954, and *Il rimorso* in Italy in 1963, both de Beauvoir and de

[1] Ann Hallamore Caesar, 'The novel, 1945-1965', in *A History of Women's Writing in Italy,* ed. by Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 205-237 (p. 205).

[2] In this study, Caesar informs us that 'Manzini, Romano, Banti and Ginzburg were all enthusiastic readers of Proust', that Maria Bellonci translated Stendhal's *Chroniques Italiennes,* Natalia Ginzburg translated the first volume of Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu,* that Anna Banti translated Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room* and that Gianna Manzini first read *Mrs Dalloway* in 1932. See pp. 206-7.

[3] Caesar, p. 211.

[4] Bruce Merry and Giovanni Cecchetti, eds, *Women and Modern Italian Literature. Four Studies Based on the Work of Grazia Deledda, Alba de Céspedes, Natalia Ginzburg and Dacia Maraini* (Townsville: James Cook University, 1990), p. 91.

[5] Ellen Nerenberg, 'Resistance and Remorse: Alba de Céspedes' Withdrawal from the Public Sphere', in *Writing Beyond Fascism,* ed. by Carole C. Gallucci and Ellen Nerenberg (London: Associated University Presses, 2000), pp. 223-246 (p. 241).

Céspedes had already established their international reputations as novelists, and more specifically as observers, thinkers and writers of the female condition — with varying degrees of fame or even notoriety.

De Beauvoir became a major intellectual figure at the age of 35 with *L'Invitée* (1943), a fictionalized account of the relationship between herself, Sartre and Olga Kosakievicz, and a novel which marked the beginning of a prolific writing career. The following year, she published the philosophical essay *Pyrrhus et Cinéas* in which she examined the significance of situations with reference to individual freedom and the individual's relationship with Others, as will be discussed in Part II of this thesis. In 1945, her second novel *Le Sang des autres,* took the socio-political context of the war and the Resistance to show the way in which our being inevitably impinges on the existence of Others. That same year, her only play *Les Bouches inutiles* was performed in Paris, and with Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, she launched the politico-literary journal *Les Temps Modernes.* From this period onward, de Beauvoir's presence in the public eye was considerable because of her intellectual contribution to literature and Existentialism and later to the campaigning for women's rights, and not least because of her much-publicized, unconventional relationship with Sartre. After her trips to Spain and Portugal, she wrote newspaper articles condemning the Fascist regimes there and, to some extent, these informed her reflection on the Cold War and colonialism in *Les Mandarins,* which she started writing in 1949. *Tous Les hommes sont mortels* was published in 1946 and explored the necessity of death. In it, the immortal character Fosca comes to realize that the finite nature of life gives it value and that we must act collaboratively with Others. De Beauvoir produced her second philosophical essay in 1947, *Pour Une morale de l'ambiguïté,* and that same year she began working on the myths of femininity. In 1948, *L'Existentialisme et la sagesse des nations,* a collection of moral essays, and *L'Amérique au jour le jour,* an account of her first two trips to the US, were published. 1949 saw the publication of the two volumes of *Le Deuxième sexe,* her famous treatise on women, which was met at the time both with virulent criticisms and high praise. De Beauvoir won the prestigious *Prix Goncourt* in 1954 for *Les Mandarins,* and she published two political essays and one on the Marquis de

Sade (*Faut-Il brûler Sade?*) under the title *Privilèges* the following year.[6] She recounted her trip to China in *La Longue marche* (1957), and in 1958 she published the first of the four volumes of her memoirs, *Mémoires D'une jeune fille rangée*, followed by *La Force de l'âge* in 1960, *La Force des choses* in 1963 and *Tout Compte fait* in 1972. From 1959 onwards, de Beauvoir became increasingly openly involved in the campaigning for women's rights. Notably, she wrote prefaces to books defending contraception and family planning, an essay in English called *Brigitte Bardot and the Lolita Syndrome* (1962), and the introduction to Gisèle Halimi's book on Algerian tortured activist Djamila Boupacha. She also signed the Manifesto of the 343 admitting to having illegal abortions in 1971, and the following year, she began a column in *Les Temps modernes* aimed at exposing discriminatory statements about women and sexism. In *Une Mort très douce* (1964), she poignantly related the death of her mother the previous year. In her fifth novel, *Les Belles images,* published in 1966, de Beauvoir evoked the hypocrisy of a consumer society which hides oppression and injustice under a glossy veneer. She then based her collection of three short stories, *La Femme rompue* (1968), on the letters she received from women in their forties whose marriages had broken up, and she explored the themes of women's isolation, sense of failure, motherhood and old age. She developed this last topic at length in her extensive essay *La Vieillesse* in 1970. Rejected by publishers in 1937, *Quand Prime le spirituel* can be considered de Beauvoir's very first work of fiction and only came out in 1979. In this collection of stories, she criticised the spiritual values that the French middle classes imposed on young women at the time of writing. De Beauvoir's last work, *La Cérémonie des adieux* in 1981, is an uninhibited account of the last ten years of Sartre's life followed by interviews with the French philosopher.

De Céspedes' career as a writer began before de Beauvoir's. She wrote the novel *Io, suo padre* and the collection of short stories, *L'anima degli altri,* in 1935, followed by a book of poetry entitled *Prigione* in 1936, and *Concerto,* another novel, in 1937. She was also first to become an international best-selling author when her 1938 novel, *Nessuno torna indietro,* was translated into twenty-four languages. It is the tale of the lives of eight young women in the residential college *Pensione Grimaldi* in Rome during Fascist times. Together

[6] In 1956, both *Le Deuxième sexe* and *Les Mandarins* were put on the Catholic Index of prohibited books.

with the collection of short stories, *Fuga,* published in 1940, *Nessuno torna indietro* was banned by Fascist censors, although in the latter's case, de Céspedes successfully argued that her characters were representational of only a very small proportion of the female population. During the war, she took part in the Resistance by working for radio Bari under the pseudonym Clorinda on the programme *L'Italia combatte*. Just after the liberation of Rome in 1944, she set up and directed the political, literary and scientific journal *Mercurio. Mensile di politica, arte, scienze.* In her 1948 novel *Dalla parte di lei,* her character Alessandra fails to find in marriage the kind of fulfillment that patriarchal ideology had led her to expect from such an institution. Her plight allows de Céspedes to introduce a study of the place of women within married relationships — a theme that she will develop further in later novels. As Zancan comments:

> *Dalla parte di lei* apre la seconda fase di quella produzione letteraria che si lega alla città di Roma: *Quaderno proibito* (1952), *Prima e dopo* (1955), *Il rimorso* (1963), *La Bambolona* (1967) sono i romanzi in cui le premesse insite in *Dalla parte di lei* prendono corpo nella selezione delle tematiche (la crisi dei valori sociali e individuali; le valenze della scrittura; il tradimento degli ideali che avevano sorretto la tensione etica nella Resistenza e l'impegno politico-culturale del dopoguerra; la solitudine delle donne; la corruzione e il degrado sociali nell'Italia del benessere).[7]

In *Quaderno proibito,* Valeria confides the emptiness of her life to her notebook when, as Alessandra did, she realizes that love alone is not enough in fact to bring complete happiness and fulfillment in a woman's life. De Céspedes argued this viewpoint consistently in the advice she dispensed in her agony column bearing the same name as the novel *Dalla parte di lei* from June 1952 to the end of 1958 in the magazine *Epoca.*[8] She published a collection of short stories, *Invito a pranzo,* in 1955 and her novel *Prima e dopo* in 1956 which, as suggested by the title, put in sharp focus the separation the war created between the period before the conflict and the aftermath. In particular, the novel exposes Irene's struggle to exist alone as a woman in the early 1950s,

[7] *Scrittrici e intellettuali del Novecento. Alba de Céspedes,* ed. by Marina Zancan (Milan: Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 2001), p. 14.

[8] Morris comments that 'for Mondadori, publisher of both *Epoca* and de Céspedes' novels, there was an obvious commercial advantage to using the same title'. Penelope Morris, 'From private to public: Alba de Céspedes' agony column in 1950s Italy', *Modern Italy,* 9 (2004), 11-20 (p. 19, n. 21).

and raises the subject of female financial independence which, as will be shown, has a prominent place both in her column and in *Il rimorso* in 1963. In *La Bambolona* (1967), de Céspedes recounts the demise of her character Giulio who falls in love with a woman who is much younger than him and of a lower social class. Following her definitive move to Paris, she witnessed there the events of May 1968 which inspired her poems written in French, *Chansons Des filles de mai*, subsequently translated into Italian. Her last novel, *Sans Autre lieu que la nuit*, also written in French, was published in 1973 and relates the events of one night in the lives of two women and four men, while drawing attention to a universal condition: the anxiety of not knowing what the future holds. Despite the extent of her literary production, and although she was a best-selling author whose works, published in many languages, earned her an international reputation, it is interesting, and yet regrettable, that de Céspedes did not enjoy the same lasting popularity as de Beauvoir. In fact, Morris notes that 'in the 1970s and 1980s, de Céspedes' writing was largely forgotten and, if remembered, she tended to be thought of as a writer of romantic fiction'.[9] As a first-time in-depth comparative analysis of *Il rimorso* with de Beauvoir's *Les Mandarins*, this research contributes to the new interest that has emerged in the past two decades in exploring de Céspedes' texts and life that have long been ignored 'despite the lush resources her work offers and the respect garnered from her contemporaries'.[10]

Significant to the investigation of an intellectual bond between the two writers, and of a possible influence of de Beauvoir on de Céspedes, is the fact that both knew each other. In an interview, de Céspedes mentions that she was 'molto amica di Simone de Beauvoir' and that, with Sartre, 'sono stati tante volte a casa mia a Roma ospiti'.[11] In fact, in *La Force des choses*, de Beauvoir recalls:

> je m'amusai franchement à un dîner chez Alba de Céspedes; comme elle, son amie Paula Massini unissait à la savoureuse méchanceté italienne une causticité très feminine et elles nous découvrirent à belles dents les dessous de la vie littéraire romaine.[12]

[9] Penelope Morris, 'From private to public: Alba de Céspedes' agony column in 1950s Italy', *Modern Italy*, 9 (2004), 11-20 (p.19, n.15).
[10] Front jacket of Gallucci and Nerenberg, *Writing Beyond Fascism.*
[11] Piera Carroli, *Esperienza e narrazione nella scrittura di Alba de Céspedes* (Ravenna: Longo, 1993), pp. 143- 4.
[12] Simone de Beauvoir, *La Force des choses II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), p. 108.

A photo displayed in the book accompanying the 2001 exhibition on de Céspedes, and which shows the authors engaged in conversation, adds to the impression of complicity evident in this memory between the two women.[13] Although there is no formal account of their meetings and their conversations, it is likely that such occasions were fuelled by copious amounts of intellectual exchange. Upon reading *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso*, there are several inter-relational points that become immediately noticeable and that suggest some connection between de Beauvoir's and de Céspedes' writings. Both works deal with the aftermath of World War II and they talk of the great sense of post-war disillusion, shattered hopes and aspirations which pervaded the societies they depict. Perhaps the most striking similarity has to do with the overt resemblance between the plots: two women, Anne and Francesca, go through the disintegration of their marriages, which instigates a process of self-analysis that they detail in the narratives. Anne and Francesca realize that their husbands, Robert Dubreuilh and Guglielmo Antaldi, both twenty years older than their wives, have had to change or abandon their wartime ideals. These two highly esteemed Resistance heroes now work as journalists, and the difficulties they encounter throughout the narratives present the theme of the value of literature and that of the role of the intellectual in society. This is developed further with the struggles of two male writers in the press environment, Henri Perron in *Les Mandarins* and Gerardo Viani in *Il rimorso* who, structurally speaking, are parallel to the stories of Anne and Francesca. Henri and Gerardo have to work as journalists in order to survive financially but they are equally frustrated because of the little time this leaves them to dedicate to their novels. Crucially, both embody the criticism of journalistic writing as being politically manipulated and increasingly lacking integrity. The fact that both Anne and Francesca embark on extra-marital affairs with younger men, and that both affairs ultimately end, also contributes greatly to the impression of likeness between the two narratives. Moreover, both *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* make use of a mirror story device with the intervention and the sombre fate of the characters of Paule in the former and Isabella in the latter as Anne and Francesca's childhood friends respectively.

[13] Marina Zancan, ed., *Mostra Alba de Céspedes. Scrittrici e intellettuale del Novecento* (Milan: Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 2001), p. 63.

Despite such a degree of resemblance, the rapport between these two novels has never been subjected to academic scrutiny, nor has its potential significance in terms of de Beauvoir's role in de Céspedes' writing. In fact, it is worth pointing out that the presence and the influence of Simone de Beauvoir in Italy is, to this day, largely unexplored. There she remains a controversial figure amongst women, and her reception amongst Italian feminists is subject to great inconsistencies.[14] It is a topic beyond the scope of this research, but one which is raised nonetheless here by the fact that, as will be shown, there is no real evidence in the present investigation to support de Céspedes' claim in an interview with Carroli that, in her opinion, *Le Deuxième sexe* does not actually play an instrumental role in understanding the female condition. This comment may be explained by the fact that, unlike de Beauvoir, de Céspedes always resisted being called a feminist — even if most critics would now consider her novels in fact to be so — and that by the time of the interview in 1990, *Le Deuxième sexe* was, and still is, generally regarded as the founding book of feminism.[15]

So what does the relationship between de Céspedes' and de Beauvoir's novels tell us about the Italian author? Or, indeed, what does it tell us about her position, as an Italian woman, on the French writer and on feminist issues? Does the relationship between the two novels present adequate and sufficient evidence to verify that de Beauvoir in fact influenced de Céspedes and, if so, to what extent?

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[14] During the course of my research, I was warmly welcomed at the *Libreria delle Donne* in Milan, until the name of the French author was mentioned and the atmosphere turned rather cold suddenly. I was duly informed that *Le Deuxième sexe* showed that all de Beauvoir wanted to do was to be like a man, and that her evident subservience to Sartre was degrading. The women at the *Libreria* felt closer to Luce Irigaray who claimed women's difference, than to de Beauvoir who proposed to put the question of feminine nature at a second level and to fight for equality of the sexes in patriarchy. She saw this separationist demand as something dangerous that would isolate women, and thus meant that they would never reach any form of status in society (for this reason, despite her world-wide reputation as a feminist, she actually refused to take part in feminism until the 1970s). Yet it is also striking that feminist groups such as *Lotta Feminista* of Padua or the magazine *Effe*, for example, address the topic of women and housework in terms largely similar to those of de Beauvoir in *Le Deuxième sexe:* in order to bring changes to an activity traditionally regarded as pertaining to the female realm (and even if those changes, such as the demand for salaries for housewives, would not necessarily be those advocated by de Beauvoir), housework should be considered in terms of its negative effects on a woman's private and professional life. See *Italian Feminist Thought. A Reader*, ed. by Paola Bono and Sandra Kemp (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), pp. 261- 8.

[15] De Céspedes states that the female condition 'è tutta un'altra cosa (…) io non sono d'accordo con Simone perché lei prende tutto questo come una rivalsa e questo non è giusto'. Carroli, p. 144.

It is the aim of the present thesis to show that *Il rimorso* is not a copy of *Les Mandarins* — an impression that may understandably result from the successive reading of both texts — and to establish that the relationship between these two novels is much more complex than a simple rapport of obvious similarities. Indeed these do not necessarily bring the most significant contribution in terms of defining the precise nature of such a relationship, and there are differences that are in fact decisive to the outcome of this research.

Part I deals with the historical and political backgrounds to the novels and is essential to an informed understanding of the narratives' critical depictions of society. It also provides a brief survey of various theories regarding the concept of intertextuality which is of particular relevance when comparing two novels noted for their likeness. Chapters One and Two cover the main events occurring in France from Liberation to the turn of the 1950s, and in Italy from the end of the war to the years of the economic miracle and the early 1960s. Chapter Three gives an outline of different hypotheses relating to the relationships of co-presence between texts, and singles out the intertextual phenomena most relevant to the subsequent comparative analysis of *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso*.

Part II aims at corroborating the influence of de Beauvoir on de Céspedes by investigating the relationship between these two novels. Through their lives and works, both authors distinguished themselves for their interest in the female condition, and both discussed ideas that would become much more familiar in the developments of feminism in the 1970s. It is therefore coherent that such an analysis should focus mainly, although not exclusively, on the female characters in the two novels. De Beauvoir developed her own interpretation of Existentialist philosophy in her early essays *Pyrrhus et Cinéas* and *Pour Une morale de l'ambiguïté,* and she later used it as the foundation for an analysis of the place of women in society in her famous treatise, *Le Deuxième sexe*. In this study, I isolate those Existentialist concepts whose meanings are specific to de Beauvoir's understanding, and I investigate in what ways *Les Mandarins,* and more significantly de Céspedes' *Il rimorso,* may be said to illustrate such notions. The comparative analysis between the two texts thus allows for an assessment of the extent of de Beauvoir's influence on the Italian author in terms of Existentialist philosophical thinking, and with particular regard to her outlook on the question of women.

In the early philosophical essays mentioned, de Beauvoir exposes her theory following a sequence which provides a clear and logical framework to support this investigation: the structure of her reasoning will be paralleled with the developments in the plots of the novels. De Beauvoir's view encompasses firstly a defined understanding of immanence and transcendence which is also gendered because she denounces the former as characteristic of what is regarded as normal femininity; secondly, an awareness that individual freedom is influenced and restricted by situational instances, and that bad faith may result from this contingency; thirdly, an encouragement of a positive acknowledgement of the Other or Others in the way one engages in life and society. Part II begins by addressing the situations and the predicaments of the female characters in *Les Mandarins* and in *Il rimorso* and Chapter Four investigates how far they may be said to exemplify de Beauvoir's opinion that women are denied transcendence and that immanence is typically regarded as normal femininity. This chapter compares the novels' treatment of the place of women in society by exploring the causes of the anguish suffered by Anne in *Les Mandarins* and by Francesca in *Il rimorso.* The subject of motherhood is then examined in detail in the two narratives. It is a topic that has a prominent place in de Beauvoir's criticism of the traditional ideas of femininity, and her views on maternity provide a most effective support to her claim that society denies transcendence to women — albeit also the most polemical issue in terms of more recent feminist theories, as will be shown. In fact, the comparative analysis of the treatment of this topic in the two novels will allow a discussion of de Beauvoir's and de Céspedes' versions of feminism, and a comparison of both authors' outlooks.

Following the same sequential development as de Beauvoir does in her theory, Chapter Five turns to an examination of the two narratives in the light the notions of situated freedom and bad faith, and compares the functions of mirror-characters Paule in *Les Mandarins,* and Isabella in *Il rimorso.* A fundamental issue to de Beauvoir's concepts of situated freedom and bad faith is the past, and its role in the individual's confrontations with the present. The investigation of the place given to the past in the two narratives and, more specifically, a comparison of its significance in the lives of the characters — with particular attention to the nature of the relationships Anne and Francesca entertain with their husbands in contrast with Paule's relationship with Henri

and Isabella's marriage — will show that this topic contributes to the likeness between the two novels while, at the same time, setting them apart. Another crucial theme in de Beauvoir's analysis of the contingency of freedom has to do with cultural and social requirements. Chapter Six shows that the institutions portrayed as responsible in *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* for dictating how individuals should behave (and by doing so for safeguarding a view of normality that imprisons women to immanence) provide a testimony to the different types of society both novels depict in fact. This chapter compares how psychoanalysis and psychiatry in de Beauvoir's novel — with Anne's critical view of her profession — and Catholicism in de Céspedes' — with the depiction of the ritual of confession — are shown to impinge upon the individual's relation with his/her past (and therefore to shape his/her confrontation with the present), and assesses how far the criticisms posed by the authors in each narrative may be correlated.

Finally, the concluding principle of de Beauvoir's own interpretation of Existentialism, and one that gives it a specific pro-active stance, also provides the referential thread to the two concluding chapters of this thesis. In an effort to remedy the sufferings incurred by the contingency of freedom, her reflection on ethics marks here perhaps her most radical departure from the Sartrean understanding of human relationships found in 'traditional' Existentialism: she puts forward a positive acknowledgement of the Other, motivated by what could be called existential joy, as a model for relationships (especially concerning love relationships) and as a means to achieve an effective engagement of the individual in society, or transcendence (in particular with regard to the intellectual). Chapter Seven analyses the endings of *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* and investigates how far de Beauvoir's positive Existentialism finds illustration at a private level with the fates assigned to the female characters, and what conclusions may be drawn from the differences between the ways in which the plots end. This chapter posits that both novels urge for a reconsideration of the dynamics of love, and compares the authors' views of the ideal relationship between man and woman. In the two narratives, Anne and Francesca's married relationships are shown to fail for they obey the traditional dynamics of love, and both extra-marital affairs — which also carry a significant comment on female sexuality — fall short because the lovers illustrate attitudes of passivity, lack of commitment, and they embody life

confined to immanence. By contrast, the means available to Anne and Francesca to achieve transcendence in the end, or to go beyond the status quo and pursue a further project while still being in a love relationship, set the novels firmly apart. This difference allows for a discussion of the authors' views on female financial independence with respect to the private sphere and the dynamics of marriage, and a comparison of the treatment of this topic in the narratives. Chapter Eight discusses de Beauvoir's existential ethics at a public level this time, with the notions of *engagement* and transcendence. This chapter examines how the dilemmas facing the literati in the two narratives are addressed, and compares the authors' views of intellectual commitment or *impegno*; it assesses how far de Beauvoir's and de Céspedes' own experiences of the press environment may be seen as testimonies to their shared outlook on the place and function of the literati in society and to their dedication to *engagement*. Considering here too the endings of *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso*, this study argues that the channels for (re)commitment adopted by Robert Dubreuilh and Henri Perron, and by Gerardo Viani, provide another striking difference between the two novels, and demonstrates further that obvious similarities are not necessarily the most interesting and revealing features of the relationship. This final chapter concludes with an evaluation of how far each novel may be seen as a piece of *littérature engagée.*

# PART I

# Chapter One

## France: From Liberation to the Turn of the 1950s

This chapter, and the following one, presents an analysis of the historical, political and social backgrounds of *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso.* This is essential to our understanding of the nature of the dilemmas faced by the characters in the novels. In Chapter Five, I shall argue that past events weigh heavily on the two narratives, and we shall see that their role is not merely informative, it is also formative: these events do not solely reveal how the protagonists met, they also shape the characters. A reasonable knowledge of post-war history and politics is also fundamental to an informed appreciation of the criticisms the authors address in the narratives and which Part II of this thesis will reveal and discuss throughout.

*Les Mandarins* starts in December 1944 and ends in summer 1948, and it must be noted that de Beauvoir's novel contains some discrepancies in the chronological occurrence of the historical events described. These are due to the significant gap between the narrative itself and the actual time of writing which stretches from the end of 1949 to 1953. This chapter deals with the era of French history that is relevant to the narrative as well as to the writing period of *Les Mandarins*, and which runs from the Liberation, the early post-war years and a young Fourth Republic, to the advent of the Cold War and the early 1950s.

### *The Liberation and the Early Post-War Years: Difficulties and Disappointment*

World War Two changed the global landscape dramatically: the previously almighty Europe was reduced to a devastated battlefield and its dominion in the African and Asian territories was soon to bring more unrest as the colonies prepared for emancipation. It would become rapidly clear that the United States and the Soviet Union would soon hold the new political and economic

supremacy. This new redistribution of powers is initially manifest in the exclusion of France from two major international conferences that took place between the United States, the Soviet Union and Great Britain, or the Trois Grands. Despite Winston Churchill's best efforts and De Gaulle's frustration and indignation, France was not invited to take Part in the assessments of the post war situation and in the resulting decisions that were made at Yalta in Crimea from 4 to 11 February 1945, and at Potsdam in Germany from 17 July to 2 August the same year. Thus the aftermath of war which was felt in the devastation of the country's social situation (traumas, poverty, disease, lack of infrastructure, penuries and rationing) also affected France's former prestige. The Vichy regime meant that the nation that had prided itself on being the cradle of human rights was now regarded in a very different light.

Before addressing those issues to do with politics and the new bipolar redistribution of the world powers that are intrinsic to the narrative of *Les Mandarins*, it is necessary to give an assessment of the situation of the country and its inhabitants in the wake of the war in order to appreciate the psychological condition of the characters in the novel.

The opening of *Les Mandarins* is set during a Christmas party in December 1944 and gives a first impression of the atmosphere of euphoria in the early days following the Liberation. However, a more realistic portrayal of the bleakness of post-war years comes rapidly to counterbalance and denounce the naivety of the hopes that soon all would return to normal (hopes that turn to obsession and delusion with Paule). Indeed the Liberation on 6th June 1944 would not instantly erase the atrocities of the war, and the years that followed were years of severe hardship for the French population who had to re-learn how to live in a country whose landscape and structures were in ruins, and whose inhabitants were devastated both physically and psychologically.[16] Kupferman illustrates the dichotomy between the elation of freedom and hope recovered and the new uncertainties brought by the Liberation when he notes that on the very winter when *Les Mandarins* begins 'les libérés soufflent sur leurs doigts dans cet hiver sans charbon, mais l'espoir est entré dans leur vie,

[16] It must be noted that from September 1944 to January 1945, the Allies bombed the Reich, killing many prisoners too. In Russia, Stalin ordered the execution of 35,000 Alsatian prisoners known as the 'malgrés nous' in the camp of Tambov because he considered them to be Germans (half of the Alsace region was free, the other half under German occupation).

les autres comptent les jours. Tiendront-ils?'[17] The 'others' who are counting the days to the Allied victory are the more than two million French people who were still in Germany as prisoners of war, as forced labour deportees of the Vichy government's Service du Travail Obligatoire of 1943 and as concentration camp prisoners. The trauma brought by the war and its aftermath is deeply felt throughout the narrative in Anne's moral questioning over the worth of so many lives lost and over the nature of her work which involves finding a 'cure' for all the psychological damage. Her daughter Nadine is also the striking representative of a generation whose childhood years were heavily burdened by restrictions and rationings, by the severe hardship of the Occupation and by the witnessing of many atrocities. The population had hoped the end of the war would bring a return to normality in their daily lives. Instead, a general feeling of great disappointment and disillusion prevailed when the Liberation and the Victory the following year failed to live up to such expectations. Firstly, living conditions continued to be extremely difficult in the early post-war years, as rationing was maintained and even became more severe than during Occupation time. Elgey highlights the psychological hardship brought by the contradictory state of enduring shortages and deprivation in a society that has just been freed from its oppressor as she observes that 'la victoire n'a pas levé les contraintes de la pénurie; elle les a rendues plus pénibles à supporter'.[18] Secondly many atrocities were still perpetrated in the name of justice: the purges took place in France for over a year following Liberation; and thirdly the financial elite was to remain in place. 1945 was a particularly tragic year. The extremely cold winter was made harder to bear by the continuing lack of shoes and textiles, and the strict regulations over gas and electricity usage. Food was still rationed, and although ration cards for bread were initially dropped in November, they had to be reinstated one month later with a smaller allowance than during the Occupation. Shortages meant endless queues and the country's division into two categories: those wealthy enough to be able to supplement their rations by buying food from a flourishing Black Market, and those who could not. The description of the Christmas party of 1944 which marks the beginning of the narrative of *Les Mandarins* and at which 'Anne déballait des rillettes, du

[17] Fred Kupferman, *Les Premiers beaux jours 1944-1946* (Paris: Tallandier, 2007), p. 189.
[18] Elgey, p. 30.

beurre, des fromages, des gâteaux' and two bottles of rhum and 1 kilogram of tea leaves no doubt as to the main characters' financial circumstances (*LM I,* p. 17- 18).

To many French people, the immediate experience of World War II was not that of the front line, but that of the daily humiliations of Nazi occupation, such as being forced to steal in order to survive. The eagerness to obliterate any remnants of the Vichy regime that took hold of the French population at the time of Liberation is, in my opinion, not only an understandable reaction but also a natural one, a physical attempt to find release from the psychological damage of life in an occupied territory. This damage is illustrated in *Les Mandarins* by Anne's patients who are haunted by the atrocities they witnessed and endured during the war. Her own doubts over the worth of her profession (as a psychoanalyst, she equates 'curing' her many patients with teaching them to live with their

painful past by annihilating the vivid rawness of their memories)[19] and the example of Sézenac who is dependent on the opiate 'eubine' to relieve him from recurrent nightmares, underpin the failure of the purges to bring effective and lasting relief to individual psyches in the post-war years.[20] Moreover, the further depictions of the lack of psychotherapy in such cases and of the inadequacies of the available psychotropic drugs in treating patients — as Anne remarks 'On ne guérit pas les cauchemars avec de l'eubine' (*LM I,* p. 107) — emphasize the urgency of the need for immediate healing; this need was to be addressed in the 1950s with the development of varied and prolific neuro-chemical research.[21]

Aside from the purges' ultimate failure to bring any lasting individual psychological relief, two early problems that were inherent to their implementation can be identified; these would undoubtedly contribute to the population's discontent and eventual sense of disillusion in the postwar years.

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[19] As her observation at the lack of progress from a child after two months of therapy testifies: 'cet inconnu [the child's father] qui était mort deux ans plus tôt à Dachau, ça me faisait horreur de le chasser du coeur de son fils' (*LM I,* p. 94).

[20] See *Les Mandarins I,* p. 105.

[21] In *Les Grands courants de la pensée psychiatrique* Michel Escande comments that 'le véritable point de départ du courant de Psychiatrie Biologique coïncide avec l'avènement et l'application par Delay et Deniker du premier neuroleptique: la chlorpromazine (Largactil) en 1952. (...) L'arsenal chimiothérapique s'enrichit en 1957 du premier antidépresseur tricyclique, l'imipramine (Tofranil), en 1960 de la première benzodiazépine, le chlodiazépoxide (Librium)'
http://www.med.univ-angers.fr/discipline/psychiatrie_adulte/cours/48-grandscourants.htm
[accessed 5 June 2009]

From June 1944 to approximately the end of 1945, several courts of justice and civic chambers were created, drawing sentences ranging from the death penalty to the confiscation of belongings and assets and redundancies. The first problem with these trials resided in the fact that, at this stage, there existed no previous definition of the act of 'collaboration' as crime, and thus no provision for legal penalties to which the courts could refer for their sentences. This made it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to pronounce proportional and consistent verdicts, and as a result, the severely punished 'act of treason' became the sort of all-round charge that was applied the most. In *Les Mandarins,* Josette is prosecuted for her liaison with a German officer, and for acting as an informer during the Occupation. She appears before such a court and she narrowly escapes a sentence for act of treason thanks to Henri's false testimony. The second problem concerned the political background against which the act of 'collaboration' took place; very often it could be argued that the individual facing these courts had not worked for the Nazis themselves, but for the Vichy regime, which during wartime constituted the French authorities, or their own nation's government. Hence how could this be an act of treason? Elgey's observation that 'l'épuration ne satisfait guère l'opinion. Les uns la jugent excessive, les autres par trop indulgente…elle est un motif supplémentaire de mécontentement' is symptomatic of the great inconsistencies of the verdicts; moreover, these were often passed by judges and members of the jury whose own involvement in collaboration was sometimes far more significant and had more dramatic consequences than the actions of the accused. [22] As a result, France saw a bloody episode of personal vendettas. Judt appraises that

> 10 000 personnes furent tuées dans le cadre de procédures 'extrajudiciaires', pour beaucoup par des bandes indépendantes de résistants armés, notamment les Milices patriotiques, qui raflaient les collaborateurs presumés, s'emparaient de leurs biens et souvent les exécutaient sans autre forme de procès.[23]

In *Les Mandarins,* Vincent illustrates just how deeply the psychological hold of the purges penetrated the individual psyche. His character reveals that the all-encompassing aspect of this thirst for revenge was not confined to those

[22] Elgey, p. 35.
[23] Tony Judt, *Après Guerre* (Paris : Armand Colin, 2007), p. 61.

more experienced members of the Resistance, but also spread amongst a younger generation that had been scarred by the Occupation. Vincent had killed a dozen members of the French militia, and now he extorts some money from old collaborators in order to save *L'Espoir* from financial ruin. More significantly, when he discovers that Sézenac, an individual he actually likes, had been a collaborator, he does not hesitate to kill him.

It is worth mentioning the extreme discordance amongst intellectuals that the process of the purges generated. In *La Force des choses,* de Beauvoir relates her emotional dilemmas over whether or not to add her name to a petition amongst writers which appealed for the tribunal's indulgence when sentencing Brasillach who 'par ses dénonciations, par ses appels à l'assassinat et au genocide, (il) avait directement collaboré avec la gestapo'.[24] If de Beauvoir chose to refrain from signing (and her attendance at the trial meant she could not be accused of indifference), Albert Camus, 'cédant à certaines pressions', did eventually sign a plea for clemency. His gesture, together with his bitter dispute with François Mauriac after the Liberation, is characteristic of the extreme ethical struggle amongst intellectuals in deciding which stance to adopt. While Camus thought it iniquitous to condemn men to death because of their opinions, no matter how appalling these might be — and thus rejected communism's uncompromising view of the purges — he still argued in the daily newspaper *Combat* for the need to eliminate all elements associated with the Nazis in France.[25] This position, which I consider a rather incongruous one, was shared by Sartre and de Beauvoir at the time, and was defined by the latter as trying to find 'un juste milieu'.[26] On the other hand, Mauriac, who had been the only member of the Académie Française to have taken part in the Résistance, thought that the purges should be set aside in the interests of national reconciliation.[27] It is interesting that by the time she wrote *Les Mandarins,* de Beauvoir's stance appears closer to Mauriac's: Henri decides to lie before the court in order to save Josette, and his decision highlights the

[24] Simone de Beauvoir, *La Force des choses I* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), p. 38.
[25] Camus edited *Combat,* a resistance paper that had become a daily at Liberation, and Mauriac wrote a column for the conservative paper *Le Figaro.*
[26] De Beauvoir tries to clarify this stance in *La Force des choses I* by declaring that 'la vengeance est vaine, mais certains hommes n'avaient pas leur place dans le monde qu'on tentait de bâtir', p. 36.
[27] In the issue of *Le Figaro* on 31 December 1944, he wrote that: 'Chacun peut découvrir dans son passé assez d'erreurs pour comprendre la faute plus grave des autres et pour l'absoudre quand l'heure sera venue'.

ethical problems that are intrinsic to the contingency of freedom.[28] This most prominent topic of de Beauvoir's philosophical thinking will be addressed in detail in Chapter Five with regard to the question of women. In the context of the present chapter, it is reasonable to suggest that Henri's decision calls for reflection on the idea of circumstances, and how one's actions (here Josette's during the Occupation) are always shaped and limited by the situation one finds him/herself in. In my opinion, Henri's act highlights the unfairness of passing an ethical judgment without considering first the degree of freedom and the circumstances in which the act took place. In fact, Mauriac also expressed doubts over the possibility of dispensing impartial or dispassionate justice in the emotional turmoil of Liberation and the immediate post-war period. It is interesting to note that Kupferman highlights the particularly violent repression suffered by journalists for 'par un honneur singulier, on les trouva plus responsables que les militaries, les industriels, et même les gens de lettres'.[29]

It is certain that the poignant spectacle of the returning camp survivors between 1944 and 1945 also fuelled the population's enthusiasm for the purges. The prisoners of war — the forced labour contingent, and those who had been deported for acts of Resistance or for their political convictions — returned in greater numbers than the racial deportees: 30% survived Buchenwald against only 3% for Auschwitz. Jews and Gypsies had to struggle immensely to reintegrate into French society because they received a very different welcome from the Resistant deportees.[30]

A few months after the war had come to an end in August 1945 with the US dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the surrender of Japan — an event which, as we shall see in Chapter Six, is reported in *Les Mandarins* and contributes to de Beauvoir's criticism of the US in the novel — the frame of mind of the population changed rapidly. The French were still very unhappy and bitterly disappointed with the situation of their country and with the hardship of their daily lives, but they wanted to believe in a better future. After completion of the immediate purges, the end of 1945 saw a

[28] See Ursula Tidd, 'Testimony, *Historicité*, and the Intellectual in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Mandarins*', in *The Contradictions of Freedom. Philosophical Essays on Simone de Beauvoir's The Mandarins*, ed. by Sally J. Scholz and Shannon M. Mussett (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), pp. 87- 103.
[29] Kupferman, p. 123.
[30] See Kupferman, p. 197.

general effort across Europe to repress bad memories, to leave the past far behind and to get on with the daily routines of a new era. Judt rightly ascertains that:

> sans cette amnésie collective, l'étonnant redressement de l'Europe après la guerre n'aurait jamais été possible […] Le prix à payer en était un certain oubli sélectif et collectif, notamment en Allemagne. Mais alors, par dessus tout en Allemagne, il y avait beaucoup à oublier.[31]

The role of the past in shaping the present and the future is an important thematic component of *Les Mandarins,* and of *Il rimorso* indeed, and one which will be addressed in detail in Chapter Five in the context of a discussion of de Beauvoir's concept of situated freedom, and in Chapter Six as part of the analysis of the criticism of psychiatry in the former and of Catholic religion in the latter. It is pertinent to note here that in a sense, Robert in *Les Mandarins* is representing the tendency to this consciously-endorsed 'amnesia' of the end of 1945 because he situates himself firmly in the present and he now chooses to adopt an attitude which denies the past somehow, as he addresses Anne: 'Les questions auxquelles je ne peux pas répondre, les évènements auxquels je ne peux rien changer, je ne m'en occupe pas beaucoup' (*LM I,* p. 69). Considering the context of his declaration, he clearly refers to the significance of the human losses during the war. Anne, on the other hand, opposes this trend: in the anxiety she expresses with 'l'automne a passé et tout à l'heure, tandis qu'aux lumières de l'arbre de Noël nous achevions d'oublier nos morts, je me suis avisée que nous recommencions à exister, chacun pour soi' (*LM I,* p. 42), she foresees the social and psychological dysfunctions of such a new era. This is demonstrated further by her questioning of her profession whose function she finds now reduced to facilitating the eradication of the past from people's mind in order for them to engage 'freely' in the present.

For Anne, as well as for the most observant people of an older generation and indeed for the young and the revolutionary, a return to a pre-1939 status quo was out of the question: the experience of the war must absolutely be a deciding factor in the reconstruction of the country. The Resistance, while fighting against the Occupier and their collaborationists, not only fought against Fascist ideology, but also against that of the right-wing bourgeois

[31] Judt, p. 84.

socio-political system in place during the years after the First World War, and which was deemed responsible for precipitating the country into the Second World War. At Liberation time, all newspapers were suspended to be replaced by the clandestine publications of the Resistance in the previously occupied territory, as well as new ones in the provinces: monthly, weekly and daily publications were soaring despite the continuing lack of paper. The creation of small newspapers by those who had been intellectually educated in the 1930s and who were trying to establish a new political programme by gathering their school friends (from the Left and from the Right, for even the bourgeois of the Resistance now condemned the Bourgeoisie) contributed greatly to this proliferation of the press. This process of 'enrolment' of the intelligentsia in the spheres of politics and journalism with the aim of effective socio-political reconstruction is witnessed in *Les Mandarins* with Dubreuilh's and Perron's abandonment of literary writing, and of course, with Scriassine's argument that in such times literature would become obsolete and void of purpose. However, ideological unity could not make up for the fact that the Resistance entered the post war period wholly unprepared for the political terrain; as Perron rightly observes, 'la Résistance était une chose, la politique en était une autre' *LM I,* p. 21). Fighting the Occupier and collaborators meant that resistants had had no time to dedicate to organizational provisions for the period after Liberation, and they tended to form small groups rather than one big party. The lack of organization, together with the fact that the Resistance was made up of very different people with very different backgrounds and even religions, meant that, as Kepferman notes, 'le programme politique d'une Résistance unie, cohérente, decidée à imposer ses vues n'existe pas'.[32] By contrast, the governments in exile in London spent the war years preparing for their return, while the Communists already had practical knowledge and experience in the field of politics. Both prevented the already unlikely formation of one big resistance party: the *Résistance* had to be divided or disappear altogether. Thus, upon de Gaulle's return in June 1944, only two options were feasible for the creation of a temporary government: either an alliance with the General, or with the Communists. This early political bipolarity would soon intensify dramatically at both national and international levels with the advent of the Cold War. The theme of the engulfment of the Resistance by one or the other

[32] Kupferman, p. 109.

opposing political factions is at the basis of every episode of tension between Robert and Henri in *Les Mandarins*: in a first instance, Robert endeavours to persuade Henri to affiliate his Resistant neutral newspaper *L' Espoir* with his leftist party the SRL, thus highlighting the impossibility to keep avoiding taking political sides; later, the dispute over whether or not to publish the discovery of the work camps in Russia underscores the personal difficulties and potential global consequences of this strict political bipolarity.

*The Provisional Government of the Fourth Republic*

In *Histoire de la société française depuis 1945*, Borne proposes an interesting and enlightening approach to the differentiation between Gaullists and Communists by introducing the notion of 'imaginaires sociaux' to define the type of society each ideology envisages. The 'imaginaire gaulliste', on one hand, favours the idea of Nation over that of society; this implies that the nation must depend on a very powerful central government, or the mighty State, and that its citizens 'sont sévèrement invités à se penser non comme membres des différents groupes sociaux, mais comme citoyens d'une même nation'.[33] On the other hand the 'imaginaire marxiste' (upheld by the parties of the Left, and particularly by the PCF) draws a strict division between the employing class which holds the power, and the working class which is exploited by it. The 'imaginaire marxiste' implies that the workers must unite in their fight against this oppression, and against the bourgeoisie. It is reasonable to suggest that the denunciation of bourgeois living in *Il rimorso* means that de Céspedes' novel belongs to this category, whereas, as will be shown in Chapter Six, de Beauvoir balances a criticism of the US and of right-wing politics in *Les Mandarins* with a criticism of the Soviet Union and the Marxist model.

Shortly after the Liberation, General de Gaulle became head of the temporary government, and the Communist Maurice Thorez took the function of General Secretary. The Communist Party was the first to benefit from the Purges of the press at the time of the Liberation: in 1944, *Le Figaro* and *La Croix*, both right-

[33] Dominique Borne, *Histoire De la société française depuis 1945* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1988), p. 9.

wing papers, were still published, but they could not risk addressing a single criticism to Communist politics; as Elgey puts it, 'c'est l'époque où critiquer le PC et discuter l'URSS équivaut à afficher des sympathies fascistes'.[34] The party exploited its anti-fascist credentials actively by claiming that the Communists were at the origins of the Resistance before De Gaulle (while remaining silent about the fact that it had changed its political agenda in June 1941 after Hitler attacked Stalin), and that without them it would have failed.[35] The Communist Party even ignored protestations from *résistants* themselves against this flawed conception, and as Kupferman observes: 'il indispose les résistants qui ne marchent pas avec lui, hommes de droite ou hommes de gauche, qui lui refusent leur concours, mais ne peuvent faire comprendre à l'opinion qu'on la manipule'.[36]

The party's strategic and extensive recruitment policy dictated that its important network of organizations was open to non-Communists too, for example Roman Catholic writer François Mauriac joined its *Comité National des Écrivains*, and also that those who had compromised themselves during the Occupation could redeem themselves by joining the PC (Parti Communiste). In a typical Communist family, the father would be member of the PC, the mother member of the UFF or *Union des Femmes Françaises*, and the children would go to the Communists scouts *Vaillants* in the first instance, and then move on to the UJRF or the *Union de la Jeunesse Républicaine de France*. Even leisure and holidays would be planned by the PC which also owned many regional and local newspapers over and above the national *Ce Soir* and *L'Humanité.* In 1945, the UJRF counted 300,000 members who distributed leaflets showing young people investing their leisure time in the reconstruction of the country (for example, cleaning ruins, rebuilding schools, gathering foodstuffs, repairing railways, helping prisoners and deportees). This dynamic young generation, who knew they were lucky to be alive, contributed to the dissemination of the idea that the Soviet Union was the indispensible model of hard work and dedication without which nothing could be achieved.

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[34] Elgey, p. 42.

[35] Indeed the young crowd following the PC at Liberation knew nothing of the party's past, and certainly not that in 1939, it had defended the pact of non aggression between Hitler and Stalin. This ignorance may explain, in part, the general and initial disbelief at the discovery of the Soviet work camps, as well as the accusations of anti-Communist propaganda against those who revealed them first.

[36] Kupferman, p. 185.

De Gaulle, unlike the Communists, did not seek to emphasize the heroic role of the Resistance and exploit its image for his own political agenda. For him, the résistants had done nothing more than their duty as citizens during the war. Their military organization, the FFI or *Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur*, was disbanded and its members were successfully integrated within the ranks of the regular national army so that the State would not bear the hallmarks of the Résistance.

In *La Force des choses I,* de Beauvoir finds 'parfaitement injuste qu'on ait excusé la collaboration économique mais non qu'on ait sévi contre les propagandistes d'Hitler' (*LFC I,* p. 38). She refers to the great disparity between the treatment received by journalists and writers such as Brasillach, as mentioned earlier, and that received by the financial, economical and industrial élite. Indeed De Gaulle (and the Communists who agreed with him on this point) estimated that without employers, there could not be any production because workers did not have the right or the ability to run factories. In order to feed, clothe and provide gas and electricity to a population devastated both materially and psychologically, bankers, small firm directors and civil servants who had worked for the enemy during Occupation retained their functions. This institutional restoration was also interpreted by Kupferman as a strategic step aimed at depriving the Left of an opportunity to change the social order. He notes

> Il [De Gaulle] ne permettrait pas davantage que l'on touche à l'Eglise, qui chante maintenant des Te Deum en son honneur, ni au patronat. Même défaillantes, les colonnes de la société doivent être respectées. L'épuration ne doit pas être une remise en question de l'autorité des patrons, ni un examen exagéré de l'attitude des notables pendant l'Occupation. On fait quelques exemples, et l'on s'en tient là.[37]

Despite this, the Communists were included in the State, with Maurice Thorez as general secretary, though it is significant that all the government secretaries were controlled by De Gaulle.

As early as the winter of 1944 a politics of intense strengthening of the State was initiated with a first wave of nationalization; it involved the coal mines of the North and the Pas de Calais (*les Houillères*), Renault which became the

[37] Kupferman, p. 115.

*Régie Nationale*, the merchant navy, air transport, the *Banque de France* and other main banks. 'L'État patron', as it came to be known, controlled prices and production, and those enterprises and firms which had been allowed to carry on trading despite their collaborationist past. By May 1946, a fifth of all industries were owned by the State.

Trade Unions were given more powers with the creation of work councils; the CGT or *Confédération Générale du Travail* and the PC exhorted the working classes to work and produce, while striking became considered antipatriotic: 'la France ne repose plus sur l'alliance de la bourgeoisie et de la paysannerie. Vichy a devalué quelques images. La France repose désormais sur les épaules des travailleurs'.[38]

*The Birth of Tripartism*

On 21 October 1945, De Gaulle was chosen as 'Chef du Gouvernement provisoire de la République Française'. The Communists and the Socialists held the absolute majority in the Deputy Chamber; the Right, however, had not disappeared altogether and it gave its votes to the less Leftist of the parties of the Resistance: the MRP (*Mouvement Républicain Populaire*) or Christian Democrats with Maurice Schumann who, as their president, constituted the third element of the Tripartite government. The MRP was strongly opposed to the Communists and faithful to De Gaulle. It contributed to the dissolution of the Resistance ideal of a united socialist party by imposing a religiously-based division upon those who had previously stood together during the Occupation: the MRP selected and brought into its ranks those Christian members of the Resistance only. Despite having no political past, it was nonetheless the PC's main rival for the title of first party in France. Judt attributes the popularity of the MRP to its insistence upon the importance of the family. He judges that in the postwar context when 'les besoins des familles monoparentales, sans domicile et aux abois, n'avaient jamais été aussi grands', the family agenda had significant political consequences.[39] This political emphasis on the family in the postwar period is reflected in *Les Mandarins* and in *Il rimorso*, particularly in the themes of marriage and motherhood. However, while the MRP in France and the Christian Democrats in Italy were concerned to preserve the traditional

[38] Borne, p. 21- 2.
[39] Judt, p. 106.

family, both de Beauvoir and de Céspedes sought to criticize it. We shall see in Chapter Four how the two authors condemn society's view of a woman's place. Despite being published a good deal later, de Céspedes' novel is set in a time when the DC and the authority of the Catholic Church still largely dominated the country, and the novel shows how this influenced and limited women's lives.

The promotion of a traditional family model in the postwar political agenda was accompanied by a stance that was geared towards economic growth, with Jean Monnet's *plan de modernisation* which De Gaulle ratified in December 1945. Modernization committees were instituted in various sectors such as coal mining, electricity, transport, agriculture and so on. The focus of France's scarce resources fell on key industrial sectors rather than on consumable goods, despite American aid being insufficient and the population still suffering severe hardship, food shortages and lack of coal to keep warm.

De Gaulle's resignation as Head of the provisional government in January 1946 was a result of the difference between his ideas of government dynamics and those of the political parties. De Gaulle wanted the State to be more powerful than the elected assemblies in order to re-establish France's grandeur as a nation; the political parties, and especially the Communists, demanded a wider democracy which would confer all powers, executive and legislative, on the nation's elected assemblies; according to Elgey, it was unequivocal that they wanted to reduce the role of President of the Republic and that of De Gaulle to a 'rôle de potiche'.[40] As a means of countering the nation's amazement and fear at De Gaulle's resignation, politicians set out to show that France could do perfectly well without him, and that in any case the General had been responsible for the current economic and political difficulties. However, the tripartite government was unable to decide on a precise political plan (as De Gaulle had anticipated earlier). Notwithstanding the efforts of the successive presidents of the provisional government of the French IV Republic (the socialists Gouin or Blum, or the Communist Thorez, or the MRP Bidault), the intrinsic internal divisions of a tripartite political organization created utter confusion and the inability to draw a precise line of action. Symptomatic of this (and to counter the unprecedented level of Communist presence in the government from June), was the creation of a political movement in August:

[40] Elgey, p. 106.

l'Union Gaulliste, directed by René Capitant and whose popularity was becoming a serious threat to the existing parties. Aside from what could be seen as squabbling on the political scene, and on a more dramatic and urgent level — though, of course, unequivocally dependent upon the will and efficiency of the wrangling politicians — most of the population in 1946 still lived in misery. There were food shortages, inadequate living quarters with no sanitary facilities, and a huge housing problem. France was running out of resources: the immediate post-war American credit had been spent, thus no long term investment could be made in order to address the problem of supply. In *La Fermeture*, Boudard gives an account of the scarcity of foodstuffs in 1946 and the ensuing daily struggle: 'Et puis toujours depuis six ans, ces éternelles questions de bouffe…les cartes de rationnement, la viande, le lait, les matières grasses qui manquaient dans les poëles à frire du Français libéré au ventre creux.'[41] Similarly, Giroud talks of the general shortages and frustration that year as a kind of justification for the enthusiastic embracing of consumerism that would characterize the next two decades:

> Et qui n'a pas connu la France de cette époque ignore ce qu'est l'appétit de biens de consommation, des bas en nylon aux réfrigérateurs en passant par les disques et les automobiles, pour lesquelles il fallait des licences d'achat, et que l'on attendait un an…
> En 46, c'est simple, en France, il n'y avait rien.[42]

Giroud's concluding words find an echo in Judt's analysis of the mood of the period which, by 1946, had changed from enthusiastic hope at the time of Liberation to a sombre resignation to the fact that recovery would be a long and painful process. She writes:

> Au cours des dix-huit premiers mois qui suivirent la victoire alliée, le climat du continent changea du tout au tout, passant du soulagement devant la perspective de la paix et d'un nouveau départ à une froide resignation et une disillusion croissante face à l'ampleur des tâches à accomplir.[43]

In order to gauge 'l'ampleur des tâches à accomplir', and to remedy the tripartite government's unawareness of the state of its own country's resources,

[41] Alphonse Boudard, *La Fermeture* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1986), p. 14.
[42] Françoise Giroud, *Si Je mens...*(Paris: Stock, 1972), p. 123.
[43] Judt, p. 112.

*L'Institut National de la statistique et des études économiques* or INSEE was created in April that year, and was to become a crucial tool for socio-economic observation and improvement. Several social reforms were put into place, notably the creation of *comités d'entreprise* which meant workers' rights were better represented, and a social security system. *La Sécurité sociale*, created by Pierre Laroque the previous year, was granted to the entirety of the population in May 1946, male or female, wage earners or independent workers. The *Ordonnance du 4 octobre 1945* guaranteed 'les travailleurs et leurs familles contre les risques de toute nature susceptible de réduire ou de supprimer leur capacité de gain, à couvrir les charges de maternité et les charges de famille qu'ils supportent'.[44] At the same time, family allowances which were allocated upon the birth of a second child, and for the duration of school education, together with various maternity bonuses, aimed at encouraging women, who received the right to vote in 1944, to stay at home and have several children. Besides this notable improvement which brought security in the lives and works of citizens, the general and dramatic price increases from July to October saw much discontent, and a significant number of demonstrations were organized in Paris and the provinces.

At international level, it must be noted that while the country was entirely focused on the creation of new laws, decrees and other internal procedures, the problems inherent to the French Union were never addressed, apart from that of Indochina. On 9 March 1945, the Japanese had put an end to France's sovereignty in Indochina, where the French army and administrators had ruled since 1940 under the authority of Vichy. In March 1946, the preliminary Franco-vietnamese convention was signed by Hô Chi Minh; thus the French government formally acknowledged the Democratic Republic of Vietnam as a free state with its own government, its own parliament, its own army and finances, while the Republic of Vietnam was part of the Indochinese Federation and of the French Union.

Moreover, when Elgey appraises that 1946 'marque la pause entre la fin du conflit mondial et le début de la guerre froide',[45] she fails to acknowledge to the full the implications of the events of May that year, and that the 'pause' was very short-lived on the international scene in fact. In spite of the normative

[44] Article cited by Borne, p. 21.
[45] Elgey, p. 151.

regulations that had been agreed between the USA, Great Britain and the USSR at the Potsdam Conference in 1945, and that addressed the treatment and role of their respective zones of occupation in Germany (plus that of France), all through 1946 Russia imposed one single party in its zone: the unified socialist party or SED which gathered Communists and socialists, risking imprisonment if they disagreed. There, the USSR exploited and pushed production intensively for its own use. As a result of this breach of agreement, the US ceased to supply Russia with reparation provisions thus marking the beginning of the open conflict between the capitalist and Marxist systems.

*The Fourth Republic and the Advent of the Cold War*

In January 1947, the socialist Vincent Auriol was elected president: the IV Republic could now legally exist. The four State presidencies at the basis of the French government (*République, Assemblée, Conseil de la République* and *Conseil des Ministres*) were taken on by professional politicians who had played a part under the Third Republic: Auriol, Herriot, Champetier de Ribes and Ramadier respectively. The Resistance ideals looked truly over. Paul Ramadier, also a socialist, became Prime Minister and first *Président du Conseil de la République* and, as such, responsible for the formation of the new government. The Ministry of National Defense was granted to the Communist François Billoux, though quite significantly the key ministries of War, Airforce and Marine were granted to non-Communists. Despite this, Billoux's appointment was met with great concern on the part of the US. Elgey reports that in February 1947 during a secret meeting at the White House, Dean Acheson, then principal advisor to President Truman, declared that France was about to succumb to the USSR's authority in the following terms:

> Quant à la France, les Russes n'ont qu'à secouer la branche à l'heure qu'il leur plaira, pour récolter le fruit. Avec quatre Communistes au gouvernement, dont un à la Défense nationale, avec des Communistes à la tête des administrations, avec des Communistes noyautant l'administration, les usines, l'armée, avec des difficultés économiques empirant sans cesse, la France est mûre pour tomber sous la coupe de Moscou.[46]

[46] Elgey, p. 317.

As early as August 1945, Washington had shown similar disapproval of the French government formation when Truman had welcomed De Gaulle at the White House and had advised him to get rid of his Communist political colleagues — a piece of advice which De Gaulle plainly ignored. The passionate and rather emphatic nature of Acheson's statement clearly foreshadows the fomenting of a climate of fear and paranoia at the near certainty of a Russian invasion of Europe that would characterize the approaching Cold war.

In the meantime, the French population had to recover as best as they could from a terrible winter which had added even more hardship to their daily existences; for weeks canals, roads and railways had come to a halt because of the extreme weather conditions, and farmers were thus unable to deliver their foodstuffs to the cities; wheat crops were destroyed by the ice. The shortage of coal and foodstuffs could be partially countered by American and by British dominion's imports which had to be paid for in hard currency or dollars. Since France was the world's biggest importer of coal, its annual payment deficit to the US reached significant proportions. The dependence upon the US for the import of raw material, machinery, and foodstuffs, but also for American goods in general (which was certainly a sign of economic recovery), was a European phenomenon. In other words, dollars and good relations with the USA would ensure that the population would not starve and that the country's economy would eventually recover.

The first year of the official Fourth Republic also marked the onset of the Madagascan revolt, which Ellis considers as 'arguably the first modern nationalist rising against colonial rule in Africa'.[47] The revolt may be said to have paved the way for the decolonization wars in Algeria, and more generally that of Indochina in the East, that tore apart the French nation from the 1950s to 1962. In the night of 29 to 30 March, the strong and powerful independent Madagascan government massacred around 100 French colonists, who in turn organized themselves into self-defense groups and captured and killed some Madagascans. The insurrection and bloody massacres lasted until November 1948, when the last rebel stronghold fell and the *Mouvement Démocratique de la Révolution Malgache*, or MDRM, was subsequently outlawed by the French

[47] Stephen Ellis, 'Madagascan Insurrection', *The Journal of African History,* 29 (1988), 132-33 (p. 132).

colonial rulers. The Malagasy Uprising is a significant event in de Beauvoir's illustration of intellectual commitment in *Les Mandarins.* The question of its ensuing trials sparks a rapid train of thoughts in Henri's mind which will lead him to re-engage in political writing. He observes:

> Et quand on en aura fini avec Madagascar, il arrivera d'autres choses. Il faut couper court. (…) Mais quand un avion pique du nez, il vaut mieux être le pilote qui essaie de le redresser qu'un passage terrorisé. Faire quelque chose, ne fût-ce que parler, c'était mieux que de rester assis dans un coin avec ce poids obscur sur le coeur (*LM II*, p. 486).

*The Dismissal of the Communists from Government*

It is important to make clear that while Ramadier's decision to dismiss the Communist ministers later that year corresponds in principle to American wishes, it was certainly not motivated by an overall concern with keeping harmonious relationships with the US. Less than two months after the official institution of the Fourth Republic, the difficulties in finding common ground between the ruling parties of the tripartite government became increasingly obvious as the ministers showed little will to compromise and one by one threatened to resign. Moreover, the question of Indochina sparked an initial incentive for the French government to break from the Communists. Truman's determination to stop Russian expansion was shaking international peace profoundly. In response, the Communists all over the world adopted a defensive political strategy, and this new global dimension to their agenda meant that everywhere the interests of Russia took precedence over that of the other nations.

For the first time since Liberation, the PC openly dissociated itself from the government. Two weeks after their initial ratification of Ramadier's politics of integration of Indochina to the *Union Française* (as well as having voted on the amount of military credits to be granted), the PC suddenly made a volte face and announced that they rejected the process altogether.[48] Already the political events of April were foreshadowed by Ramadier and President Auriol whose

[48] In conformity with the Constitution of 27 October 1946, the French army were in charge of security in Indochina, while it was up to the indigenous population to decide on their political future.

entry in his *Journal du septennat* reads*:* 'Autant rompre tout de suite si la formule actuelle n'est pas viable'.[49]

From his retreat at Colombey-les-Deux-Eglises, De Gaulle sensed that the French population wanted him back in power. Thus on 7 April 1947, he created the *Rassemblement du Peuple Français*, which was not a party per se, but an alternative movement which gathered all those who were disillusioned with the post-war years. The immense popularity of the RPF is not surprising: it gave new hope by opposing the current regime systematically and uncompromisingly (even going as far as declaring its illegitimacy). Naturally in the eyes of the French government De Gaulle was becoming a significant rival, and Elgey reports wittily that 'De Gaulle a réussi un exploit: pour la première fois depuis longtemps, les 3 grands partis au pouvoir adoptent la même attitude. Avec une égale violence, ils attaquent De Gaulle'.[50]

The final dismissal of the Communist ministers from the French government on 23 April was eventually motivated by the USSR position at the Moscow session of the Council of Foreign Ministers in March and April. Stalin's belief that the Americans and the British were trying to create an anti-Soviet Western block was manifest in Pravda's rejection of the agreement signed between Bidault, US Foreign Minister Marshall and British Foreign Secretary Bevin. It stipulated that France was to obtain 300 000 tons of coal per month from the Ruhr region, and this would be reconsidered when France took control of the Sarre's economy.

The Belgian and Italian governments also rejected their Communist ministers that year: just as France did, they had experienced the impossible challenge of trying to collaborate with the Communists at national level, while being against them in matters of international politics.

*The Marshall Plan*

In May 1946, Washington ruled that the money lent to France by the US during wartime would not have to be reimbursed. Furthermore, promises of future loans at very low interest rates came with the condition that Paris cancelled all protectionist quotas on importations. However, by June 1947, the new offers made by American State Secretary George Catlett Marshall underscored a

[49] Vincent Auriol, *Journal du septennat,1947-1954, tome I* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1970), p. 157.
[50] Elgey, p. 343.

radical change in the economic relations between France and the US. After the Council of Foreign Ministers, Marshall was convinced that Stalin's interest lay in the weakness and vulnerability of Europe which would offer Communists the opportunity to accede to power. In consequence, the US scheme was geared towards European economic recovery and growth, and towards providing long-term investments rather than pursuing short-term emergency funding. America would supply European countries with goods at their request; the country would then sell the goods, and the money thus generated would be put into a special account, which in France was called *la contrepartie*. The government could not use those funds without prior approval from the US and its advisors and specialists in financial management. It is pertinent to note that the French government's expenditure requests were met positively more often than not, since the Plan Monnet already shared the Marshall Plan's perspective of modernization and economic growth, and thus to a certain extent also encouraged the espousal of America as the model for reconstruction. Quite predictably, the Left saw the Marshall Plan as a US attempt to take control of Europe. The Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Viatcheslav Molotov rejected the Plan on two grounds: firstly because every joining country would have its economic situation assessed, and secondly because Bevin and Bidault insisted that the aid be accompanied by the creation of a unified European economy. Clearly, this level of scrutiny and the establishment of common European resources were incompatible with the strict Soviet command of its economy, and indeed Stalin saw the Plan as a significant threat to Russia. Thus, countries that were politically and economically aligned with the Soviet Union (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Albania) did not benefit from Marshall Aid, but from the USSR's own version of the plan instead: the Molotov Plan, a Soviet-sponsored economic grouping created in 1947 and that was to become the COMECON or Council for Mutual Economic Assistance two years later. In hindsight, the Russian leader's fear at that time was not totally unfounded: France was to benefit considerably from April 1948 (the aid was worth some 280 million dollars), and Elgey reports that as early as December 1947, the US vice State Secretary Lovett had declared that 'l'aide américaine sera suspendue si les Communistes prennent le pouvoir en

France'.[51] Moreover, in his appraisal of the motivations behind the Plan, Judt notes that:

> Tel était le contexte élargi du plan Marshall, un paysage sombre sur le plan de la politique et de la sécurité dans lequel les intérêts américains étaient inextricablement lies à ceux d'un sous-continent fragile et mal en point.[52]

With US financial help confined to the West, the two halves of the European continent were poised to follow radically opposing paths. In addition to the political complications that had led to the dismissal of the Communists from the French government that year, fears that democracy and communism were indeed incompatible (as the writer André Malraux affirmed) grew to be justified as revelations of the atrocities of the Stalinian regime became daily news. In August, the tribunal of Sofia gave a death sentence to Nicolas Petkov, leader of the Bulgarian opposition, who had denounced the torture endured by previous Secretary of Finance Koev at the hand of the Soviet police. The Western press published copies of medical certificates that attested to the torture. Arthur Koestler, the author upon whom Scriassine is supposedly based in *Les Mandarins*,[53] described the methods used for confessions in Russian prisons in his book *Le Zéro et l'infini*; it became a best seller.

The nine representatives of the Communist Party in Europe were summoned to attend the first meeting of the Kominform in Poland on 22 September.[54] They were ordered to dissociate their parties from the Socialists who were accused of collaboration with the US and to liaise closely with the Kominform in order to avoid political mistakes due to lack of contact with the Soviets; they were also given permission to use violence when and where they deemed it necessary. In other words, the meeting confirmed Stalin's determination to exert a strict control over the Communist parties of Europe, and his uncompromising opposition to America's plan.

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[51] Elgey, p. 470.
[52] Judt, p. 123.
[53] See Sally J. Scholz and Shannon M. Mussett, eds, *The Contradictions of Freedom* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), p. 14.
[54] The Kominform was the Communist information bureau. Its aim was to closely monitor the ideological and political developments of Communist nations and parties in Europe (including French and Italian).

*The Social Conflicts of 1947and the Great Fear*

By the autumn of 1947, the world was divided into two enemy blocks: the US and the USSR. In France, the Fourth Republic was threatened by the Communists on one side, and the Gaullists on the other. Some feared Russian danger, others feared American aggression, and a real collective psychosis took hold of the population. Examples of irrationality are countless, and Elgey recounts with humour the explanation given for boxer Marcel Cerdan's weakness during his first fight against Raadik: certainly a steak he had eaten had been poisoned following orders from the FBI. A rumour also spread that Russian planes were dropping arms at night in preparation for the Communist insurrection.[55] At the time of Victory on 8 May 1945, the press homage to Roosevelt and Stalin had been equally laudatory; by 1947, most French saw Stalin as the enemy. At Liberation time, literature was committed and newspapers that specialized in political analysis were very popular. This is reflected in *Les Mandarins* when Henri accepts to associate his newspaper with Robert's leftist party, albeit with a lot of self-questioning. His decision also marks the beginning of the political engulfment of the press in general, and raises the question of intellectual engagement and integrity in society, also an important theme in *Il rimorso*, and one which will be addressed in the final chapter of this thesis. By 1947, writers were rediscovering the concept of 'best-sellers' and escapist literature. Political matters competed with big titles to do with actors and sportsmen, *L'Humanité* readership decreased, that of *France-Soir* increased.[56]

Certainly the decline of the Communists in French public opinion, which was a consequence of the international political events that year, was also fuelled by the PCF's control over the working classes and its advocating of rather vociferous and often violent methods of protestation against the government, an ally of American capitalism. All through 1947 and 1948, there was social conflict against the difficult background of inflation, food shortages, lack of housing, and low incomes. By November 1947, the country was coming to a halt: nearly all of the metallurgical and building industries were on strike, as well as the railway and coalmines. The duration of the strikes and the

[55] See Elgey, p. 447.
[56] In Chapter Eight, the portrayals of the evolution of the press in *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* will be analyzed and compared.

realization that the government would not give way to their demands were cause for concern amongst some coal miners whose families were severely affected by the lack of income. Despite this, the National Strike Committee created by the PC prevented them from resuming work, sometimes using violence. The longer the strike lasted, the less popular it became and by December, the Committee had to issue the order to resume work. The cessation of the strikes had everything do with the workers' unwillingness to pursue the fight, and nothing whatsoever with governmental intervention. Significantly, the events had caused a scission in the unity of the French working classes, and the non-Communist members of the CGT accused the others of political manipulation: the strikes had not only been motivated by social and human reasons (such as low wages and work conditions) but also, and perhaps more importantly, by the war against the 'American party' in Europe. The CGT remained in the hands of the PC, while the non-Communist members formed the very popular CGT-FO (*Force Ouvrière*) which welcomed material assistance from American Trade Unions in order to build new offices and employ more personnel.

The same winter, more foreign political events added to the obsession with a possible imminent Russian invasion. Within the space of two months, all opposition parties in Bulgaria, Romania and Poland were dissolved. Nicolas Petkov, the leader of the agrarian movement, was executed in Bulgaria, and King Michel of Rumania was forced to abdicate. In February 1948, the Czechoslovakian Communist party seized control of the country. This coup d'état terrified the French Socialists who were very close to their Czechoslovakian colleagues. They estimated that what had just happened in Prague could very well happen in any democracy. [57] For them, it became clear that only the Americans could prevent Stalin's armies from invading Europe.

On 17 March 1948, the Treaty of Brussels was signed by France, Great Britain, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg. This led to the Berlin Blockade from 24

[57] The non-Communist ministers of Czechoslovakia had resigned in the hope that the president of the Republic, the Liberal Benès, would dismiss the Communist government and its leader Klement Gottwald. However, the plan backfired dramatically as Gottwald continued in his function, formed the new government and gave the majority of the posts to his politician friends. Following this Communist triumph, the borders were closed, all passports declared void, all bank accounts blocked. The opposition newspapers were forced to cease trading, and companies employing more than 50 people became automatically nationalized. Lastly, the Social-Democrat Ian Masaryk who had somehow managed to retain his post of Foreign Affairs Minister, met his death by falling through the window of the Czerny Palace: the question of whether this was an act of suicide or assassination remains a mystery.

June 1948 to 12 May 1949 which became a symbol of the free world fighting openly against the Soviet regime for the first time.[58]

*The Social Conflicts of 1948 and Anti-communism*

In June 1948, coalminers began to strike in the North and Pas-de-Calais to protest against working and living conditions that were slightly better than the previous year, but still very hard nonetheless. By October, the movement had spread nationwide. When the government made redundant the director of the North Coalmines who was renowned for his Leftist views, the strike action became more political and orientated towards the condemnation of the Marshall Plan as a whole. Violence grew everywhere, war artillery was deployed in order to regain control of the mines, and the CRS intervened. The strikes ended at the end of November with massive economic losses and tragic human consequences. The workers who had taken part in the strikes had to wait up to two years before getting their jobs back. In 1953, 700 coal miners who had been made redundant because of their actions in the protests were forbidden to ever work again in the mines. They were eventually allowed to keep living in the dwellings that were property of the *Houillères*, the national coalmines, thanks to workers' solidarity. As in 1947, miners in 1948 were angry with the Trade Union leaders for having led them into actions with such dramatic consequences for no appreciable outcome whatsoever.

In a radical change from Liberation time, by 1948 the French had become largely anti-Communist following national and international events. The

[58] The Treaty of Brussels established a common military organization, which stipulated that if any of the signatories were to be victims of an aggression, the other member States would provide help, be it military or otherwise, as and when needed. It was a purely European mutual defence pact and primarily aimed at preventing a resurgent Germany, a possibility that the Marshall Plan made all too feasible since it considered the recovery and participation of the German economy to be the sine qua non of European reconstruction. Moreover, considering the political climate, the treaty of Brussels quite clearly made provision for a strong defence against any unwanted Soviet intervention in the member states too. The agreement was signed by France, Great-Britain, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg, and came to be considered as the precursor of NATO which the USSR regarded as a much greater threat to its expansionist politics. It put a significant strain on the relationship between the four nations which were occupying Germany: USA, Great Britain, France and the USSR. Following this, Russia blocked all the roads and river accesses and thus all food supplies between Berlin and Western Germany on 24 June 1948, the day that the new currency was to be introduced in the Western zones of Berlin in a bid to fight inflation. The Soviet Union went back on the agreement of 1944, and the Berliners would starve until the Allies agreed to leave Berlin, and abandon their project of creating a federal Republic in Western Germany. However, thanks to Truman and Marshall's determination, and American and British remarkable organization of airlifts, by the time the blockade was lifted on 12 May 1949 the amount of supplies flown into the city actually exceeded that previously brought by rail.

political parties agreed that Communist government equalled dictatorship, and the Soviet danger had to be firmly controlled. All filmed press coverage of the strikes of 1948 was highly monitored and other news reports were also scrutinized for possible Communist propaganda. With its stubborn, unconditional defense of the USSR and its politics of non-tolerance of criticism or even discussion, the PC became further isolated.

On 4 April 1949, the NATO Atlantic Pact became the first diplomatic agreement whose direct aim was to stop the spread of communism.[59]

*The Question of the Soviet Camps*

Victor Kravchenko's autobiography *I Chose Freedom*, which contains extensive revelations on the Soviet prison system and use of slave labour, was translated into French the previous year and its simple style made it accessible to the mass public. The PC reacted violently and the Party intellectuals provided false testimonies as well as fabricated documents in an attempt to counter the publication's immediate huge success. As a result, Kravchenko sued the French Communist weekly *Les Lettres françaises* for libel. In the course of the trial that became known as 'the trial of the century' and which lasted from 24 January to 4 April 1949, many writers, intellectuals and scientists who had played a significant role during the Resistance and thus were highly regarded came to testify that the USSR was the country of Socialism, and of freedom indeed, and as such it could never sanction the practice of labour camps. A KGB officer even alleged that Kravchenko had been diagnosed as mentally ill. The prosecution lawyers called on witnesses who had survived the Soviet Gulags and, arguably, its most powerful argument lay in Margaret Buber-Neumann's testimony which corroborated Kravchenko's allegations about the essential similarities between the two dictatorships.[60] Although the Court declared itself to be unqualified to pass judgment on the

[59] NATO united France, Great-Britain, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Portugal and the USA in a defensive military alliance in case of aggression on any of its member states.

[60] Margaret was the widow of German Communist Heinz Neumann who had fled to the USSR after Hitler had come to power and who had been shot during the Great Purges of 1937 in Moscow. She was deported to Siberia in 1938, and then handed to the Gestapo in 1940 and sent to Ravensbruck. She survived both Soviet and Nazi concentration camps.

Soviet regime, nonetheless it deplored that *J'Ai choisi la liberté* made no mention of the economic achievements of the Soviet countries. It ruled that Kravchenko had been unfairly libeled and he was awarded the symbolic one franc for damages — 'tellement symbolique qu'il en devenait insultant' comments Judt.[61] Yet de Beauvoir declared at the time that the whole trial was 'une operation antiCommuniste organisée par Washington'.[62] The hastiness of her accusation was counteracted later when she wrote *Les Mandarins* and she actually used the discovery of the Soviet work camps (end of 1949 in real life, but mid-1946 in the text) as a benchmark in her narrative to reveal the depth of the ideological intricacies that the intelligentsia faced in the political climate of the time.

That same year, David Rousset, whose own experiences of Nazi concentration camps were published in *Les Jours de notre mort* in 1947, gathered his deportation friends in order to launch a commission of enquiry on the Soviet camps. He successfully sued the chief editor of *Les Lettres françaises* for having dismissed the motivations behind his project as a fantasy.

*The Country at the Turn of the Decade*

Modernization had yet to influence the lives of individuals, and in 1951 significant housing problems meant that one French citizen out of seven was looking for a home, many lived in slums, and over half of the population estimated their everyday conditions to be inferior still to that of prewar years.[63] The American administration's proposal to lend individuals some funds from the Marshall Plan in order to build their houses had been stopped in its tracks by the General Secretary of the United Nations Trygvie Lee's appeal for reinforcement of military aid in Korea in July 1950.

In France, the postwar period had not brought security, but atomic threat and fear, and the conviction of imminent world domination by one of the two opposing forces: Russia or America. In *Les Mandarins*, the massive technological and economic changes the Marshall Plan brought from 1947, in effect the forerunners to the Cold War, are anticipated by Scriassine who also predicts the world's split into two opposing superpowers and the mandatory choices it implies. The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the US

[61] Judt, p. 261.
[62] See Elgey, p. 502.
[63] See Elgey, p. 625-26.

in August 1945, and the US growing economic, and even cultural, hold of the country, and the discovery of the Soviet work camps are points of reference in the novel. At a time when the US cultivated its image of liberator and promoter of Europe with the economic aid of the Marshall Plan, and when the USSR was seen by the Left as the supreme model for effective socialism and collective fairness, the complexities of the political climate are reflected in the moral dilemma that Robert and Henri face in the middle of the narrative in Chapter Seven, when the implications of whether or not to publish the existence of Soviet work camps split the two friends.

As a reaction to the disillusions of the postwar period and the oppressive climate of a strictly bipolar world division, the gap between the old and the new generation widened, and France's social mores were shaken. The young wanted to create their own world, since the one they lived in only brought them disappointment. From those living in slums in the suburbs to the students of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, they gathered into groups, giving rise to the phenomenon of *bandes* or gangs. These were in effect an alternative universe which provided a sense of belonging and stability, and in which they could oppose the old bourgeois values by dressing in a non conformist way and dancing to be-bop, by breaking into impromptu jazz jam sessions, and by claiming their support for Existentialism, even though most lacked a real grasp of the philosophical concept. In a television interview in 1975, de Beauvoir harshly criticized the students (or pseudo-students) of Saint-Germains-des-Prés by pointing out that taking refuge in one's own alternative universe in order to escape anguish and disappointment was fundamentally against the principles of Existentialism; thus what they represented and defended were in fact incompatible with the real philosophers' ideas which considered the individual's acceptance of his/her own responsibility (and the ensuing anguish) as the fundamental basis for the development of his/her identity.[64] The Church viewed Existentialism and its decidedly atheist stance as a worse danger than rationalism, especially in a time when the clergy's presence in people's daily life was diminishing.

The concept of responsibility that is intrinsic to Existentialist philosophy necessarily presupposes that the writer can only be a writer per se if his/her

[64] Interview conducted by Jean-Louis Servan-Schreiber. *Simone de Beauvoir: Pourquoi je suis féministe.* Arte Vidéo. France Culture, 1975 [on DVD-ROM].

literature is *engagée* or committed to the social struggle. Accordingly in January 1950, Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty took the decision to publish details of the existence of 10 million prisoners in Russia. In *Les Temps Modernes,* they condemned the Soviet practice of labour camps, but also stressed that this denunciation should not incur a break with the USSR 'car elle [Russia] se trouve grosso modo située, dans l'équilibre des forces, du côté de celles qui luttent contre les formes d'exploitation par nous dénoncées'.[65] This is reflected in *Les Mandarins* in de Beauvoir's corresponding illustration of the utter impossibility of keeping one's integrity in a political world of two extremes, and of the need to make ideological concessions as the Cold War begins to take its toll on society at the turn of the 1950s. As Keefe comments:

> When he [Henri] and Dubreuilh bury their differences barely a year later, Scriassine's earlier claim that one is obliged to accept one or the other of the two world blocs in its entirety looks more plausible, in that Dubreuilh argues that they could only achieve anything by throwing in their lot with the Communists.[66]

Although the Communist Party found itself in a sort of a ghetto at the turn of the decade, having lost 4/5 of its members in the space of five years as well as its image of holder of the supreme truth, its intellectual influence was still very much alive. Sartre's political stance grew closer to the Communist Party in 1952 during the Henri Martin Affair. The Marine soldier Henri Martin was arrested by the military police in 1950 on suspicion of sabotage. He was proven not guilty, but his propagandist activities in the naval base of Toulon where he urged his colleagues to demand a ceasefire in Indochina cost him a five-year prison sentence. The disproportion between his actions and this sentence provoked a general uproar and he became the symbol of the French population's protest against the war in Indochina. Politicians, intellectuals and the PCF organised defence committees, but despite a huge campaign, Martin was not freed until 1953, the year Sartre published *L'Affaire Henri Martin.* Considering the writing period of *Les Mandarins,* this undoubtedly affected the portrayal of the PC in the narrative, and Robert's and Henri's final decision to return to politically engaged writing reflects a rapprochement with the Communists. Their re-commitment, or the fact that both resume their roles as

[65] Cited in Elgey, p. 630.
[66] Keefe, p. 130.

committed literati, is stimulated by the events of the Madagascar Insurrection of 1947- 48 in the novel, and points to these characters' overall opposition to the USA and their support of the USSR despite de Beauvoir's criticism of both powers in the narrative.

In *Les Mandarins,* de Beauvoir exposes the dilemmas and reactions of French left-wing intellectuals in the immediate post-war period of social and political reconstruction. The period depicted in the narrative is marked, as we have seen, by a general sense of disappointment which replaced the hopes at Liberation time, and by the division of the world into two opposing powers and the terror of a third conflict. It is also a period of governmental instability, of violent social unrest and numerous strikes, and an era which gave foreboding signs of future unrest in the French colonies.

# Chapter Two

## Italy: From the End of the War to Early 1960s

This chapter gives an account of the historical and political events in Italy that have led up to, and influenced, the type of society de Céspedes depicts in her novel. In addition to being a social testimony of its time, *Il rimorso* conveys, just like *Les Mandarins*, some significant socio-political criticisms that can be fully grasped and appreciated only with prior historical knowledge. De Céspedes' novel is set in Italy, over a decade after the era that de Beauvoir captured in France, and it depicts a society in the grip of the centre-right Christian Democrats. In contrast with *Les Mandarins*, its narrative span is strikingly brief, from 9 October to 25 November 1961, a period of just under two months. As a result, far fewer historical events appear in the novel compared with de Beauvoir's which contains direct references to the US dropping of the atomic bomb, or the discovery of the Soviet work camps. Thus de Céspedes put much more emphasis on the political climate at the time, rather than on the actual events in political life. She also introduces in her narrative scenes of reminiscence that counter the narrow limits of this time frame, and actually encompass the same period described in de Beauvoir's novel (when Guglielmo recalls his first encounter with Isabella in 1945 and later with Francesca;[67] when the two female characters remember their childhood before the war in the first part of their epistolary exchange).[68] The present analysis covers the period stretching from the end of the war through the 1950s, and it concludes with five years of the 'Economic Miracle', from 1958 to 1963. By doing so, it will provide the background necessary to reveal how the treatment of the past in *Il rimorso*, addressed in Chapter Five, conveys in fact a criticism of the embracing of American influence. We shall see how Italian society was radically transformed by a model of progress coming from

[67] *Il rimorso*, pp. 487- 91.
[68] pp. 37, 45- 6, 73, 99- 101.

the West, by industrial development and new technologies, and how this affected the lives of individuals. This will help understand the nature of the anxieties suffered in the novel by Francesca and Gerardo, and how these are used to denounce the values of consumerism and society's denial of individuality. This study will discuss the political harnessing of the media, which is reflected in the novel's portrayals of the press, and of the place and function of the literati analyzed in Chapter Eight. We shall also see how the influence of the Catholic Church in Italian society in the 1950s contributed to legal stagnation with regard to family laws. This is reflected in the novel's treatment of the position of women discussed in Chapters Four and Five with particular reference to the theme of motherhood, and in the criticism of the Catholic Church as Chapter Six will argue. *Il rimorso* also illustrates the fact that by the early 1960s, the authority of the Church in private matters was being increasingly challenged. In Chapter Seven, I shall argue that Francesca's fate certainly reflects such changes; however, taking into consideration the following account of the social climate and the status of women at the time, it will also become clear that her character remains more inspirational than testimonial.

*In the Wake of the War*

When member of the Action Party and deputy commander of Resistance forces Ferruccio Parri was appointed Prime Minister in June 1945, there prevailed amongst many Italians a new sense of hope; the spirit of the Resistance had finally come to power, and the fight for a socially fair democracy and state in the years 1943-5 would not have been in vain. When Parri resigned in December 1945, following the withdrawal of the Liberals' support, Alcide De Gasperi took his place. Between 1946 and 1948, a conflict of interests and ideologies saw the development of two clashing fronts in the coalition government: on one hand the Christian Democrats influenced by the United States and defending the interests of the employers or the capitalist classes; on the other hand the Communists and Russia, focusing on the workers.

*Christian Democrats and the Capitalist Class*

The situation of the Italian capitalist class in the wake of the war is radically different from that of the French; industrialists in France suffered the great

purges for their allegiance to the Vichy regime and collaboration with the Nazis, and there the industrial sector underwent a wave of mass nationalization. Italian industry, on the other hand, remained the stronghold of small firms and artisan shops at one end, and of an agglomeration of production and capital at the other. However, while capitalist monopoly remained in the same hands, its powers and realm of control in the firms were now being challenged by the working-class movement. In order to counter the Socialist and Communist demands for workers' rights, and to regain control of their industries, employers turned to the Christian Democrat Party. The social and economic dichotomy between capitalists and workers, employers and employees, had found corresponding political representations. The ferocious clashes between these two opposing fronts increased in the following years.

The Christian Democrats, despite the decidedly capitalist endorsement just mentioned, aimed at encompassing all social classes. With the support of the Catholic Church and its lay organizations, Italian believers were recruited en masse amongst artisans and shopkeepers, state employees, white collar workers, small businessmen or the *ceti medi* (urban middle class), peasant proprietors and the rather less affluent Catholic workers to whom insurance, social assistance and legal services were offered. The Christian Democrats based their policies allegedly on the limitation of power of the great monopolies and the defence of consumers and producers alike, but they also aimed at encouraging and protecting new production and work initiatives and they promised to safeguard property; in this way, their programme was resolutely anti-Communist. Undoubtedly their most efficient argument in order to reach a vast Italian public who was struggling to overcome the effects of the war and striving to go back to some sort of normality was a reaffirmation of the bastion of Catholic morality, and an appeal to the protection of Christian family values. The party united with the church to address family problems and to offer a variety of services such as financial aid, inquiries to reunite separated families, assistance to children, and so on, via a huge parish network.

*The Left and the Working Class*

By 1947, the number of Italians that were unemployed reached 1.6 million.[69] Those returning from war camps in Germany joined the mass of teenagers, ex-partisans, demobbed Fascists and regular army soldiers in search of work. In the immediate postwar years, the *Partito Comunista Italiano*, which had played a key role in the Resistance, enjoyed growing membership. Foot comments that 'millions of Italians flocked to join the PCI, making the party the biggest Communist Party (and perhaps the biggest party, full stop) in the Western world'.[70]

Just like the Christian Democrats and the Church, the Communist Party sections offered immediate practical help for individuals. The autarchic nature of the party on a social level is noticeable in the tendency of the working class communities to turn to the Party sections for those matters traditionally dealt with by the local government offices (housing, jobs). On a political level, however, autarky was precisely what the leader of the Italian Communist Party Palmiro Togliatti wanted to avoid between 1945 and 1947 by focusing on inter-party agreements in his bid for the nation's recovery and for new reforms. In fact, the PCI had to make many concessions in this period in order to keep the alliance with the Christian Democrats and De Gasperi, and in order to retain their position in the government. These compromises were sometimes in direct opposition to Communist ideology, such as for example the agreement to carry through the Concordat in Article 7 of the Constitution.[71]

These were times of severe hardship for factory workers, and their only representational voices in the factory organizations and trade unions were silenced by the establishment of a national regulatory system. The agreements of wages at national level, the guaranteed minimum wages, the increased minimum holiday period, and the extra month wage at the end of every year were in fact double-edged social improvements. Following the agreement of the CGIL (*Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro*) with the *Confindustria* (employers) to a partial unblocking of the veto on sackings, the

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[69] Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy 1943-1980* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1990), p. 80.

[70] John Foot, *Modern Italy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), p. 180.

[71] The Concordat was a part of the Lateran Pacts agreed in 1929 between Mussolini and Gasparri. It established Catholicism as the religion in Italy, and granted various privileges to the Church. Religious education was guaranteed in schools, and the law validated church marriages. Clark also comments that the Concordat 'ensured that the Church could continue to run her own organization for the laity' and that this was perhaps 'the most important provision of all'. Martin Clark, *Modern Italy 1871- 1982* (Harlow: Longman, 1984), p. 255.

number of unemployed industrial workers increased by more than 250,000 in 1946, reaching over one million.[72] The Resistance dream of an equal and fair society was being crushed by a balance of wealth which tilted heavily to the employers' side. A limited number of powerful companies and a restricted business élite had control over Italy's capital and industrial production. Social class divisions were reinforced and deepened as the already existing gap between the privileged and the working classes widened.

*The New Republic and the Constitution*

The elections of 2nd June 1946 were the first free general elections after over twenty years of the Fascist regime, and for the very first time, Italian women were allowed to take part, as women had the previous year in France. Morris observes that

> (…) across the political spectrum, the idea that women should get the vote was no longer regarded as a contentious issue. In 1946 it was with great pride and in huge numbers that they queued up at the ballot boxes for the first time as full Italian citizens.[73]

Italy became a republic, and the Christian Democrats, endorsed by the Catholic Church, enjoyed a vast majority in the new Assembly which drew up the republican Constitution.

However, despite a number of innovatory articles, such as the right to work for all Italians or the right for workers to take part in the management of their workplace, in reality any legal improvements came to a relative halt between 1945 and 1960. The division introduced by the *Corte di Cassazione* in February 1948 reinforced the status quo of the Law: articles requiring immediate action and labeled 'norme precettizie' were distinguished from those labeled 'norme programmatiche' which would be dealt with at no specified time, but sometime in the future. Ginsborg points out that in this way, 'many Fascist laws and codes in clear contradiction to the constitution were

[72] Ginsborg, p. 96.
[73] Penelope Morris, ed., *Women in Italy, 1945-1960* (New York: MacMillan, 2006), p. 2.

never repealed'.[74] The main victims of this stasis were clearly women. As Naldini states:

> most of the principles contained in the penal code of 1930, and also especially the civil code of 1942, continued to regulate family relations in the new democratic Italian republic until in 1975 family reform law modified the section concerning the family.[75]

The portrayals of Francesca's and Isabella's marriages in *Il rimorso* amount to a criticism of the immobility of the legal system during this period, and they expose the consequences on a private level of right-wing political support of the Catholic Church with its traditional view of the family as an untouchable bastion. Morris rightly assesses that:

> (…) when the legal reforms of the period 1945-1960 are compared with the radical revisions of laws in the 1960s and 1970s they appear really quite minor and it is not surprising that these years have been characterized as a period of immobility for Italian women.[76]

For example, Article 559 of the penal code which punished a wife's adultery more severely than that of her husband was upheld by the court until 1961.[77] Therefore it is not surprising that in her novel set in the same year, de Céspedes should deal with the theme of extra-marital relationships by opposing Isabella's views to Francesca's, or those of tradition to the reality of women's lives. When the bill that deputy Teresa Noce had put forward in 1948 became law in 1950 (albeit in a more limited form), paid leave before and after the birth of a child as well as the prohibition of dismissal during pregnancy and for one year after the birth of a child became guaranteed for working mothers. However, any notion of unfair dismissal was brazenly ignored by employers who did not hesitate to sack their female employees as soon as they married. It is also noteworthy that, until 1971 when it was extended to all working mothers, this law did not include home workers, which constituted a large part of the female workforce, and thus was relevant to only a limited percentage of the population. Divorce remained illegal until 1970. As for the right to birth

[74] Ginsborg, p. 100.
[75] Manuela Naldini, *The Family in the Mediterranean Welfare States* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003), p. 73.
[76] Morris, p. 5.
[77] The sanction for female adultery was up to a year's imprisonment, whereas male adultery was very much tacitly accepted, if not expected.

control and the question of women's welfare, Saraceno notes that 'the fascist laws prohibiting the use, sale, and dissemination of information about contraception were repealed, and women's health centers were set up by the State as late as 1975'.[78] The right to abortion was granted in 1978, although under restricted conditions and to be carried out only in public hospitals. Mention must be made of the Communist deputy Giovanni Grilli who presented an amendment to Article 29 in 1947, asking that marriage not be declared indissoluble. Despite a huge uproar, the amendment was very narrowly passed, but there remained the fact that a woman rejected by her husband lost all financial support and even her children if he said so. She was also left publicly shamed for being separated. Married women were completely dependent on their husbands; notwithstanding Grilli's amendment, should their marital situations become unbearable, divorce was still impossible and the dissolution of their marriages by the Catholic Church via the Sacra Rota was a feasible option to only a privileged few. It is reasonable to suggest that in *Il rimorso*, which is set in 1961, the fact that Francesca decides to become financially independent, and that she is able to leave her husband in the end, is facilitated by the social status of her marriage. Moreover, as we shall see in Chapter Four, the death of her only son at an early age allows for Francesca's departure to be seen not as a mother's neglect (since, as a woman, she would have no rights over her offspring), but as a positive step towards female emancipation from patriarchal authority.

*The PCI vs. the Government*

The second half of 1946 saw a climate of social unrest. General strikes broke out all over the country in protest against the hardship of living conditions in a country in the grip of unemployment and inflation. The following year, two main factors urged De Gasperi to do away with the coalition government on 31 May: firstly, the Church hierarchy was becoming concerned with the presence of the left in the government; secondly American foreign policy, also responsible for American aid, pushed for their removal. In fact, as Foot notes, these were sure signs that 'the Cold War was beginning to shape Italian

[78] Chiara Saraceno, 'Shifts in Public and Private Boundaries: Women as Mothers and Service Workers in Italian Daycare', *Feminist Studies*, 10 (1984), 7-29 (p. 10).

politics'.[79] Moreover, it seems likely that the situation in France encouraged De Gasperi's decision: as mentioned in the previous chapter, following a similar political and economic crisis (though without the church's intervention), the Communists had been successfully excluded from the French government earlier the same month.

When in September 1947 the Communists were summoned to attend the first meeting of the Kominform in Poland, both the French and the Italian Parties stood accused of having made too many concessions to the politics of the bourgeoisie in order to remain in governments. Stalin was determined to exert strict control over the Communist parties of the world, and he gave them the directive to oppose all America's plans in a systematic and unreserved manner. Although he felt reluctant to do so, Togliatti accepted Stalin's decree.

*Political Associationism*

The nature of the relationship between the Christian Democrats and the Church that appears from the functioning of their affiliated organizations within Italian society of the late 1940s and early 1950s is one of mutual benefit. Firstly, the Vatican's conspicuous influence on the Christian Democrat's organizations in the late 1940s made them effectively Catholic organizations. Secondly, the Christian Democrats relied on the Church's explicit political support at election times, therefore on the votes of the members of its organizations, and on the mobilization of further support thanks to their political activism within the community.

The Church's mighty sprawling organization *Azione Cattolica* was divided into sections depending on sex and age: men, women, young men and boys, and, by far the largest section, young women and girls. For the young, the organization offered prayer meetings and Bible classes. Its educational and recreational institution, the POA or *Pontifica Opera di Assistenza*, organized seaside and mountain camps, sports clubs, kindergartens, after-school clubs or *doposcuole* for the 6-12, and the *case del fanciullo* and *della fanciulla* for teenagers in need of assistance. For adults, activities centered on proselytizing and focused on the defence of the family and public morality, and on the Christian education of children. There also existed a network of cinemas showing only films that had been received the Church authorities' approval. Indeed the huge web of

[79] John Foot, *Modern Italy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), p. 180.

Catholic associations was strictly controlled by Pius XII and the church hierarchy. From issues of birth, death, sex, marriage, contraception, to norms of clothing and decency, cinematographic censorship and the discouragement of dancing, the church provided a firm set of rules for its members.[80] In Part II of this thesis, we shall see that in her novel, de Céspedes challenges this set of rules and, with the character of Isabella in particular, she questions the feasibility of abiding by a stringent Catholic morality within the changing social context of the early 1960s.

The presence and ensuing psychological impact of the Church in the lives of Italian is perhaps best exemplified by the problem of the absence of state provision for the care of the very young and of the elderly. The responsibility of local nursery schools was left entirely in the hands of the parish priest, and families had to turn to Catholic welfare institutions for their elders.[81] *Azione Cattolica'*s charitable work and its emphasis on family and children welfare were particularly attractive to Italian women who had the opportunity to mobilize and offer their contribution in the CIF or *Centro Italiano Femminile* established in 1944. In the countryside, the *Coldiretti*, a Christian Democrat collateral organization created by Paolo Bonomi in 1944 to defend the interests of peasant proprietors, encouraged individuals aged between 16 and 30 to learn and use new farming methods. Their active sub-sections included *Gioventù dei campi* and *Donne rurali*, and in accordance with the Church and with their political party, they emphasized the necessity for anti-Communist campaigning.

Despite the Communist Party's stigmatization by the Christian Democrats and the United States in the early 50s and during the years of the Cold War, the PCI's popularity remained undisputed; there is evidence of its success in the various organizations which carried on prospering, bringing members together and infiltrating every area of civil society. Foot gauges the scale of the party's place in Italian society by linking its exclusion from the government with the rapid expansion and reinforcement of Communist sub-cultures throughout the 1950s. He comments that:

[80] For a more detailed account of Catholic Action, see 'The Catholic Church in Italian Society', in Ginsborg, pp. 168- 170.

[81] There existed a huge network of hospitals, nursing homes and old people's homes built and run by the Church.

> The PCI was not just a political organization, but a state within a state, with party schools, newspapers, radio stations, sports and leisure organizations, women's groups, holiday homes, magazines, festivals and much, much more. [82]

Both Communists and Socialists could work in the *Case del Popolo* or 'Houses of the People', where, for example, they held meetings, showed films, offered childcare and sports and other activities. Some even served as medical centres and public baths. Consequently, the *case* were crucially important to community life, and they could be found mainly in the central regions, the smaller towns and the countryside. It is noteworthy that in a time when the Resistance ideals of justice and solidarity were rapidly becoming Utopian, many case were in fact laboriously built by the local militants between 1953 and 1955, after the government sold the original buildings by public auction.[83]
An important event in the local Communist Party's calendar was the *Festa dell'Unità.* A significant manifestation of the extent of the Communist presence, the *festa* was an opportunity to attract considerable numbers of non-Communists too. The money raised by the events was used for the PCI newspaper, *L'Unità*.
The most important collateral organizations which encouraged Communist sub-cultures were the ANPI (National Association of Ex-partisans) and the UDI (*Unione delle Donne Italiane* or Union of Italian Women). Just like its political rival the CIF (see above), the UDI was created in 1944 in view of the granting of the vote to women, and it published the first edition of *Noi Donne* in Naples the same year. By 1949, it counted over a million members.[84]
Women of the UDI were engaged in petitions for public housing and for peace, assistance to the sick and the elderly during the winter months, providing help and solidarity with women workers, the organization of children's camps, bus trips and so on.

*Women and the Family*

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[82] John Foot, *Modern Italy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), p. 180.
[83] These *case* were buildings that had been taken from the local Fascist parties at the end of the war. In 1952, they were deemed government property. See Ginsborg, p. 196.
[84] See Rosalia Colombo Ascari, 'Feminism and Socialism in Kuliscioff's writings', in *Mothers of Invention,* ed. by Robin Pickering-Iazzi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1995), pp. 1- 25 (p. 20).

As mentioned earlier, de Céspedes novel *Il rimorso* captures a period of Fascist legacy over the judiciary system, and this was very real and palpable in the role and in the individual freedom granted — or rather denied — to women. They continued to face the obstacles to independence that were established during Mussolini's regime long into the postwar era. Willson notes that, as late as the end of the 1950s,

> beliefs about the inferiority of women continued to pervade Italian society. Court judgements reinforced the idea that the male head of family was in charge of his wife, with the right even to read her private correspondence or to prevent her from going out to work.[85]

The steadfastness of the views held by the Catholic Church, in particular those relating to moral conduct, the family, and sexuality, is symptomatic of the Church's growing alarm at the rise of consumerism and capitalist modernization under increasing American influence. It is effectively a response to what it considered 'the moral aberrations of individuals, caught up in their pleasure-seeking selfishness and materialism'.[86] For instance, the article which prohibited spreading contraceptive information applied until 1971. This meant that 'once the Pill appeared (available in the US from 1960) it could not be prescribed for contraceptive purposes in Italy' and that 'the only legal contraceptive was the condom, albeit still presented as protection against venereal disease'.[87]

Although the model of the Soviet proletarian family promoted by the PCI resembled that of the traditional Catholic family on many points — obeying a rigid morality, monogamy, and having numerous children — there existed crucial variations between the two approaches. Morris comments that the advocating of a largely traditional kind of family by the PCI was in fact motivated by the need to avoid accusations of immorality.[88] The function of the family within the community and its degree of commitment outside the home appeared to be the main source of contention. On the one hand, the Church and the Christian Democrats promoted a view of family duties that was primarily

[85]Perry Willson, *Women in Twentieth Century Italy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 124.
[86] Penelope Morris, 'Introduction', in *Women in Italy. 1945- 1960*, ed. by P. Morris (New York: Macmillan, 2006), pp. 1-20 (p. 12).
[87] Willson, 'Moving into Town', p. 125.
[88] Morris, p. 7.

internal or inward looking and its principal aim was to foster spiritual values and preserve harmony within its unit. This was manifest in the church's strict position on the indissolubility of marriage and in its stressing of parents' duties to educate their children in a Christian manner, thus ensuring perpetuation of the model. On the other hand, Communist ideology dictated that all families should fight isolation and put their resources together for the community's collective good. The encouragement of women's work outside the home, whether married or not, was severely criticized by the Church because it would inevitably result in the disruption of the sacrosanct familial unit. When compared with Catholic ideology and Christian Democrats' treatment of the place of women in society, it is evident that the PCI showed, as Morris assesses, 'a greater sensitivity to women's concerns'. However, she also points out that, from 1945 to 1960, 'both the DC and PCI upheld a largely traditional view of women'.[89] In fact, it is significant that while Communist ideology encouraged women's work outside the home and advocated equality between spouses, it also determined that the Socialist revolution would automatically take care of old prejudices and women's issues. It meant that women's rights did not need to be addressed separately, and that the PCI could conveniently avoid pronouncing itself on such pressing subjects as divorce. We shall see in Chapter Four that de Beauvoir refused to be labeled a feminist up to 1971 precisely because of this belief in socialist development.

The Catholic and the Communist visions of the ideal family presented some ambiguities. On the one hand Pope Pius XII promoted a very traditional image of motherhood, that of the mater dolorosa sacrificing herself for the preservation of her family in the face of such demons as Communism and modernism. On the other hand, the Church's ban on the involvement of women in politics was overturned in 1945, and this put great emphasis on their participation in the new Italian democratic society — and indeed, as we have seen, they voted in great numbers the following year. With the Church's endorsement of the Christian Democrat party, Catholic female associations such as the CIF expected their members to vote accordingly and independently. This sometimes meant running the risk of taking a separate political stance from their Socialist husbands, for example, and thus of disrupting the family harmony they were supposed to safeguard. Furthermore, the popularity of

[89] Morris, p. 8.

Catholic associations amongst women meant that the time spent campaigning for their rights, promoting their own visions of womanhood or simply assisting the disadvantaged, could not be time dedicated to the nurturing of their own homes. This issue is similar to that faced by Communist women.

*The DC and the Elections of 1948*

The April 1948 election saw a Christian Democrat victory: they obtained 48.5% of the votes and an absolute majority in the Chamber of Deputies (305 seats out of 574). The Democratic Popular Front, which united Communists and Socialists, got 31% of the votes, with 140 Communist deputies and 41 Socialist deputies in the Chamber. It is reasonable to suggest that the overwhelming success of the DC in the April 1948 elections does not entirely reflect the population's support of the party's political agenda per se. Rather, these results reflect in great part the impact on the population at the time of American, Catholic and Christian Democrat anti-Communist propaganda, which Ginsborg points out was 'both virulent and effective'.[90] Moreover, at the end of March, George Marshall had announced that all financial and material help to Italy would cease if the Communists came to power. France had been victim of the same threat. Added to this was the lure that the United States, Great Britain and France had promised one month before the elections that Trieste would return to Italian rule. A general climate of fear and insecurity was generated by widespread warnings of a possible imminent Soviet invasion should the Italians lower their guards. Some Hollywood stars even recorded messages of support for the anti-Communist campaigns. McCarthy notes that in Southern Italy, a region traditionally imbued with superstition and the cult to the Virgin Mary and the saints, '36 Madonnas wept in Naples alone at the prospect of a Communist victory'.[91] The political campaign conducted by the Christian Democrats themselves also aimed at inducing fear of Communism through a psychologically aggressive method of visual representations of good and evil in the forms of the two opposing blocs: Ginsborg describes Christian Democrats' posters featuring a giant Stalin trampling over the Roman monument of Victor Emanuel II, Italian mothers trying to protect their children from Communist wolves, and snakes bearing the poison of 'free love' rearing

[90] See Ginsborg, pp. 117- 118.
[91] Patrick McCarthy, *Italy since 1945 (*Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 140.

up to destroy the Italian family.[92] The population was also reminded that it was De Gasperi who had obtained free food from the United States at a time when most Italians were undergoing severe hardship, and white-collar workers were granted a pay rise shortly before election date.

In March 1949, three months after Pope Pius XII's unequivocal encouragement in a radio message, the country joined NATO.[93] Despite becoming known in the US as 'America's most faithful ally', Italy nonetheless retained individual control over the use of American funds.[94] Just as in France with the *contrepartie*,[95] the Italian government was required to set up a counterpart fund, the *fondo lire*, to the value of the sums received in US dollars and destined for projects approved by the European Cooperation Administration which had been established and was controlled by the Americans. Ginsborg assesses that in reality, the repartition of the funds in Italy 'corresponded only in part to American directives, and above all to the mosaic of different interests and opinions within the Italian political and business élites', the main contributory factor arguably being the fact that the Italian public administration had not been overhauled.[96] During the first year, Marshall Aid was directed to those areas vital to recovery, such as grain, coal imports and the textile industry. Then until 1950, the counterpart funds were used mainly to increase the Bank of Italy reserves, and to maintain the stability of the currency. After 1950, the funds were used for economic investments in the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* and the agrarian reforms boards in an attempt to address the dramatic situation in the Southern countryside, and in the purchase of

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[92] Ginsborg, p. 117.

[93] The Pope's radio message of Christmas Eve 1948 marks a decisive break from the Catholic position on international matters immediately after the war. Then strongly pacifist and in favour of neutrality, Pius XII now declared: 'Un popolo minacciato o già vittima di una ingiusta aggressione, se vuole pensare ed agire cristianamente, non può rimanere in una indifferenza passiva; tanto più la solidarietà della famiglia dei popoli interdice agli altri di comportarsi come semplici spettatori in un atteggiamento d'impassibile neutralita (…) Possa l'organizzazione delle « Nazioni Unite » divenire la piena e pura espressione di questa solidarietà internazionale di pace'. Pope Pius XII in *Radiomessagio di Sua Santità PIO XII al mondo intero in occasione del Natale.* http://.vatican.va/holy father/pius xii/speeches/1948/documents/hf p-xii spe 19481224 un-tempo it.html [accessed 24 March 2009]

[94] Ginsborg, p. 158.

[95] See Chapter One.

[96] Ginsborg, p. 159.

machinery for the state and private industries such as FIAT, Finsider, Edison, in central and Northern Italy.[97]

By 1951, the previous popularity of the Christian Democrat party had begun to fade. A vast proportion of its followers now criticized the party's inability to live up to its promises of social justice. De Gasperi launched a series of laws to enforce order and to limit the rights of extremists who were growing in number in the regions of the South; the laws restricted civil liberties too and caused Communists and Socialists to campaign against them, albeit unsuccessfully.[98] De Gasperi also introduced a new electoral law, famously renamed *legge truffa* by its opponents. This law, conveniently adopted 2 months before the national elections of June 1953 and annulled the following year, quite simply reworked the concept of proportional representation. It stated that any alliance of parties which received one vote more than 50% of the vote cast at national election would receive 65% of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies.[99] In the 1953 elections though, the centre coalition made up of the Christian Democrats, the Liberals, the Social Democrats and the Republicans very narrowly failed to obtain the 2/3 of the seats in the Chamber. De Gasperi gave way to Giuseppe Pella as President of the Council of Ministers.

The relative failure of the Christian Democrats in 1953 compared to their overwhelming triumph in the 1948 elections reflects reactions to its first mandate's immobilism (a policy of conservatism and opposition to change) as we have seen, which is itself in great part the result of numerous contrasting strands of thought within the party. The fragmentation into regional factions, each under one or more leader of national importance, led to confusion and struggle, and each Christian Democrat faction, as Ginsborg points out, 'came to serve different interests within the party, either personal, or sectional, or (increasingly rarely) ideological'.[100]

In January 1954 Amintore Fanfani, a 45 year old with a fascist past, became secretary of the party and the new president of the Council of Ministers. Following a series of campaigns indicative of Fanfani's will to revitalize the

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[97] See Gianni Toniolo, 'L' utilizzazione dei fondi ERP nella ricostruzione italiana: alcune ipotesi di lavoro', in Elena Aga-Rossi, ed., *Il piano Marshall e l'Europa* (Roma: Istituto Enciclopedia Italiana, 1983), pp. 189- 92.

[98] See Giancarlo Scarpari, *La Democrazia Cristiana e le leggi eccezionali, 1950-1953* (Milano: Feltrinelli Economica, 1977).

[99] See Gaetano Quagliariello, *La legge elettorale del 1953* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003).

[100] Ginsborg, p. 154.

party, membership soared for the next five years, reaching its highest levels since 1945. From the mid-1950s, the signs of an ideological scission between the Church and the DC became more apparent, and the process of modernization was evident in Fanfani's wish to make the party less dependent upon Church organizations.

*The Left and the Working Classes, 1949- 1955*

The financial and material help the Marshall Plan provided allowed the most important factories to develop new technologies and more efficient working methods. Internal demand for products increased, and the international markets were starting to open up to Italian goods. However, Italy would have to wait until the second half of the decade before entering a period of economic boom; for the working classes, the first half of the 1950s is known as *gli anni duri* or the hardship years.

The lack of unionization meant very liberal pay regulations, if any at all, inevitably leading to huge disproportions between wage levels. With poor working conditions jobs could be, and often were, dangerous and there existed no provision for insurance payment. Women in particular received very little pay, whether in the factories or at home doing piece work, such as sewing gloves, lace, making toys and so on. Despite new jobs created by industries such as FIAT and Olivetti between 1948 and 1953, this was a time of mass unemployment, severe poverty and homelessness.

In the early 1950s, Communists and Socialists dedicated much time and energy to the peace effort, drawing up petitions and organizing demonstrations against nuclear weapons and the Korean War. The liberal socialist Norberto Bobbio, philosopher in law and politics, and eminent historian of political thought, warned of the fundamental discrepancy within the heavily PCI-dominated Italian peace movement. He commented that its followers 'offer themselves as mediators to re-establish peace between the two contenders. But they announce from the outset and without any reticence that one of the contenders is right and the other is wrong'.[101] In a similar line of argument, the intellectual Lelio

[101] Norberto Bobbio, 'Pace e propaganda di pace' in *Politica e cultura* (Turin: Einaudi, 1955), pp. 72-83 (p. 79).

Basso, who had been secretary of the PSI between 1947 and 1949, disputed the idea that the USSR was the only point of reference: this opposing view to the party's Stalinism led to his gradual marginalization. He was not re-elected in 1950 and was excluded from the central committee at the 1953 Milan Congress.[102] Basso was readmitted at the 1955 Turin Congress where he declared that the Christian Democrat new programme of political and social reforms was, in this context, a ploy to attract new parties. Pietro Nenni, national secretary of the PSI, chose to ignore Basso's warning and launched a policy of socialist cooperation with the Christian Democrats thus marking a break with the Communists. It is debatable indeed whether Nenni's decision was stimulated less by the conviction that the Christian Democrats would keep their promises of reforms than by a wish to do away with his party's subordination to the Communists; the uncertainty of this new direction must have seemed preferable to the continuation of blind obedience to the PCI. [103]

*The PCI and the year 1956*

The structure of the Italian Communist Party was modeled on that of the Russian Party, with a strict hierarchy of powers and no internal democracy nor allowance for organized opposition. After Stalin's death in March 1953, Nikita Khrushchev was appointed the new general secretary of the Soviet Union, a position he was to retain until 1964. At the 20th Congress of the Russian Communist Party in February 1956, he launched a process of de-Stalinization. In the first part of what became known as 'the Khrushchev report', he introduced the idea that the Russian model could be subject to variations in order to accommodate different countries' need and to facilitate their transition to socialism. This encouragement to adopt polycentricism suited Togliatti who was opposed to the Kominform and wanted more freedom for the individual Communist parties. The second part of the report, known as 'the Secret Speech', should have allegedly been kept from the public, but rapidly leaked to the Western press. In it, Khrushchev simply accused Stalin of ruthless dictatorship and of perpetrating crimes against humanity with the Great Purges amongst others. In the same year, the violent suppression of public opposition

[102] See Vittorio Foa, 'I socialisti italiani', in *Per una storia del movimenti operaio (*Turin: Einaudi, 1980), p. 279.

[103] In any case, Basso was proved right as Ginsborg informs us that 'the DC programme to which Nenni referred was, of course, Vanoni's, which disappeared into oblivion shortly afterwards', p. 194- 5.

by the Soviets during events in Poland and Hungary provoked many debates amongst the party's intellectuals. Thanks to the first part of the Khrushchev report, they could now refer to contemporary western culture without running the risk of an accusation of immorality and historical research could expand beyond the restrictive realm of Stalinism. Ginsborg comments that 'in every party section the fundamental questions of democracy, national independence and the role of the Soviet Union were argued over with an intensity and openness that had never previously been experienced'.[104] However, despite this new-found liberalism, Foot notes that:

> many Communist intellectuals rebelled, and hundreds of thousands left the party (never to return). Togliatti made tentative attempts to break with the USSR, but the party was too tied up with the Soviet world, and the soviet myth.[105]

Many of those who had left the PCI between 1955 and 1957 joined the Socialist party in 1956; this was also the first year since the war that the PSI refused to renew its pact of unity with the Communists. [106]

*The Years of the 'Miracle': 1958- 1963*

De Céspedes' *Il rimorso* is set at the end of 1961. The period under scrutiny here is therefore particularly relevant to the novel's critical analysis. *Il rimorso* reflects a problematic time of clashes between old and new ideologies, between traditional morality and modernity. In Part II of this thesis it will become apparent that, in her narrative, de Céspedes promoted changes for women and the family, despite the views of the Catholic Church, while at the same time she sought to highlight the importance of the past and traditions in the face of progress: Chapter Five and Chapter Eight in particular will show that her novel conveys a strong criticism of the de-humanizing consequences of consumerism. Her approach reflects an ideological compromise with the

[104] Ginsborg, p. 206.
[105] Foot, p. 182.
[106] Ginsborg reports deputy for the Italian Communist Party Amendola's estimation of a loss of 400,000 members. p. 207.

problematic effects of the profound economic and social developments of the 1950s that will now be examined.

The time of transformation known as the years of the 'Economic Miracle' is traditionally dated between 1958 and 1963. However, the fact that mass migrations from rural areas and the South to the fast-industrializing regions of the centre and the North of the peninsula were a feature of the 1950s, and given their contribution to the changes in the landscape of the country, to its social structure and to the Economic Miracle itself, the precision with which these dates traditionally frame such a vast historical phenomenon could be open to debate. In fact, Morris comments that:

> It was in the 1950s that items such as off-the-peg clothing, cosmetics, modern domestic appliances, scooters, and automobiles became much more widely accessible and, even if it is true that by the end of the decade the majority of people still did not possess a fridge or an automobile for example, they were familiar with them via advertising and other accessible (because relatively cheap) and already popular consumer products such as film and magazines.[107]

Certainly during the years 1958 to 1963, growth rates reached an unprecedented level, whether in the average Gross Domestic Product, in investments in machinery and industries, or in the industrial production which more than doubled. Kaiser observes that on the international markets, demands from advanced industrial countries for Italian domestic appliances such as fridges, washing-machines and television sets and for Italian cars (the leading sector of the economy with FIAT), precision tools, typewriters and plastic goods augmented to the point that the average increase of exports reached 14.5% per annum. In all, trade in manufactured goods increased six fold.[108]

The new riches provided by the fruitful combination of increased export demands and Fordism, or the automated mass production of consumer goods, meant that Italy could embrace the world of consumerism and that the majority of the population could now afford a decent living. However, Ginsborg uncovers three areas of grave social problems engendered by such radical and relatively rapid transformations. Firstly, the needs of the community, regarding the provisions of schools, hospitals, public transports, low-cost housing for

[107] Morris, p. 10.

[108] Karl Kaiser, 'Le relazioni transnazionali', in Fabio Lucca Cavazza and Stephen R. Graubard, eds., *Il caso italiano* (Milan: Garzanti, 1974), pp. 401-19 (p. 406).

example, were taking second place behind the needs of individual families and the production of private consumer goods. Secondly, the Italian economy was also now more than ever clearly divided into two: at one end, the large and small firms displaying technological sophistication and high levels of productivity; at the other end, the poorly productive and labour intensive traditional sectors of the economy, such as agriculture. Thirdly, the disadvantage of the South of the country became even more obvious because the majority of expanding industries were situated in the northern and some central regions, thus 'the "miracle" was quintessentially a northern phenomenon, and the most active parts of the southern population did not take long to realize it'.[109] The massive rural exodus that took place all through the 1950s meant that the Economic Miracle was not just changing the way of life of Italians; it was also transforming the landscape of their country.

Hundreds of thousands of active Southern Italians left the hills and mountain villages of the poorest agricultural regions and headed for the cities of the North and Central belt (Rome, Milan, Turin) where they hoped to start a new life. Undeniably, the labour market of the booming cities of the industrialized regions offered new enticing possibilities: the prospect of regular wages and regular working hours which was particularly attractive to peasants, the prospect of a better income, especially for rural labourers, and the lure of the city for the young who longed to embrace the culture of Vespas, radio and fashion. Over and above all this, the reality for immigrant workers was also that of appalling living conditions and of labour exploitation. The absence of state provision for council housing meant that most immigrant families had to live wherever they could, in basements, attics or disused buildings. McCarthy also states that migrants suffered from 'isolation, when not outright hostility, from the host population who despised the *terroni* (literally people from the land) owing to language and cultural differences'.[110] Moreover, the health sector was stretched to its narrow limits, with insufficient numbers of doctors and nurses, and no social services, which meant that material and psychological support had to be provided by private charities and the Church. In *Il rimorso*, Francesca's parents are migrants from the South, and she recalls visiting her friend:

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[109] Ginsborg, p. 217.
[110] Patrick McCarthy, *Italy since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 14.

> la sera indugiavo per vedere la cameriera del grembiulino bianco apparecchiare la tavola con i fiori al centro, scendevo in cucina dove Clemenza stava preparando il dolce o un timballo. Noi, a cena, mangiavamo pane e mortadella (…) d'estate cenavamo col piatto in mano in terrazza tra i panni stesi e le piante nei barattoli (IR, p. 101).

In Chapter Five, we shall see how her childhood understanding of the differences between her family and Isabella's has played a significant part in shaping her personality.

The most telling illustration of work exploitation was that endured by women.[111] When they finally joined their husbands in the Northern cities, most did not work and carried on the traditional functions of housewives, even if they did part-time or piece work from home. In this way, they were excluded from official employment statistics, as were those who fell into prostitution. For the women who found work in factories, their wages were more or less half of those paid to men, there were no insurance payments and no safety regulations. In addition, after a day at work, they still had to fulfill their more traditional domestic roles and attend to the needs of their families at home. Despite all this, Ginsborg comments that women generally embraced the experience of factory work as they saw it as 'a form of emancipation';[112] notwithstanding the low wages and poor conditions, they had started to earn their own money and the workday spent outside the home provided respite from the suffocating dominion of their families. It is noteworthy that the female workforce was very gradually starting to infiltrate more intellectual and thus traditionally male-dominated work areas such as journalism, publishing, lecturing, and research. This path, however, was paved with many difficulties and was very rarely open to women. Less challenging, or perhaps in a different way, were those new professions which so many young women aspired to, such as TV presenter, air hostess or beautician, and which Morris assesses as responsible in great part for the assumption that the 1950s is the period when women achieved a greater presence in the workforce.[113]

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[111] Child labour must also be mentioned here, with children aged between 10 and 15 working long and underpaid days as errand boys, waiters or cooks' helps.

[112] Ginsborg, p. 224.

[113] Morris estimates that this tendency 'was probably based more than anything on a greater visibility of female workers, especially those in the new, feminine professions'. Morris, *Women in Italy*, p. 11.

By the end of the 1950s, standards of living rose considerably and changes occurred more rapidly. This new wealth meant women could afford proper shoes for the first time, and mass-produced coats, dresses and stockings replaced the traditional black Southern outfits. They were able to acquire consumer durables such as a television set, a fridge or a washing machine for the first time.[114] However, as Willson rightly observes:

> a negative feature of the new labour-saving home was that it could effectively imprison women indoors. Previously, many household tasks had meant leaving the home (…) In the world of the new modern housewife, laundry became a private, solitary activity and fridges enabled less frequent shopping. Now life (…) could be more socially isolating: comfort came at a price.[115]

In *Rouler Plus vite laver plus blanc*, Ross points out that the hasty and drastic changes in the way of life of the French in the 1950s evident in the espousal of 'tout un ensemble de coutumes et de comportements étrangers, imposés par l'acquisition de nouveaux biens de consommation modernes' were a necessary and natural development from the deprivation and starvation during wartime and the postwar period.[116] This appraisal may be equally applicable to the case of the rapidly transforming daily customs of the Italian population by the end of the 1950s.

Community life was dying down and urbanization increasingly isolated individuals. It is easy to comprehend why this phenomenon affected Southern emigrants most: from a way of living that was reliant on inter-family solidarity, and where the village piazza was the centre of the community, they found themselves in the impersonal environment of the northern urban structures. However, for some and for the young in general, this was a chance to break out from the tight circles of family life. This new generation or urban youth embraced modernization which, in many cases, was seen as synonymous with Americanization; in the way they dressed, they danced, they behaved, even in the way they thought, they aimed at exposing the gap separating them from the old generation. Unsurprisingly, the Catholic Church, many Christian

[114] In 1958, 12% of Italian families owned a TV, 3% a washing machine, and by 1965, 49% and 23% respectively, Ginsborg, p. 432.
[115] Willson, p. 123.
[116] Kristin Ross, *Rouler Plus vite laver plus blanc* (Paris: Flammarion, 2006), p. 100.

Democrats members and the Communists found these changes in social mores very alarming. Morris remarks that:

> As huge numbers of Italians migrated, once again families were split up and whole kinship networks dispersed. The changing habits associated with growing consumerism and the all-pervasive influence of American society were seen by many, on the left and right of politics, as an even greater threat.[117]

Willson argues that the general consensus between those who deplored the revolution in Italian habits was that women played a great part of responsibility in this overt slackening of traditional morality: after all, they were the ones in charge of bringing up the children, and new tensions arose from the idea of motherhood and the role of women within the family.[118] In Chapter Four, the topic of motherhood in *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* will be addressed, and we shall see that in her novel, de Céspedes challenges very directly the views held by society at the time. Her narrative will be shown to denounce the concept of maternal instinct as a social invention, just as de Beauvoir had done in *Le Deuxième sexe*.

An interesting ambivalence emerges from the distinct shift in the early 1960s regarding the role of women in society: on the one hand, there was still greater freedom and autonomy brought by the breaking down of the traditional family hierarchies after transferring to the cities, mostly enjoyed by younger women in full-time work and in the North; on the other hand, the new emphasis on consumption and house-based living confined women to the home and effectively removed them from political and public life. Moreover, as Willson points out, 'the principle of equal pay, agreed in 1960, made employing them less attractive. Certain industries began a process of restructuring that led to female redundancies'.[119] Added to this, the improved male earnings meant that one family wage was brought by the husband and the tendency for women who had worked when they were young was to become full-time housewives after the birth of their children. Thus it is fair to see Isabella in *Il rimorso* as the embodiment of, in Ginsborg's words, 'this new figure of the modern Italian

[117] Penelope, Morris, 'A window on the private sphere: Advice columns, marriage, and the evolving family in 1950s Italy', *The Italianist, 27 (*2007), 304- 32, (p. 304).
[118] See Willson, p. 123.
[119] Willson, p. 119.

woman, tutta casa e famiglia, smartly dressed, with well-turned-out children and a sparkling house full of consumer durables'.[120]

*Political Life*

The political situation remained unchanged at the 1958 elections. Amintore Fanfani became both President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs as well as retaining his position of Secretary of the Christian Democrat party. The opposition that grew within the party after the announcement of his wish to shift the Christian Democrats' political alliance to the left and include the Socialists caused the fall of his government and his resignation as party secretary. When Aldo Moro, a member of a new powerful central faction of the Christian Democrats called the *Dorotei*, became party secretary in 1959, Fanfani's policy of opening to the left was not abandoned altogether, but only tactically delayed. This was in order to have time to reassure not only the capitalist classes but the Church hierarchy too which, at this stage, also condemned the centre-left alliance. The first experiments of centre-left government were made the year after at a regional level after the local elections of 1960. The administrations of Milan, Genoa, Florence, Venice and many smaller localities formed centre-left coalitions. According to the historian and special advisor to the newly elected US President Kennedy Arthur Schlesinger, the formation of a centre-left government in Italy would enable a greater commitment to reform and justice as well as further isolating the Communists. Despite Kennedy's agreement with his advisor, manifest in the absence of an American veto on the centre-left, Ginsborg notes that he was 'cautious about supporting Schlesinger too openly'.[121] This presidential hesitation was reflected in the lack of agreement amongst US representatives in Italy, ranging from positions of neutrality to uncompromising opposition about making any concessions to the Socialists.

The decreasing number of peasants and rural middle classes and the transformation in the social fabric of the country resulting from the Economic Miracle and rapid industrialization called for a radical re-evaluation of the Christian Democrats' politics as a whole. Firstly there grew the need for dialogue with the new urban social classes, as well as the consideration of their

[120] Ginsborg, p. 244.
[121] Ginsborg, p. 259.

political representations and leadership. Secondly, the process of organizing a rapidly changing society could not afford to be slowed down by endless discord in the Parliament. The Christian Democrats' leaders now estimated that the time was ripe for an alliance with the Socialists if they wanted to secure a firm majority in the Chamber of Deputies. However, most of the country's newspapers controlled by the conservative upper classes showed their opposition to such an alliance, thus emphasizing the firm division that existed between Italian social classes.

The first centre-left government formed by Amintore Fanfani in March 1962 was rather tentative — decidedly more centre than left — as it did not include the Socialists, but consisted of Christian Democrats, Social Democrats and Republicans. The DC official candidate Segni, 'a man profoundly suspicious of the consequences of a centre-left government', was elected President of the Republic after, as Ginsborg points out, nine ballots and 'the votes not only of the DC but of the Monarchists and neo-Fascist as well'.[122] Fanfani's government began a process of nationalization of the electricity trusts in order to get rid of the capitalist conservative monopoly of *Confindustria*, to fix prices and to direct investments in the South where they were most needed.[123] At the same time, the centre-left would get rid of its most powerful opponents. The reform establishing compulsory schooling until the age of 14 was also adopted, and for the first time many girls received an education that went beyond primary school level.[124] However, in autumn 1962, the significant increase in the rate of inflation meant that small and medium sized firms got into financial difficulties (for which they blamed the government and Fanfani's activism) as wage bills were eating into profits, and demand for labour in the North was exceeding supply for the first time ever. Small and medium savers became worried. In a climate of uncertainty and financial panic, the majority of the Christian Democrats demanded a stop to reforms.

The worlds of politics and industry were intimately connected through the practice of *lottizzazione* or the division of the command posts of the public

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[122] Ginsborg, p. 268.

[123] Although Ginsborg observes that 'in political terms, the continuing influence of the electricity barons had been ensured'. p. 269-70.

[124] This came much earlier in France where 'in 1908, the year of Simone de Beauvoir's birth (…) state schools (as opposed to Catholic and other so-called "free" schools) were finally allowed to prepare girls for the baccalauréat, the only exam to assure access to French universities'. Toril Moi, *The Making of an Intellectual Woman* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 39.

sector among the governing parties. As a result, finding employment in the state enterprises at any level at all did not depend upon one's competence, but rather upon one's political affiliation and loyalty. The term 'state bourgeoisie' was coined by Guido Carli, the Governor of the Bank of Italy from 1960 to 1975, to describe the conservative social class formed by public managers and entrepreneurs who, thanks to their close links with the dominant political parties, could liberally divert public funds into private enterprises. Chapter Eight will discuss Gerardo's struggles with the sacrifice of personal integrity and values that his work environment demands of him. His attitude will be contrasted with that of Guglielmo who, as director of a newspaper with DC affiliation, has sacrificed his past ideals in order to comply with the party's political agenda.

It is important to note that the political isolation of the PCI that resulted from the centre-left alliance contrasted greatly with its continued, significant presence in Italian society. Ginsborg informs us that in the 1960s, the UDI counted 200,000 members, and the PCI-dominated cooperative league 2 million members organized in 7,000 cooperatives with 8,000 retail outlets. The Communists held between 8 and 10% of the Italian press, with the immensely popular daily newspaper *L'Unità* amongst others. The party was also responsible for the organization of 1,300 sporting societies and 3,000 cultural and recreational circles.[125]

By the end of the 1950s, the influence of the Catholic Church started to waver. It was clear that the changes brought by rural exodus and urbanization now presented new challenges that the clergy was finding hard to cope with. Clark remarks that people began to wonder 'whether religious perspectives were possible within industrial society';[126] Part II will discuss the way that *Il rimorso* highlights the discrepancies between the Church's dogma on private matters and the reality of changing mores in the early 1960s. Angelo Roncalli became Pope John XXIII at the death of Pius XII in 1958, and his vision of the Church's place and role in society was very different from that of his predecessor. Contrasting highly with the conservatism of Pius XII, *il Papa buono*, as he came to be known, understood that the Church should adapt to changes and he was regarded with fondness by believers and non-believers

[125] Ginsborg, p. 291.
[126] Martin Clark, *Modern Italy 1871- 1982* (London: Longman, 1984), p. 371.

alike. During his first two years of papacy, he upheld the Church's disapproval of the centre-left alliance, arguably, as Ginsborg assesses, more out of prudent concern for his relationship with his Secretary of State, Mgr. Domenico Tardini and the Curia, both conservative and unaccustomed to changes, than out of any real conviction.[127] However, the Pope revised his position in the summer of 1961, when he expressed his sympathy towards the opening to the left. He also shared his wish to re-evaluate the role of the Church in Italian politics and society, a role that had been highly interventionist so far. The civic committees were cancelled and Catholic Action's engagement was strictly limited to spiritual and social activities.

His encyclical *Mater et Magistra* of May 1961 contained a clear message of social justice and of the need for more altruism in human relationships. He called for better conditions for the disinherited and their integration in society and politics. While acknowledging the role of science and new technologies in improving the nations' living standards and welfare, he also warned of the dangers of a self-centered life and of the isolation ensuing from individualistic and unconsidered material pursuits. It is also noteworthy that John XXIII launched an appeal for rich countries (clearly here the US) to help and share with underprivileged ones.

In October 1962, he opened the Second Ecumenical Council, better known as Vatican II. Again, he recommended that the church should not be immutable, but open and adaptable in order to meet the needs of the world. Considering the long conservationist papacy of Pius XII, and more generally the severe rigidity with which the Church always intervened in matters of politics and society, Vatican II marked a real revolution in the history of Catholicism and of Italy indeed. *Pacem in terris,* John XXIII's last encyclical issued in July 1963, contains perhaps the most telling evidence of this change of direction. Effectively a plea for tolerance, and addressed to all men of goodwill not just Catholics, the letter called for cooperation between different beliefs and international conciliation; John XXIII affirmed the neutrality of the Church in the Cold War and McCarthy stresses that 'in *Pacem in terris* John substituted peace for anti-Communism as the goal of Church foreign policy and he challenged NATO's view that nuclear weapons simply deterred'.[128] 1963 is

[127] See Ginsborg, p. 260.
[128] McCarthy, p. 143.

also the year in which de Céspedes published *Il rimorso*. Naturally, she wrote the text before *Pacem in terris* was issued, and therefore her treatment of the Church in the novel could not have taken into account this new direction in the history of Catholicism. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to suggest that the encyclical would not have tempered her sharp criticism of the Church's influence on women's place in society and on marriage dynamics, despite the fact that *Pacem in terris* addressed, for the first time, the question of the contribution of women in the workforce. The Pope clearly acknowledged that society had changed and that women's demands for better conditions both at home and outside should be addressed. In article 41, he writes

> (…) women are gaining awareness of their natural dignity. Far from being content with a purely passive role or allowing themselves to be regarded as a kind of instrument, they are demanding both in domestic and in public life the rights and duties which belong to them as human persons.

However, while article 41 indubitably demonstrated a huge step forward in the Church's treatment of the question of women, if only by acknowledging the need for addressing the subject, its view that a woman's autonomy comes second to her role as wife and mother still prevailed. Indeed, article 19 stated that the conditions in which a man works

> must not be such as to weaken his physical and moral fibre, or militate against the proper development of adolescents to manhood. Women must be accorded such conditions of work as are consistent with their needs and responsibilities as wives and mothers.[129]

It would be fair to say that despite the need for more tolerance and a re-evaluation of social relationships that Vatican II promoted in the early 1960s, women's issues were still subject to the immutability of the legal system and to deeply rooted hierarchical traditions and beliefs; in the early years of the 1960s, the expectations that came from the mighty bastion of the traditional family still took precedence in a married woman's life. It is, as we shall see, precisely what de Céspedes challenges in *Il rimorso*.

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[129] Pope John XXIII, Pacem in terris, 1963, <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/johnxxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jxxiii_enc_11041963_pacem_en.html> [accessed 15 march 2009]

The present chapter has given an account of the historical and political events that have led up to the period depicted in de Céspedes' novel which is essential for a full appreciation not only of *Il rimorso* as social testimony but also, and more significantly, of the criticisms the author conveys in her narrative. Part II will discuss how this era of modernization, industrialization, American influence and new consumerism has shaped, and continues to affect, the lives of the protagonists in *Il rimorso*. Most significantly, we shall see that de Céspedes uses de Beauvoir's existentialist thinking in order to propose a solution to the malaise that pervades the lives of the characters in her narrative and that, by doing so, she also puts forward a different ethical perspective to her contemporary readers.

## Chapter Three

## Intertextuality

The neologism 'intertextualité' was used in Julia Kristeva's work in 1969, in an attempt to express Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of 'dialogism' in French.[130] In the 1930s, Bakhtin wrote *The Dialogic Imagination* where he introduced the idea that there cannot be an utterance that does not also carry an Other discourse.[131] The notion of otherness is fundamental to dialogism, and it implies that every expression is a reconstruction or transformation of another one. Hence dialogic literature carries out a dialogue with other works of literature and with other authors. Because the dialogue is reciprocal, and not unilateral, the notion of dialogism goes beyond the concept of influence. Thus a work of literature informs and is informed by the previous one, and conversely the previous one informs or is informed by the present one. Since Kristeva coined the term 'intertextualité', many linguists and critics have likened it not only to Bakhtin's dialogism, but also to concepts that had been used in literary criticism long before: for example, the *critique des sources* — in my view, an interesting and rewarding field whose popularity has unfortunately waned, but which some academics are

[130] Julia Kristeva, *Sémiotikè, Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1969).
[131] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1981).

endeavouring to revive nevertheless —[132] and the phenomena of imitation and citation. In his *Colloque de Cerisy*, Robbe-Grillet stressed how intertextuality had always existed in fact when he remarked that the Gospel is 'quatre fois la même histoire, racontée par des personnages différents avec des passages qui se recoupent et des passages qui se contredisent'.[133] Intertextuality may refer to any aspect of a work: for example, its style, its content, its form, its exegesis. Thus it remains a very general notion which, to this day, presents many difficulties as far as definition is concerned. Lazar notes that Kristeva's familiarity with Bakhtin 'gave her the confidence to transform his theories for her own particular project'.[134] When she coined the term 'intertextualité', she did so with all the flexibility and ambiguities of dialogism, perhaps allowing for a rather adaptable usage of this notion. For this reason, it is used rather liberally amongst critics who, as Rabau puts it, 'reportent sur l'intertextualité toutes les facettes de la notion en mettant, selon les circonstances, l'accent sur l'aspect qui les intéresse'.[135] Despite such uncertainties, this study aims to draw on some of the tools of intertextuality in order to establish the nature of the relationship between *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* by considering, in Gérard Genette's terms, the former as hypotext and latter as hypertext.

The present chapter starts with a general discussion of some of the most important perspectives on intertextuality which, as already implied, vary considerably from one critic to the next. We will see, for example, that the theories of Kristeva and Barthes challenged traditional literary criticism and agreed on rejecting the subject in order to focus on the text as an autonomous entity, while Eco sought to re-instate the author by arguing for a circular relationship between writer and reader. The rigorous methodology of source criticism is also part of the field of intertextuality, although its lack of popularity means that very little research has ever been done, and in fact as we

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[132] See, for example, the works of Claude Bourqui, Professor at the Sorbonne, and notably his doctoral thesis on the influence of the Commedia dell'arte and Italian XVII century theatre on Molière. *Les Sources de Molière. Répertoire critique des sources littéraires et dramatiques de Molière* (Paris: SEDES, 1999). I use the French term *critique des sources* to indicate a specific area of intertextual investigation, and this notion will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

[133] Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Colloque de Cerisy* (Paris: UGE 10/18, 1976), p. 431.

[134] Liliane Lazar, 'When the *Samurai* Meet the *Mandarins*', *Simone de Beauvoir Studies*, 13 (1996), 66-77 (p. 66).

[135] Sophie Rabau, *L'intertextualité* (Paris: Flammarion, 2002), p.21. Critic William Irwin also notes that the term 'has come to have almost as many meanings as users, from those faithful to Kristeva's original version to those who simply use it as a stylish way of talking about allusion and influence'. William Irwin, 'Against Intertextuality', *Philosophy and Literature*, 28 (2004), 227-242 (p. 228).

shall see, it is too restrictive for the purpose of this thesis. Riffaterre's definition of the concept brings some clarity, but it is the works of Genette which are more significant in terms of precision. In 1982 he narrowed down the meaning of intertextuality by introducing the notion of transtextuality that he defines as 'tout ce qui le [texte] met en relation, manifeste ou secrète, avec d'autres textes'.[136] As will be discussed, transtextuality comprises two elements according to Genette: firstly, intertextuality or the relations of co-presence or inclusion between two texts, such as quotations, and secondly, hypertextuality, or the relations of derivation between two texts, for example text B (the hypertext) derives from A (the hypotext) by imitation or transformation. This last point appears to be particularly pertinent to the comparison of *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* since it implies that a previous text (which would be here de Beauvoir's novel) contributed to the production of another text (de Céspedes' novel). The analysis will then turn to the many phenomena which cause intertextual relations, firstly those that are present within the works, or internal, and secondly those that are external. We will see that that the first category may apply at microstructural level, at macrostructural level and in the *mise en abyme* which concerns both microstructure and macrostructure. The second category, or external occurrences, will be shown to apply to the work of genetic criticism or paratextuality, to the relations of commentary or metatextuality, and to the relations between text and genre or architextuality. Finally, the new concept of *récriture* will be commented on and its relevance will be assessed in the context of an intertextual rapport between the two novels.

*The Many Faces of Intertextuality: Overview of a Polyseme*

Bakhtin's theories became known in France in the second half of the 20th century thanks to the works of Kristeva and Todorov.[137] With the term 'dialogism', Bakhtin articulated the idea that there are always links between a text and its own context, and its author, and previous texts. Thus he argued that while the author of a work of literature certainly 'crée un produit verbal qui est un tout unique (un énoncé)', this work is nevertheless produced 'à l'aide

[136] Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes. La Littérature au second degré* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), p. 7.
[137] Tzetan Todorov, *Mikhaïl Bakhtin, le principe dialogique* (Paris: Seuil, 1981).

d'énoncés hétérogènes, à l'aide des énoncés d'autrui pour ainsi dire'.[138] Kristeva adapted his thoughts to her own theory in 1969, but already in her 1967 article, *Bakhtin, le mot, le dialogue et le roman,* she had introduced the word 'intertextualité' for the very first time.[139] Kristeva claims that a system of codes, which is imparted to the writer and the reader by other texts, always intervene in the creation and the understanding of a text, or in the meaning it is given. Unlike Bakhtin's dialogism, however, her theory of intertextuality seeks to do away with the idea of the subject of the enunciation, and to re-focus literary criticism on the text in its quality of structural entity *per se*. By doing so, Kristeva challenges the traditional view of literary criticism and she aims at avoiding the usual approach to textual analysis which concentrates mainly on psychological and biographical interpretations of characters and authors.[140] She writes that the word finds its meaning 'a) horizontalement: le mot dans le texte appartient à la fois au sujet de l'écriture et au destinataire et b) verticalement: le mot dans le texte est orienté vers le corpus littéraire antérieur ou synchronique'.[141] Another difference of note between Bakhtin and Kristeva (and all theoreticians after her) is that for the latter, intertextuality can occur in poems, whereas for the former poetry could never be dialogistic with other texts.

An interesting, more recent interpretation, and one that is far removed from Kristeva's, is that of psychoanalyst Michel Schneider who would rather talk of plagiarism than intertextuality, thus conferring a negative moral undertone to the concept. His review of literary history in *Voleurs de mots* shows our changing attitudes to plagiarism: the Humanist tradition openly promoted a spirit of imitation in literature, while the Romantics fantasized about originality born out of some individual genius; then the 19th century saw many prosecutions against works considered to be plagiarisms and finally the notion of intertextuality appeared, and with it the acknowledgement that influence was necessary and unavoidable. In his view, plagiarism has become diluted within

[138] Mikhaïl Bakhtin, *Esthétique de la création verbale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), p. 324.
[139] Julia Kristeva, 'Bakhtin, le mot, le dialogue et le roman', *Critique*, 239 (1967), 438- 465.
[140] Kristeva worked within the framework of a group of intellectuals writing for *Tel Quel*, the avant-garde journal founded by Philippe Sollers, whom she later married, and Jean-Edern Hallier. Sollers also used the term intertextuality, and highlighted the fact that a text is always the re-working of another: 'Le concept d'inter-textualité (Kristeva) est ici essentiel: tout texte se situe à la jonction de plusieurs textes dont il est à la fois la relecture, l'accentuation, la condensation, le déplacement et la profondeur'. *Théorie D'ensemble* (Paris: Seuil Tel Quel, 1968), p. 75.
[141] Julia Kristeva, *Séméiotiké, Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), p. 145.

the field of intertextuality, as he comments that 'le plagiat est redevenu, rehabilité sous le nom savant d'intertextualité, quelque chose qui n'est plus une fatalité mais un procédé d'écriture parmi d'autres, parfois revendiqué comme le seul. Quant à l'infamie elle-même, l'opprobe s'en est quelque peu dilué'.[142] For Schneider, intertextuality, or plagiarism, has to do with the individual's relationship to his/her mother tongue and a search for authenticity that is evident in the writing style adopted by the author. Style becomes a creative transmutation from others' texts, or the sign that others' writings have been appropriated in order to produce one's own 'original' work. Schneider argues that the concept of plagiarism allows for an understanding of both the writer's anxiety (all has been said before) and the relationship each writer entertains with originality and influence. The term was also used by Freud who struggled with the idea of establishing a common school of thought with his pupils in the psychoanalytical field in order to develop research, while at the same time needing to protect his own original thoughts: Schneider maintains that this anxiety is common to all authors, whether they fear to plagiarize or to be plagiarized, because writing always implies the Other. This psychoanalytical approach to intertextuality thus contributes to our understanding of the act of writing.

A similar interpretation to Kristeva's is that of Roland Barthes who, in the early 1970s, introduced the idea of 'texture' to describe the relations of co-presence between written works, and the idea of the death of the author. For him, intertextuality is such a general notion that it is impossible to analyse it precisely. It is something common to all texts and which goes beyond obvious influence, since 'l'intertexte est un champ général de formules anonymes dont l'origine est rarement repérable, de citations inconscientes ou automatiques, données sans guillemets'.[143] Barthes argues that what the reader understands of his/her reading is more important than what the author sought to express. Like Kristeva, he rejects traditional literary criticism and the authority it bestows on the author by insisting on the anonymity of intertextuality, and by arguing that it is neither possible nor necessary to identify precisely those works that are echoed in a text. He writes that

[142] Michel Schneider, *Voleurs de mots* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), p. 48.
[143] Roland Barthes, 'Théorie du texte', *Encyclopædia Universalis*, 15 (1975), p. 372.

> un texte n'est pas fait d'une ligne de mots, dégageant un sens unique, en quelque sorte théologique (qui serait le "message" de l'Auteur-Dieu); mais un espace à dimensions multiples, où se marient et se contestent des écritures variées, dont aucune n'est originelle: le texte est un tissu de citations, issues des mille foyers de la culture.[144]

This new status conferred to the reader automatically calls for a re-evaluation of intertextuality as the possibility for each person to decipher several other texts within one, and therefore several meanings. However, Barthes's view that to consider the author is to impose a hermetic meaning on the text and therefore to put limits to its interpretation is a rather problematic one. For example, it implies ignoring the chronology of works, and in fact denies the very notion of influence. Therefore Barthes's interpretation would allow that *Il rimorso* be in fact the intertext of *Les Mandarins* and would prove counterproductive in the literary investigation of de Beauvoir's impact on de Céspedes.

Eco does not share in Barthes' and Kristeva's abolition of the significance of the author, and instead he introduces the idea of cooperation between writer and reader. For him, intertextuality implies the intervention of an ideal or model reader, and an ideal or model writer. The latter must be able to use textual strategies in order to produce a work in which semantic correlations may be detected; the former, in turn, demonstrates his/her intellectual profile through his/her ability to decipher them. Intertextuality is at the core of this relationship that Eco sees as circular, and in which, as he describes, the reader must be able to 'cooperare all'attualizzazione testuale come egli, l'autore, pensava, e di muoversi interpretativamente così come egli si è mosso generativamente'.[145] This interpretation presents the problem of uncertainty on the part of the author whose text is not guaranteed to meet the ideal reader he/she had imagined: readers are very different depending on their abilities, culture and personal experiences. Eco also introduces the notion of intertextual scenarios which has the advantage of relating to precise given structures used to represent a stereotypical situation, for example in the detective series or in the western. These intertextual scenarios, which comply with the genre of a

[144] *Le Bruissement de la langue* (Paris: Seuil, 1984), p. 65.
[145] Umberto Eco, *Lector in fabula. La cooperazione interpretativa nei testi narrativi* (Milan: Bompiani, 1979), p. 55.

work, appeal to the reader's knowledge. They are rhetorical and narrative schemes that, according to Eco, are part of:

> un corredo selezionato e ristretto di conoscenza che non tutti i membri di una data cultura possegono. Ecco quindi perché alcuni sono capaci di riconoscere la violazione di regole di genere, altri di prevedere più facilmente come una storia andrà a finire, mentre altri, che non posseggono sceneggiature sufficienti, sono esposti a godere o a soffrire di sorprese, colpi di scena, soluzioni che il lettore sofisticato giudica invece abbastanza banali.[146]

This interpretation also means that Eco limits his analysis of the concept to codified genres and that some more subtle elements of intertextuality between two texts, such as citations, are not considered. In fact, these scenarios have less to do with textual matters than with popular topoi in literature, cinema, songs, or comedy for example. They refer to the structural relations between the work and the genre it sets out to fit in.

A field which also brings into sharp focus the reader's cultural and intellectual abilities, and one which must be included in our discussion of the various approaches to intertextuality, is source criticism. An exponent of the discipline, Bourqui rejects the term *intertextualité* in favour of *source*, and deplores the fact that very little theoretical work has ever addressed this concept which came to replace that of imitation in the early 19th century. In *Les Sources de Molière*, he writes that a source refers to 'un texte — dans son intégralité ou dans un ou plusieurs de ses fragments — dont nous pouvons démontrer qu'il a été utilisé directement et délibérément par l'auteur au moment de la composition de son oeuvre'.[147] The methodology behind the *critique des sources* consists in seeking out all the texts that have influenced a work. For a *source* text to be established, the researcher must be able to demonstrate that firstly, its production is anterior to the work examined; secondly, that the author was able to access it; thirdly, that there is no other text that could be considered the *source* and that is even older (in which case it could be the real source for both works); and finally, that there are a considerable number of obvious similarities between the plots in general (the *inventio* or the choice of subject matter and the *dispositio* or the structure), and

[146] Eco, p. 84.
[147] Claude Bourqui, *Les Sources de Molière. Répertoire critique des sources littéraires et dramatiques de Molière* (Paris: SEDES, 1999), p. 16.

between the ways in which they are formulated (the *elocutio*). It is interesting to consider *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* within the framework of this investigative technique: unquestionably, the first point applies, and it is also very likely that de Céspedes did read de Beauvoir's novel, given its success at the time, and the fact that both writers knew each other. To my knowledge, there has never been any research that has compared *Les Mandarins* with a previous text in order to establish its *source* and, as discussed in this thesis, both novels clearly share a significant number of similarities to do with narrative as well as style.[148] For these reasons, it may be appropriate to consider *Les Mandarins* as the *source* text to *Il rimorso.* However, the precision and meticulousness involved in the methodology of source criticism is too restrictive for the purpose of this thesis. This rigorous discipline fails to take into consideration the differences between two otherwise similar works — differences that this research will reveal to be significant to the comparative study of de Beauvoir's and de Céspedes' novels, and to the determination of the nature of the relationship between them.

To close this far from exhaustive survey of the various approaches to the concept of intertextuality, it is useful to refer to two French literary theorists, Michaël Riffaterre and especially Gérard Genette. Their work in the early 1980s provided some much needed precision and clarity to the debate. Riffaterre gives a very straightforward definition of intertextuality when he states that it is 'la percèption, par le lecteur, de rapports entre une oeuvre et d'autres, qui l'ont précédée ou suivie. Ces autres oeuvres constituent l'intertexte de la première'.[149] Like Barthes, his interpretation does not take into consideration the chronological order between works, and the discovery of the intertext very much depends on the reader's intellectual abilities and formation. Genette's contribution to the study of the relations of co-presence between texts remains arguably the most significant to this day. Forsyth actually appraises that 'Gérard Genette has reined in the potential anarchy of Barthes's approach to reading by breaking up the original idea [of intertextuality] into sub-categories. He proposed the term "transtextuality" as a

[148] All chapters in Part II address the obvious, as well as the more subtle, similarities between the two narratives. Chapter Six also establishes literary similarities from the styles of the novels: third person narrative, diary and epistolary writing.

[149] Michaël Riffaterre, 'La trace de l'intertexte', *La Pensée*, 215 (1980), 4- 18 (p. 4).

more inclusive term than "intertertextuality"'.[150] In 1982, Genette published *Palimpsestes* in which he puts forward a clear classification and summary of intertextual practices indeed. In fact, the very title of his work is an interesting metaphor for intertextuality: a palimpsest is the manuscript page of the very first text ever written in a scroll or a book, and which has been scraped off in order to write a new text on top of it. Genette's choice for a title thus suggests that intertextuality is the voluntary practice of re-using anterior texts. His interpretation takes into consideration the writing subject and the chronology of works — unlike Barthes's and Kristeva's — and under the term 'transtextuality' he encompasses everything that puts a text in relation 'manifeste ou secrète' with other texts.[151] From this, he singles out five types of transtextual relations: first, he calls 'intertextuality' the obvious relationships between texts. These can be openly expressed, as in the cases of citations and quotations when an intertextual reference is clearly revealed with the use of speech marks, italics or even the mention of an author; or they can be concealed — which is the case for allusion or plagiarism — and thus the reader's ability to detect them is required. Second, Genette talks of paratextuality to describe the relations between a work and its paratext which includes all which is not the text itself, such as the title, footnotes, sketches and first drafts, subtitle, illustrations, preface, and so on. For example, the fact that de Céspedes chose to quote René Char for the epigraph to her novel is particularly interesting in terms of Genette's paratextual relations. Despite the fact that Char was a poet who took part in the French Resistance, he rejected the popular and arguably artistically restrictive idea of *littérature engagée.* As will be discussed in Chapter Eight, *Il rimorso* conveys a very negative image of the state of literature, and in particular of the press, in the era depicted. In the discussion of commitment and the role of the intellectual, it will be argued that de Céspedes shared de Beauvoir's view of the literati's duty towards society. This is conveyed in the novel's ending in fact: Francesca and Gerardo choose to leave the deceitful and corrupt environment fomented by the bourgeoisie, the Catholic church at the time, and the 'values' of the consumer society, and they embark together on a new and uncertain intellectual venture with the aim of

[150] Neil Forsyth, 'From Imitation to Intertextuality', in *Nordic Journal of English Studies* http://ojs.ub.gu.se/ojs/index.php/njes/article/viewPDFInterstitial/328/325 [accessed 21 January 2010]

[151] Gérard Genette, *Palimpseste, la littérature au second degré* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), p. 7.

preserving the integrity of their ethical principles. They certainly face an uncertain future, but it is one that is also full of hope. Carroli judges that de Céspedes shared with Char 'la profonda fiducia nelle possibilità terrene degli individui e nella forza della creazione poetica, che entrambi oppongono alla rassegnazione al fato o a un destino celeste'.[152] In the light of a paratextual analysis, the author's choice of epigraph is fitting in fact because Char's belief that only the power of artistic creativity can bring change in the present and hope for the future is reflected in her narrative. Although she chose to write mostly in the novel genre, it is interesting, in this respect, that de Céspedes' response to the events of 1968 took the form of poetry, the revolutionary potential of which was emphasized by Char.[153] Genette singles out a third type of intertextual relations which he calls metatextuality. This has to do with the relationship established by what is usually referred to as a 'commentary' and he remarks that 'c'est, par excellence, la relation critique' (*Palimpseste*, p. 11). Metatextuality most often relies on quotations from the text studied (and thus on intertextuality), yet it does not necessarily imply the naming of the text commented upon, and therefore can be implicit or explicit. Genette also speaks of architextuality to refer to the relationship between a text and its generic code or its type of discourse. Sometimes there might be an explicit indication of the nature of architextuality when, for example, the title of a work is followed by a mention such as 'a novel' or 'an adventure story'. Genette insists on the significance of architextual relations because they influence the public reception of a work. He observes:

> le fait que cette relation soit implicite et sujette à discussion (par exemple: à quel genre appartient *La Divine comédie*?) ou à fluctuations historiques (les longs poèmes narratifs comme l'épopée ne sont plus guère perçus aujourd'hui comme relevant de la "poésie", dont le concept s'est peu à peu restreint jusqu'à s'identifier à celui de poésie lyrique) ne diminue en rien son importance: la perception générique, on le sait, oriente et détermine dans une large mesure l' "horizon d'attente" du lecteur, et donc la réception de l'oeuvre (*Palimpseste,* p. 12).

Finally, the last category, the analysis of which makes up most of *Palimpseste,* is called hypertextuality, and refers to the relation between the text studied, or

[152] Piera Carroli, *Esperienza e narrazione nella scrittura di Alba de Céspedes* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1993), p. 93.
[153] Alba de Céspedes, *Chanson des filles de mai* (Paris: Seuil, 1968).

hypertext, and a previous text, or hypotext. The difference between hypertextuality and metatextuality consists in the fact the hypertext (or text B) is not a critical analysis or commentary of the hypotext (or text A), but it is a literary text itself that draws from another. In fact, this thesis investigates the influence of de Beauvoir on de Céspedes and is based on the study of the hypertextual relations between two of their novels. It seeks to demonstrate that *Il rimorso* can be considered the hypertext of *Les Mandarins*, and *Les Mandarins* the hypotext to *Il rimorso.* It is of note that hypertextuality is a much wider concept than the quotation, or the direct mentioning of an author, for example, and that therefore it differs from Genette's intertextuality as detailed above: it transforms the hypotext whereas intertextuality inserts it, as it is, in the hypertext. The two modi operandi of hypertextuality are transformation and imitation and, according to Genette, while the former is quite a simple operation, the latter is rather intricate and requires more intellectual knowledge and ability. He states:

> Joyce raconte l'histoire d'Ulysse d'une autre manière qu'Homère [transformation], Virgile raconte l'histoire d'Énée à la manière d'Homère [imitation]; transformations symétriques et inverses. Cette opposition schématique (dire la même chose autrement/ dire autre chose semblablement) […] dissimule la différence de complexité qui sépare ces deux types d'opération (*Palimpseste*, p. 15).

It is interesting to consider some of the topics analyzed in Part II of this thesis with reference to Genette's broad definitions of transformation as the act of saying a same thing but in a different way, and of imitation as that of saying something else but in the same manner. In Part II, I shall argue that both *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* illustrate de Beauvoir's interpretations of the philosophical concepts of immanence, transcendence, *mauvaise foi* and situated freedom that she set out in *Pour Une morale de l'ambiguïté* and *Le Deuxième sexe*, with regard to the question of women's place in society, and related topics such as motherhood (Chapter Four), women and mental health (Chapters Five and Six), female financial independence, female sexuality and love relationships (Chapter Seven). In the light of Genette's observation, both novels may be considered transformations of de Beauvoir's early philosophical essay, and of what is commonly referred to as her feminist treatise: while the

substance of the discourse is the same in the novels, the way in which it is exposed here is very different in fact from de Beauvoir's previous works, not least because it is dictated by the genre. Thus it is fair to suggest that the impression of similitude strictly between *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* this time actually arises from a hypertextual relation of imitation, and, to follow Genette's definition, from the fact that the expression of de Céspedes' text is similar to de Beauvoir's — albeit different in substance. For example, in Chapter Five, I shall argue that *Il rimorso* uses depictions of the past and of childhood memories with the same purpose as *Les Mandarins*: that of showing how the past influences the individual's confrontations with the present. In Chapter Six, we shall see that the two novels denounce the ways in which institutions meddle with the individual's past in a similar manner with the use of mirror stories, but de Beauvoir accuses psychiatry in her narrative, while de Céspedes blames the Catholic Church. The correlation that will be established between the illustration of the psychoanalytical session in *Les Mandarins,* and that of the act of confession in *Il rimorso,* may be said to fit Genette's definition of imitation: de Céspedes conveys a different point in a similar manner. The analysis developed in Chapter Eight is also interesting from this perspective. I shall argue that *Il rimorso* approaches the subject of the literati's duty to society in a similar manner to *Les Mandarins*: both portray the frustration and disillusionment of the writer of prose embodied by Gerardo and Henri respectively, and, with endings that see these characters engage in a new literary venture, both novels similarly urge for a re-commitment of the intellectual in a manner that does justice to his/her moral beliefs. However, we shall see that while de Beauvoir ultimately portrays the press as viable media for such an engagement, de Céspedes in the end rejects it unequivocally. Here too, the topic of intellectual commitment in *Il rimorso* may be said to correspond to Genette's imitation: a viewpoint different from de Beauvoir's (the press) is conveyed in a similar manner nonetheless (the character's final re-commitment). Yet it is evident that these definitions are too general in fact, with respect to the investigation of the precise nature of the relationship between de Beauvoir's and de Céspedes' novels, because they lead to conclusions that are open to interpretations and thus debatable. *Il rimorso* may well differ from *Les Mandarins* because, for example, it conveys a criticism of the Catholic Church at the time while de Beauvoir's novel offers a criticism of

psychiatry, but the fundamental idea is the same in both novels: to condemn the various institutions within society that interfere in private lives, and their attempts to 'normalize' behaviour. Likewise, the fact that de Céspedes rejects the press in her approach to engagement while de Beauvoir includes it in her reasoning does not prevent both narratives from promoting a same view of the function of the literati in society.

Genette also introduces a precise terminology to refer to hypertextual practices that operate by transformation or by imitation, each featuring a humorous, a satirical and a serious form. In *Palimpseste* (p. 45), he proposes the following tabula of hypertextual systems (my own translation):

| Form / Relation | Humorous | Satirical | Serious |
|---|---|---|---|
| Transformation | Parody | Travesty | Transposition |
| Imitation | Pastiche | Caricature | Forgery |

Despite the remarkable clarity of his contributions to the theories of relations of co-presence between texts in *Palimpseste*, Genette's terminology remains seldom used and critics prefer to talk of intertextuality rather than transtextuality. This is perhaps because, as Forsyth notes, Genette's books 'will seem to some the production of an obsession for categorization gone mad', and yet, as he points out

> in Barthes and Kristeva, intertextuality is a feature of all literature when opened to the reader's imagination. But Genette teaches us to distinguish kinds, and thus to get closer to the particular literary relations we want to study.[154]

This brief survey of various theories surrounding the polysemous term 'intertextuality' has shown just how vast and subjective this problematic field of study remains to this day. In order to apply the tools of intertextuality to our investigation of the relationship between de Beauvoir's and de Céspedes' novels, this chapter will now explore the actual phenomena which are at the core of the relations between texts. The following discussion will establish which of these may be present between *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso*.

[154] Forsyth, 'From Imitation to Intertextuality', p. 6.

*Intertextuality and the Texts*

The phenomena responsible for the relation between a text and one or many others fall into two categories: those which appear inside the text studied itself, or internal occurrences, and those which are around the text, or external occurrences. Intertextuality inside the text can be at microstructural level, for example a quotation or citation from another work may appear in the text studied; there may be a reference such as the title of a book or the name of an author. It can also appear at macrostructural level when the intertextual phenomenon concerns a whole book. In this case, the work studied may be a parody, which, to use Genette's tabula given above is the humourous transformation of a text; it can also become satire, or a burlesque travesty. These two genres aim at amusing the reader. In 1982 when *Palimpseste* was published, Genette acknowledged that the serious transformation of a text 'ne porte pas encore de nom' (*Palimpseste*, p. 43). The word 'transposition' given in his tabula in fact corresponds to the intertextual phenomenon nowadays called 'réécriture' or '*récriture*' that will be discussed later. The pastiche also concerns the macrostructure or the whole of a work, and it refers to the imitation of style, or linguistic mannerisms of an author. Finally, the forgery or plagiarism is the unlawful appropriation of important fragments of a text, or even of a whole book, by a writer. This concept highlights the importance of authorship and re-instates the significance of the subject of the enunciation in the text and in intertextual analysis, a significance that Bakhtin, Kristeva and Barthes had rejected.

The *mise en abyme* is of particular relevance to the comparative analysis of *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* because, unlike the internal intertextual phenomena just mentioned, it features in the two novels. The expression was first used in 1950 by Claude-Edmonde Magny in an analysis of the works of André Gide who had chosen the word 'abyme' to describe what he sought to achieve with his work.[155] In *Le Récit spéculaire*, literary theoretician Lucien Dällenbach

[155] Claude-Edmonde Magny, *Histoire Du roman français Depuis 1918* (Paris: Seuil, 1950). Gide explained that what would best described what he had tried to do in his writings was 'la comparaison avec ce procédé du blason qui consiste, dans le premier, à en mettre un second "en abyme"'. André Gide, *Journal 1889- 1939* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), p. 41.

concisely defines *mise en abyme* as 'tout miroir interne réfléchissant l'ensemble du récit par réduplication simple, répétée ou spécieuse'.[156] Therefore it is a method of reflection, a mirror-like element within the text that helps the reader understand the meaning of the work. The *mise en abyme* may be fragmented and may only last for a few pages, and thus has to do with the microstructure; yet it involves the macrostructural level too because it informs the meaning of the whole of the book. It may take the form of a book within the book, an object showing or reflecting an image such as a painting or a mirror within the narrative, a character…The *mise en abyme* occurs inside the story and introduces a reflection of it, and the *mise en abyme* character usually has a function of guarantor of the truth. Chapter Five will discuss and compare the roles of Paule in *Les Mandarins,* and of Isabella in *Il rimorso.* They are mirror characters to Anne and Francesca respectively, and they reflect the image of what life would be like should they choose not to act upon the existential anguish both women are experiencing. The function of Paule in de Beauvoir's narrative is the same as Isabella's in de Céspedes' novel: in the light of an analysis based on the concept of situated freedom, we shall see that the mirror story is used in both narratives to view the main female character's malaise as the rightful consequence of submission to patriarchal authority, and not as the symptom of a mental illness. The fact that firstly both *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* feature the *mise en abyme,* and that secondly de Céspedes used this narrative device with the very same purpose as de Beauvoir, significantly contribute to the impression of likeness between the two novels. Moreover, it is reasonable to suggest that this brings further evidence to the proposition that *Les Mandarins* should be considered hypotext and *Il rimorso* hypertext.

External occurrences of intertextuality, or of co-presence between texts, include relationships established by genetic criticism, literary criticism or commentary, and genre. Genetic criticism is an area of study which uses texts the reader does not usually come across (for example, first drafts, manuscripts, or pre-texts) in order to explain the meaning of a work. The relations thus established between the text in question and the materials provided by genetic

[156] Lucien Dällenbach, *Le Récit spéculaire. Essai sur la mise en abyme* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), p. 52.

research belong to the realm of paratextuality. Grésillon sees two essential functions in genetic criticism, which are:

> Donner à voir, c'est-à-dire rendre disponibles, accessibles et lisibles, les documents autographes qui ne sont d'abord que des pièces d'archives, mais qui ont en même temps contribué à l'élaboration d'un texte et qui sont les témoins matériels d'une dynamique créatrice (…) [The critic] construit, et c'est là sa deuxième tâche, des hypothèses sur les chemins parcourus par l'écriture et sur les significations possibles de ce processus de création.[157]

The study of drafts therefore provides significant tools for literary criticism, since they reveal the creative process of formation that preceded and influenced the final version of a text. I have not had access to drafts of de Céspedes' novel, but the letters that she wrote to Arnoldo Mondadori in the years before publication of *Il rimorso*, and in which she talks, amongst other matters, of her progress with its writing, were consulted in preparation for the present thesis.[158] We shall see that this work of genetic research allows us to confirm in Chapter Eight that de Céspedes considered Gerardo to be her male alter-ego, and thus he may be the embodiment of many of her views in the novel, particularly with regard to the press environment. Moreover, the letters also provide evidence that de Céspedes had first considered another title for her novel, namely *Il piacere e la colpa*, and that after careful consideration, she opted for *Il rimorso.* This allows for a discussion of the significance of her choice to an understanding of the book as a whole in the same chapter. With regard to the comparative analysis of the two novels, it reveals another element of the intertextual relationship: in both cases, the titles that were first considered by the authors (*Les Survivants* for *Les Mandarins*) in fact feature in the narratives as titles of the main male characters' writings (Henri's play and Gerardo's book).[159] In this case, it is the evidence provided by genetic criticism that helps support the argument that de Beauvoir influenced de Céspedes and her writing. It is also important to note, however, that in her letters to Mondadori, or anywhere else indeed, de Céspedes never gave any indication or

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[157] Almuth Grésillon, *Éléments De critique génétique* (Paris: PUF, 1994), p. 15.
[158] Letters held in the Fondo Arnoldo Mondadori, Fondazione Mondadori, Milan.
[159] Fallaize informs us that 'it was not until the completion of the manuscript that Beauvoir chose its title. Deciding against *Les Suspects* ("The Suspects") and *Les Survivants* ("The Survivors"), she eventually selected Lanzmann's suggestion, *Les Mandarins*'. Elizabeth Fallaize, *The Novels of Simone de Beauvoir* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 92.

acknowledgement of such an influence. The conclusion reached in this thesis therefore rests on the evidence provided first and foremost by the comparative literary criticism between *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso.*

This thesis itself also presents in fact an intertextual relationship with the novels that is external, or outside the texts: it is a metatext, a tool whose function is to comment on another text or on other texts as is the case here. In a metatext, the author establishes a relation of commentary by using quotations from the text(s) studied, as in the literary journals, reviews, memoirs, literary essay, or scientific criticism. The metatext can also be part of the work itself and be inserted in the text. For example, in *Les Mots,* Sartre recalls his childhood and how he never understood Charles Bovary as a character in Flaubert's novel. He writes:

> Il jetait un regard sombre à Rodolphe, donc il lui gardait rancune — de *quoi*, au fait? Et pourquoi lui disait-il: "je ne vous en veux pas" ? Pourquoi Rodolphe le trouvait-il "comique et un peu vil" ? Ensuite Charles Bovary mourait: de chagrin? de maladie? Et pourquoi le docteur l'ouvrait-il puisque tout était fini? [160]

*The Concept of Récriture*

*Récriture* is a fairly new notion in the field of intertextuality.[161] Over the last two decades, it has been the subject of many studies, and seems to be growing in popularity. However, as is the case with the term 'intertextuality', *récriture* is often used without any preliminary concise definition and therefore gives rise to some ambiguities. For the purpose of clarity, it is useful to consider first the meaning given in the dictionary *Le Petit Robert.* It states that *récriture* is 'l'action de réécrire un texte pour en améliorer la forme ou pour l'adapter à d'autres textes, à certains lecteurs'. The author re-works the ideas contained in another work, whether it is in front of his/her very eyes, or whether he/she remembers it. *Récriture* is therefore at once a work of repetition, or reproduction and, significantly, of adaptation, and it can refer to the narrative structure and/or to its content. The critical appreciation of a work as the *récriture* of another obviously calls up the reader's intellectual knowledge, as

[160] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Les Mots* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p. 48.

[161] '*Récriture*' is sometimes referred to as 'réecriture' which is a term also used in editing to describe the process of correction of a text before publication. For this reason, the present argument will use solely '*récriture*'.

is the case with intertextuality in general. In a work of *récriture*, the able reader can identify what the author has repeated or replicated, and the alterations to the original book. However, Gignoux notes that unlike intertextuality, *récriture* is always a conscious and intentional practice from the author and he/she does not seek to conceal it. She comments:

> lorsque le lecteur, en fonction de ses propres lectures, projette de l'intertextualité dans le livre qu'il lit, il est certain qu'on ne peut supposer chez l'auteur aucune intention particulière. Si la lecture de Stendhal renvoie Barthes à Proust — comme la lecture d'*OEdipe roi* peut renvoyer à Freud — au mépris de la chronologie, c'est que la distinction entre intertextualité et *récriture* se justifie totalement.[162]

The notion refers to a new text containing a balance of similarities, adaptations and differences, and in which the author's intention of creating a *récriture* or 'reprendre en le modifiant un texte antérieur' is apparent.[163] It is evident that this concept offers some attractive prospects if we consider the fact that *Il rimorso* was published nearly a decade after *Les Mandarins*, that it depicts a different era and society and it is set in a different country, and that despite this, there is such significant likeness between the two novels as to have been noted — if not investigated — by some scholars.

The subject of intertextuality in general is of particular relevance for the purpose of this thesis because it refers to the relation of co-presence between a text and one or several others. However, the broad overview presented in this chapter of various theories and definitions that were developed ever since Kristeva coined the term reveals how challenging the intertextual definition of the rapport between de Beauvoir's *Les Mandarins* and de Céspedes' *Il rimorso* can be. In order to define this relationship, Part II of this thesis is an in-depth comparative analysis of the two novels. Obvious similarities concerning the thematic content, the characters' situations and predicaments and the settings will be analyzed, and we shall assess whether the degree of similitude between the works suggests an intentional allusion from de Céspedes to *Les Mandarins*. Less obvious and perhaps more sophisticated elements of likeness between the two novels which relate to their thematic and philosophical content will also be

[162] Anne Claire Gignoux, *Initiation à l'intertextualité* (Paris: Ellipses, 2005), p. 116.
[163] Gignoux, p. 117.

studied and compared, such as, for example, the treatments of the topic of madness and of female sexuality, the reasons for the portrayals of psychiatry in *Les Mandarins* and of the Catholic Church in *Il rimorso*, and the promotion in both narratives of a new type of love relationship. We shall see that there are some significant differences between the two books too, such as the main female characters' attitudes to society's view of motherhood, or the fates assigned to these characters, or even the ways in which the press is portrayed. These variations may be indicative of de Céspedes' adaptation of de Beauvoir's text to a different time, place, and socio-political environment. The conclusion of the present thesis will establish the precise nature of the intertextual relation between *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* by drawing on both the theoretical account offered in the present chapter and on the findings in Part II.

# PART II

# Chapter Four

## Immanence and Transcendence: Delineating the Woman's Place and her Function as a Mother

Despite marked resemblances between *Il rimorso* and de Beauvoir's *Les Mandarins,* de Céspedes' work has never been considered in the light of Existentialism. This chapter investigates how and why the existentialist concepts of immanence and transcendence, which are vital to the understanding of the subsequent discussion on situated freedom, apply to the narrative of *Il rimorso* and its treatment of women's place in society and motherhood. Although de Céspedes does not refer explicitly to the French writer's ideas, it is the assertion of this chapter that the novel shares with *Les Mandarins* an illustration of the male/female boundaries that is based on de Beauvoir's particular interpretation of these notions — an interpretation which, as will be discussed, shapes the two authors' versions of feminism.

Both works overthrow the foundations of the two ideological and cultural strongholds that dictate the status and the place of women in the types of society depicted. Firstly, the present chapter shows that de Céspedes exposes in her narrative the consequences of the gender-based delineation of the spheres

of commitment. To this end, she reworks in her novel a theme illustrated in *Les Mandarins* and argued in *Le Deuxième sexe*: that of the mental distress caused by women's confinement to what de Beauvoir identifies as immanence. By doing so, *Il rimorso* challenges the traditional norms of femininity reproduced through centuries of patriarchy in the same manner as *Les Mandarins*. In both novels, female anguish is caused by the pressure imposed on women to conform to society's notion of gender roles. This suggests a similar early criticism of the cultural preconceptions of language that has never so far been identified as an obvious feature in either novel. What is understood as 'normal' is put into question: anxiety, or even depression, becomes a sign of enforced conformity to femininity in both narratives, rather than being labeled and treated as illness, eccentricity or even madness as patriarchal norms of behaviours would have it. Secondly, de Céspedes' treatment of motherhood in *Il rimorso* will be shown to agree with the criticism de Beauvoir set out in *Les Mandarins* on the subject: the concept of maternal instinct is denounced as a cultural and masculinist fabrication, and society's promotion of motherhood as the pinnacle of women's lives is condemned as the traditional means to proscribe female transcendence. The present analysis also draws attention to the fact that de Céspedes' treatment of maternity in *Il rimorso* is strikingly reminiscent of *Le Deuxième sexe*.

*Challenging 'Normal' Femininity*

Unlike Sartre, de Beauvoir specifically equates the notion of transcendence with fertile action or a productive commitment in society, and opposes it to immanence or a state of passivity. In his 1943 philosophical text *L'Etre et le néant,* Sartre's interpretation of transcendence does not distinguish between constructive activity and inaction because it refers to absolutely every deliberate manifestation of the for-itself or *pour-soi,* or to 'any moment of intentional consciousness, even those that occur in moments of passivity'.[164] In contrast, in *Pyrrhus et Cinéas,* and later in *Pour Une morale de l'ambiguïté,* de Beauvoir shows a more refined understanding of transcendence which is not limited to the projection of the Self into the world through any conscious

[164] Andrea Veltman, 'Transcendence and Immanence in the ethics of Simone de Beauvoir', in *The Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir,* ed. by Margaret A. Simons (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), pp. 113-31 (p.118).

activity in the Sartrean sense; to her, transcendence is the dynamic, creative endeavour which moves an individual beyond the present status quo towards an open future because it refers 'less to the movements of an intentional conscious subjectivity and more to constructive activities that situate and engage the individual with other humans'.[165] She writes:

> il faut que l'homme s'engage dans deux directions convergentes: il fonde des objets où il trouve le reflet figé de sa transcendance; il se transcende par un mouvement en avant qui est sa liberté même (*PC*, p. 308).

Her definition becomes gender-dependent in *Le Deuxième sexe* where she argues that women are prevented from conducting an active mode of existence, from striving to surpass the status quo, and thus from contributing positively to a constructive enterprise of the human race. Instead, society and its dictating of marriage dynamics restrict the female sphere of commitment to what is commonly known as the private sphere; de Beauvoir argues that in so doing, civilization reduces women to taking part solely in the kind of labours she considers to be negative or unconstructive, those necessary to the continuity of human life and, more significantly, to the perpetuation of the status quo. This type of work corresponds to her understanding of immanence. She observes that:

> La femme est vouée au maintien de l'espèce et à l'entretien du foyer, c'est-à-dire à l'immanence. En vérité toute existence humaine est transcendance et immanence à la fois (…) à l'*homme*, le mariage en permet précisément l'heureuse synthèse; dans son métier, dans sa vie politique il connaît le changement, le progrès, il éprouve sa dispersion à travers le temps et l'univers (…) Mais celle-ci [the woman] n'a pas d'autre tâche que de maintenir et entretenir la vie dans sa pure et identique generalité; elle perpétue l'espèce immutable, elle assure le rythme égal des journées et la permanence du foyer dont elle garde les portes fermées; on ne lui donne aucune prise directe sur l'avenir ni sur l'univers; elle ne se dépasse vers la collectivité que par le truchement de l'époux. (*LDS II*, p. 227).

[165] Veltman, p. 115.

The present analysis argues for the first time that *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* draw on de Beauvoir's definition of immanence and transcendence in order to address the consequences of this cultural gender-based delineation of the spheres of commitment. The female characters' psychological sufferings are portrayed as resulting from the traditional insistence on women's rightful place and role or from their imposed confinement to immanence. The topic of psychoanalysis in *Les Mandarins* has already been addressed by some scholars with reference to Anne's profession and solely in the context of relationships with the past or with lived experiences (as discussed in Chapter Six). However, the place given to the traditional Freudian school of thought and its influence on society's view of the status and function of women in the narrative of *Les Mandarins* has so far never been investigated. This is true of *Il rimorso* too, and although psychoanalysis is not a theme immediately identifiable in de Céspedes' novel — in Chapter Six, I argue that it is religion that assumes here a function similar to that of psychoanalysis in de Beauvoir's novel — it still shares with *Les Mandarins* a radical criticism of the gender assignment of immanence and transcendence which I posit can be seen as a rejection of Freud's theory of penis-envy. The celebrated Austrian neurologist has played a significant role in the idea of 'normal' femininity by using psychoanalysis and biology to justify the subservience of the female to the male. Although they do not address Freud's ideas directly, de Beauvoir and de Céspedes show the flaws in such argument by depicting the physiological ills (women's anguish) resulting from such reasoning. Both narratives not only reveal the cruelty but also expose the irrationality behind society's arguments for justifying male supremacy and the treatment of women as the second sex, of which Freud's view is only one.

Freud considered a watershed in a girl's development the point when she realizes that she does not have a penis. He used this to define the condition of women and more significantly to justify those genitally deficient beings' subservience to men. Appignanesi gives a straightforward and clear account of Freud's thesis when she reports that:

> The girl's discovery that she lacks the penis (…) and its attendant disappointment can lead to sexual inhibition, neurosis, or to what Freud calls 'normal femininity'. It can lead the girl to deny her lack and mimic

> maleness in her various pursuits or sexual choices. Or it can resign her to what Freud calls 'femininity, that is, a settling into the "passive" role in which she expects to receive the penis'.[166]

The symptoms of mental distress suffered by the female characters in *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* may be described as depression by the broad-sweeping medical jargon that often too readily equates existential malaise with psychological disorder.[167] It is significant that in both narratives the roots of their malaises, or disorders if we are to use the scientific term, lie not outwith the parameters of Freud's 'normal femininity', but in the very system of patriarchal supremacy — and its attendant normal femininity indeed — that the concept of penis-envy has helped to normalize, and that the religious and political propaganda of the postwar and the Cold War years promoted.[168] Anne's distress comes from the realization that her psychological dependency on Robert is not viable any longer, and from her desperate attempt to reproduce the learned pattern of male-dominance/female-dependence with her lover Lewis, a pattern engraved within her persona by early experiences of religious worship and depicted in the novel as debilitating enthrallment or subjugating of the Self to an Other, be it a God or a man; Francesca's depression occurs and lasts for the time of her compliance, or at least attempted compliance, with the traditional pattern of female subservience to the husband and by implication his milieu despite the fact that, unlike Anne, she had resisted the enrolment into the 'normal' code of femininity as a child; Paule's neurotic behaviour may be seen as the tragic expression of her desperate readiness to conform to the Freudian view of the status of women in her relationship with Henri; finally the behavioural extremes that make up Isabella's personality, from the devout housewife and model mother to the promiscuous and quasi-nymphomaniac woman, can be interpreted as the signs of a troubled personality that culturally-enforced conformity to the social construction of womanhood has generated. In other words, de Beauvoir and de Céspedes challenge what is commonly construed as maladjustment or even

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[166] Lisa Appignanesi, *Mad, Bad and Sad* (London: Virago Press, 2008), p. 226.

[167] In the next chapter I argue that both novels make similar use of the mirror story device in order to criticize strongly the convenient and all-encompassing diagnosis of psychological disorder.

[168] See Chapter Six and the comparative analysis of the role of the psychoanalytical session and of the ritual of confession in the respective societies depicted by each novel.

madness, and equate it with conformity, not difference, rebellion or eccentricity. Both Anne and Francesca will ultimately 'recover' their mental health by extracting themselves from the traditional mould of Freudian 'normal femininity', psychologically in the former's case as she ceases to acknowledge the male figure (be it God, Robert or Lewis) as the absolute referential point of her existence, and both psychologically and physically for the latter as she leaves Guglielmo to return to a life true to her own ethical beliefs. The paths to the main female characters' recoveries show that both authors do more than simply denouncing the ills of the politics of their times. In her narrative, de Céspedes uses the depiction of female psychological distress in a very similar way to de Beauvoir in *Les Mandarins*: it is portrayed as a consequence of what is construed as normal, when normality entails women's compliance to their confinement to immanence. By doing so, she also brings into focus and denounces the subjective nature of the notions of non-conformity and madness in the same way that de Beauvoir does in *Les Mandarins*: *Il rimorso* similarly rattles the chains of the male-constructed and inherently masculinist values that imprison our understanding of concepts and indeed our speech. The idea that the words we use harbour cultural preconceptions about women features in *Le Deuxième sexe.* De Beauvoir argues that criteria of 'femininity' should not be used to define a woman, and even less in essentialist dictations of what a woman is, since the very word 'feminine' is contingent to time and social customs. She writes that:

> Pas plus qu'il ne suffit de dire que la femme est une femelle on ne peut la définir par la conscience qu'elle prend de sa féminité: elle prend conscience au sein de la société dont elle est membre (*LDS I*, p. 91).

Lundgren-Gothlin also notes that de Beauvoir 'criticizes Freud for having failed to describe the "feminine libido" and having used only male sexuality as his model'.[169] Although critics have not identified this as a feature in *Les Mandarins* before, or in de Céspedes' *Il rimorso*, the preconception of language is a vital component to the discussion on immanence and transcendence since the very words we utter and the significance they carry contribute to female oppression: a woman's imprisonment in immanence is

[169] Eva Lundgren-Gothlin, *Sex and Existence. Simone de Beauvoir's 'The Second Sex'* (London: The Athlone Press, 1996), p. 202. Her argument is further explored in Chapter Seven in which I discuss female sexuality and the novels.

seen as 'normal', and by extension female access to transcendence tends to be regarded as outside the norm. The present analysis therefore disputes the later second-wave feminist theorists' claim that de Beauvoir, her followers and what became known as the pro-equality first wave of feminism, failed to detect and address the masculinist construction of concepts and language in the first place, or ignored it altogether. From the mid 70s, the women of *Psy et Po* drew on Lacanian theory which sets forth the idea that language is a system in which woman is designated in relation to man.[170] They argued that 'the organized systems of knowledge (…) had always excluded women. They were concerned to show how meaning itself was entangled in a hierarchy of power-relations which placed masculine reason as its pinnacle'.[171] The depiction of psychological disorders, or at least of psychological torments, in *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* in fact offers a striking illustration of the potential damage inflicted on women by the socio-cultural obligation to conform to those male-constructed values that constitute what is regarded and labeled in our vocabulary as normality. The semantic displacement of the concept of madness from its popular (and therefore masculinist) definition as state of abnormality or 'outside the norm' into a new correlation with conformity and the women's struggles to remain 'within the cultural norm' of male-female relations as illustrated in both narratives in fact gives a clear indication of de Beauvoir and de Céspedes' early insights into the question of the gendered partiality of language and meanings. In *When Sex Became Gender,* Tarrant likens de Beauvoir's view of Freud's theory of penis-envy as exposed in *Le Deuxième sexe* with that of American anthropologist Margaret Mead. She notes that both 'rejected this (same) concept on the basis that it contributed to women's second-class status. Beauvoir, like Mead, instead argued that it was power — and not a penis — that women lacked'.[172] The present analysis identifies such an argument as a feature of *Les Mandarins* for the first time, and reveals that de Céspedes shared de Beauvoir's critical outlook.

*Motherhood and the Demystification of Maternal Instinct*

[170] The anti-Beauvoirian pro-difference political group *Psychanalyse et Politique*, or *Psy et Po* as it became known, was issued from the 1968 Mouvement de Libération des Femmes that had been created by Antoinette Fouque, Monique Wittig and Josiane Chanel.
[171] Appignanesi, p. 460.
[172] Shira Tarrant, *When Sex Became Gender* (New-York: Routledge, 2006), p. 196..

Also vital to an understanding of de Beauvoir's views on immanence and transcendence with regard to women is the question of motherhood. In *Le Deuxième sexe*, not only does she reject indisputably the notion of specifically female values that would thrive on what she considered as belonging to immanence — the uncreative, isolating activities of homemaking and housewifery — and which were supposed to fulfill women's lives sufficiently and adequately, but she also actively condemns the traditional idea of motherhood. According to her, it ultimately normalizes female identity and removes any possibility of expression of individuality. When Lundgren-Gothlin notes the discrepancy between de Beauvoir and 'some contemporary feminists',[173] she refers to the ideological opposition between the first and the second wave of feminism. While bearing in mind their authors' reticence at being labeled 'feminists' at all, at least at the time in de Beauvoir's case,[174] I judge *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* to belong to the pro-equality first wave. Second wave feminism which arose from the mid-1970s celebrates women's difference and their ability to 'shape a different model for humanity, out of motherhood or traditional female occupations'.[175] It is in clear opposition to the views of de Beauvoir who, as Lundgren-Gothlin rightly remarks, could 'never see motherhood and women's work at home as transcendent, for not only is domestic labour unpaid and carried out in isolation, but also it is not creative'.[176] Second wave feminism argues against *Le Deuxième sexe*'s definition of transcendence which it considers all too male-identified. The criticism addresses de Beauvoir's vision of the liberated woman because it involves surpassing feminine immanence to achieve masculine transcendence: women are encouraged to take part productively in a world whose values were established by men, and the superior merit bestowed on this type of engagement necessarily also involves the denigration of the worth of maternity.

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[173] Eva Lundgren-Gothlin, *Sex and Existence. Simone de Beauvoir's 'The Second Sex'* (London: The Athlone Press, 1996), p. 237.

[174] De Beauvoir eventually joined the women's movement in November 1971 and a year later in an interview with Alice Schwarzer she stated: 'At the end of *Le Deuxième sexe* I said I was not a feminist because I believed that the problems of women would resolve themselves automatically in the context of socialist development. (…) I am a feminist today, because I realised that we must fight for the situation of women, here and now, before our dreams of socialism come true. Apart from that, I realised that even in socialist countries, equality between men and women has not been achieved. Therefore it is absolutely essential for women to take their destiny in their own hands. That is why I have now joined the Women's Liberation Movement'. 'I am a feminist' in *Simone de Beauvoir Today.Conversations 1972-1982*, with Alice Schwarzer (London: The Hogarth Press,1984), pp. 27- 48 (p. 32).

[175] Lundgren-Gothlin, p. 238.

[176] Lundgren-Gothlin, p. 237.

Nevertheless, I think it crucially important that de Beauvoir's presentation of the two concepts of immanence and transcendence in *Le Deuxième sexe* which, as the present thesis demonstrates, is at the basis of the portrayals of women, married life and female financial independence in both *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso,* be put into context. As mentioned in Chapters One and Two, the post war period is a time when women are actively encouraged to revert to their traditional roles as housewives and mothers, propaganda in which even the Left partook to a certain degree. De Beauvoir's courage is remarkable: in pronatalist times, when the only acceptable role for a woman was being a spouse and mother — a role promoted as the essential female function — she denies any life-endowing meaning to domestic labour and motherhood. She rails against the established concept of childbearing as the most laudable form of commitment in a woman's life and takes up the defying challenge, given the climate of opinion, of declaring that in actual fact having a child does not entail any active participation or engagement in the world:

> elle [la mère] ne fait pas vraiment l'enfant: il se fait en elle; sa chair engendre seulement de la chair: elle est incapable de fonder une existence qui aura à se fonder elle-même (*LDS II*, p. 351).

She reduces childbearing and childrearing to minor projects through which the woman is a passive instrument of nature, subjected to rather than actively assuming the biological functions of giving birth and suckling the infant. In so doing, de Beauvoir's analysis of the female condition in *Le Deuxième sexe* stresses the reductionist and normalizing definition of a woman's life disseminated by such societal pressures that confine her to immanence; significantly her take on maternity and motherhood highlights and warns against the traditional, cultural and popular view on such issues which intrinsically dismiss the need to address women's rights to financial independence and work, and that of controlling their own fertility, those rights which we now enjoy in Western societies. It is evident that in the postwar climate, when the effort of reconstruction also meant encouragement to procreate, as I mention in Chapter One, de Beauvoir's argument of gendered existentialist ethics in *Le Deuxième sexe,* which condemns women's confinement to the private sphere by establishing the boundaries of immanence and transcendence, offered the most radical (and logical) foundation to those

thinking and working towards the eradication of female subjection. For this reason, it is essential that modern feminists should fully appreciate the social and political context in which the French author was advancing her theories, and that they take these into consideration when developing their critiques.

The difficulties that women face in committing to this liberating leap from a life confined to (feminine) immanence into achieving (masculine) transcendence are identified and addressed in a similar manner in *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso.* Both novels expose the traditional view of the couple and the institution of marriage as fundamental to the obstruction of female access to engagement in the public sphere. The main female characters embark on arduous journeys towards a new life that will not admit the quashing of their own personas by male constructed values, or the sacrifice of how they really want to conduct their existences. However, Anne and Francesca's fates are ultimately different at the end of the novels: the former will remain in her marriage, whereas the latter will leave. In part, this distinction is a result of the novels' respective backgrounds, of the chronological difference between the two novels, and the fact that each is set in a different society.[177] Nevertheless it is significant when considering the extent of de Beauvoir's influence on de Céspedes that the path to women's liberation from the confinement of immanence that is exposed *Il rimorso* involves a critical assessment of the notion of motherhood that corresponds precisely to the arguments developed in *Le Deuxième sexe.* Consequently, both *Les Mandarins* and de Céspedes' novel convey a similar condemnation of the traditional promotion of childbearing as the pinnacle of a woman's life and as a natural development from marriage, also upheld as essential to female existence. In terms of the plot, this is conveyed quite differently, and again this may be a result of the different times and societies captured by the narratives: de Beauvoir's novel portrays one woman's struggle with her feelings of inadequacy and failure to live up to society's view of what one may call good mothering, while *Il rimorso* depicts a woman who is not afraid of admitting that her own experience was very different from the traditional expectations and understanding of maternity. Anne has fallen victim to societal expectations, whereas Francesca shows that she feels no guilt whatsoever about

[177] This will be discussed in Chapter Seven with the question of women and financial independence.

her non-conformism and that she is ready to question openly the established idea of motherhood. Therefore the two novels challenge the normalizing view that dedicated maternity should not only be necessary, but also sufficient, to fulfill all women's lives and desires; they contest the idea that the meaning of female destiny lies in becoming mothers, and that their most honourable functions rest in self-sacrificial motherhood. Finally, they denounce the concept of 'maternal instinct' as a social fabrication that exploits the idea of a so-called biological female feature with an aim to control and isolate women, to maintain the gender-role status quo in patriarchal society and to bestow on them full responsibility for the upbringing of children. With this, *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* undoubtedly address the most significant concept of all in terms of women's roles in the types of society they depict.

As a result of both the intensely pro-natalist postwar politics in France, and the Catholic stronghold in Italy, *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* share a similar background with regard to such an issue. Throughout the postwar and cold war era, right and leftwing political factions promoted essentially the same familial values: a rigid morality, monogamy and numerous children. However, it must be pointed out that while the conservative right and Catholics firmly believed in keeping the mother at home to look after the family wellbeing, Communist and Socialists saw motherhood as one of the woman's three essential functions: mother, worker and citizen. Patterson's remark that de Beauvoir's 'quarrel was not with motherhood itself, but rather with the institution of motherhood as it is developed in a bourgeois society'[178] is certainly pertinent to the analysis of *Les Mandarins*; it is arguably all the more relevant to the critical study of the topic in *Il rimorso.* De Céspedes' novel depicts a time when the consequences of the social and economic changes of 1950s Italy were a cause of concern for the conservative forces in the country: churchmen, politicians, doctors, social commentators, and so on, warned against the relaxation of social mores, notably to do with parental authority over young people. As a result, the idea of women's role pertaining primarily, if not exclusively, to the private sphere was re-inforced and the responsibility bestowed on the mother for bringing up a respectable new generation was put into sharp focus. The socio-political background to the novel therefore means that the analysis of the topic of

[178] Yolanda Astarita Patterson, *Simone de Beauvoir and the Demystification of Motherhood* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989), p. 317.

motherhood has a more politicized approach against right-wing conservative forces than in *Les Mandarins*. Its treatment is consistent with the novel's direct criticism of Catholicism and specifically highlights the Church's role in perpetuating the promotion of the model of 'the woman-mother *(donna-madre),* a traditional figure that Fascist discourses reinvented by casting the bearing of children and selfless devotion to family and home as the highest political service women could perform for the state'.[179]

In *Il rimorso,* the theme of motherhood is conveyed by the account of Francesca's reaction to the birth of her son, Lionello, and to his premature death. In *Les Mandarins,* it is addressed in terms of the mother-daughter relationship between Anne and Nadine, and to a lesser extent between Nadine and her baby daughter Maria. De Beauvoir puts forward a complex illustration of motherhood and one that has provoked very different interpretations. The contrast between Fallaize's comment that in the novel the treatment of the mother-daughter connection 'offers little but guilt and hostility', her mention of 'maternal frigidity',[180] and Keefe's view that 'the mother-daughter bond is of incalculable importance to Anne, who will do anything for Nadine and cares for her more than for herself'[181] bears witness to the difficulty of evaluating such a topic in *Les Mandarins*. However, the present analysis will concentrate on the three aspects shared with *Il rimorso*: firstly, the intense historical victimization of the mother that characterizes the climate in which both narratives take place; secondly, the notion of maternal instinct that both novels denounce as a social invention that is disguised and promoted as women's natural attribute, and thirdly, the objectification of the child within the couple or family unit that each addresses to varying degrees.

Anne holds herself responsible for her daughter Nadine's wild behaviour because she thinks she does not love her enough. Her statement: 'Remords parce que je ne savais pas me faire obéir d'elle et parce que je ne l'aimais pas assez' (*LM I,* p. 96) shows how far she has fallen victim to the standardised idea of motherhood. Anne's case can be said to illustrate the post-war

[179] Robin Pickering-Iazzi, 'Introduction', in *Mothers of Invention. Women, Italian Fascism and Culture*, ed. by Robin Pickering-Iazzi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), pp. ix-xxxii (p. x).
[180] Elizabeth Fallaize, *The Novels of Simone de Beauvoir* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 113.
[181] Terry Keefe, *Simone de Beauvoir* (London: Macmillan, 1998), p. 114.

popularisation of Melanie Klein's complex hypotheses in which the 'sense of the mother as both utterly passive and infinitely responsible helped to induce in women a feeling of lingering culpability with regard to their children'.[182] The guilt she experiences is symptomatic of the established view inherent to the backgrounds of both novels that mothers are entirely responsible for the development of their children, and therefore also for the possible future problems of the generation they bore. Accordingly, Willson stresses that 'indeed, some began to blame mothers for the ills of Italian society';[183] in *La Mamma,* d'Amelia explains that the expression 'mammismo' was coined in 1952 to describe a particularly strong bond between the Italian mother and her son(s), and that it was used as an explanation for the terrible state the country was in.[184] The victimization of the mother, common to the historical contexts of both *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso,* reveals the extent of the psychological pressure Anne, Francesca, and all women, were under to conform to the popular idea of their roles in life. As a consequence, Anne as a mother, and what is more as a psychoanalyst, is unable to fathom that the hardship Nadine (and a whole generation) suffered during the war at a young age, and the death of her first lover Diégo at the hands of the Nazis may be the primary source of her unruly behaviour. In this sense, *Les Mandarins* supports as well as anticipates Anna Freud's view in 1974 that there is too common a tendency to see the conflict within the individual person as expression of 'one's longing for perfect unity with his mother'. Significantly, she adds that 'there is an enormous amount that gets lost this way'.[185]

In *Le Deuxième sexe,* de Beauvoir wrote that 'il n'existe pas d' "instinct" maternel: le mot ne s'applique en aucun cas à l'espèce humaine' (*LDS II*, p. 369). Both novels illustrate as an absurdity the belief that there is a specific

[182] Appignanesi, *Mad, Bad and Sad.* p.323. A detailed account of such popularization, of the role and involvement of the media in promoting 'mothering' as a precise and intricate discipline, and of the public taste for it, is beyond the scope of the present analysis. However, Appignanesi's observation is worth mentioning here: 'Everywhere in the postwar magazines, paediatric services and childcare manuals, the business of raising children became something so difficult as to drive both mothers and children if not altogether mad, then certainly to seek out help'.

[183] Perry Willson, *Women in Twentieth-century Italy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 123.

[184] Marina d'Amelia, *La Mamma* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2005).

[185] Anna Freud, letter to J.C. Hill, 21 October 1974, quoted in Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Anna Freud* (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 457.

feeling, or some sort of sixth sense, that nature bestows on the female after the birth of her child. In *Les Mandarins,* Anne is sure that she does not love Nadine enough. Her very consciousness of what she considers to be a lack of parental affection shows the extent to which she is influenced by society's view of motherhood. Moreover, it is evident from Henri's description of Nadine feeding Maria at the end of *Les Mandarins* that her own experience of maternity is far removed from the idyllic image of mother-child interaction promoted by society's romanticised version. He observes:

> Elle [Nadine] se résignait mal à n'être plus qu'une mère de famille. Elle s'assit sur un tronc d'arbre, avec Maria dans ses bras; elle lui donnait son biberon avec autorité, avec patience, elle mettait un point d'honneur à être une mère compétente, elle avait acquis de solides principes de puériculture et un tas d'objets hygiéniques; mais jamais Henri n'avait surpris de tendresse dans ses yeux quand elle s'occupait de Maria. Oui, c'est ça qui la rendait difficile à aimer: même avec ce bébé elle gardait ses distances, elle restait toujours murée en elle-même (*LM II*, p. 436).

Nadine's unchanged character, the failure of maternity to operate in her the sort of almost divine transfiguration supported by popular belief, is demonstrated by the cold and detached manner in which she interacts with her baby.[186] What makes her the person she is, what dictates the way she interacts with the present, is the sum of her past experiences, of the hardship she has suffered during the war, as discussed earlier. The fact that she has become a mother can never erase all this and radically transform her: in Chapter Six, I will show that in *Les Mandarins* psychoanalysis — not motherhood — is portrayed as having the power to change one's relationship with his/her past and present.

The denunciation of maternal instinct as a social myth, and of the popular idea of motherhood in general, appears more strongly and more directly in *Il rimorso.* It is developed in more detail than in *Les Mandarins,* and its treatment in the narrative corresponds very precisely to de Beauvoir's arguments in *Le Deuxième sexe.* Therefore it may be said that in de Céspedes' novel, this topic may be related more closely with de Beauvoir's earlier essay than with *Les*

[186] The resemblance between Anne and Nadine's experience of motherhood, their ostensible lack of affection for their daughters, or at least their common lack of partaking into the type of affection that society promotes as motherly, evidently puts forward the topic of the reproduction of mother-daughter behaviour. This subject, however, is beyond the scope of the present analysis.

*Mandarins.* Francesca talks openly of the view of maternity as an ecstatic character-changing female experience, an experience that all women should strive for. Her divergence from this popularised and standardized version is not conveyed by an apparent or confessed lack of affection for a child, as is the case for Anne and Nadine, but rather by her failure to yearn for such change, and even fearing it. She recalls that when she had expressed her intention to obtain a diploma and become a writer, thus asserting her right to a life independent from a possible future husband, her mother had immediately replied: 'quando avrai un figlio, non ragionerai piú così (...) non penserai piú a queste cose' (*IR*, p. 35). The child is clearly portrayed as the impediment to Francesca's autonomous life, not only from a practical point of view, but also on a psychological level. She recalls her feelings during her pregnancy:

> Mentre aspettavo Lionello sembrava che dovessi sottopormi a un'operazione per correggere una mia deformità. Tutti mi predicevano che, di lí a poco, sarei stata una donna completamente nuova (...) Io non ho mai desiderato avere un altro carattere: comunque fosse, preferivo il mio. Perciò aspettavo con orrore tale cambiamento (*IR*, p. 35).

Secondly, her account of her failure to feel 'the wave' at the birth of Lionello, the famous overwhelming 'ondata' (*IR*, p. 35) that her own mother had told her to expect, shows that a uniform idea of the experience of motherhood does not pertain to real life, but to cultural folklore. In fact, it is the very understanding of such a myth that allows Francesca to bestow on her son a type of love that appears infinitely more preferable than that fostered by the popular view of the all-sacrificial maternal role. Her comment that 'forse, ho tanto amato Lionello perché mi ha risparmiato le ondate, i naufragi, l'annientamento, che voi m'annunziavate sorridendo' (*IR*, p. 36) shows that she did not fall into the social trap which dictates that the mother is not a person, but a sort of secondary being entirely devoted to her child. In this context, Isabella's declaration that 'quando nascerà il bambino tu non esisterai piú, sarai sua' (*IR*, p. 35) is proved wrong by Francesca's experience. Hers supports de Beauvoir's view that 'c'est une morale sociale et artificielle qui se cache sous ce pseudo-naturalisme. Que l'enfant soit la fin suprême de la femme, c'est là une affirmation qui a tout juste la valeur d'un slogan publicitaire' (*LDS II*, p. 386).

Francesca's attitude shows her understanding of the myth of motherhood as social fabrication; this contrasts with Anne's interpretation of her lack of maternal instinct as a defect and of her ensuing guilt towards Nadine. It is interesting that taken together, these characters can be said to exemplify the two sides of Kierkegaard's evaluation of the female condition within patriarchy that is the epigraph to *Le Deuxième sexe*: 'Quel malheur que d'être femme! Et pourtant le pire malheur quand on est femme est au fond de ne pas comprendre que c'en est un'.

The arguments and even to a certain degree the vocabulary used in *Il rimorso* to address the topic of the subjectivity of the child, or the fact that contrarily to popular opinion mother and child do not belong to each other but are two autonomous human beings with separate feelings, are strikingly similar to that of *Le Deuxième sexe.* Francesca recalls at the birth of Lionello: 'Io esistevo ancora ed esisteva anche lui, adesso: un'altra creatura umana, sola sulla terra' (*IR*, p. 37). Her acknowledgement that the baby is a human being in himself, an Other, precisely echoes de Beauvoir's view that:

> La mère peut avoir *ses* raisons de vouloir *un* enfant, mais elle ne saurait donner à *cet* autre qui va être demain ses propres raisons d'être ; elle l'engendre dans la généralité de son corps, non dans la singularité de son existence (*LDS II*, p. 351).

In Francesca's account of the very first time she found herself alone with Lionello, only a few hours old, there is the same demand for distinctive rights for mother and child as in *Le Deuxième sexe.* Her description of the newborn baby as an autonomous organism draws on a clinical register which corresponds to de Beauvoir's intention of demystifying motherhood and doing away with the romanticised popular idea of an eternal spiritual link between mother and child. Her assessment that:

> Non ci saremmo mai posseduti a vicenda. La sua pelle rosea racchiudeva un organismo con tutto il suo vigore e le sue insidie ; con la sua vita e la sua morte — già tanto prossima — che non avrebbe potuto spartire con me né con altri (*IR*, p. 37).

parallels *Le Deuxième sexe*'s 'tout ce qu'il [the newborn] éprouve est enfermé en lui, il est opaque, impénétrable, séparé ; elle [the mother] ne le reconnaît même pas puisqu'elle ne le connaît pas' (*LD II*, p. 364). The advice of Francesca's mother, dispensed in a hushed voice, depicts women's complicity, or bad faith, in perpetuating the social myth of maternity from generation to generation. Francesca's failure to feel 'the wave', or to conform to what is disseminated as the 'normal' experience of motherhood, must be hidden in shame, like a dirty secret, lest she should be deemed an unfit mother. She recalls: 'Quando mia madre rientrò nella camera, le confessai che non avevo sentito l'ondata. Lei sbalordí, rimase incerta, poi mi consigliò sottovoce: "Non lo dire a nessuno"' (*IR*, p. 37). It is not unreasonable to suggest that the novel's illustration of this code of silence passed through generations of women may have brought much needed reassurance to female readers: Francesca does not differ from other women because of her experience of maternity, but because she has been given a voice through the novel. The treatment of motherhood in *Il rimorso,* just like in *Le Deuxième Sexe* and in *Les Mandarins,* normalises the existence of authentically non-conformist feelings, and it invalidates the threat of social categorising associated with them.

In *Les Mandarins,* Anne admits that it was not hers but Dubreuilh's wish that they should have a child so soon after their marriage. Her consequent resentment towards Nadine, whose arrival she feels disturbed their intimacy — 'J'en ai voulu à Nadine de déranger notre tête-à-tête' (*LM I,* p. 101) — gives an illustration of the negative outcome for mother and child of a maternity that is not absolutely freely chosen. It is interesting that in her 1949 novel *Dalla parte di lei*, de Céspedes raised the issue of maternity as a choice, and drew attention to the fact that not all women necessarily wish to become mothers: Alexandra does not want any children because, as Anne does in *Les Mandarins* five years later, she feels a child would interfere in her married relationship that therefore she puts first and foremost. De Beauvoir cites the work of psychiatrist Hélène Deutsch and her argument that a woman can find fulfilment in motherhood only if it is a product of her own free and authentic will. She argues that 'il faut que la jeune femme soit dans une situation psychologique, morale et matérielle qui lui permette d'en supporter la charge; sinon les conséquences en seront

désastreuses' (*LDS II,* p. 385). The idea of disastrous consequences may be exaggerated as far as the relationship between Anne and Nadine is concerned since Henri's comment that 'ces deux femmes se seraient fait tuer l'une pour l'autre' (*LM II,* p. 450) testifies to a profound love between them. Nonetheless, the damaging effects of a pregnancy that was not freely chosen on the woman's part, but was aimed at pleasing Robert, are clearly reflected in Anne's perception of her daughter as 'cette petite intruse' and in Nadine's aggressivity towards her mother, her 'rivale dans le coeur de son père'(*LM I,* p. 101). This tortuous relationship allows some of the same criticism of the objectification of the child in *Les Mandarins* as de Beauvoir exposes in *Le Deuxième sexe.* She condemns the selfish use of parenthood as a means of counteracting one's shortcomings or frustration when she declares that 'c'est un leurre encore plus décevant que de rêver atteindre par l'enfant une plénitude, une chaleur, une valeur qu'on n'a pas su créer soi-même.' (*LDS II,* p. 385). Anne surrendered to Robert's wish when she conceived Nadine: thus it can be said that in that context, motherhood was intended on Anne's part as a means of maintaining the harmony in her marriage, and of filling a void in her husband's life that she felt herself unable to alleviate. She remarks: 's'il a voulu si vite un enfant, c'est sans doute parce que je ne suffisais pas à justifier son existence'. Likewise, the reasons for Robert wanting to become a father so soon after their marriage may be interpreted as a response to the popular view that a child is the cement to family life, not to mention an increasing consciousness of time passing and ageing on his part, as she reflects: 'peut-être aussi cherchait-il une revanche contre cet avenir sur lequel il n'avait plus de prise' (*LM I,* p. 78).

A similar criticism is conveyed in *Il rimorso* with Isabella's assessment of her friend's marital situation. It is notable that whereas the denunciation of the object-child in *Les Mandarins* is revealed in terms of its supposedly consolidating purpose between husband and wife, and of its consequences on mother-child relations, *Il rimorso* offers a criticism of the same topic that is less psychologically orientated. In the narrative, the presence of the child is used to show society's firm grip on the institution of marriage.

It is evident that Isabella, like many women at the time, suffers from the incongruity between the socio-cultural promotion of an unbreakable and almost mystical bond between mother and child, and a legal system that proclaims

wife and children to be the property of the husband. She writes that 'tutto ciò non sarebbe avvenuto se tu avessi ancora Lionello: tanto meno se avessi oggi un altro figlio, piccino. Lo so per esperienza' (*IR*, p. 76). Isabella's insistence that Francesca would not even remotely consider leaving Guglielmo if her son was still alive certainly reflects her allegiance to Catholic dogma and the sanctity of marriage, but more pertinently here, it also raises the subject of the continuing hardship inflicted on women by Italian family law. In 1906 Aleramo denounced the marginalization of women by the legal system in her barely disguised autobiography *Una donna.*[187] As she recounts her experience of marital separation, the novel ends with her being denied access to her son as well as to the inheritance money left by her relative. What is more Wood comments that 'divorce is not an option, and she [Aleramo] is encouraged to regard herself as fortunate in so far as Pierangeli [her husband] does not force her to return to the family home, an option legally available to him'.[188] In *Il rimorso,* the hypocrisy of Isabella's family life, as revealed by her many affairs, is not solely engendered by the requirements of her religion which condemns the dissolution of marriages and by the ensuing public disgracing of the separated woman; Isabella's stressing of the absence of the child as a critical element to Francesca's decision to leave her marriage — and arguably of the presence of the child in hers to remain — shows the consequences in the private sphere of the immutability of the judicial system which denies women any legal means of independence. Nearly 60 years after Aleramo's novel was published, in cases of separation, decisions concerning financial support and care or access to the children still remained in the hands of the husband entirely.[189]

Against such a background, Francesca's courage in her decision to leave her marriage and attempt to stand on her own two feet may have provided hope at the very least, and an inspirational, if still rather utopian, model for many unhappy married women. For this reason, Lionello's death is instrumental on two levels: firstly, it is necessary to the thematic content of the novel because it introduces the idea that children and the fulfilment of one's life are not

[187] Sibilla Aleramo, *Una donna* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1906).
[188] Sharon Wood, *Italian Women's Writing 1860- 1994* (London: The Athlone Press, 1995), p. 80.
[189] As already mentioned in the section concerned with the historical and political background to *Il rimorso,* family relations in Italy were subjected to the penal code of 1930 and the civil code of 1942 until 1975.

necessarily interconnected, not even for women (Francesca represents the childless woman who still strives to pursue her own happiness); secondly, it is critical in terms of readers' response. Francesca's decision may offer some motivation for women to hold on to their ambitions and desires and strive to fulfil them, but leaving behind a child, because, as the law dictated, he or she is property of the father, for the pursuit of her own happiness, may not have struck quite the same chord with the majority of her female readers, and certainly not amongst those that were mothers themselves. Wood emphasizes how Aleramo was castigated by female critics in particular for leaving her home and significantly her child, and the review she cites shows this acrimony clearly: 'this woman, who becomes a rebel, lacks simplicity of heart, any sense of woman's highest virtue. She lacks faith...and flees the cradle of her child'.[190] Portrayed as sine qua non of Francesca's liberation from the unhappiness and inauthenticity of her marriage, the use of Lionello's death in the narrative tragically shows at the time 'quanto siano superate leggi che regolano l'istituzione matrimoniale e quanto sia urgente rivederle secondo criteri nuovi'.[191] In this sense, the topic of the objectification of the child in *Il rimorso* reads more as a socio-political commentary on family life than in *Les Mandarins* where it is primarily addressed in terms of psychological significance between husband and wife as it was five years earlier in de Céspedes' *Dalla parte di lei*.

While both narratives deny the idea of maternal instinct, or of a kind of female sixth sense that takes effect through maternity, it is also clear that different approaches are used to address the same issue: that of the harmful consequence for a woman's life and for family dynamics of the dissemination of such beliefs. In *Les Mandarins*, de Beauvoir focuses primarily on the tortuous relationship between Anne and Nadine, and the crippling guilt that the former experiences because she thinks she has failed to conform to what is popularily endorsed as good mothering. In *Il rimorso*, de Céspedes concentrates on the idea of the child who becomes an impediment to a woman's freedom because it is used, or objectified, as validation for female imprisonment in the private

[190] Paola Mattei Gentili, 'la donna nel romanzo di *Una donna', Corriere d'Italia,* 5 January 1907. Cited in Wood, p. 81.
[191] Alba de Céspedes, *Epoca*, 10 February 1957

sphere. In consequence, it can be said that the question of motherhood in *Il rimorso* reads as a more direct, obvious and effective critique than in *Les Mandarins* with regard to women's right, or the lack thereof, to engage in the public sphere, or to attain de Beauvoir's notion of transcendence. Badinter perceptively judges that in 1949, any protest against the view that a mother is instinctively devoted to her children is considered as 'extravagance ou folie. Il fallut bien du courage à Simone de Beauvoir, ni épouse ni mère, pour s'attaquer à ce sujet qui relève du sacré et constitue le véritable fondement de l'oppression féminine'.[192] The present analysis shows that de Beauvoir's courage is equalled by de Céspedes who, against a socio-cultural background which was certainly changing, but which was still steeped in the Catholic vision of the model family — and moreover as a mother herself — dared to demonstrate in such straightforward manner that the real foundations of what is known as maternal instinct do not lie in nature but in politics.

With historical contexts marked by pro-natalist politics in the immediate postwar years in *Les Mandarins*, and by intense familial propaganda based on the American vision of a housewife 'tutta casa e famiglia'[193] of the 1950s and early 1960s in *Il rimorso*, both novels reveal those issues judged by their authors at the time to be the most critical to women's emancipation. Most significantly, these are addressed in terms of de Beauvoirian gendered existentialist ethics. Both narratives overthrow the foundations of the gender-based boundaries between public and private spheres, or of society's dictating female confinement to immanence. Firstly, they illustrate the mental distress that their main female characters Anne and Francesca undergo as a consequence of their consignment to the private sphere. By doing so, they demonstrate similarly the ethical groundlessness of using biology or physiology as a means of promoting and justifying women's inferiority to men. Secondly, both novels denounce the traditional concept of motherhood and maternal instinct as patriarchy's calculated victimization of women. Although I have shown that there are differences in the way these topics are approached, notably when addressing the subject of the child's function in the family unit, it

[192] Élisabeth Badinter, 'La mère', in *Simone de Beauvoir: Le Deuxième Sexe. Le livre fondateur du féminisme moderne en situation*, ed. by Ingrid Galster (Paris : Honoré Champion, 2004), pp. 355-64 (p. 355).
[193] Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy 1943-1980* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1990), p. 244.

is clear that both narratives draw on *Le Deuxième sexe*, even sharing its particular semantic field for the description of the new-born baby in *Il rimorso*. It emerges that de Beauvoir's particular perception of immanence and transcendence that she developed in her early philosophical texts, *Pyrrhus and Cinéas* and *Pour Une morale de l'ambiguïté,* and that she later exposed as opposing gendered entities in *Le Deuxième sexe*, contrasts with that of Sartre, insofar as his interpretation of transcendence encompasses all conscious activities, even those occurring in moments of passivity, but chimes with de Céspedes' ideas on women. Her vision is akin to de Beauvoir's condemnation of 'un criminel paradoxe' which consists in 'refuser à la femme toute activité publique, de lui fermer les carrières masculines, de proclamer en tous domaines son incapacité, et de lui confier l'entreprise la plus délicate, la plus grave aussi qui soit: la formation d'un être humain' (*LDS II*, p. 387).

# Chapter Five

## Illustrating the Contingency of Freedom: Mirror-Characters and the Past

In *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso*, Anne and Francesca's journeys towards the recovery of their integrity and their consequent re-engagement in life is contrasted with, and also motivated by, the fates of two other female characters: Paule and Isabella. The two novels make similar use of mirror-stories in order to reveal the harmful condition generated by the prescriptions of social mores. In both cases, these mirror characters act as the essential influence on the lives and the ethical developments of the main female protagonists, as has been noted by critics in their analyses of Paule in studies of de Beauvoir's writing, and those of Isabella in works on de Céspedes. This is perhaps best exemplified by the simultaneous consideration of Mussett's appreciation of the former, and Carroli's assessment of the latter, namely that 'Anne mediates herself through Paule in order to confront her own inauthenticity and to shatter the final illusion that there can be any other absolute than freedom',[194] and that

> le lettere sono per Francesca più un confronto con se stessa e con i suoi dubbi, che uno scambio dialettico con un altro individuo. Sembra che Francesca, nelle risposte di Isabella alle sue lettere, cerchi conferma della

[194] Shannon M. Mussett, 'Personal Choice and the Seduction of the Absolute in *The Mandarins*', in *The Contradictions of Freedom*, ed. by Sally J. Scholz and Shannon M. Mussett (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), pp. 135-56 (p. 146).

> sua interpretazione del mondo a cui appartengono sia l'amica che suo marito.[195]

The present chapter develops the discussion and throws greater light on it by comparing the two novels. The function of the mirror story device in both cases is to establish and to recognize Anne's and Francesca's sense of maladjustment as a rightful symptom of the ills produced by women's confinement to immanence, or by the patriarchally-constructed view of the married woman, of the couple and of the family as the previous chapter discussed. In the two novels, this device allows to challenge and to go beyond the catch-all diagnosis of female eccentricity and immorality, or even mental illness and madness, that society often too readily applies to women's expressions of distress at being denied access to transcendence. This research firstly examines the mirror and the mirrored characters in both novels in the light of the existentialist concept of *mauvaise foi* or bad faith. Their present lives and situations are then assessed against de Beauvoir's interpretation of freedom and her specific concept of negative or situated freedom that she introduced in *Pour Une morale de l'ambiguïté* and developed in *Le Deuxième sexe* in the context of women's role and place in society. Considering the historical contexts of both novels, and the fact that the two narratives bring equally considerable pathos to the mirror characters through their tragic fates, it can be said that Isabella, like Paule, is representative of de Beauvoirian situated freedom. Moreover, in contrast with Sartre, de Beauvoir argues that not only the present situation but also lived experiences, or the past, can influence an individual's life in a way that cannot always be freely chosen or controlled. By doing so, she emphasizes further the contingency of freedom. The argument of this thesis that there is a specifically de Beauvoirian existentialist trend in *Il rimorso* echoing that of *Les Mandarins* is therefore also substantiated by the importance given to the past, or lived experiences, in the later narrative: it weighs heavily on the characters, it is portrayed as being fundamental to the individual's confrontation with the present and therefore to one's ability to act upon one's freedom. Critics have commented on the significance of war experiences in de Beauvoir's and de Céspedes' novels, notably with regard to Robert and Henri in the former, and

[195] Piera Carroli, *Esperienza e narrazione nella scrittura di Alba de Céspedes* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1993), p. 103.

Guglielmo and Gerardo in the latter. *Les Mandarins* uses depictions of childhood experiences of religion as a means of exposing and explaining Anne's psychological makeup and the dynamics of her married relationship. This chapter shows that de Céspedes operates the same gender-based demarcation as de Beauvoir: in *Il rimorso,* and in *Les Mandarins,* the male characters are unveiled and defined through the reminiscences of the war and the Resistance, the female characters through the recollection of their childhood, and notably their early experiences of religion. In the light of the existentialist reading of the use of the mirror story device and the significance of the past in the two narratives, it can be said that de Beauvoir's specific view of the contingency of freedom as demonstrated by her interpretation of *mauvaise foi* and situated freedom is palpable in de Céspedes' presentation and development of her characters. The present analysis transcends the argument that *Il rimorso* bears some striking similarities with *Les Mandarins*: it brings evidence that de Céspedes reworked de Beauvoir's novel, and by extension her philosophical theories, to her own purpose.

*Situated Freedom and Mauvaise Foi: Mirror Stories and the Demise of Normality*

In *L'Etre et le néant,* Sartre argues that every human being is free, and conscious of being so.[196] He sees freedom as absolute and maintains that the situation can always be freely transcended since situation **is** the contingency of freedom: thus a man in prison always has the option of choosing to escape. *Mauvaise foi* or bad faith occurs when the individual does not embrace such freedom and instead flees from the anxiety it causes. For Sartre, every human makes an original choice of a way of existing in the world, and is free to decide how much weight to give to the situation. Thus he argues that the only limitations to freedom are those the individuals set themselves. De Beauvoir, on the other hand, distinguishes between freedom and the ability to accomplish something which is dependent upon the situation. It may well be that the prisoner is free to choose to escape, but if he cannot bring this freedom into

[196] Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Etre et le néant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943).

action because he is severely restricted by the situation, then this freedom can only be negative. Kruks observes that 'the "essay" [*Le Deuxième sexe*] and the novel [*Les Mandarins*] that Beauvoir regarded as most successful (…) are indicative of a new period in her thinking', and that these two works show that the author started to accept the presence of uncontrollable elements as fundamental to our existence.[197] Although Kruks dates this ideological shift from the writing of *Le Deuxième sexe*, it is worth pointing out that already in *Pour Une morale de l'ambiguïté* de Beauvoir had used the concept of restriction and negative freedom. She compared the situation of women to that of the Black slaves in plantations who 'subissaient docilement leur [the white colonials'] paternalisme.' She maintained that 'dans beaucoup de civilizations, cette situation est aussi celle des femmes qui ne peuvent que subir les lois, les dieux, les moeurs, les vérités créés par les males' (*PMA*, p. 50), an assessment which foreshadowed the detailed account of the situation of women in *Le Deuxième sexe*. The depictions of the marital situations of Anne and Francesca, and of Paule and Isabella, undoubtedly underscore in both novels de Beauvoir's premises that transcendence characterizes the situation of man, and immanence that of women, as defined in the preceding chapter. Significantly however, she also considers this situation to be imposed upon women categorically and systematically, and thus to undermine their freedom since she notes that 'la femme (…) se vautre dans l'immanence; mais d'abord on l'y a enfermée' (*LDS II*, p. 491). Therefore while Sartre's reasoning would tend to consider women complicit with patriarchal oppression for they choose not to rebel against it — an argument summed up in the concept of bad faith or *mauvaise foi* — de Beauvoir sees that the relativity of situational instances (a relativity that has much to do with historical and cultural customs in the case of women) can restrict one's ability to be conscious of choice and thus constrain the impetus towards the exercise of freedom. Kruks rightly observes that de Beauvoir's conception implies that the Self 'does not only make its decisions "in situation" but is so thoroughly suffused by its situation, that it is, to a significant degree, constituted by it'.[198] This is shown to be the case in *Les Mandarins* as well as in *Il rimorso* in two ways: firstly through the portrayals of the question of the intellectual and the possibilities for integrity and action in

[197] Sonia Kruks, 'Living on Rails. Freedom, Constraint, and Political Judgment in Beauvoir's "Moral" Essay and *The Mandarins*', in *The Contradictions of Freedom,* pp. 67- 86 (p. 68).
[198] Kruks, p. 68.

a postwar climate of severe political constraints; secondly, through the portrayals of the traditional idea of the couple, where female freedom is constricted by the societal normalization of married relationships, on both a psychological level (a woman's life should be at home) and a practical level (the male should be the breadwinner and the wife financially dependent on her husband).[199]

*Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* challenge the perpetuation of female confinement to the private sphere as the 'normal' way of being. In this respect, Paule and Isabella's roles as mirror stories to their respective childhood friends Anne and Francesca are significant. As the stories begin, Anne and Francesca are entering a time of change in their marriages which is symptomatic of the existential malaise both women are experiencing. As has been noted, Anne's relationship with Robert is profoundly affected by his failure for the first time in their marriage to provide her with answers and with solace in the face of life's hardship. As a result, Anne suffers the same psychological turmoil as when she lost her faith in God as a teenager. In *Il rimorso*, Francesca can no longer stand the hypocrisy and indifference of the bourgeois society that her husband belongs to, and she yearns to put an end to the pretence, one way or another. Therefore both narratives capture a time of transformation, or evolution in the main female characters' lives; this is highlighted by contrast in the two novels with the ideological stagnation that characterizes the mirror characters existences, those of Paule and Isabella. This distinction is developed by opposing the process that leads Anne and Francesca to recover the integrity of their minds, or a true ideological (re)commitment (Anne will re-evaluate the relation of her Self to the Other, Francesca will break free from her marriage to start life afresh in a new relationship and as a working woman) to the process which leads to the symbolic 'death' of Paule and the actual death of Isabella.[200] Lecarme-Tabone's observation that 'Paule joue (ainsi) un rôle de catalyseur dans la prise de conscience de son amie', can be applied to Isabella who likewise provides her friend Francesca with a glimpse of what her life could be should she choose to conform to the prescribed 'normality' in terms of love

[199] Anne works, of course, but this is illustrated in a rather deprecatory manner in *Les Mandarins* because of her own sentiments towards the nature of her profession, as the next chapter on the criticism on psychoanalysis in the novel reveals. The reader also understands that her employment plays a secondary role in her married life, as it is the man, here Robert, who provides the main income.

[200] This is discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

relationships and family dynamics.[201] Indeed both Paule and Isabella can be said to illustrate de Beauvoir's analysis of 'La femme mariée' in *Le Deuxième sexe,* even though Paule is not married in fact. De Beauvoir notes that society promotes the institution of marriage as the pinnacle of female destiny, that 'la destiné que la société propose traditionellement à la femme, c'est le mariage. La plupart des femmes, aujourd'hui encore, sont mariées, l'ont été, se préparent à l'être ou souffrent de ne l'être pas' (*LDS II,* p. 221). Any other personal ambition is implicitly relegated to a secondary level, something unnecessary so long as a woman finds a husband. Paule and Isabella submit themselves to the traditional patriarchally-constructed view of the role of women which denies them an identity outside the couple, reduces them to a state of subservience to men, and encloses them in the de Beauvoirian context of immanence discussed earlier.

Both women are portrayed in a very unsympathetic manner in the novels. Paule's constant reiteration that she sacrificed her singing career for Henri makes her appear manipulative and resentful. Keefe justly highlights her despotic tendencies when he sees her claim to hold some sort of right over him because she believes she has created him — 'Henri, rends-toi compte, c'est moi qui l'est fait; je l'ai créé comme il crée les personages de ses livres, et je le connais comme il les connaît' (*LM I,* p. 298) — as a 'kind of tyranny exercised over the man'.[202] In *Il rimorso* Isabella's deceitfulness is gradually revealed. If to begin with the reader is not immediately suspicious of the blatant display of moral righteousness and religious devotion exhibited in her answers to Francesca, then the personality contrast afforded by the degree of connivance with her childhood friend's husband certainly brings to light the falsity of her character. She writes to Guglielmo despite having promised Francesca that she would not inform him of her intention of leaving her marriage. Although their past affair is disclosed only later in the novel, the details of the circumstances in which it happened have the effect of dramatically intensifying his and Isabella's heartlessness; Guglielmo writes of the 'giorno in cui Francesca era in clinica perché nasceva Lionello e, in casa, tu e io facevamo l'amore nel suo letto'(*IR,* p. 527). His subsequent letter dated 10 November gives the full

[201] Eliane Lecarme-Tabone, 'Anne, psychanalyste', *Roman 20/50,* 13 (1992), 85-101 (p. 98).
[202] Terry Keefe, *Simone de Beauvoir* (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1998), p. 120. The nature of the bond between Paule and Henri will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven.

extent of her double-game and the reader discovers that 'dietro la pia maschera sociale [Isabella] nasconde una serie di relazioni extra-coniugali'.[203]

Considered in the context of Sartre's argument about freedom, Paule's stubborn refusal to accept her relationship with Henri is over and Isabella's deceitful role in maintaining the image of the perfect housewife may be seen as the expressions of their free choices within the given situations, that is that Henri does not desire Paule any longer, and that Isabella's marriage is in fact nothing more than a social contract. Thus the attitude that each woman adopts in response to the circumstances of her marriage, and that will eventually lead to their demise, is freely chosen. Paule becomes obsessed with reviving her past with Henri; as she clings to the image of what their couple used to be like, she gradually descends into madness and she becomes a recluse in her own flat in order to dedicate all of herself to Henri, until she finally breaks down and requires psychiatric internment. In *Il rimorso,* Isabella's conduct brings to mind the characteristics of mental illness too, this time that of schizophrenia: the reader is witness to her behavioural extremes, from her own cultivation of the image of a perfect Catholic housewife and mother, to Guglielmo's recounting of her many sexual adventures she called 'i miei smarrimenti' (*IR,* p. 556). In his letter dated 10 November, he exposes Isabella's promiscuity with mention of intercourse with total strangers, for example in the train to Milan (*IR*, p. 556), and of her inappropriate behaviour at parties where she drank too much and teased the male guests (*IR,* p. 554-5). Therefore Paule's proclaimed self-sacrificial relationship with Henri and Isabella's marriage are instances of the existentialist concept of *mauvaise foi.* The former's participation in her own oppression (her obsession for Henri) has been recognized by critics. As Mussett remarks, 'it has been well noted that Paule is a fictionalized representation of the attitude of the *amoureuse* from Beauvoir's *The Second Sex'*.[204] For example, Appignanesi sees Paule as de Beauvoir's 'most anguished depiction of a "woman in love"',[205] Moi mentions that de Beauvoir 'readily admits that the spectre of the *amoureuse* haunts her own fiction' and that she points to Paule amongst others,[206] and Fallaize states that 'Paule is the complete example of *The Second* Sex's analysis of the *amoureuse* (the woman

[203] Carroli, p. 97.
[204]Mussett, in *The Contradictions of Freedom,* pp. 135-56 (p. 146).
[205] Lisa Appignanesi, *Simone de Beauvoir* (London: Haus Publishing, 2005), p. 120.
[206] Toril Moi, *Simone de Beauvoir. The Making of an Intellectual Woman* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), p. 217-8.

who makes a cult of love) who tries to attain her own being vicariously thorough that of the loved one'.[207] Indeed Paule, like *l'amoureuse,* raises the beloved to almost mythical status and through this idealized object, she loses her integrity : 'il n'y a pas pour elle d'autre issue que de se perdre corps et âme en celui qu'on lui désigne comme l'absolu, comme l'essentiel' (*LDS II,* p. 547). Thus the misery of her existence is brought upon herself by the obsessive 'rêve d'une union extatique' (*LDS II,* p. 557), and by her very own complicit pursuit of such a romantic and popular notion of the couple. In contrast, it is noticeable that Isabella has more affinities with the description of *la femme mariée* in *Le Deuxième sexe* than with that of *l'amoureuse.* Indeed it is her own complicit submission to the patriarchal ideal of the dynamics of the relationship between husband and wife and to the role of a woman in the family unit in general that is at the root of her unhappiness. In this sense, Isabella has more in common with women of the generation of Valeria who, in *Quaderno Proibito,* suffers from the oppression and obligations of family life and its established dynamics, than with a younger Irene who, in *Prima e dopo,* refuses to submit to the traditional idea of relationships by giving priority to her financial independence.[208] Isabella's perception of a love relationship is reduced to only two possible options that leave no room for Paule's kind of blissful union: the institution of marriage as dictated by social and religious mores which deny the woman identity outside the home and encloses her in a world of household chores and care for her family, and extra-marital affairs that firstly can never be completely emotionally fulfilling because of wedlock ties and that secondly become psychologically burdensome because of the remorse they provoke.[209] She expresses her unhappiness and frustration as she poignantly writes to Guglielmo that 'anche in famiglia, c'è molto freddo attorno a una donna affettuosa. Tutti vogliono imporle un modo di vivere che, in generale, si risolve in parole di cui dovrebbe accontentarsi' (*IR,* p. 598). Like Francesca, she is suffering from the monotony of her marriage and the societal requirements of the bourgeois household. Both women's wedded lives correspond to *Le Deuxième sexe*'s description of *la femme mariée* when de Beauvoir observes that:

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[207] Fallaize, p. 109.
[208] The topic of women and work will be discussed in Chapter Seven.
[209] Remorse is a particularly relevant concept to de Céspedes' novel as its very title indeed suggests, and it will be explored in the subsequent chapter with reference to the criticism of religion in the narrative.

> Vivre le commencement d'une enterprise, c'est exaltant; mais rien n'est plus déprimant que de découvrir un destin sur lequel on n'a plus de prise. C'est sur ce fond définitif, immuable, que la liberté émerge avec la plus intolérable gratuité. Naguère la jeune fille abritée par l'autorité des parents usait de sa liberté dans la révolte et l'espoir; elle l'employait à refuser et dépasser une condition dans laquelle en même temps elle trouvait la sécurité; c'était vers le mariage même qu'elle se transcendait du sein de la chaleur familiale; maintenant elle *est* mariée, il n'y a plus devant elle d'avenir *autre*. Les portes du foyer se sont refermées sur elle, ce sera là toute sa part sur terre (*LDS II*, p. 282).

Unlike her childhood friend, Isabella is resigned to her fate, to her 'part sur terre'. She chooses to follow the Catholic dogma and obey its rituals; thus she denies herself any incentive to change her situation. Both Paule and Isabella are conscious of the troubling realities: it is obvious that the former's past relationship with Henri can never be rekindled, and the latter's secret extra-marital affairs are blatant indications of her inability to obey the criteria of family life prescribed by her religion and those of perfect housewife and hostess that bourgeois society imposes. Nevertheless they deny such realities, and opt for the self-deception afforded by the obsessive pursuits of the romantic view of the couple for the former, and of appearing to conform to the traditional idea of the institution of marriage for the latter. The socially and culturally prescribed ideals of love, marriage and family life act as absolutes and become the easy alibi Paule and Isabella need in order not to take responsibility for their actions and their lives. In the novels, their existences are expressions of the existentialist notion of *mauvaise foi* because both characters 'refuse to face their freedom or try to hide it from themselves, especially by refusing to see that one has to choose values for oneself.'[210]

Anne comes to realize that if she chooses Lewis over her life and family in Paris, she will succumb to the kind of love Paule defends. Thus Fallaize comments that 'Paule functions as a warning, as an image of what Anne might become',[211] a surrendered victim to a type of love which, in Paule's words, 'ne laisse rien de disponible à une femme' (*LM I*, p. 295). Through her, Anne is forced to re-evaluate her relationship with Robert and comes to a new

[210] Barbara s. Andrew, 'Beauvoir's Place in Philosophical Thought', in *The Cambridge Companion to Simone de Beauvoir*, ed. by Claudia Card (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 24-44 (p. 27).

[211] Elizabeth Fallaize, *The Novels of Simone de Beauvoir* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 108.

appreciation of its dynamics. When her friend declares that 'je sais quelle entente il y a entre Robert et toi (…) mais ce n'est pas ce que j'appelle un grand amour' (*LM I,* p. 295), it is evident that the type of love Anne shares with her husband is much more preferable to that which Paule stands for. After realizing this, Anne eventually prefers to remain in Paris. In *Il rimorso,* the reader is left uncertain of whether Francesca is aware of Isabella's affair with her husband, though as Guglielmo remembers a party, he writes to Isabella that 'mi pareva che [Francesca] sapesse tutto di noi perché disse: "Non bere piú, Isabella, Guglielmo aborre le donne che bevono"' (*IR,* p. 554). In any case, Francesca witnesses her friend's flirtatious ways that are in stark opposition to Isabella's public image of the devoted wife and mother. Guglielmo recalls that the same evening, he saw Francesca frown 'con fastidio mentre, dalla cucina, giungeva squillante la tua risata' (*IR,* p.555). Isabella's letters to Francesca contain her attempts to defend the moral principles and the prescribed conduct that, as a Catholic mother and housewife, she is supposed to reflect. Instead, they act as a mirror in which Francesca sees in fact reflected the hypocrisy of her life in Rome, and the urgency to act on the existential malaise she is experiencing.

I have argued that Paule and Isabella's complicity in the ensuing inauthenticity of their existences make them the expressions of the existentialist notion of *mauvaise foi* as exposed by Sartre; however, attention to the social and ideological context in which they evolve urges qualification of such an assessment, this time in the light of the de Beauvoirian concept of situated freedom. The tragic end they meet, with the brutality of Paule's final psychiatric treatment,[212] and Isabella's suicide, gives the measure of these women's participation in their submission to the popular idea of a woman's role and destiny and of marriage. The eradication of their persona is symptomatic of their own inability to appear as anyone other than woman subservient to man: when Paule finally realises that her relationship with Henri is over, she breaks down, and when Isabella has to face the prospect of her true behaviour coming out in the open, she throws herself under a train. Therefore both novels convey a desperate view of those women complicit in promoting and adopting society's ideal image of family and wedded relationships: the

[212] Paule will eventually undergo shock treatment; its annihilating effects, together with the ethical questions raised in the novel with reference to psychiatry, are discussed in the next chapter.

archetypical Paule and Isabella are ultimately unable to live for themselves, to define themselves or to find an identity outwith the parameters of the institution of marriage. However, when the critical analysis takes into consideration the social backgrounds to the novels, the previously mentioned unsympathetic portrayals of these women in both narratives is ultimately counter-balanced: they are revealed more as victims of the societies they live in, and less as the willing accomplices in their own oppression. Indeed Musset acknowledges the tragic condition of the woman in love embodied by Paule in *Les Mandarins* as she writes that 'her situation as a woman in the patriarchy is such that she is left little choice but to set up her beloved as an absolute project'.[213] Correspondingly, Isabella's suicide in *Il rimorso* in response to the threat of her promiscuous behaviour being divulged — an act that ironically she had warned Francesca against as 'un gesto che un cattolico non deve nemmeno concepire' (*IR*, p. 63) — brings much pathos to a character otherwise perceived as malicious. The severity of her final gesture, motivated 'dalla paura che la sua vita segreta intacchi a l'immagine pubblica di donna perbene',[214] shows the degree of utter social conformity that is required from a married woman in 1950s Italy, and the vital importance of the family's public image. Thus the novels' illustrations of the dramatic effects of the restrictions imposed by such rigid cultural backgrounds on women's lives tend to diminish the severity of the previous assessment of *mauvaise foi*, and require a consideration of Paule and Isabella in the context of their situated freedoms. As such, both women appear as the tragic victims of social and cultural influence on the individual or on the Self — as do Anne and Francesca. Their inability to live a life other than that prescribed by society is imposed rather than innate: Paule and Isabella are the archetypical representations of women's entrapment in the private sphere as a result of the way society dictates love relationships, the institution of marriage and the place of women. Their stories are tragic illustrations of *Le Deuxième sexe*'s premise that 'on ne nait pas femme, on le devient' (*LDS II*, p. 13).

*Situated Freedom and the Past*

[213] Mussett, p. 153, n. 6.
[214] Carroli, p. 84.

De Beauvoir's concept of situated freedom is also illustrated in both novels by the significance of the past in helping the reader understand the characters' present anxieties. In *L'Être et le néant,* Sartre argues that the individual is free to decide how much weight to give to the past, and thus denies that events such as a childhood trauma could have a predetermining influence on an individual's life. By contrast, de Beauvoir acknowledges the influence of lived experiences on the Self, as she observes that 'on sait que si le passé nous concerne, ce n'est pas en tant que donné brute: c'est en tant qu'il possède une signification humaine' (*PMA*, p. 116). Kruks identifies this difference between the two intellectuals when she comments that:

> Beauvoir's explicit pronouncements on the nature of time generally echo Sartre's in affirming that the present takes its meaning from one's future goals. However, from the late 1940s on she develops a more dialectical notion of time, in which the weight of the past, as well as the openness toward a future, shapes the meaning of the present.[215]

The study of the importance given to the past in *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* throws further light on de Beauvoir's thought and provides further evidence of the French author's influence on de Céspedes' writing. The two narratives highlight the importance of the past in a similar manner: it belongs to those elements which are beyond the control of the Self and which are integral to our own existence and that of Others. Indeed this is paramount in the two novels where the characters' presents are heavily influenced by their lived experiences, and as the novels unfold, we see they are the formative element to the nature of the interaction of their Self with the Other. The analysis of Anne and Francesca's childhood experiences, and especially those to do with religion, is critical to determining these female characters' moral strengths, the nature of the relationship between their Self and the Other, and thus the nature of their marital bonds. In contrast, the formative and referential elements in the case of the male characters in both novels are World War II and the Resistance: their present situations and predicaments can be fully grasped with the knowledge of their earlier wartime persona to which they owe their equation of engagement with the idea of the search for, and the defence of, freedom.

[215] Kruks, in *The Contradictions of Freedom*, p. 83, n.6.

To be sure, the men's malaises stem from the discrepancy between the experience and expression of freedom during the Resistance, hence the past, and the restrictions imposed on them in the present. Robert and Henri in *Les Mandarins*, and Guglielmo and Gerardo in *Il rimorso* are facing a situation which prevents them from doing justice to their principles, or to those ideals they fought for during the war. Guglielmo offers perhaps the most striking example of such a discrepancy: the mention of his Resistance activities as Ignazio, and the fact that he was imprisoned for his writings, show the extent of his compliance with the ideological compromise, or transformation even, necessary to allow him to maintain the prestigious lifestyle he became accustomed to in the society in which he now lives. The status he holds as a Member of Parliament, the higher aristocracy he belongs to and his regular religious practices indicate that *La Gazzetta* is of right-wing political orientation. Considering the historical period in question, and despite the fact that no party is explicitly cited in the text, his newspaper is evidently working within the framework of the Christian Democrats and of the Catholic Church which, at the turn of the 1960s, still occupied a central role in Italian political life. The difference between the male characters' attitudes, decisions and actions in both narratives with regard to political commitment in the present and its significance in the fields of literature and journalism are discussed in the final chapter that deals with the question of the intellectual in postwar society. For now, it is sufficient to note that Guglielmo is very different from Robert in *Les Mandarins*: the latter, like Henri, eventually chooses to distance himself from party politics and create his own literary and political journal rather than compromising the expression of his true beliefs. By doing so, both Robert and Henri continue their war-time persona and commitment despite their being restrained by society. By contrast, in de Céspedes' novel, Guglielmo, who once dared to express his own opinion regardless of the consequences and to fight for freedom unreservedly, now chooses to strictly obey the political line adopted by his newspaper, and thus to enjoy an easier life. There are therefore considerable differences between *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* in the way lived experiences affect these male characters, but the past is still equally important in both novels.

While Gerardo is too young to have taken part in the Resistance and become the figure of public esteem that Henri, Robert or Guglielmo are, nonetheless

the war or the past shapes his persona significantly. Firstly, Gerardo is afflicted by the fact that his father complied with Fascism; secondly, he is torn between the joys of freedom and the guilt of having done nothing to deserve it, and of not knowing how to preserve or defend it. He shares this psychological torment with Nadine in *Les Mandarins* and a whole young generation in the post-war era. In his diary, Gerardo recalls Guglielmo's reaction when he dared to complain about the present times. His answer is enlightening and effectively emphasizes the importance of the past in an individual's grasp of the present. It covers three generations of Italians in their struggles for freedom, from the Aventine Secession and Mussolini's colonialist war in Africa, to his own participation in the Resistance during the Second World War; this is brought into striking contrast with what might be described as the *mauvaise foi* of Gerardo's generation who, according to Guglielmo, dares to complain about their times, and yet withdraws in idleness and resignation. Gerardo recalls:

> Ha domandato con durezza: 'Di che ti lamenti? (...) Quando aveva la tua età, i ragazzi –cioè i tuoi coetanei- mi lasciavano sempre intendere in qualche modo che, se fossero stati già alti e adulti come me, se avessero avuto la mia cultura , la mia maturità, avrebbero impedito che avvenisse ciò che allora avveniva in Italia. Mio nipote, partendo per l'Africa, mi bollò: "Tuo padre sull'Aventino, tu chiuso in camera a scrivere e io, intanto, vado a farmi una bella scorpacciata di sabbia nel deserto". Avvampai. A quale tempo non immaginavo io stesso che i miei scritti mi avrebbero poi condotto in prigione. Quando ero dentro pensavo a quel ragazzo ed ero in pace all'idea di avere anch'io la mia parte di sabbia. Ma voi, di che vi lagnate?' ha ripetuto. 'Volevate la libertà. Ve l'abbiamo data: a voi di usarne, adesso' (*IR,* p. 330).

As has been seen in the discussion of Paule and Isabella, de Beauvoir's perspective on the importance of the past in her discourse on situated freedom allows for a more sophisticated judgment of what constitutes bad faith. The treatment of the influence of lived experiences in shaping the female characters' presents in both novels is therefore also particularly interesting in terms of the relationship between man and woman. In fact, the dynamics of Anne's and of Francesca's marriages may be elucidated and fully appreciated in both narratives by considering the women's childhoods, and in particular the scenes in which they reminisce about their early experiences of religion. In both novels, these are used as a means of revealing the women's personalities.

Anne's case with regard to the topic of situated freedom and the past is particularly enlightening. For this reason, it requires further in-depth analysis, and a more detailed discussion of her relationship with Robert and with her lover Lewis, and of the way they have been assessed by critics. *Les Mandarins* clearly pictures the worship of God as the formative constituent of Anne's character: it has created a psychological dependency on the judgment of an Other, and as such it hinders the expression of her integrity. The impact of religion on her consciousness robbed her of the ability to conceive of even a mental revolt against the power of the Other, in this case of Robert, in favour of her Self. Her situation illustrates that described in *Pour Une morale de l'ambiguïté* when:

> l'esclave est soumis quand on a réussi à le mystifier de telle sorte que sa situation ne lui semble pas imposée par des hommes mais immédiatement donnée par la nature, par les dieux, par des puissances contre lesquelles la révolte n'a pas de sens; alors ce n'est pas par une démission de sa liberté qu'il accepte sa condition, puisqu'il ne peut même pas en rêver une autre (*PMA*, p. 107).

De Beauvoir asserts that an individual living in this type of situation, when the oppression is camouflaged as something given by nature or by the gods, cannot be said to be living in bad faith. Anne's childhood experience of religion has put her in the situation of the oppressed described above, and therefore is not living her relation with Robert in bad faith, and nor does she with Lewis, as I shall argue. In *Il rimorso*, Francesca's recounting of her lack of fervour during services and her resistance against complying with religious practices shows the extent of her non-conformist nature and puts her in sharp contrast with the devout and obedient Isabella. Her insubordinate personality and the circumstances in which Guglielmo proposed — a challenge rather than a romantic gesture — show that unlike Anne, she entered wedded life and her husband's social milieu fully conscious of the implied restrictions on her freedom.

The relationship between Anne and Robert owes its foundation to this intense and, one might even say traumatic, spiritual loss that Francesca necessarily could not have experienced. Anne lost her religious faith at the age of 15 and in *The Contradictions of Freedom*, Mussett puts forward the idea that 'Anne's

loss of God as the absolute forced her to confront her finitude'.[216] It is pertinent to note that Anne's adolescent crisis appears to echo de Beauvoir's very own experience with the reality of death. In *Mémoires d'une jeune fille rangée*, she gives the measure of the distress caused by such discovery. She writes:

> Je fis une autre découverte. Un après-midi, à Paris, je réalisai que j'étais condamnée à mort. Il n'y avait personne que moi dans l'appartement et je ne refrénai pas mon désespoir; j'ai crié, j'ai griffé la moquette rouge. Et quand je me relevai, hébétée, je me demandai: 'comment les gens font-ils? Comment ferai-je?' Il me semblait impossible de vivre toute ma vie le coeur tordu par l'horreur. Quand l'échéance s'approche, me disais-je, quand on a déjà trente ans, quarante ans et qu'on pense: 'C'est pour demain', comment le supporte-t-on? Plus que la mort elle-même je redoutais cette épouvante qui bientôt serait mon lot, et pour toujours.[217]

As a teenager, Anne is similarly struck and unprepared to face with serenity the inevitability of her own death. Having renounced God and the promises of eternal life, Mussett notes that 'for four years, she [Anne] experienced the anguish of one who truly confronts being-toward-death',[218] until the age of nineteen when she meets her teacher Dubreuilh whom she marries some time before the war. He then becomes a 'surrogate to replace the authority of her lost God' (p. 142), an alternative outside Absolute and a figure of authority to guide her and give significance to her existence. For years he fulfilled this role, bringing a reassuring order in Anne's life. Looking back, she comments that 'à dix-neuf ans, il semble aussi naturel d'être aimée par l'homme qu'on aime que par des parents respectés ou par Dieu tout-puissant' (*LM I,* p. 74), thus expressing the idea that for her, love of the Other is a natural prerogative and a sine qua non to her existence, or to the Self. Her total dependence on Robert corresponds to the situation of *l'amoureuse* in *Le Deuxième sexe* when Simone de Beauvoir analyses the process of idolization, characteristic of the woman in love. She observes that :

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[216] Mussett, p. 142.
[217] Simone de Beauvoir, *Mémoires d'une jeune fille rangée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1958), p. 192.
[218] Mussett, p. 142.

> elle a cherché d'abord dans l'amour une confirmation de ce qu'elle était, de son passé, de son personnage; mais elle y engage aussi tout son avenir: pour le justifier, elle le destine à celui qui détient toutes les valeurs; c'est ainsi qu'elle se délivre de sa transcendance: elle la subordonne à celle de l'autre essentiel dont elle se fait la vassale et l'esclave. C'est afin de se trouver, de se sauver qu'elle a commencé par se perdre en lui: le fait est que peu à peu elle s'y perd; toute la réalité est en l'autre. (*LDS II*, p. 558)

In such terms, it is interesting to note that the dynamics of Anne's relationship with her husband are similar here to those experienced by her friend Paule with her partner Henri. The narrative thus illustrates the existence and persistence in society of a standard traditional idea of relationship dynamics between men and women, one which admits no variations.[219] Anne also insists on the necessity of her husband's presence in her life for her mental wellbeing because 'grâce à Robert, les idées sont descendues sur terre et la terre est devenue cohérente' (*LM I*, p. 75). It is interesting that the terminology used here to describe the effect Robert had on Anne's psyche — 'les idées sont descendues sur terre'— contrasts sharply with the incorporeality and abstraction of the answers to ethical questioning that religion provides, such as justifying compliance with its set of morals in order to reach Heaven in the after-life. This affords a retrospective ironical comment upon Anne's previous unwavering faith in God. As the narrative begins, she progressively realises that the steadfastness of her reliance on Dubreuilh as her Absolute is beginning to waver. Anne finds the euphoria of the Liberation and the first celebration of Christmas after the Occupation all too nauseating. As she thinks of the dead, and in particular of Diégo, her daughter's lover who had been deported and killed, she is painfully aware that the excitement of the war ending does not suppress the omnipresence of its atrocities: death does not instantly become a future abstraction but remains a concrete part of everyday life in fact. The process leading to her loss of faith in Robert is initiated when he remarks that 'c'est tout de même différent de se dire que leur mort a servi à quelque chose ou à rien du tout'; at this point, Anne challenges him by answering that Diégo's death 'n'a servi à rien du tout' (*LM I*, p. 69). She advances her own theory that

[219] In Chapter Seven, I shall argue that *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* in fact urge for a reconsideration of love relationships.

the popular idea of purposeful or even heroic death is an all too convenient way to bury the memories of the horrors of war under a blind glorification of life, as she declares that 'Ça arrange bien les vivants, ce système où tout se dépasse vers autre chose; mais les morts restent morts; on les trahit: on ne les dépasse pas' (*LM I,* p. 69). By doing so, she shows that she is acutely aware of the significance of the past in our present and future. For now, Anne must face the evidence that while Robert had succeeded in giving a sense to her existence, in showing her the meaning of her life, he is naturally unable to provide her with the same orderly and appeasing vision when she confronts him with the question of death. She poignantly recalls her realisation of such a shortcoming: 'Je pleurais, et pour la première fois depuis vingt ans j'étais seule: seule avec mes remords, avec ma peur' (*LM I,* p. 70). The nature of the relationship Anne entertains, or rather entertained, with Robert — the result of a highly dependent personality fostered by religious faith as we have seen — is not exclusive to her husband. Although critics have not considered the motivations behind, and the nature of, her affair with reference to the erosion of Robert as Anne's outside Absolute specifically, or the replication of the loss of God in her childhood, yet it is evident that her extra-marital relation marks the final stage of a series of transferals of her overwhelming reliance on an Other, first from God onto Robert, and then from Robert onto Lewis Brogan. Despite this, Keefe considers Anne's story principally as an illustration of 'many aspects of Beauvoir's analysis of women's "situation"', and he sees her extra-conjugal affair as a sure sign that her marriage has fallen into 'the standard routine pattern' of wedded life. [220] Clearly the treatment of women in *Les Mandarins* reflects some of the aspects of the female condition that de Beauvoir had observed and analysed for the completion of *Le Deuxième sexe*. Indeed Fallaize pinpoints the research behind this work as the ideological milestone in Beauvoir's career. She observes that :

> Beauvoir's thinking had also undergone a quite different kind of transformation and radicalisation in between the writing of *Tous les hommes sont mortels* and *Les Mandarins*; in between the two she had written — and discovered — *The Second Sex.* Sexual politics, hitherto

[220] Terry Keefe, *Simone de Beauvoir* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1998), p. 105.

> virtually invisible to Beauvoir, opened up a new way of looking at the world. [221]

However, to limit the interpretation of Anne's affair to an illustration of *Le Deuxième sexe*'s argument in matters of marriage and women's sexuality is to ignore Anne's individuality and, more significantly, the specificity of her relationship with Robert.[222] The function of the affair in her life is in some way understated when Keefe rather narrowly interprets Lewis's intervention in the novel as solely symptomatic of Anne's awareness of 'the implications of the ageing process for women, and her long marriage to a highly successful man much older than herself'.[223] In this context, when the affair is seen as nothing more than a typically female reaction to ageing and to the dullness of a long married life, it is not surprising that Keefe should find Anne's sexual re-awakening with Lewis predictable. Yet paradoxically, he also notes that when the affair ends, Anne finds herself in the same distressing psychological state as she was at fifteen when she lost her religious faith and consequently the thought of death obsessed her.[224] Despite this acknowledgement of Anne's relationship with Robert acting as a substitute for her lost faith, his suggestion that 'the extent to which she falls into the traps of the "woman in love", however, may be more unexpected, given the independence of her character in some other respects'[225] shows that he has failed to measure Anne's psychological dependence on her husband to the full, a dependence that she subsequently transfers onto Lewis, albeit for a time.

Mussett's analysis of Anne's need for an outside Absolute may be seen as challenging Keefe's premises that firstly Anne's affair is to be attributed solely to the monotony of her long marriage and that secondly the passion she devotes to Lewis is rather inconsistent with her independence of character. In my opinion, Mussett's interpretation of Anne's relationship with Robert can in fact be extended to Anne's relationship with Lewis. Her affair is less the result of marital boredom and of her awareness of ageing than it is a logical

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[221] Elizabeth Fallaize, *The Novels of Simone de Beauvoir* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 88.
[222] The significance of the affairs in the two novels in terms of female sexuality is discussed in Chapter Seven.
[223]Keefe, p. 105.
[224]See Keefe, p. 115.
[225] Keefe, p. 106. For the analysis of 'L'amoureuse', see Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième sexe II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), pp. 546-81.

consequence of the second time in her life Anne lost her faith in the ethical guidance of an outside Absolute: the first time in God, this time in Robert as God-like figure. Thus the intensity of her feelings towards Lewis and her psychological dependency are not inconsistent with her character: they simply signify that Brogan has become, for the time the affair lasts, Anne's new Pygmalion.

Unlike so many other areas where similarities can be noted between the two principal marriages in the novels, such as their social status and the fact that they are breaking down motivates both narratives, the argument of the outside Absolute as a substitute for God that was used to define Robert's role in Anne's life stands a clear contrast with the nature of Francesca's relationship with her husband. The description of the changes of dynamics in Anne and Robert's relationship as they are taking place in *Les Mandarins* means that Anne has not yet embarked on her extra-marital affair when the narrative opens, whereas the circumstances of Francesca's affair are exposed retrospectively in *Il rimorso.* The age difference between Robert and Anne is the same as between Francesca and Guglielmo: both husbands are some twenty years older than their wives. Whereas in the first case, this generational gap highlights the teacher-student status they maintain in their relationship, in *Il rimorso,* it allows for an illustration of the clash between 'due generazioni, due ideologie e due etiche diverse'.[226] Guglielmo embodies the consumerist society of the 1950s seen by many to have surrendered to Americanism, and Francesca a new progressive and libertarian attitude which has started to challenge the authority of the church. In contrast with Anne who recalls losing her faith, Francesca admits she never experienced any religious fervour. In her fourth letter to her friend Isabella she describes her childhood relationship with God as an apathetic mimicry. She writes:

> Così, durante le funzioni religiose, mentre tu eri commossa e incapace di esprimerti, io recitavo con freddezza, simulando sentimenti che non provavo, che mi erano indifferenti e che appunto la mia indifferenza mi consentiva di imitare alla perfezione (*IR*, p. 47).

[226] Marina Zancan, 'La ricerca letteraria. Le forme del romanzo' in *Alba de Céspedes*, ed. by Marina Zancan (Milan: Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 2005), pp.17-65 (p.52).

Nor did she feel the same passionate admiration for Guglielmo that Anne devoted to Robert at the time of their marriage. Anne's integrity became subject to Robert's influence through transferral of the God and father-figure pattern onto the husband, whereas Francesca's character is not swayed, but depicted as strong and defiant of social conventions. She appears as the exact opposite to Isabella, and this is emphasized further by the indication of their respective family backgrounds, again through the use of childhood memories: unlike her friend, Francesca comes from a modest and even relatively poor working-class family. She recalls:

> Tuo padre era ricco sebbene amasse dire che un onesto avvocato di provincia guadagna appena quanto basta ad assicurargli un certo decoro. I miei genitori, invece, non avevano la possibilità di pensare al decoro. Il nostro mondo era un mondo di lampadine a poche candele, di bicchieri scompagnati, ove non c'era nulla di piacevole all'occhio, nulla che non fosse strettamente necessario. Il giorno in cui mio padre portava a casa lo stipendio, chiamava subito la moglie, si sedevano sul letto e ricontavano i biglietti con ansia (...) Era una festa che si ripeteva ogni mese (*IR*, p. 99-100).

There is no such explicit information concerning Anne or Paule's earlier social status in de Beauvoir's novel, and there is no suggestion that they have come from a different social milieu.[227] It seems that in this instance, de Céspedes reworked the use and the function of the intervention of past experiences in the narrative to her own purpose in *Il rimorso*: some elements are clearly very similar to *Les Mandarins* but in other ways her approach is very different. In her novel, the past does more than to reveal the characters' persona, and more than to help understand the way they engage in the present. It also contributes to the overall criticism of the bourgeoisie.[228] The scenes of reminiscence when Francesca recalls her feeling of inadequacy or even of inferiority or shame, her acute sense of being different from Isabella and her family, inspire empathy, for the former's integrity makes her an infinitely more attractive character than the latter (and this is despite the argument mentioned that Isabella's life is

[227]In Chapter Seven, I shall discuss that the autobiographical content of *Les Mandarins* has long been recognised by scholars and critics. It may be said that Anne's character actually evokes de Beauvoir herself, and therefore the reader may assume that, like its author, she is issued from a bourgeois milieu.

[228]Chapter Six will show that this criticism is mainly conveyed through the portrayal of Catholicism and its rituals.

dictated by her situation, or that her freedom is situated or negative to use de Beauvoir's term). For example, she remarks:

> Tua madre m'invitava a restare ma io declinavo per dimostrarmi, in qualche modo, superiore. E lei: 'Torni a casa sola a quest'ora, Francesca?' mi domandava col solito tono condiscendente che aveva nel parlarmi. (Credo che, ricevendomi, pensasse di fare un'opera buona.) Tu e Vera uscivate accompagnate dalla zia Virginia che cosí ripagava l'ospitalità di tuo padre. (...) Da quando avevo cominciato a capire dove vivevamo, ero sdegnata che mia madre vi trovasse egualmente la felicità. La nostra casa consisteva nella grande camera dei miei genitori; io dormivo in uno stanzino nel fondo del corridoio e studiavo in cucina. Avevo sempre paura che, per una occorrenza imprevista, tu potessi venire. Non sai quanto sia umiliante temere che qualcuno venga, che veda (*IR*, p. 101).

The reader is left with a feeling of aversion towards Isabella's family, and by extension towards the members of the bourgeoisie, because they are responsible for raising her to become the kind of individual she is now. Ironically, Francesca points out that she has surpassed Isabella's status, as she now belongs to the higher aristocracy of Rome. She notes that 'le vostre abitudini — che oggi giudico sobrie — mi sembravano l'immagine stessa del lusso' (*IR*, p. 100- 1).

Unlike Anne, every step of Francesca's life appears to be taken in a spirit of rebellion. The reader is informed that she lost her virginity before marriage. Isabella recalls the day when Francesca told her that 'a te, mancherebbe il coraggio. [...] Non puoi. Tu, sposandoti, devi portare in dote la verginità come un titolo di cui, ogni sabato, il marito stacca una cedola' (*IR*, p. 75). This way, Francesca defies the societal idea that a young woman's eligibility for marriage is conditional on her virginity, and more so to her reputation which could seriously affect her chances of finding a husband. Her gesture conveys an early criticism of the paradoxical situation faced by the younger generation in the 1950s in matters of sexuality. As mentioned in Chapter Two, this was a period of transition in which old ideologies, such as the condemnation of sex for women before marriage, persisted alongside new social freedoms that increased wealth and American influence afforded. There were more opportunities for boys and girls to meet: steady incomes brought by a growing economy meant that more girls were sent to school where they came into contact with boys, teenagers were increasingly allowed to go to dances, and the

cinema became a popular meeting place. For some, improved wealth also meant going on holiday and thus meeting new people in a more relaxed and carefree environment than at home. The full measure of Francesca's defiance in the fact that not only she lost her virginity before marriage, but also more significantly to Gianluca whom she will ultimately reject as a husband in favour of Guglielmo, is revealed by Willson's observation that :

> Even in the North, a woman was supposed to sleep with only one man, the man she married. (…) although extra-marital sex was not uncommon in this period, it generally took place in a context of expected marriage. It was, therefore, mainly seen, by women at least, as part of the lead-up to a formal engagement.[229]

True to her feisty character, Francesca sees her married life as an everyday challenge that Guglielmo once defied her to undertake, as she recalls the day she understood she would become his wife. She states:

> Guglielmo mi trattenne con lo sguardo: la sfida che ancora oggi dura fu lanciata, tra noi, in quel preciso momento. Quale sfida, domandi. Sentivo che egli cercava già una fessura nella corazza che da quel giorno mi sono imposta. Mi ha messa a tutte le prove (moglie, madre, nuora, padrona di casa) senza trovarla. Talvolta mi sono domandata se capiva che recitavo (*IR*, p. 56).

Francesca's description is highly symbolic: Guglielmo embodies societal conformity and plays the role of the predator who longs to ensnare his prey, Francesca — here the embodiment of freedom and integrity — within the weft of traditional bourgeois married life. In concrete terms, Guglielmo's proposal consists in seeing how and for how long this free-spirited and insubordinate character could survive within these social parameters, how long Francesca could keep up the pretence ('recitavo') that was expected of her — that of fitting the moulds of housewife and mother and hostess — before reaching breaking point or revealing the 'fessura nella corazza'. Isabella's recollection of Guglielmo hastening the wedding date, 'Io sola sapevo che era stato Guglielmo a fissare al piú presto la data delle nozze poiché considerava una immeritata fortuna che tu accettassi di sposarlo'(*IR*, p. 44), reinforces further the idea of marriage as entrapment of the female. Therefore the nature of the

[229] Perry Willson, *Women in Twentieth-century Italy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 127- 8.

bond that connects Francesca to her husband is essentially dissimilar to that of Anne's because it does not presuppose the idea of intellectual subordination, but that of resistance. Lazar notes, with justification, that de Beauvoir tends to create female characters that are weak and reliant, and it is clear that Anne fits that mould.[230] Francesca, on the other hand, displays the strength of character, the struggle for independence and insubordination and the fighting spirit that are more representative of de Céspedes' heroines, such as Valeria in *Quaderno Proibito* who dares to express the oppression of family life, albeit in secret, or even Irene in *Prima e Dopo* who would rather live in relative poverty rather than depend on a husband financially.[231] Despite this, Anne and Francesca still have in common an early awareness of their atheism, and it is their responses to this — continuing to embrace life without a referential God for Francesca and the transference of the external absolute on to Robert for Anne — that differentiate both characters in fact. In the two novels, their approaches to faith in God, that is to say to an external absolute in matters of ethical guidance, are used as a narrative tool to gauge and to reveal their moral strengths and they are critical to understanding their ultimately distinct personas. The analysis of these experiences found early in both novels is teleological and foreshadows their respective endings in a coherent manner. The depiction of Anne whose existence is dependent upon the intervention of the Other, or an external absolute, in *Les Mandarins* and the depiction of Francesca as a self-sufficient independent spirit who sees life as a permanent challenge in *Il rimorso*, account for these characters eventual existential choices: Anne will remain in her marriage with Robert, whereas Francesca will leave Guglielmo and attempt to stand on her own two feet.

It must be noted that without a doubt, all of de Céspedes' heroines have anti-conformist thoughts; nevertheless, their ability and courage to act upon them are not the same. There is a kind of progression in how daring and independent these protagonists are which reflects the generational differences between them. This is most evident when considering the fates of Valeria who is already

[230] When Lazar compares Kristeva's female character Olga in her novel *The Samourai* with Anne in *Les Mandarins,* she assesses that 'Beauvoir the feminist creates heroines that are vulnerable, sensitive, and dependent', thus Anne's reliance may not seem so surprising and can be said to be characteristic of de Beauvoir's creative writing. Lilian Lazar, 'When the *Samouraï* met the *Mandarins*', *Simone de Beauvoir Studies,* 13 (1996), pp. 66- 77 (p. 70).

[231] Closer attention is paid to the difference between de Beauvoir's and de Céspedes' female protagonists in Chapter Seven, where the endings of the novels will be discussed with reference to the authors' presentations of model dynamics of married life.

43 at the time of *Quaderno proibito* set in the early 1950s, Irene who is in her thirties in the mid-1950s depicted in *Prima e dopo,* and Francesca in *Il rimorso* who is in her thirties too, though in the early 1960s. Valeria is a victim of women's entrapment in immanence, a point on which, as Chapter Four has argued, de Céspedes appears to agree with de Beauvoir when she sees it as imposed on women and when she equates it with the uncompromising traditional view of the place and the function of the wife and mother. Next, there is Irene who certainly shows her refusal in complying with such ideas, although she is not married and one may question whether she will be able to sustain her independent spirit should she ever marry. Finally, there is Francesca whose final separation from her husband makes her the most significant character in terms of women's liberation from patriarchal authority, and may be said to give evidence if not of radical alterations in the views generally held of marriage and in family laws (in Chapter Four, I have shown how Lionello's death can be seen as instrumental in the narrative) then at least of the fact that some ideological and social changes were set in motion. Over a whole decade after Valeria, and after Anne in *Les Mandarins*, she actually dares to break the chains of wedlock and shows that a woman's life also lies outside the institution of marriage. It may be said that the difference between Francesca's and Anne's fates are shaped on one hand by the fact that both characters have dissimilar personalities, as the present discussion has helped to demonstrate, and on the other hand that they bear witness to the fact that de Céspedes was writing later and the situation of women had changed a great deal.[232] Francesca is of a different generation from Anne, and while the former's childhood, or those all too important formative years as argued in this chapter, was set in times of resistance and changes, the war and the postwar period, the latter's is set in the traditional and conservative era of 1930s-1940s France. Besides, it is indubitable that the opportunities for women to assert their independence and to distance themselves from the traditional view that their lives should be limited to the roles of wives and mothers were greater in the early 1960s than they were in the immediate post-war years, be it in France or in Italy: on this point, de Céspedes appears to have adapted the end of de Beauvoir's novel to

[232] See Chapter Two.

her own purpose and to fit the different social context in which *Il rimorso* is set.[233]

*Il rimorso* may be said to give evidence of de Céspedes' support for de Beauvoir's philosophical reflection on the contingency of freedom. As has been mentioned, de Céspedes uses the same narrative device as *Les Mandarins*: the mirror story, and to the very same purpose. De Beauvoir's novel offers an illustration of the existentialist concept of *mauvaise foi* or bad faith with Paule. She acts as a warning sign for Anne who sees reflected in her friend the image of what she might become should she choose not to act upon the existentialist malaise she is undergoing, and to retreat into facile resignation. Similarly in *Il rimorso,* Isabella reflects for Francesca the kind of existence that awaits her if she remains in her marriage in Rome. The present chapter has demonstrated that the contexts in which Paule and Isabella evolve with regard to the position of women in society, and the similar treatments of these two individuals in both narratives, also allow us to construe these mirror characters as instances of de Beauvoir's specific notion of situated freedom. The importance of such a concept for de Céspedes is evident in the function she gives to lived experiences in her novel: the way in which they influence her characters is essentially similar to what reads in *Les Mandarins* where the past is fundamental to the individual's confrontations with the present, sometimes imposing uncontrollable psychological constraints on one's freedom (as is the case with Anne and her early experience of religion).

The following chapter will continue to provide evidence that de Beauvoir's theories on the contingency of freedom influenced de Céspedes, and that this can be traced very clearly by comparing *Il rimorso* with *Les Mandarins*. For this purpose, Chapter Six will turn to the present in the novels, and examine and contrast the treatments of the institutions depicted as responsible for imposing limitations on individual freedom in the types of society the characters now live in.

[233] This is evidently significant to the question of women and financial independence that will be addressed in Chapter Seven.

# Chapter Six

## The Criticism of Psychoanalysis and Religion: Rethinking Normality

In the preceding chapter, I have argued that both *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* use depictions of the characters' past or lived experiences to the same purpose: that of revealing the way in which the individuals relate to the Other, particularly with reference to the female protagonists, and of explaining their difficulties when engaging with the present. As the reading of both narratives in the light of de Beauvoir's concept of situated freedom has helped demonstrate, the two novels express the idea that the past is inherent to an individual's life. It an essential part of his or her persona since in fact its influence steers the Self in the present. In this chapter, the discussion of the past will be developed further, this time with reference to the novels' criticism of psychiatry in *Les Mandarins,* and religion in *Il rimorso.* The topic of psychiatry does not appear in de Céspedes' novel, but in fact, as will be shown in this chapter, many of the same ideas are expressed under a different guise, that of Catholicism. De Beauvoir's novel offers a criticism of the advances and success of psychiatry in the postwar era, and notably the increasing taste for psychotherapy. In her narrative, de Céspedes questions the benevolence of the Catholic dogma in the letter exchange between Francesca and Isabella. Significantly in *Il rimorso*, she assigns the portrayal of Catholic confession a function that is essentially the same as de Beauvoir's criticism of

psychotherapy in *Les Mandarins*: this practice is depicted as controlling the influence of the past on the Self, and therefore as manipulating the individual in the present. By doing so, both novels raise in a similar manner what Lecarme-Tabone called 'le problème de la légitimité de l'oubli' at an ethical level.[234] The therapy session in *Les Mandarins* and the act of Catholic confession (and its exploitation of guilt) in *Il rimorso* are illustrated as devices aimed at standardizing the individual into one prescribed conduct, or one might say that they are identified as society's tools for the normalization of its citizens. Moreover, I shall argue that there are significant autobiographical elements which have inspired the two authors' critiques. The section dealing with the historical backgrounds of *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* shows that the former is set in a time when citizens were encouraged to put the war behind and turn to the future; the latter is set in a period when rapid capitalist expansion and changing mores put the authority of the Church over ethical and family matters in the limelight. In times when Catholic dogma was increasingly being challenged, the positive undertone that the fate of Isabella's mother assigns to *Il rimorso* discredits the traditional idea of a wife-and-mother's destiny as she grows older; moreover, her story allows de Céspedes to dispute the ethical foundations of what constitutes madness or eccentricity with reference to the question of women. The comparison between the case of Paule in *Les Mandarins* and that of Isabella's mother in *Il rimorso* will allow for comment on the novels' approaches to the topic of insanity.

*The Criticism of Psychoanalysis in Les Mandarins*

By 1951, when she finished writing the first draft of *Les Mandarins*, de Beauvoir had travelled three times to the United States. Her first stay there lasted 4 months in 1947, when she famously met Nelson Algren. Critics have commented quite liberally on the fact that Anne's affair with Lewis Brogan in the novel is directly inspired by the author's own relationship with the American writer which ended in October 1950. Lazar notes that *Les Mandarins* is:

> highly biographical and that Beauvoir's visits to the U.S. and her affair with the Midwest writer Nelson Algren is barely fictionalized in Anne Dubreuilh's relationship with Lewis Brogan. The novelistic accounts

[234] Eliane Lecarme-Tabone, 'Anne, psychanalyste', *Roman 20/50*, 13 (1992), 85-101 (p. 97).

> follow quite closely the descriptions that Beauvoir gives in her autobiography. The trips to Chicago, the visits to bars, the boat ride down the Mississippi, the quick trip to Central America, and the stays in the cottage on Lake Michigan are all related in her autobiography as well as in *The Mandarins*.[235]

In addition to providing source material for the description of her character's extra-marital affair in the novel, de Beauvoir's American experience also gave first-hand insight into the country's intelligentsia. In *L'Amérique au jour le jour* where she retraces her first trip to the United States in 1947, she observes of the journalist and sociologist Dwight MacDonald that, in comparison to other intellectuals, he is 'moins passif: par la revue qu'il dirige, les articles qu'il écrit, il s'engage sur un terrain politique'; and, significantly here, she adds: 'mais je crois que son effort lui apparaît comme très solitaire'.[236] This translates in *Les Mandarins* as a criticism of the lack of political engagement on the part of most of America's literati in the postwar period.[237] Moreover in *Les Mandarins,* the criticism of US capitalism and international policies — with Anne's first trip to America marking the onset of her concerns about the country's influence in Europe, and the joys of a cycling daytrip for her, Robert and Henri being spoiled by the dropping of the US atomic bomb — adds to the decidedly anti-American overtone of the novel. Anne begins to question America's real motives regarding European aid, and whether this amounts to a form of colonisation; also, she wonders why the US did not remove Salazar and Franco after Hitler, and how German prisoners are treated by the American liberators.[238] This has been noted by a number of critics, and in the US some of the press unleashed their fury on the novel unsurprisingly.[239] What has not been examined, however, is the way in which de Beauvoir's portrayal of psychiatry and psychoanalysis in the novel constitutes a less obvious but

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[235] Liliane Lazar,'When the *Samurai* Meet the *Mandarins*', *Simone de Beauvoir Studies,* 13 (1996), 66-77 (p. 71).
[236] Simone de Beauvoir, *L'Amérique au jour le jour* (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), p. 45.
[237] I shall discuss this in more detail in Chapter Eight.
[238] See Elizabeth Fallaize, *The Novels of Simone de Beauvoir* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 102.
[239] For example, writing for *Commonweal* in 1956, Frank Getlein judges that 'the only narrative question raised by the constant cohabitation in *The Mandarins* is, will they ever get out of that bed so we can get on with the story?'. He patronisingly comments that awarding the Prix Goncourt to such a novel amounted to praising a three-year old violinist and that the author's merit does not lay in the fact that 'she writes so well, but that she writes at all' (Frank Getlein, 'Review of *The Mandarins* by Simone de Beauvoir', *Commonweal,* 15 June 1956, pp. 279-80). Also in the *New Republic,* Donald Malcolm went as far as entitling his review 'Simone Go Home' (Donald Malcolm, 'Review of *The Mandarins,* by Simone de Beauvoir', *New Republic,* 18 June 1956, pp. 18-19).

nonetheless a most insightful attack on the US, and the extent to which her direct contact with American culture has broadened her knowledge of, and influenced her opinion of the disciplines.

The reader is informed of Anne's profession in her first entry in the text: she is a psychoanalyst. It is significant that this is conveyed through her expressing doubts over the basis and the rationality of her profession. Her clear definition of the therapeutic process as a work of adaptation of the individual through the control of his/her relation to past experiences throws a negative light on the discipline. She asks:

> Et même si je réussis à neutraliser leur passé, quel avenir ai-je à leur offrir? J'estompe les peurs, je lime les rêves, je rogne les désirs, j'adapte, j'adapte, mais à quoi les adapterai-je? Je ne vois plus rien autour de moi qui tienne debout (*LM I,* p. 48).

Her critical view is increasingly disparaging as she becomes more and more aware that the therapy she administers to her patients, who by today's standards would be diagnosed as suffering from PTD (or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), in fact amounts to altering the individual's mind in order for him/her to forget the past altogether, rather than allowing them to face their demons and deal with their anxieties. The metaphorical language she uses to describe the psychoanalytical session inscribes the therapy in a register of repulsion or even aggression: 'Encore un que j'allais étendre sur le divan et essayer de vider. […] ici, ils redevenaient des nourrissons au derrière bréneux et c'était à moi de les laver de leur enfance' (*LM I,* p. 104). She makes her stance even clearer when she declares after the ending of her affair with Lewis that 'Mes sentiments ne sont pas des maladies' (*LM II,* p. 355), thus refusing that her emotional state should be depersonalized and put under the normative category of 'depression'. She acknowledges the importance the past, and indeed of facing it, in defining one's own subjectivity, one's Self in the present, as already discussed in the previous chapter. It is therefore consistent that the insight afforded by her profession should lead her to reject turning to psychoanalytical treatment as she suffers the sadness of her affair's breakdown. She remarks: 'Notre histoire m'avait coûté bien des larmes; pourtant pour rien au monde je n'aurais consenti à l'arracher de mon passé' (*LM II,* p. 424). Anne's critical judgment of the fields of psychoanalysis and psychiatry reflects de Beauvoir's own view and

this has been noted before. Lecarme-Tabone rightly asserts about *Les Mandarins* that:

> On retrouve ici l'une des critiques addressées par Simone de Beauvoir à la psychanalyse dans *Le Deuxième sexe*: en proposant des schémas et des symboles à valeur générale, la théorie psychanalytique ne saurait appréhender la singularité des individus ni rendre compte de la liberté de leur choix existentiel personnel.[240]

At this stage of the argument, it is important to point out that the apparent conflation of psychoanalysis and psychiatry in the present chapter reflects de Beauvoir's combining of the two in her narrative. For example, Anne is described as being a psychoanalyst yet it is a conference on psychiatry that she attends in the US. Undoubtedly this confusion may be construed as a weakness in the novel, and perhaps as a rare if not a unique instance when the author's preparation of her topic foundered. However, as mentioned in Chapter One, the 1950s was a period of intensive research and new developments in the field of psychiatry, and at the time of writing *Les Mandarins,* and certainly in the immediate post-war years that the narrative sets out to depict, psychiatry and psychoanalysis were yet to be considered disciplines as distinct from each other as they are now. It would be unthinkable and illegal in today's society that a psychoanalyst should prescribe any drugs, or administer injections indeed, as Anne does for Sézenac in *Les Mandarins.*

In the novel, de Beauvoir very clearly associates the disciplines of psychiatry and psychotherapy with the US, and the idea of America's political colonization of Europe is associated with the idea of colonization of the mind. It is most likely that the author's trips to the US largely contributed to this portrayal in *Les Mandarins,* or even in *Le Deuxième sexe,* just as they informed her depiction of the country and the passive acceptance of American intellectuals evident in their lack of political engagement and their recoiling from any critical discussions of their country's policies in the narrative, as will be discussed further in Chapter Eight. During her travels to the US, de Beauvoir witnessed the growing popularity of the talking therapy in post-Second World War, which was relatively successful in the treatment of war

[240] Lecarme-Tabone, p. 99.

neuroses of returning soldiers. In *L'Amérique au jour le jour,* published for the first time in 1948, she observes that:

> En ce moment [in the postwar era], il y a toute une catégorie d'individus qu'on essaie activement de récupérer: ce sont les G.I. revenus d'Europe ou du Pacifique et que leur experience d'outre-mer a troublés (…) beaucoup se sentent simplement perdus. On les regardera comme guéris quand ils auront perdu la conscience d'être perdus. S'adapter, ici, c'est en vérité se démettre de soi-même (*AJJ*, p. 93).

In *Les Mandarins,* the very reason for Anne's first trip to America — an invitation to attend a conference on psychiatry — can be interpreted as an indication or an acknowledgement of the country's supremacy in the research and development of the discipline, as well as its popularity there. Indeed Anne herself remarks about the American conference that she had 'tout à apprendre' and that 'les séances du congrès étaient bien instructives ainsi que les conversations de [ses] collègues' (*LM II,* p. 9). It is interesting to note that while in France a Doctor of Philosophy (as Anne would appear to be) could perfectly well enter the profession of psychiatry at the time and become a psychoanalyst, in early postwar America both psychiatrists and psychoanalysts had to study medicine (nowadays in France, aspiring-psychiatrists must study medicine, although psychoanalysts are still not required to do so). This too emphasizes the US's embrace of, and esteem for, the mind therapies in the period concerned. Considering the nature of the criticism Anne expressed earlier, America's expertise may also be interpreted as an early warning against the dangers of mimicking the US craze for the practice of psychoanalysis in the postwar period. This is highlighted in 1948 in *L'Amérique au jour le jour* when de Beauvoir remarks categorically that 'la psychanalyse est une vaste enterprise sociale; son seul but c'est de permettre à chaque citoyen de reprendre une place utile dans la société' (*AJJ*, p. 93). Therefore her warning against the dangers of psychoanalysis (and of psychiatry) in *Les Mandarins* is undoubtedly informed by the insight her trips to the US provided, and considering the American model of the perfect housewife that was to pervade through the public perception of a woman's place and role in society in the 1950s and the 1960s, it appears particularly pertinent to a discussion of gender in the postwar period. [241]

[241] Chapter Two gives further details of the promotion of the American model of a housewife.

*The Criticism of Catholicism in Il rimorso*

The fact that the theme of psychiatry does not appear in *Il rimorso* can certainly be argued as a notable difference between the two novels, or seen as a topic that de Céspedes chose not to rework to her own purpose. However, the idea that society strives to align the individuals to a prescribed type of conduct by manipulating the way in which they relate to their past is in fact very present in the novel, albeit under a different guise: that of religion, and more particularly Catholicism. Already in 1955 de Céspedes depicted the struggle one faces in resisting this obliteration of one's past in times that are entirely turned towards the future and devoted to economic prosperity and scientific progress. In *Prima e dopo,* Irene's lover Pietro delivers a speech during a congress of writers in which he tries to emphasize the significance of the past as an integral part of the individual's identity. For this reason, he talks of the immense personal and ethical difficulties one faces in rejecting established principles and traditions completely; his audience, however, remains unimpressed. If this is considered alongside the argument developed in the present chapter, the audience's indifference can be interpreted as a sure sign that they have yielded to social pressure that judges it necessary to put the past behind them if they want to enjoy a comfortable and easy life, as Guglielmo so clearly illustrates in *Il rimorso.* In short, it means that consumerist society has won over the individual. Pietro dejectedly recalls the experience

> Io parlavo della difficoltà che affrontiamo per separarci dalle nostre tradizioni, dal nostro passato, senza separarci da noi stessi…Dell'angosciosa ricerca di una libertà che non si riferisca soltanto alla nostra vita privata e che tuttavia non prescinda da questa (…) Mi pareva che le mie parole cadessero nel vuoto, nell'indifferenza.[242]

In *Il rimorso,* de Céspedes addresses the dangers of such indifference through the depiction of the act of confession to a priest, and its consequences on the individual, and by extension on society at large. In the narrative, the lives of Guglielmo and Isabella — those Catholic characters partaking in such a ritual — help to expose the obstructive role of the Church in terms of social improvement and progress, notably to do with women's issues. The gap

[242] Alba de Céspedes, *Prima e dopo* (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1955), p. 166.

between traditional Catholic preaching in matters of family and morality and the reality of life, as previously mentioned in Chapter Two, is thus revealed. By the end of the 1950s and early 1960s, Italy was in a period of intense economic growth: businesses and industries prospered, notably exports stimulated by America's new taste for Italian white goods. The influence of the United States, which had begun a whole decade earlier, was not restricted to the public arena.[243] In the Northern and central regions of Italy, families with a better income could embrace the consumerist private lifestyle that came from the other side of the Atlantic. For many women, life was very much subject to an aspiration to conform to the American model of glamorous housewives dedicated to their husbands, children and the maintenance of their impeccable homes. With the comforts of modernity also came radical cultural changes to everyday life, from the way people ate, the way they dressed to the opportunities to interact with each other which were much greater. In a 'bid to counteract the evils of communism, on the one hand, and consumerism and its perceived concomitant degrading of moral values, on the other,' the Church promoted stringent guidance on proper modes of conducts and an obstinately steadfast view of the sanctity of marriage and family.[244] The gap between the feasibility of abiding by its preaching and the realities of life widened. Willson rightly interprets the fact that 'most Italian couples, Catholics and non-Catholics alike, limited the size of their families' as evidence of the growing disparity between the Church's discourse about sexuality and 'the attitude of many Italians'.[245] De Céspedes' experience as an agony aunt for the magazine *Epoca* is particularly relevant to the topic of the portrayal of religion in *Il rimorso.* Her column 'Dalla parte di lei' undoubtedly provided her the same opportunity to witness first-hand the effects of society's enforcement of a standard code of conduct (that includes the Church authority) on the individual as the trips to America did for de Beauvoir. It may be said that the critical outlook she casts on Catholicism in her novel, and that which de Beauvoir casts

[243] In her introduction to *Women in Italy 1945-1960,* Morris notes about the inception of the American influence in Italian society that 'although the Italian consumer boom is usually said to have begun in 1958, the effects of the opening up of Italy's economy after the years of autarky and war, and of the first contacts with American customs and consumerism, was already evident at the end of the 1940s and beginning of the 1950s'. *Women in Italy 1945-1960,* ed. by Penelope Morris (New York: Palgrave, 2006), pp. 1-20 (p. 10).

[244] Penelope Morris, 'From private to public: Alba de Céspedes' agony column in 1950s Italy', *Modern Italy,* 9 (2004), 11-20 (p. 12-3).

[245] Perry Willson, *Women in Twentieth-century Italy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 125.

on psychoanalysis and psychiatry in *Les Mandarins* are equally significant in terms of autobiographical content. As was the case for the portrayal of psychiatry and de Beauvoir's American experience, the fact that de Céspedes' work for *Epoca* almost certainly provided additional material for the illustration of religion and more particularly of Catholicism in *Il rimorso* has never been remarked so far. Yet it is significant that the Italian author actually observed the hardship and misery created by the discrepancy between religious and legal resistance to change in the era she exposes, not least during her work as an agony aunt. She must have been fully aware of the immense potential for literary production that the content of thousands of letters she received from the Italian public represented. Andreini writes of de Céspedes' enthusiasm for her column and she comments in passing that *Il rimorso* shows some influence from it, if not in its content, then at least in its form. She notes that 'la forma epistolare avrebbe così incrementato le sue occorrenze, già rilevabili nell'ampianto della rubrica e nella tecnica narrative del *Rimorso*'.[246] In her correspondence with Mondadori, de Céspedes alludes to the fact that she intended to publish a collection of the letters and that Sartre was supposed to write the preface to the French publication of the volume. However, Morris cautiously warns that 'we only have de Céspedes' word for this, as the collection was never published'.[247] To my knowledge it has not been possible to connect the overall plot of *Il rimorso* to a particular letter.[248] However it has to be significant that de Céspedes had spent the previous decade obtaining the valuable 'insights into the state of family and marriage during a time of transition' that 'Dalla parte di lei' provided, and then wrote another novel in which married relationships are central again, alongside a criticism of the influence of America and the 'values' of consumerism which is perceptible in the descriptions of Guglielmo's milieu and of Francesca's aversion for its social etiquette.[249] More significantly for the purpose of the present discussion, the novel also gives centre stage to a criticism of Catholicism and its influence on individuals' lives and relationships. It must be pointed out also that in spite

[246] Alba Andreini, 'La scrittura giornalistica', in *Alba de Céspedes. Scrittrici e intellettuali del Novecento*, ed. by Marina Zancan (Milan : il Saggiatore/Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 2005), pp. 330-49 (p. 337).
[247] Morris, *Modern Italy*, n. 41, p. 20.
[248] I have discussed this with Penelope Morris who agrees that if there ever was a letter which directly inspired the plot, then de Céspedes chose not to publish it.
[249] Morris, *Modern Italy*, p. 11.

of the traditional preconception of the agony column, the issues she had to address in 'Dalla parte di lei' were not exclusively limited to those of a sentimental nature, but they included questions of moral and philosophical magnitude, 'regarding, for example, the nature of love, art, truth and fidelity, not necessarily with reference to private life'.[250] In this sense, de Céspedes must have felt she knew what the concerns of some of the Italian population in 1950s' and at the beginning of the following decade were, and *Il rimorso* may be said to offer an overview of some of the recurrent problems the author had to address in her column.[251]

The disparity between the rather deferential tone of her answers in matters of religion, and the openness with which this topic is treated and criticized in *Il rimorso* are motivated by contextual obligations. Morris describes *Epoca* as a magazine which sought to put 'an emphasis on photojournalism and current affairs, and aimed to appear thoroughly modern, whilst avoiding offending conservative and catholic sensibilities of the time'.[252] Still it is of note that the decidedly uncompromising approach of Padre Atanasio in the Catholic periodical *Famiglia Cristiana,* in which he categorically condemns sex before marriage, contrasts greatly with de Céspedes' s courage when she advised readers in the magazine 'to work out what their own principles were, then adhere to them'.[253] It is fair to say that she went as far as one could in expressing her atheism in the context of the column: what is striking is that she doesn't simply toe the Catholic line, unlike other advisers. As Morris points out, her answers feature a careful ideological negotiation: while she advocates that the non-believer is free to obey his own morality, she also stresses that whoever embraces the Catholic religion commits to following its dogma. She writes that 'chi professa e pratica una religione sinceramente debba sottostare alle norme che essa impone; norme che chi non segue quella stessa religione, o

[250] Morris, *Modern Italy,* p. 14.

[251] Or at the very least of the portion of the population who read de Céspedes' column in *Epoca.* Considering the public's new taste for weekly magazines, this readership was quite substantial. As Morris observes: 'the 1950s saw a huge boom in production and the appearance of new illustrated weeklies (…) Arnoldo Mondadori's *Epoca* and Luigi Barzini jr.'s *Settimana Incom* (…) were very much part of the publishing boom of the period, influenced greatly by American publications of a similar ilk'. (Penelope Morris, 'A window on the private sphere: Advice columns, marriage, and the evolving family in 1950s Italy', *The Italianist,* 27 (2007), 304-32 (p. 306).

[252] Morris, *The Italianist,* p. 306.

[253] Morris, *The Italianist,* p. 319.

non ne segue alcune, non ha invece alcun obbligo di osservare'.[254] She insisted that she did not feel she had either the right or the competence to advise on matters of religious beliefs that she herself boldly and openly admitted to not partaking in, and often asked the readers to seek advice from a priest who should be considered the absolute authority in such matters. In the novel, by contrast, the stronghold of the Church is criticized in a very direct and open manner, its treatment freed from the constant worry of editorial censorship due to the magazine's position in terms of conservative and Catholic sensibilities. This also suggests that despite the fact that *Il rimorso* and *Epoca* shared the same publisher, the novel addressed a wider and more educated readership than the magazine which was more family-orientated. Indeed de Céspedes herself acknowledged the controversial side of this work in a letter to Mondadori dated 16 July 1960, where she wrote:

> Preferisco dirti che il romanzo è una violenta e intelligente, credo, denunzia dell'ipocrisia del cattolicismo, anche nella vita politica. Vi sono certe pagine che saranno condannate aspramento dalla Chiesa (...) Credo che avremo forti attacchi dai cattolici appunto per l'esattezza delle mie figure di cattolici e per la precisione delle mie obiezioni. [255]

The most effective contribution to the accuracy of her 'obiezioni' arguably comes from the fact that she uses the logic of the existentialist ethical discourse to support her critique of the Catholic sacrament of confession; her approach echoes de Beauvoir's in her treatment of psychoanalysis in *Les Mandarins*. The narrative strongly emphasizes the role of confession in preventing the individual from taking responsibility for his/her own existence, and therefore in denying them the possibility of living their lives authentically, in other words to be themselves. In *Prima e dopo,* de Céspedes already intimated a similar critique of the subject, and drew some attention to the existentialist concept of *mauvaise foi* discussed in the previous chapter. When Irene recalls her sister coming back home late at night, she recounts that:

> Poi, presto al mattino, andava a confessarsi; e ciò bastava a rassicurare mia madre che me la citava ad esempio poiché io, sapendo che per essere

[254] *Epoca*, 31 March 1957
[255] Fondo Arnoldo Mondadori, Fondazione Mondadori, Milan.

> assolta avrei dovuto promettere di rinunziare agli incontri segreti con Maurizio, non mi confessavo più (*PD,* p. 83).

Irene would rather not go to confess than to live in bad faith for having made a promise she knew she would be unable to fulfill. Despite this, it is noticeable that the topic of religion in her 1955 novel holds a much lesser place than in *Il rimorso* where it is as significant to the narrative as psychoanalysis is in *Les Mandarins*. Notwithstanding variations in thematic focus between *Prima e dopo* and *Il rimorso*, this may also be indicative of the fact that by the end of the 1950s and by the time she was writing the latter, the Church's primacy was declining and was becoming more openly challenged after having held political and sociological hegemony at the beginning of the decade. Already between 1952 and 1958, a considerable proportion of letters that de Céspedes chose to put in her column showed a definite set in motion of the questioning of the traditional values defended and dictated by the Catholic dogma at the time. Morris comments that she aimed at creating 'a kind of compendium of secular morals for her time, for those who felt they could no longer turn to the Church for advice, and who found the wisdom of older generations insufficient for the requirements of modern times'.[256] From 1958 to 1963, Pope John XXIII promoted the Church more as a spiritual guide rather than a political mentor. Some embraced this view as a positive change from the conservationist papacy of his predecessor Pius XII, others feared that the slackening of the role of the church in everyday life at this stage meant that mass production and consumerism would take the place of God's worship and guidance. In the novel, the archetypical bourgeois Catholic figures, Isabella and Guglielmo, are slowly exposed as hypocritical and cunning characters. The veil of pious devotion is lifted to reveal their affairs, their promiscuity and their falsehood. Nevertheless, the reader comes to appreciate the tragic aspect of their lives: their involvement in the Italian bourgeoisie — a social stratum that swears allegiance to the Church and its conservative dogma — and their everyday experiences of the changing society of the 1950s-60s imprison them in a vicious circle of lies. Guglielmo and Isabella uncover the deception the Church has helped to create by keeping the institution of marriage an untouchable bastion; significantly, they use the act of confession to expiate their sins, in their cases extra-marital affairs, and each time their consciences are appeased

[256] Morris, *Modern Italy,* p. 17.

by the forgiveness they receive from the priest, until they sin again. Francesca's letters to Isabella hold some very straightforward and astute questionings of the Church's rules and practices. She asks:

> Ma, dimmi: nel confessarti non sospetti mai di ricorrere a quella devozione perché è più facile dichiarare cosí le proprie colpe che a quelli da te — in qualche modo — danneggiati, offesi ? La confessione non provoca conseguenze, anzi le scongiura, esimendo dall'obbligo di informare le proprie vittime (*IR*, p. 48-9).

Guglielmo writes to Isabella that: 'Ciò che alimenta la nostra fede è la possibilità di continuare a vivere nel peccato' (*IR*, p. 633), and thus he brazenly exposes the role of confession in fostering lives lived in bad faith. By doing so, the narrative plainly brings the existentialist notion of *mauvaise foi* into focus because Guglielmo reveals that they are in fact conscious of the hypocrisy of the practice 'peccato-rimorso-confessione'.[257]

The significance of the concept of remorse in the narrative is evidently reflected in the author's decision over the title for her novel, and arguably even more so in her deliberation over its importance semantically. De Céspedes opted for *Il rimorso* instead of *Il piacere e la colpa*, and she justifies this choice in a letter to Arnoldo Mondadori, where she comments that:

> il piacere porta inevitabilmente con sé l'idea del piacere fisico, mentre non è questo. Il libro non si riferisce solo all'amore, tutt'altro. 'C'è l'amore', come dicono le lettrici dei settimanali rosa; ma c'è anche e sopratutto il resto, tuttociò che compone il tessuto della nostra vita.[258]

She continues with an explanation of the unsuitability of the term 'colpa' that, in the same fashion as the word 'piacere', she considers to be too restrictive to reflect the breadth of the novel appropriately. 'Colpa' refers mostly to the idea of wrongdoing or fault and therefore of guilt, and the precision and knowledge that de Céspedes applies typically to her use of language is manifest when she comments that:

> Inoltre 'la colpa' non è traducibile; noi abbiamo 'colpa' e colpevolezza. Nelle altre lingue, almeno in francese e in inglese — e chissà in quante altre — c'è un termine solo che muta tutto: in francese si tradurrebbe ' la

[257] Carroli, p. 84.
[258] Letter dated 16 July 1960, busta da 13-2-1959 a 30-4-1971, Fondi Arnoldo Mondadori, Fondazione Mondadori, Milan.

> faute'. Che vuol dire soprattutto : 'L'errore, lo sbaglio, il peccato'. Dunque, non può andare assolutamente.[259]

The use of the English word 'guilt', a possible translation of 'colpa', and its meaning is subject to time and personal interpretation. Shakespearean theatre traditionally uses it in its objective sense, which is to say to refer to criminal accountability. This judiciary denotation of the word may be suitable in the cases of Isabella, Guglielmo and Francesca, purely on the basis of the laws of marriage already mentioned in the chapter dealing with the historical background. However, it is evident that this interpretation is too limiting to do justice to de Céspedes' novel because, in her own words, what she attempts to depict is in fact:

> il rimorso che tutti, per un motivo o per l'altro, portiamo nella nostra vita e di cui soffriamo: il rimorso di vivere senza sapere cos'è la vita. Senza conoscerne il significato, senza sapere se finirà qui o se sarà eterna. Il rimorso di essere ricchi, di volere la felicità; di vivere, insomma, talvolta a caso.[260]

In fact, her usage of the concept concurs more with professor of psychiatry Speziale-Bagliacca's sophisticated interpretation of the English word 'guilt'. He explains that:

> guilt is not merely a particular form of anxiety known to us all (if we think that we have never experienced it, then we really are in trouble), nor is it simply an objective event caused by people (breaking a rule): guilt is a way of living and thinking .[261]

The all-pervasive quality Speziale-Bagliacca thus attributes to this feeling is clear to see in the lives of the characters in both *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso*. Francesca is no longer able to live according to the social requirements of the higher aristocracy and Gerardo is struggling with the guilt of enjoying freedom while having done nothing to deserve it. It is also fair to suggest that it is in fact remorse or guilt that prompts what is usually described as existential malaise in de Beauvoir's novel. Anne feels guilty towards Nadine because she does not feel she corresponds to the idea of the good mother promoted by society;

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[259] ibid.
[260] ibid.
[261] Roberto Speziale-Bagliacca, *Guilt, Revenge, Remorse and Responsibility after Freud* (Hove: Brunner-Routledge, 2004), p. xii.

moreover, she experiences the remorse of living in a time when she realises the atrocities of the war are brushed aside. Henri is also remorseful at the slow engulfment of his newspaper by party politics, when he had been previously adamant that *L'Espoir* would never be politically and thus ideologically controlled. Remorse or guilt, in the two novels, is the driving force behind the main characters' attempts to escape the falsity of their environment, to live according to their own sets of ethical beliefs, and to take responsibility for their own lives and actions. In fact, Carroli comments that for Francesca and Gerardo, 'il rimorso agisce come trampolino di lancio verso nuove esperienze'.[262] However, it is significant that in the case of Isabella and Guglielmo, remorse drives them into the perpetual cycle of sin, confession and absolution. Therefore *Il rimorso* also includes instances when remorse or guilt is part of a negative process, and for this reason it may be said that de Céspedes reworked this notion in order to serve a most important issue in her novel: the criticism of religion.

It is also important to highlight the fact that de Céspedes' critique of religion in *Il rimorso* does not address Christianity *per se*, but the Catholic Church in the era depicted in the novel. She strictly limits the moral content of her narrative to the restrictive realm of only two possible ethical options, thus effectively encapsulating within the story the uncompromising characteristic of the limited ideological 'freedom' of choice at the time, 'una laica e problematica, l'altra conformista e falsamente religiosa, che le due donne [Francesca and Isabella] rispettivamente rappresentano'.[263] Indeed Guglielmo's words bear testimony to the fact that these are times when being a Catholic is used as a façade; it is motivated and in a sense imposed on the individual by social requirements, not by genuine religious beliefs. It has little connection, if any at all, with true Christian ethics. He writes to Isabella:

> Ma non c'è pentimento dove non c'è vera fede; e noi non l'abbiamo, anche se lo affermiamo spesso per convincerne almeno gli altri. Se credessimo veramente nell'esistenza di Dio, potremmo comportarci come se non esistesse? (*IR*, p. 633).

[262] Piera Carroli, *Esperienza e narrazione nella scrittura di Alba de Céspedes* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1993), p. 84.
[263] Rabitti, p. 137.

This effectively expresses de Céspedes' opinion on the question of faith, that 'una fede non può essere né vietata né imposta sebbene scelta da noi stessi in piena libertà'.[264] Moreover, the novel is also an apologia for humanity and altruism as authentic Christian values with the person of Don Magrini: a Resistance companion of Guglielmo's, the priest is unable to tolerate the selfish opulence of Rome any longer, and he leaves the country to dedicate himself to charity. Don Magrini's forced departure symbolically conveys the idea that true Christianity had no place among the Catholic society of the time.

In *Il rimorso,* de Céspedes gives an acute assessment of the Church's obstructionism in matters of social progress and particularly to do with the private sphere, traditionally that of women. The very possibility mentioned by Guglielmo of carrying on living in sin — a possibility that the Church would not have condoned but which is still real nevertheless — contributes to eradicating, or rather masking, any urgency to address issues such as divorce in the legal system. It may be said that confession is illustrated as instrumental to society's bad faith or *mauvaise foi* in matters relating to the family. It is evident that the Church cannot be held solely responsible for the stasis of the law in the 1950s. Morris observes that in actual fact neither the legal position of women nor the political rhetoric regarding families changed significantly during the 1950s as 'both PCI and the DC made their appeal to women by emphasizing the importance of a very traditional role for women within the family'.[265] Nonetheless the novel clearly highlights the significant role of Catholicism and its prescriptions in maintaining a legal and social status quo. De Céspedes uses the tools of existentialist discourse to expose the culpability of the Church at the time in perpetuating the fascist pattern of the family 'which would enclose women within the domestic sphere and tie them to domestic drudgery'.[266]

*Silencing the Self and Writing the Self*

In the light of this analysis, a correlation is established between the portrayals of psychoanalysis or psychiatry in *Les Mandarins* and of religion in *Il rimorso*. In the two novels, their treatments draw on the existentialist ethical discourse in matters of the integrity of the Self. They are criticized in virtue of the hold

[264] *Epoca*, 31 March 1957.
[265] Morris, p. 13.
[266] Sharon Wood, 'Women's Writing in the Postwar Period', in *Women in Italy 1945-1960*, ed. by Penelope Morris (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 147-58 (p. 147).

they can exert over the human mind, and of the normative function they assume, particularly regarding the question of female emancipation. The parallel between psychiatry and religion may be taken further when considering the psychoanalytic session and the act of confession. Both follow a similar procedure: the patient/ believer puts into words what preoccupies his or her mind, or his or her conscience, and s/he finds release through the exposure to a listening member who reveals the way to recovery or salvation.

The role of confession is to expiate past deeds: talking to the priest becomes a purgative exposition of the persona, followed by the absolution of sins which allows one to live in peace having been 'freed' from a cumbersome past; the tête-à-tête sessions with the analyst become part of a treatment that aims at relieving the mind from a similarly burdensome past, and at allowing the patient to find peace in the present, and hope in the future. It may be said that the comparative analysis of the *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* offers a valuable literary illustration of the scientific exploration of the human psyche and its coping mechanisms in terms of lived experiences and guilt or remorse. In both narratives, speech — to a psychotherapist in *Les Mandarins* and to a priest in *Il rimorso* — is portrayed as a fundamental part in the process of social normalization: with therapy or confession, the individual is stripped of personal and problematic concerns and made to fit into society. In her analysis of the function of speech in *Les Mandarins,* Tidd correctly observes that:

> [it] acts as a reactionary and adaptive force that mutilates individuals both morally and affectively, as it effects their adaptation to a morally sick society. Through this process, speech is abused and appropriated by clinical regulatory mechanisms to normalize and nullify traumatic experience.[267]

While the 'clinical regulatory mechanisms' she mentions here refer to psychoanalytical practices and the 'traumatic experience' to obsessive memories of wartime, Tidd's remark is equally fitting in *Il rimorso* where speech is appropriated in a similar fashion by religious regulatory mechanisms, or confession to the priest, to normalize and nullify guilt-inducing experiences, or sin in this case. Therefore it is consistent that in both novels the malaise

[267] Ursula Tidd, 'Testimony, *Historicité,* and the Intellectual in *The Mandarins'*, in *The Contradictions of Freedom,* ed. by Sally J. Scholz and Shannon M. Mussett (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), pp. 87-103 (p. 99).

experienced by those characters representational of the struggle for integrity and truth (Anne and Henri, Francesca and Gerardo) should find expression not in speech — lest they are normalized, or one might say silenced, by society — but in writing. Indeed the novels reveal the diaries of Anne and Gerardo and the letters Francesca writes, while Henri is appropriately 'deprived of a voice and is subjected to the discreet authority of an external narrator'.[268] These individuals cannot 'speak' their anxieties because, as the correlation between psychoanalysis and confession has revealed, speech is portrayed in both *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* as part of a process inherent to the types of societies depicted and which obliterates the manifestation of individuality and integrity. These characters' confinement to the written expression of their Selves in the diaristic and epistolary forms holds an introspective value that will turn out to be their salvation in due course: unlike the consequences of confession and psychoanalysis portrayed in the novels, these media allow them to re-live their pasts rather than eradicate them, in order to give a new perspective on the present. The confinement of self-expression to the written form as a means to salvation, or at least as a way of finding respite, is a topic that de Céspedes had already treated in her 1952 novel *Quaderno Proibito*. Valeria uses her diary to vent her frustration and to attempt to find release from the suffocation of family life. Lombardi comments that 'if the unrecorded past once appeared to her as a gray mass of uneventful days, the diary finally gives her a new perspective on the present.'[269] In *Les Mandarins* and in *Il rimorso,* the act of writing similarly triggers and sustains a process of deconstruction of the individuals' actions past and present that will ultimately lead them (and the reader) to understand the reasons for their anguish, act upon them and take responsibility for their own existences. Perhaps not surprisingly, it is after *Les Mandarins,* in which Anne's diaristic writing is crucial to her persona, that de Beauvoir wrote the first instalment of what would become her autobiographical œuvre, thus herself going through the cathartic process of writing the Self.[270] Anne and Francesca revisit their pasts and come to full understanding of the oppression exerted by Others on their true Selves. Gerardo's narrative affords him a similar hindsight, although on the whole, it is noticeable that this does

[268] Elizabeth Fallaize, *The Novels of Simone de Beauvoir* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 90.
[269] Giancarlo Lombardi, *Rooms with a View. Feminist Diary Fiction, 1952- 1999* (London: Associated University Presses, 2002), p. 35.
[270] *Mémoires d'une jeune fille rangée* was published in 1958.

not stretch as far back as Anne's and Francesca's reminiscences. The diary form means for Gerardo that he relates a more immediate past; for example, he recounts his conversations with Guglielmo, and this provides him with the confirmation that his decision to withdraw from the corrupted world of the newspaper *La Gazzetta* — also a metaphor for the Italian bourgeois milieu at the time — is the right one. The narrative relating to Henri also reads very much like a diary in which his reactions to past and present events and his feelings are reported. For example, during a visit to Portugal with Nadine, the intensity of his emotions and the course of his thoughts are described as they flow. Henri gradually becomes conscious of the difference between past and present:

> A Marseille, à Naples, au Pirée, dans le Bario-Chino il avait passé des heures à errer dans ces ruelles criardes; bien sûr, alors comme aujourd'hui il souhaitait qu'on en finisse avec toute cette misère; mais ce voeu restait abstrait, jamais il n'avait eu envie de fuir: cette violente odeur humaine l'étourdissait. C'était du haut en bas de la colline le même grouillement vivant, le même ciel bleu brûlait par delà les toits; il semblait à Henri que d'un instant à l'autre il allait retrouver dans toute son intensité la vieille joie; c'est elle qu'il poursuivait de ruelle en ruelle: mais il ne la retrouvait pas (*LM I,* p. 145).

This new consciousness afforded by the direct recording of his thoughts and experience allows an understanding of his final perspective on the engagement of his Self in the present. This is manifest in his ultimate deliberation over his and Nadine's move to Italy:

> A Porto Venere comme à Paris, toute la terre serait présente autour de lui avec ses misères, ses crimes, ses injustices. Il pouvait bien user le reste de sa vie à fuir, il ne serait jamais à l'abri. Il lirait les journaux, il écouterait la radio, il recevrait des lettres. Tout ce qu'il gagnerait, c'est qu'il se dirait: 'Je n'y peux rien.' Brusquement quelque chose explosa dans sa poitrine. Non. La solitude qui l'étouffait ce soir, cette muette impuissance, ce n'est pas ça qu'il voulait. Non. Il n'accepterait pas de dire à jamais: 'Tout se passe sans moi.' Nadine avait vu clair: pas un instant il n'avait vraiment choisi cet exil. Il se rendait compte soudain que depuis des jours il en subissait l'idée avec horreur (*LM II,* p. 490).

Consequently it is apparent that both *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* present a determined defence of writing as the sole medium of discovery and true expression of the Self. Through writing, the characters try and find a sense to a

reality they feel ill-at-ease with, a reality which conflicts with their ideals. It is only after the written analysis of their unsatisfactory lives, and the reconsideration of their pasts, that they are eventually able to reject traditional forms of living and standardized values and find the courage to try and create new ones. In this respect, it is worth mentioning the symbolic meaning that de Céspedes gives to the typewriter in *Il rimorso.* It is portrayed as the sign of Francesca's recovered integrity, and also as the tool she will use to build her independence. Guglielmo is aware of his wife's unhappiness in their marriage, and he knows she will leave. However, when she spends the night at Matteo's and in the early afternoon that day Gugliemo enters her room, he is comforted by a sign that she will be back, as he remembers: 'io, intanto, osservavo attorno e un tenue indizio mi ha confortato' (*IR,* p. 319). From what Francesca later writes to Isabella — 'forse non sono partita perché avevo dimenticato gli orecchini' (*IR,* p. 575) — the reader is led to believe that she had not left for good that night because she had forgotten a pair of earrings. Indeed the piece of jewellery plays a highly significant part in her struggle for freedom: these earrings were passed on to Francesca by her mother should she need to sell them 'soltanto in caso estremo' (*IR,* p. 575).[271] In actual fact, the clue that reassured Guglielmo his wife would be back turns out to be the typewriter, and it is only when Francesca takes it away with her that her definitive departure is confirmed. He writes:

> Francesca non è rientrata, stasera. Sono appena le due del mattino, dunque potrebbe ancora tornare, ma stavolta sono sicuro che non tornerà (…) Allora, nervosamente, ho cercato l'interruttore, ho acceso la luce. Il posto della macchina da scrivere era segnato su un velo di polvere (*IR,* p. 589).

This is later confirmed by Gerardo recalling their final train journey to Milan, and noting that besides his four suitcases was Francesca's modest luggage: 'il suo misterioso bagaglio: la macchina da scrivere e una borsa'. He also remembers that on the evening they had decided to leave Rome together, she had suddenly gone back home, despite having declared that her luggage would be sent to her. He recollects that: 'poi, all'improvviso, quasi sgomento — quasi

[271] She will eventually do so in order to afford to leave her marriage, and the episode raises another major topic common to both *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* that is addressed in Chapter Seven: that of women and financial independence.

avesse dimenticato qualcosa di molto importante, di compromettente addirittura — aveva deciso che invece doveva rientrare' (*IR*, p. 641). The use of the adjective 'compromettente' with reference to Francesca's typewriter clearly conveys its symbolical significance: just as Valeria's notebook in *Quaderno Proibito* is associated with the illicit and could betray her, it is a very powerful instrument through which her persona can find expression, and her ethical principles can be preserved and unveiled.

Furthermore in both novels, it is noteworthy that the steady unconditional defence of creative writing as sole medium for the expression of integrity is bestowed on the female characters. This is consistent with the criticism of the roles of religion and psychotherapy in the historical context each novel depicts: during the ritual of Catholic confession and during the psychoanalytical session, speech acquires a normative function which, in the perspective of a feminist discourse, contributes to the timeless silencing of the female voice, and to the ensuing relegation of women to the status of second sex. It is therefore not surprising that, as a woman, Anne should harbour so much doubt over her profession — a profession she entered following her husband's suggestion — and that she, who Fallaize observes 'has an absolute belief in the power and value of literature', never ceases both to regret Robert's decision to suspend work on his memoirs and to encourage him to resume writing.[272] The introspective journey afforded by her own writing, the work of self-analysis she undergoes by putting the past into words, allows her to break free from a debilitating psychological dependence on the Other and to recover the integrity she had lost during the seminal experience of religious worship in her childhood. Her new (or recovered) awareness ultimately prevents her from committing suicide, allowing a transformed (re)engagement with the family and with Others. Francesca's decision to leave behind the bourgeois milieu which, for all its falsities, still provided material security, and face an uncertain future as a writer, leaves no doubt as to her commitment to literature. Moreover, she alone appears to understand and share Gerardo's motivations for leaving his career in the media and dedicating himself to literary writing, and ultimately she is the one who will assert the worth of his diary. Like Anne, the work of self-analysis afforded by her writing, in this case her letters to Isabella,

[272] Fallaize, p. 93.

ultimately allows her to reassert her own moral principles and to choose a life that does justice to them.

*The Attraction of 'Madness': The Cases of Paule and of Isabella's Mother*

Another place where the influence of *Les Mandarins* on *Il rimorso* is apparently considerable with regard to the subject of society's work on the human psyche is the depiction of madness. The practice of confession entraps Isabella in a vicious circle that prevents her from recovering her integrity. Paule, on the other hand, exemplifies the abuses of Anne's profession, and its highly normative function exposed in the present chapter. Her case finds echo in Laing's observation that:

> The situation keeps cropping up in our society, when, no matter how liked, esteemed or loved, some people become insufferable to others. No one they know wants to live with them. They are not breaking the law, but they arouse in those around them such urgent feelings of pity, worry, fear, disgust, anger, exasperation, concern, that something has to be done. A social worker or psychiatrist is 'brought in'.[273]

When Paule finally accepts psychiatric treatment following her breakdown, her cure involves the administration of ECT which has the effect of blurring the memory of the past temporarily, and thus of transforming the way in which she relates to it. In the narrative, her recovery is determined in terms of social adaptation: she goes out again, mingles with people, and has become indifferent to Henri. As Lecarme-Tabone points out, 'renier son passé c'est aussi se renier soi-même',[274] and thus she questions whether this new Paule, who has a busy social life and many lovers, is actually the same character. Moreover, given what has just been argued, the fact that she decides to try her hand at writing can be seen as a sign that this really is not who and how Paule truly wants to be. Anne's reaction to the outcome of her treatment, 'Plutôt souffrir à en mourir, me disais-je, que de jamais éparpiller au vent en ricanant les cendres de mon passé' (*LM II*, p. 356), defines the cure society proposes, or the alignment to its interpretation of normality, as something deeply unattractive, and, in this way, gives some kind of value to madness. Even Paule herself appears to mourn her past state, the time when she was 'mad', as she poignantly tells Anne: 'mais tu ne peux pas imaginer comme le monde était riche, en ce temps-là; la moindre chose avait dix mille facettes' (*LM II*, p. 350).

[273] Ronald David Laing, *Wisdom, Madness and Folly* (London: Macmillan, 1985), p. 3.
[274] Eliane Lecarme-Tabone, 'Anne, psychanalyste', *Roman 20/50*, 13 (1992), 85-101 (p. 97).

The positive significance that the narrative of Paule's story bestows on madness challenges our understanding of such a concept. In the same way, the story of Isabella's mother in *Il rimorso* compels the reader to reconsider what is traditionally perceived as 'madness' or eccentricity, and society's conception of normality.[275] In context, her fate also gives an illustration of the abnormal, or indeed of madness, as a much more enviable place to be. Her story echoes that of Paule who, after a symbolic death and rebirth, is liberated from the ideological constraints of the traditional view of women and marriage and enjoys a busy social life.

Isabella writes to Guglielmo of her mother's transformation after the death of her husband. She describes her when, as a wife in the past, 'era mite (…) sbiadita accanto al babbo che la schiacciava con la statura, la corpulenza e con la sua cordialità rumorosa' (*IR,* p. 445-6). The physical description of her father's corpulence and loud joviality that erased the discreet presence of her mother is a metaphorical illustration of women's inferior place in marriage, and of their subservience to husband and family. Isabella's remarks that, after leaving the new widow in a spa as advised by her doctor, she thought 'non la vedremo piú' and that 'in fondo, è stato cosí' (*IR,* p. 446), signal the symbolic death of this character. Just like Paule, her 'treatment' is followed by a rebirth into a radically transformed character: her hair is not long and grey anymore, but short and tinted blond, she is tanned and does not dress soberly and in the dark colors her husband preferred 'affinché spiccasse il suo colorito pallido' (*IR,* p. 447) any longer. Despite the novel's criticism of the loss of traditional values and of ideals fought for in the war as the new consumer society grew, Isabella's mother still signifies an endorsement of the Americanised image of modernity which here represents greater freedom for women. It is significant that after such a transformation, Rinaldo and Carlo, Isabella's husband and brother-in-law respectively, refer to Isabella's mother as 'la vecchia pazza' (*IR,* p. 447). Against the background of the early 1960s in *Il rimorso,* the author shows that this modern version of womanhood is possible, even if it is still regarded as mad by some. The transformation undergone by Isabella's mother is depicted as a positive one, whereas in *Les Mandarins,* where Paule is not allowed to live with her 'madness', this transformation takes the form of an

[275] This develops further de Beauvoir's and de Céspedes' challenge to what is perceived as 'normal femininity' in relation to Anne's and Francesca's malaises (see Chapter Four).

enforced 'normality' whose positivity is questioned. This is accounted for primarily by the chronological difference between the two novels, and also to a certain extent by de Beauvoir's uncompromising views of the roles of literary characters, as will be discussed later in Chapter Seven. The fact that Carlo and Rinaldo swiftly label Isabella's mother as mad emphasizes the difficulties and resistance from patriarchal society in shifting the notions of normality outside the traditional conception of woman, marriage, and subservience to family; a shift that, as the present analysis shows, both de Beauvoir and de Céspedes manage seamlessly in their narratives, by guiding the reader through a reconsideration of the notion of madness, or what society accepts as normality, in relation to the question of women's emancipation outside the home.

On a lighter note, the reader is informed with much irony and humour that Isabella's mother has embraced the psychological leap into pecuniary command wholeheartedly indeed, and therefore she has successfully broken the traditional and the Catholic mould of the woman: she has made a prosperous entrance in the business world, and her investments in the Stock Market, that traditionally male-dominated institution, allow her to go on a yearly cruise, 'quest'anno nei fiordi, l'anno prossimo vuole andare in Grecia' (*IR*, p. 447). Of course, the radical and fast transformation of this character, and her newly found exuberance, may be somewhat exaggerated and in fact emphasize the unlikelihood of the story of Isabella's mother: financial ease and carefree living *all'americana* was, for most, and particularly for women, more aspiration than reality. Interestingly, however, her role in the narrative may certainly also be interpreted as a comment that the liberation of women from patriarchal oppression is a transgenerational issue, and not a matter solely for the younger population to address, as seems to be the case in *Quaderno proibito* where Valeria leaves emancipation to her daughter Mirella.

Unlike de Beauvoir in *Les Mandarins,* de Céspedes does not address the topic of psychiatry. Instead, she offers with *Il rimorso* a critical analysis of the role of the Catholic Church in a person's life and, by extension, in society as a whole. Psychoanalysis in *Les Mandarins* and Catholicism in de Céspedes' novel are revealed as being instrumental in the standardization of the individual in the type of society they depict. This is emphasized, with Paule in the former and Isabella in the latter, as something which affects women's quest for freedom from patriarchal rules and stereotypes in particular. The present

chapter has shown that for both authors, autobiographical elements have informed the treatment of each subject; de Beauvoir's and de Céspedes' choices to address psychiatry and religion respectively can be said to correspond to their own experiences and encounters of the problems, at both ethical and practical levels, caused by the steadfast imposition of a prescribed type of conduct in the societies and the times they capture. The analogy extends further: with Anne's questionings over the rationality of her profession, and with the depiction of Guglielmo and Isabella's lives caught in a vicious circle of sin-remorse-confession, the psychoanalytical session in *Les Mandarins* and the Catholic ritual of absolution in *Il rimorso* are shown to share the same operative modes. Both command the individuals' oral expression of their malaises in order to influence his/her present by relieving the mind from burdensome lived experiences or the past. In the light of this analysis, it may also be said that both narratives appear to present writing as the sole genuine medium left to the cathartic expression of one's integrity and individuality. The two novels also depict society's view of female individuality as nothing more than eccentricity. With Isabella's mother in *Il rimorso,* de Céspedes echoes de Beauvoir's challenge of our understanding madness with the case of Paule.

The story of Isabella's mother also expresses the critical view that women's emancipation from patriarchal dominance can only be achieved through the cessation of financial dependence, a topic that is addressed next. Chapter Seven argues that the influence of de Beauvoir's specific interpretation of Existentialism on de Céspedes, and of *Les Mandarins* on *Il rimorso,* is also perceptible in the reconsideration of the dynamics of marriage that both narratives call for, and in the significance assigned to the issue of women and work in establishing this new type of love relationship.

# Chapter Seven

## Existential Joy and the Positive Other: Toward a New Type of Relationship

The preceding chapter dealt with some autobiographical elements in both novels, and showed that these were significant for a better and more informed appreciation of the shared topic of social standardization of the individual, a topic conveyed by the criticism of psychiatry in *Les Mandarins* and of religion in *Il rimorso.* The present analysis also takes into consideration de Beauvoir's and de Céspedes' life experiences, this time with reference to relationships and with particular attention to the endings of the novels. It will become clear that both narratives urge for a reassessment of the foundations of life as a couple. I shall see how the concepts of existential joy and positive acknowledgement of the Other, which are constituent of de Beauvoir's specific existentialist philosophy, appear in *Les Mandarins,* and will explore for the first time the way that may be seen to inform the construction of relationships in *Il rimorso*. The accounts of the breakdowns of Anne's and Francesca's marriages, and the comparable descriptions in the two novels of many failed or rejected sentimental liaisons offer a panoptic survey of the different conceptions of love: Paule and Isabella's tragic love lives, Henri and Gerardo's unsatisfactory adventures, and in particular Anne's and Francesca's affairs with Lewis and

Matteo respectively, which afford a similar comment on female sexuality from the two authors while revealing their very different approaches to depicting scenes of sexual intercourse. Through their final choices of partners, Anne, Francesca, Henri and Gerardo engage in types of relationships that are radically different from those they experienced before. Significantly, they experience and reject sexual primacy as a viable basis, and they give precedence to reason and mutual respect. It is not unreasonable to suggest that through the semi-fictive couple Anne and Robert, de Beauvoir puts forward an illustration of the dynamics inherent to her own relationship with Sartre. Despite its ill repute amongst the general public, as will be discussed, this type of love ultimately prevails in the narrative, and may well correspond to its author's view of the ideal relationship as she herself experienced it in real life. We shall see how far a similar analysis based on biographical elements may apply to *Il rimorso* with the newly-formed love partnership between Francesca and Gerardo at the end. Moreover, in *Le Deuxième sexe,* de Beauvoir argues that work for women is a means to material but also psychological release from traditional masculinist dominance in marriage, and to a positive commitment in the world or transcendence. The present chapter concludes with a first-time investigation of how her outlook on female financial independence may also find illustration in *Il rimorso,* and with an assessment of its significance in the new type of love relationship de Céspedes puts forward at the end of her novel.

*Existential Joy and Positive Acknowledgement of the Other*

In a radical departure from the traditional Kierkegaardian existentialist debate which centres on, and in this sense is limited to, negative phenomena such as for example anguish, moroseness, melancholy or monotony, de Beauvoir introduces the notion of existential joy as an integral part of her ontological ethics. In *Pour Une morale de l'ambiguïté* she talks of 'le dévoilement de l'être dans la joie de l'existence' which stimulates a positive involvement, or commitment, in the world so that 'le mouvement vers la liberté prend dans le monde sa figure charnelle et réelle';[276] for the French author, experiencing the joy of existence, or one might say *la joie de vivre*, is essential to the harmonious relationship between the Self or Dasein and the Other, because without such feeling, as Pettersen observes, 'la plupart d'entre nous ne verrait

[276] Simone de Beauvoir, *Pour Une morale de l'ambiguïté* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), p. 168.

probablement aucune raison de vivre, et encore moins de fournir un effort pour faire un pas vers les autres'.[277] Therefore de Beauvoir does not limit the relationship between the Self and not-Self, or Self and Other, to confrontation and conflict — which Sartre clearly does, as illustrated in *Huis-Clos* —[278] but she encompasses exchange, cooperation and communication with all the emotional charge and creative potential this entails. Her interpretation of existentialist ethics, or the question of how we should live and relate to the Other, presupposes a positive understanding of the notion of relation between the Self and the not-self and vice versa which is lacking in the customary and altogether more sinister discourse. Her emphasis on inter-human relationships overthrows the risk of solipsism — a problematic concept associated with Sartrean Existentialism — since she maintains that:

> l'individu ne se définit que par sa relation au monde et aux autres individus, il n'existe qu'en se transcendant et sa liberté ne peut s'accomplir qu'à travers la liberté d'autrui. Il justifie son existence par un mouvement qui, comme elle, jaillit du coeur de lui-même, mais qui aboutit hors de lui (*PMA*, p. 193).

De Beauvoir restores faith in the potential of human interactions and by doing so gives one's existence constructive hope and drive towards the future. It is the argument of this chapter that there is clear evidence of de Beauvoir's ideas on relationships, which amount to a very positive interpretation of Existentialism, in *Il rimorso.*

In both novels, existential anguish emerges from a breakdown in the authenticity of the relationship between the Self and the other. This leads to psychological isolation from the outside world, with the ensuing cessation of commitment on a private level for the main female characters (marriage, family), and on a public level for the main male characters (political, intellectual).[279] Anne's and Francesca's crises stem from their becoming aware of the conflict between the values of their social and private environments and

[277] Tove Pettersen, 'La Joie existentielle et l'angoisse dans la philosophie morale de Simone de Beauvoir', in *(Re)Découvrir l'oeuvre de Simone de Beauvoir,* ed. by Julia Kristeva and others (Paris: Editions le Bord de l'eau, 2008), pp. 220-33 (p. 220).
[278] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Huis Clos* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947).
[279] Chapter Eight addresses the question of commitment and the intellectual.

their individual ethical beliefs. In *Les Mandarins,* Anne is profoundly shaken by the postwar efforts to put the past behind them when so many lives had been lost, and by her failure to find solace in her husband Robert any longer. In *Il rimorso,* Francesca has reached a point where she can no longer stand the social etiquette of the higher aristocracy her marriage to Guglielmo requires her to abide by, for it is fundamentally different from the values established during her childhood. Similarly Henri and Gerardo, and to a lesser extent Robert who accepts the political necessity of ideological compromise more readily, are tortured by the ethical concessions they have to make in their work, leading to their withdrawal from journalism — albeit temporarily for Henri and Robert — for it no longer allows the free expression of their true ideological commitment. At the height of their anguish, these characters are trapped in the traditional existentialist interpretation of the Other: a sinister obstruction to the expression of their individuality, an impediment to freedom which Sartre so brilliantly encapsulated in Garcin's iconic declaration that 'l'enfer, c'est les Autres'.[280] Seen in the light of de Beauvoir's thought, however, they are only enduring one side of the dualist conception of human life that she uses to demonstrate the ambiguity of human condition: the ability to experience anxiety and joy. Indeed their distress will eventually be counter-balanced by experiencing existential joy which 'concerne le mouvement de factualité de l'existence authentique, de la passivité à l'acceptation d'un engagement libre dans le monde'.[281] This is portrayed accordingly in the novels by the characters' re-evaluation of the relationship Self-Other. This time, it involves reciprocal communication and cooperation, and as such 'de-isolates' the individual and therefore stimulates the progression from sterile passivity to free engagement in the world. It is more accurate to talk here of re-commitment, rather than simply commitment, since the process described in the narratives involves a preliminary withdrawal (psychological and physical as is manifest in Anne's and Francesca's affairs and in the abandonment of journalism by Henri, Robert and Gerardo), before a new engagement of the Self towards the Other. In *Les Mandarins,* Anne re-engages her Self with her family freed from the debilitating psychological dependency on the Other discussed in Chapter Five, and revived by the knowledge that her life is not absolutely essential to its

[280] *Huis Clos*, p. 93.
[281] Pettersen, p. 225.

members, and vice versa, but that her actions do affect them nonetheless; she will endeavor to help Robert and Henri in their new political enterprise. Henri also re-engages with politics with Dubreuilh after their reconciliation, and in private life, his settling down with Nadine after his rather misguided behaviour with Paule and the sexual primacy of his relationship with Josette marks a return to probity. In *Il rimorso,* the failures of her marital and extra-marital experiences have not deterred Francesca from trusting an Other in her private life; she settles with Gerardo who shares her ethical values of truthfulness and integrity. The same can be said of Gerardo and his past relationships. At last, they can return to dedicate themselves to their real vocations: creative writing. All these characters have managed to break free from debilitating situations that prevented the unadulterated engagement of their Selves they once enjoyed in both private and public spheres. Significantly, their re-engagements also include the positive acceptance of the Others as parts of their new lives. The illustrations of re-commitment in both *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* reflect an outlook on human relationships which is specific to de Beauvoir, and far removed from the traditional existentialist interpretation of the Other. In the type of society depicted in *Il rimorso,* the traditional and the judiciary, with the steadfast maintenance of archaic family laws, create precisely the type of imbalance, oppression and frustration in the dynamics of relationships that de Beauvoir's — and I argue here de Céspedes' — viewpoints identify as the cause of existential anguish.[282] The final stances adopted by Anne, Henri, Francesca and Gerardo correspond to that of the French author who 'rejects seeing the relationship with the Other as one of confrontation and conflict and instead sees it as social, mutual and collaborative'.[283] Anne's problems with her husband in *Les Mandarins* are reworked to the same effect in *Il rimorso* with Francesca's own marital breakdown: the disintegration of the couples afford a similar criticism of the established subjugation of female sexuality within marriage, and by doing so they denounce society's interference in the relationships between men and women.

*Disintegration of the Couple and Female Sexuality*

[282] See Chapter Two.
[283] Liz Stanley, 'Rejecting the Legend, Rereading de Beauvoir, Reworking Existentialism: The case for Ontological Ethics', *European Journal of Women's Studies,* 3 (1996), 423-49 (p. 433).

Through the depiction of the female characters' sexual lives, both *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* can be seen to illustrate de Beauvoir's account in *Le Deuxième sexe* that female sexual energy is constant through life, despite early inhibitions which cause women to reach their erotic apogee later than men, at around 35 years old, and her view that 'les conditions dans lesquelles se déroule la vie sexuelle de la femme dependent non seulement de ces données, mais de tout l'ensemble de sa situation sociale et économique' (*LDS II*, p. 190).[284] De Beauvoir demonstrates that women's difficulties in coming to terms with their own sexualities is the result of a traditional cultural approach which considers the biological pattern of female sexual life as identical to that of the male's. It is remarkable that as early as 1949, she dares to bring attention to society's disregard of women's sexual subjectivity, or even simply of its existence. She shows that this approach helps rationalize societal imprisonment of female sexuality within the structures and dynamics of patriarchy and the institution of marriage. It may be said that in *Il rimorso*, de Céspedes gives an illustration of de Beauvoir's argument by assigning the loss of sexual activity between Francesca and Guglielmo to social factors that appear to be beyond their control; therefore in her novel, just as in *Les Mandarins* where Anne accepts the same loss between her and Robert as an ordinary characteristic of married life, this breakdown conveys a criticism of cultural and societal expectations of married relationships that puts the topic of female sexuality at the forefront of the narrative. It is noteworthy that the disintegration takes a different form in the two novels, and it is played out in terms which correspond to the dynamics inherent to the relationships they portray: the strong and elaborate psychological and intellectual components of the relationship between Anne and Robert compared to the more physical aspect of the relationship between Francesca and Guglielmo.[285] *Les Mandarins* describes the progressive emotional distancing between Anne and Robert with the expression of Anne's thought processes leading to her acknowledgement of Robert's current inadequacy to her emotional needs. In *Il rimorso*, where there seems to be little, if any, cerebral connection between husband and wife, the disintegration is revealed in terms of physical distancing: Francesca links each of Guglielmo's professional successes and increases in financial status to a

[284] This assertion, posited early in *Le Deuxième sexe*, was further developed in de Beauvoir's later essay *La Vieillesse.* Simone de Beauvoir, *La Vieillesse* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970).
[285] As discussed in Chapter Five.

corresponding further loss of bodily proximity between them. The increasing spaciousness of each of the houses they inhabited, and more particularly the increasing spatiality between bedrooms, allegorically accounts for the increasing distance separating her from physical intimacy with her husband. She observes:

> Questa è una casa che ostenta la nostra solidità economica e che concede a ciascuno di noi il privilegiato isolamento dei ricchi. A Verona, Guglielmo e io dormivamo nella stessa camera; in Corso Trieste in due camere contigue; qui, le nostre camere separate dal mio spogliatoio e dalle sale da bagno, si fronteggiano dagli estremi di un ampio corridoio (*IR*, p. 34).

In this way, the estrangement between husband and wife reads almost as an unavoidable progression for those who wish to maintain a certain level of wealth and evolve within the corresponding social stratum, namely here the high Roman bourgeoisie. Following the metaphorical account of the gradual spacing apart of their bedrooms, Francesca dramatically concludes that 'difese dal benessere, le nostre vite non si sfiorano mai né i nostri corpi' (*IR*, p. 34). Similarly, Anne's resignation to this loss of physicality and her own articulation of the ensuing minimal effect on her relationship not only highlights the specifically intellectual bond between her and Robert; it also reads as something that is generally expected in the course of married life, as she observes: 'il y a des années déjà qu'entre nous le désir s'est usé; mais nous étions trop étroitement unis pour que l'union de nos corps pût avoir une grande importance; en y renonçant, nous n'avons pour ainsi dire rien perdu' (*LM I*, p. 76-7).

In both novels, Anne and Francesca embark on extra-marital affairs, thereby demonstrating that their own sexual drive is still very much alive. The affairs, whose sexual intensity is striking, assume the same function in the two narratives: they allow the wives to reclaim an erotic subjectivity lost to cultural tradition and to disregard for the fact that two individuals make a relationship. By doing so, de Céspedes and de Beauvoir similarly call for an acknowledgement of women's sexual needs as part of the reassessment of love relationships they put forward in the novels.

The attention to the disclosure of Lewis and Matteo's ages in contrast with Robert and Guglielmo — the husbands are twenty years older than their wives while the lovers are younger — also raises the question of female sexuality in the context of ageing. It is not surprising to see the issue of age arising in both narratives as Anne and Francesca are in their early forties. While this may appear rather premature by today's standards, given that marrying age and childbearing age are on the increase, it is very likely that both women are supposed to have been married for about twenty years when the stories begin. Moreover, de Beauvoir herself experienced reaching 40 as a turning point in her life: as mentioned earlier, she wrote *Le Deuxième sexe* at that age, demonstrating a new awareness of sexual politics that would influence her subsequent writings.[286] In it, she notes that while biological and physiological reasons may justify the male inclination to seek several sexual partners — a tendency that is inherited from the animal world — it is difficult to condone society's use of the argument of biology to maintain women in a state of servitude within the institution of marriage by effectively denying her the need and the right to respond to her sexual appetite. She writes:

> Le « destin anatomique » de l'homme et de la femme est donc profondément différent. La civilisation patriarcale a voué la femme à la chasteté; on reconnait plus ou moins ouvertement le droit du mâle à assouvir ses désirs sexuels tandis que la femme est confinée dans le mariage (*LDS II*, p. 150).

In the narrative of *Les Mandarins*, there is a strong emphasis on the difference of the female psyche (whether resulting from biology or from social conditioning) compared with that of the male when Anne points out that:

> sur ce point [extra-marital sexual relations] j'étais très différente de Robert; ça lui paraissait normal de ramasser dans un bar une jolie putain et de passer une heure avec elle. Moi je n'aurais jamais accepté pour amants des hommes dont je n'aurais pas pu faire des amis et mon amitié était exigeante (*LM I*, p. 118).

[286] See the analysis of the role of childhood experiences with religion in shaping the dynamics of Anne and Robert's relationship in Chapter Five; see also Elizabeth Fallaize, *The Novels of Simone de Beauvoir* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 88.

Indeed, Anne's relation with Scriassine illustrates such a point. Provoked by her daughter Nadine who accuses her mother of living an undaring and monotonous life, Anne goes on to experience sex with the anti-communist and pro-America Russian émigré. His prediction about Dubreuilh's future as a writer is quite uncompromising and his fatalism is in direct conflict with Anne who 'has an absolute belief in the power and value of literature'[287] and hopes that her husband will resume his career. She also finds the sexual games that Scriassine imposes on her by pretending she is a young inexperienced virgin to be repulsive. The crudeness and negativity of this sexual encounter contrasts highly with the intense joy and sensuality that she goes on to experience with Lewis. With Scriassine, she very clearly simulated physical pleasure as she recalls 'j'acceptai de soupirer, de geindre; pas très adroitement, j'imagine' (*LM I*, p. 124). By contrast, her sexual relations with Lewis, to whom she has surrendered psychologically, are described as very fulfilling and passionate experiences. The difference reveals female sexuality as more fragile and complex than male sexuality because it is shown to depend primarily on psychological and not solely physical factors. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the reasons she gives for her abstinence before meeting Lewis — an abstinence which contrasts with the fact that Robert visits prostitutes — are clearly an illustration of society's manipulation of the idea of female sexuality to protect the institution of marriage. She explains that 'pendant ces cinq années j'avais vécu chaste, sans regret et je pensais que je le demeurerais à jamais; c'était naturel que ma vie de femme fût fini' (*LM I*, p. 118), thus revealing primarily that she had submitted to the popular notion of woman and ageing, rather than attributing the cessation of a sexual rapport with her husband to the temporary ideological breakdown between them.

In *Il rimorso*, de Céspedes also conveys the criticism of society's views of male and female sexuality. Male sexuality is traditionally perceived as existing in its own right, and, in fact, Guglielmo, just like Robert, does not seem to be affected by the loss of sexual activity in his marriage. On the other hand, female sexuality is usually seen as being entirely dependent on marriage and age, and this is illustrated in her novel in the exact same manner as in *Les Mandarins*, with the fact that Guglielmo, like Robert, regularly visits prostitutes, while Francesca, like Anne, is meant to accept passively the

[287] Elizabeth Fallaize, *The Novels of Simone de Beauvoir* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 93.

cessation of her sexual life. Guglielmo's sexuality is still very much alive, and reveals societal views of women as erotic objects. With Guglielmo, de Céspedes not only raises the issue of the commerce of women, but also that of equating youth and youthful appearance with erotic attractiveness, since he specifically requires that the prostitutes be young: 'Non mi costa ammettere che Antoniazzi [Guglielmo's pseudonym] ricorre ai suoi uffici una o piú volte la settimana, chiedendo sempre ragazze giovani, giovanissime. Al di sotto dei vent'anni, possibilmente'(*IR*, p. 419). In turn, this view deprives the ageing woman of any recognition of her sexual needs — something that is only starting to be challenged in today's society by a noticeable effort towards public ideological acceptance of sexual activity in couples beyond the age of the menopause. A more detailed account of this new tendency is beyond the scope of the present research, but it is important to highlight that the narratives of both *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* already afford an early denunciation of the societal idea that as a woman loses her youth, she also loses her sexual appeal, and that, as she ages, her sexual appetite disappears.

With a purpose common to both narratives of redressing this view of female sexuality, it is not surprising that Anne and Francesca alike should live their affairs as intense erotic experiences against the contrasting backgrounds of abandoned sexuality in their marriages. The descriptions of love scenes in *Les Mandarins* are rather famously uninhibited; the novel and *Le Deuxième sexe* were put on the Catholic Church index of prohibited books in July 1956.[288] Klaw also notes how the script of *Les Mandarins* had undergone some changes for its American edition, namely the removal of two scenes depicting oral sex and the mitigation of offensive language.[289] By contrast, the love scenes in *Il rimorso* are suggested through highly sensorial atmospheric depictions, rather than fully exposed; arguably the narrative conveys here a greater sensuality than that afforded by the graphic descriptions in *Les Mandarins.* For example, Francesca recalls:

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[288] Together with the disapproval of the explicit descriptions of love scenes in *Les Mandarins*, the Vatican castigated both works for their attacks on the sanctity of the family, notably their criticisms of motherhood and marriage, and for what it considered an invitation to 'free love'. Nonetheless Bair remarks that 'la décision du Vatican eut un effet inverse de celui que recherchait l'Église: les ventes des deux livres montèrent en flèche et se maintinrent à un niveau élevé durant le reste de l'été'. Deirdre Bair, *Simone de Beauvoir* (Paris: Fayard, 1991), p. 529.

[289] Barbara Klaw, 'Sexuality in Beauvoir's *Les Mandarins',* in *Feminist Interpretations of Simone de Beauvoir,* ed. by Margaret Simons (Pennsylvania: Pensylvania State University Press, 1981), pp. 193- 222 (p. 197 and p. 205).

> L'isola, di notte, sono le cicale, i grilli, talvolta un improvviso fruscío tra le fronde come se un uccello, destato di soprassalto, volasse via spaurito. Matteo s'addormentava con la testa sul mio seno e i suoi capelli folti, tagliati corti, odoravano il sale (*IR*, p. 21).

Or again later:

> "Pensa, bastava un nulla (…) e non sarei venuta (…) ciascuno di noi avrebbe ignorato per sempre che l'altro esisteva".
> Quest'idea ci ha ravvicinati. Poi siamo rimasti a lungo sul letto, fumando. La camera, ormai buia, era rischiarata dalle luci della casa di contro (*IR,* p. 25).

Nevertheless, despite being arguably more effective than de Beauvoir's from a literary point of view, it is quite possible that de Céspedes' approach to narrating sexuality stems from strategic choice rather than from artistic concerns. Her writing technique in those matters is common to all her novels and displays the same careful restraint as that of her answers concerning religion in *Epoca*; it contrasts quite strikingly, however, with the way that she deals with religion in her novel.[290] As discussed previously, in a letter to Arnoldo Mondadori before publication, she shows that she is fully conscious that her latest novel will anger members of the Catholic church because of the accuracy of her religious characters; foreseeing her publisher's concerns, she also comments that this will boost the sales, but at the same time she reassures him that 'dal punto di vista sessuale, come tutti i miei libri, è molto casto'.[291] The result she achieves with her narrative strategy — a judicious balance between straightforward criticisms of religious practices and restrained depictions of sexual scenes — may indicate that she did not want her book to shock in that respect. Nonetheless it certainly shows too that while de Céspedes was keen to denounce the ills of the society she lived in, she was also careful that her work would pass publication standards, both for its contribution to the public and society, and not least for her own pecuniary interest.[292]

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[290] See Chapter Six and the criticism of religion in *Il rimorso;* also Penelope Morris, 'From private to public: Alba de Céspedes' agony column in 1950s Italy', *Modern Italy*, 9 (2004), 11-20 (p. 16).

[291] 16 July 1960, Fondo Arnoldo Mondadori, Fondazione Mondadori, Milan.

[292] This assessment is supported by Morris' comment that 'de Céspedes was always very attentive to the marketing of her novels and to her own economic requirements, never missing an opportunity to remind her publisher of her impecunious state'. Morris, *Modern Italy*, p. 17.

I have argued that both narratives make similar use of the main female characters' marital situations to demonstrate that a woman's sexual life or needs are essentially distinct from that of her husband's, and as such they should be considered and addressed individually. Accordingly the affairs in the two novels are not simply symptomatic of the women's sexual dissatisfaction in their marriages; they are first and foremost the expressions of a wider existential malaise which has its roots in patriarchal society's objectification of women and the ensuing sacrifice of female sexuality and female freedom. In the light of this analysis, it is clear that de Céspedes used or even reproduced in *Il rimorso* the same narrative events as *Les Mandarins,* and to the same end in matters of female sexuality. Her criticism is akin to that contained in *Le Deuxième sexe,* and the story of Francesca's marriage breakdown and her ensuing affair contributes greatly to the impression of similarity between the two narratives. This blatant likeness draws attention — in general and, in my opinion, intentionally on the part of de Céspedes — to the fact that those arguments exposed over a decade earlier in *Le Deuxième sexe* are relevant in 1960s Italy, in times when women's needs are still subjected to patriarchal domination, if not ignored altogether. In this instance, despite the fact that de Céspedes did not openly re-propose de Beauvoir's ideas, *Il rimorso* may well read as evidence of its author's efforts at popularizing her famous essay which was translated and published in Italy in 1961, and her critical thinking. Moi astutely remarks that: 'if *The Second Sex* created such uproar on its publication, it was above all because it was perceived as scandalous in its injunction to women to integrate their freedom and sexuality'.[293] *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* portray female characters in their attempts to rise to such an injunction; the analysis of the novels' endings and the revised dynamics of Anne and Francesca's relationships will help give the measure of these characters' success.

*Towards a New Type of Love Relationship*

Anne and Henri in *Les Mandarins*, and Francesca and Gerardo in *Il rimorso* ultimately choose to reject the master-slave dialectic that characterizes the traditional idea of life as a couple. *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* give a similar closing representation of love relationships that corresponds with de

[293] Moi, p. 176.

Beauvoir's vision of fertile balanced interactions between men and women as she details in *Le Deuxième sexe:*

> Ce couple équilibré n'est pas une utopie; il en existe, parfois même dans le cadre du mariage, le plus souvent au-dehors; certains sont unis par un grand amour sexuel qui les laisse libres de leurs amitiés et de leurs occupations; d'autres sont liés par une amitié qui n'entrave pas leur liberté sexuelle; plus rarement il en est qui sont à la fois amants et amis mais sans chercher l'un dans l'autre leur exclusive raison de vivre. Quantité de nuances sont possibles dans les rapports d'un homme et d'une femme: dans la camaraderie, le plaisir, la confiance, la tendresse, la complicité, l'amour, ils peuvent être l'un pour l'autre la plus féconde source de joie, de richesse, de force qui se propose à un être humain (*LDS II,* p. 325).

Overall, it can be said that Francesca's decision not to pursue her affair with Matteo, and Gerardo's ultimate settling down with her after failing to find fulfillment in other relationships in *Il rimorso*, echo respectively Anne's final preference for her marriage to Robert over life with Lewis, and Henri's final settling down with Nadine in *Les Mandarins.* Certainly Anne's situation in the end contrasts with Francesca's because the former decides to remain in her marriage; however, significantly here, she has transformed her relationship with her husband: Robert is no longer her Pygmalion, Anne is now an integral subject. Francesca breaks free from her oppressive married life, and starts anew in a relationship in which each person is respectful of each other's individuality and where she will be able to assert her independence. Henri and Gerardo eventually settle down in relationships where reason, rather than sex and dominance, prevails. These two male characters in particular are used in each novel as mouthpieces for de Beauvoir and de Céspedes' analogous critical appraisals of two specific aspects of love relationships. Love as emotional burden and leading to over dependency is embodied by Henri's relation with Paule in *Les Mandarins,* as discussed in Chapter Five, and by Gerardo's relation with Sarah in *Il rimorso*.[294] For example, Gerardo describes her overwhelming devotion: 'Accetta tutto, senza quella finta docilità con cui le

[294] Interestingly, Keefe points out that 'without suggesting that Henri is blameless in his conduct towards her, the book brings out very well the point that Paule's type of "great love" can amount to a kind of tyranny exercised over the man', thus referring to the concept of bad faith, as already discussed, and the idea that the woman can also play a part in her own oppression. Terry Keefe, *Simone de Beauvoir* (London: MacMillan, 1998), p. 120.

donne si garantiscono una future rivalsa (…) Sarah non pensa che a me; s'inquieta della mia salute, del mio lavoro, mossa da un impulso unicamente amoroso' (*IR*, p. 87). Love as purely sexual is personified by his adventure with Gigliola, as his remark reveals the lack of intellectual connection between the two: 'Gigliola non esiste: iersera la cercavo soltanto perché, eccitato dallo scontro con Antaldi, avevo voglia di far l'amore. Poi ho pensato di prendere su una prostitute e portarmela a casa' (*IR*, p. 82), and by Henri's relationship with Josette who, like her mother, belongs to the old French bourgeoisie, and therefore incarnates the milieu and principles he loathes. Their failures to draw fulfillment and any lasting satisfaction from these sorts of love relations indicate a similar outlook in both novels concerning what life as a couple should not be.

While emphasizing the need to re-evaluate the private sphere, both narratives also indicate that the path to changing traditional beliefs is paved with considerable difficulties, and that the struggle towards society's acceptance of new norms of love dynamics, and the necessary reconsideration of the role of women, is an arduous one. Indeed the types of relationships that I posit are presented as prototypical in the novels — Anne and Robert, Francesca and Gerardo — will, for a long time, be considered oddities. In particular, the sexual freedom enjoyed by Anne and Robert, fictional alter-egos of de Beauvoir and Sartre in this specific context, is still a matter of controversy today, as I shall discuss now: the publication of de Beauvoir's letters to Algren has stimulated new debates about the real-life couple's pact of non-matrimony, as well as a considerable volume of academic scrutiny concerning the dynamics between de Beauvoir and Sartre, on private and intellectual levels. In *Les Mandarins,* Anne and Lewis's affair was widely commented upon for its testimonial value as a reflection of the author's own love life, as a way for her to convey her own political view of America at the time, and in a more general manner, as an illustration of the political climate during a time of increased tension between East and West. As a result, the relationship between Anne and her husband tends to be overlooked, and yet its significance in terms of couple's dynamics and women's issues in the private sphere is considerable. The degree of intellectual complicity and sexual openness between Anne and Robert is undoubtedly not very representative of the average French couple in

postwar France; indeed the specifics of this relationship suggest that de Beauvoir drew extensively on her own life with Sartre and that the sexual liberty they enjoy in the novel is effectively a fictionalized version of the pact of non-matrimony. The analysis of the Dubreuilh marriage is not only significant to the understanding of the author's criticism of society's treatment of female sexuality that I have discussed earlier, it also helps determine how far Anne's sentimental life may be representative of the author's own. The famous non-monogamous partnership between de Beauvoir and Sartre which consisted of contingent loves that are peripheral to the one necessary love finds an echo in the sexual freedom that Anne and Robert have agreed to within their marriage. In the same way that Anne's affair with Lewis is based on real-life events, and airs some of the author's political views, the particularity of Anne and Robert as a couple can be said to be based on real life. The popular, conventional view that Sartre more or less imposed the famous oath of non-matrimony, and that he took advantage of the sexual freedom much more than she did, originates in de Beauvoir's memoirs writings and from media images and testimonies. Against the background of this widely established version, the autobiographical link between Sartre and Robert, who shows no qualms in having relationships that are purely sexual in *Les Mandarins*, is rather obvious. Therefore this element of Anne's marriage would appear to reflect the author's own experience, and corroborates the popular idea that de Beauvoir herself, like Anne, did not take advantage of the sexual freedom afforded by the pact of non-matrimony to the extent that Sartre, or Robert, did. However, it is important to note that any literary analysis which draws from their private lives should also be re-evaluated in the lights of Fullbrook and Fullbrook's seminal work: *Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre: The Remaking of a Twentieth-century Legend.*[295] This polemical study argues that the self-presentation of de Beauvoir as subservient to Sartre in public as well as in her memoire writings was a necessary arrangement at the time, and that the image of 'la grande Sartreuse' is in fact little more than a myth since most of his philosophical ideas actually originated from her. More significantly for the purpose of this argument, public knowledge of the oath of non-matrimony is also relegated to the rank of fiction, since Fullbrook and Fullbrook reveal that

[295] Kate Fullbrook and Edward Fullbrook, *Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre: The Remaking of a Twentieth-Century Legend* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993).

de Beauvoir rejected Sartre's marriage proposal. Stanley also comments that 'for a considerable period of time de Beauvoir experienced her body as sexually rapacious almost in its own right', also challenging the pact's concept of contingent loves when she adds that 'she also became deeply emotionally involved with a number of her lovers of this time'.[296] In the light of such findings, Anne's relationship with Robert in *Les Mandarins* should not be considered the reflection of the author's true personal life suggested hitherto, but it becomes a fictional representation of her public image which also contributes to its dissemination (since the autobiographical content of the novel is widely acknowledged). Therefore the illustration of female sexuality in the narrative also becomes a testimony to de Beauvoir's use of the people's view of her relationship with Sartre as a vehicle for her own critical thinking — here to do with society's hold over the female psyche and sexuality. Stanley estimates that the impact of Fullbrook and Fullbrook's work 'has still by no means been assimilated'.[297] Indeed as the present analysis shows, this work significantly transforms any study that relies to some degree on autobiographical elements, and it will undoubtedly play a fundamental new part in the question of the extent to which *Les Mandarins* should be considered a roman à clef.

Despite offering much lesser ground for an autobiographical study than *Les Mandarins*, *Il rimorso* in many ways reflects a crucial period of de Céspedes' life when she worked as an agony aunt for *Epoca* and had direct contact with the Italian public through the letters she received. Undeniably a significant number of these letters were to do with conjugal matters specifically and predominantly with adulterous husbands. Questions to do with family law, work for women, women and mental well-being, religion, the art of writing, literature and self-enrichment, the ideological clashes between the generations, were also recurrent topics and de Céspedes had shown her keen interest and knowledge of such issues in her previous writings, notably in *Quaderno proibito, Prima e dopo* and *Dalla parte di lei.* As already mentioned in the previous chapter, it is likely that the thematic content of *Il rimorso* draws on the author's experience at *Epoca.* It is noticeable that the novel allows her to

[296] Liz Stanley, 'Rejecting the Legend, Rereading de Beauvoir, Reworking Existentialism', *European Journal of Women's Studies,* vol.3 (1996), 423-49 (p.427).
[297] Stanley, p. 426.

address more openly those issues crucial to the question of women in particular — such as religion or motherhood — whereas her writing in the column, though remarkable in the freedom she did have, was restricted by the magazine's ideological and political perspective. In a similar vein, Francesca's decision to leave her marriage in the end and to become financially independent while engaging in a relationship with Gerardo was still a rather utopian outcome for the lives of many unhappy women. As would have been well known, de Céspedes herself had managed to leave her first husband, and though her financial situation was more secure than most women because of her family background, it is reasonable to suggest that her own experience gave her added insight and heightened sensibility when dealing with this topic.[298] While she is not completely averse to suggesting women should leave their husbands in her column, she is also very aware of how difficult this makes a woman's life. At the very least, Francesca's fate could provide stimulating escapism for those female readers, and a ray of hope for things to come.

In her interview with Carroli, de Céspedes explains that *Quaderno Proibito* was a greater public success than *Il rimorso* because readers were more likely to relate to Valeria in the former than to Francesca. At the end of the novel, Valeria burns her diary and remains within the prison walls that her family has now come to represent. In contrast, Francesca's eventual leap into independence in *Il rimorso* would have appeared daringly dangerous, if not unfathomable to a generation of women who, over and above matters of practicality and legality in the early 1960s, were educated to believe that their foremost aim in life was to become wives and mothers. De Céspedes highlights the insecurities such an education fomented in the female psyche when she states:

> Vuole che le dica perché preferiscono *Quaderno Proibito*? Perché per fare altre cose ci vuole molto coraggio, per dire me ne vado da casa, per dire vado a fare il mio lavoro, così è rimasta! Valeria era insicura, come la maggior parte delle donne.[299]

[298] De Céspedes married Count Giuseppe Antamaro in 1926 at the age of 15 with whom she had a son two years later. See *Scrittrici e Intellettuali del Novecento*. *Alba de Céspedes*, ed. by Marina Zancan (Milan: Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 2001), p. 111.

[299] Quoted in Piera Carroli, *Esperienza e narrazione nella scrittura di Alba de Céspedes* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1993), p. 150.

She also mentions the reassurance in finding a character that in some way validates their complaints, but also more significantly their fears and reluctance to change their situations and face the hardship of a life on/of their own, 'in a context in which divorce was still impossible, separation was barely accepted by society, and marriage was seen as the only real means of financial security for women'.[300] To be sure, de Céspedes acknowledges the uncertainties and hardship Francesca faces as a newly separated woman attempting to make a living for herself. The novel ends with Gerardo and Francesca expressing their fears and insecurities at this unknown freedom, a freedom afforded by a life stripped of the ideological limitations imposed by work as a journalist for the former, and away from the social and psychological constraints of a bourgeois marriage and environment for the latter. Their apprehension closes the narrative: '"Francesca…Senti, Francesca: ho paura". Lei s'è voltata a guardarmi e ha mormorato, seria: "Anch'io"'(*IR,* p. 669). It is interesting that *Les Mandarins* ends in a similar manner, with Anne expressing the uncertainty of her re-commitment to life, as she says: 'Qui sait? peut-être un jour serai-je de nouveau heureuse. Qui sait?' (*LM II,* p. 500). However, it is also significant that in the 1950s and certainly by the early 1960s when *Il rimorso* was published, despite the legal and practical difficulties (divorce became legal only in 1970), and the social stigma crippling newly 'unattached' women, unofficial separations in Italy were not all that uncommon. Sansone's estimation of 600,000 Italian couples living apart in the 1950s shows that some individuals were becoming, as Willson notes, 'less inclined to just put up with bad marriages, whatever the Church's view'.[301] Therefore de Céspedes considers the success of *Quaderno Proibito* not only as indicative of women's insecurities, but also of their own bad faith or *mauvaise foi* in their married relationships, even if she does not actually use this term. She comments that 'per i lettori è il più confortante perché dice, ecco bisogna restare, mentre eh no, *Dalla parte di lei* no, mentre *Il rimorso,* no, capisce? *Quaderno Proibito* è il libro che conforta chi si sente fallito' (Carroli, p. 150).

The significance of Francesca's fate is revealed to the full when seen as an investigation of a post-war protofeminist discourse. The pro-active stance at

[300] Penelope Morris, 'From private to public: Alba de Céspedes' agony column in 1950s Italy', *Modern Italy,* 9 (2004), 11-20 (p. 13).
[301] Perry Willson, *Women in Twentieth-century Italy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 124.

the end of the novel may have seemed inspirational for a next generation of readers — the daughters of those finding comfort in Valeria — who came of age in the late 1960s. These young women benefitted from the period of economic growth and increased levels of wealth generated by the years of the miracle in an unprecedented way. For the first time on a steady income, Italians took 'an increased interest in investing in the education of daughters'.[302] Girls' access to secondary and higher education does not only explain to some degree the rise in female employment in the 1970s, it also plays a significant role in the struggle towards equality between the sexes and female emancipation.[303] Francesca's clear insight into the malfunctions of her marriage (which conveys a criticism of the societal idea of wedded relationships), and her ensuing decision to leave Guglielmo and to take up the challenge of female financial and ideological autonomy is an illustration of de Céspedes' view that 'i sogni che uno resta a contemplare inerte non si attuano mai; soltanto quelli animati dall'azione, dalla speranza e anche dal timore di vedergli dileguare, possono attuarsi'.[304] Her character's active engagement in the course of her destiny marks a radical departure from the image of the 1950s' woman captured in *Le italiane si confessano*, first published in 1959.[305] From this selection of letters sent to the agony columns of two magazines, Parca deduces that the Italian woman appears as 'una donna ossessionata dai problemi del sesso, ricca di slanci ma inibita dai pregiudizi, generalmente insoddisfatta della propria vita, ma incapace di fare il minimo tentativo per cambiarla'.[306] In contrast, Francesca's struggle for independence and her boldness not only convey the idea that a new start is possible for women at the turn of the decade and provide food for thought to the younger generation, but her feistiness and strong will also make her a precursor to the image of the woman promoted by late 1960s and 1970s feminism. Though the assessment appears unfair since nearly a decade and a half separates the two narrative times, and since the marital bonds between the two women and their husbands

[302] Willson, p. 117.
[303] Of course by the 1970s, the effects of 1968, its ideas, and the growing feminist movement, also had a very significant effect.
[304] Quoted in Alba Andreini, 'La scrittura giornalistica' in *Alba de Céspedes*, ed. by Marina Zancan (Milan: Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 2005), pp. 330-349 (p. 336).
[305] On Parca and *Le italiane si confessano*, see Penelope Morris, 'The Harem Exposed: Gabriella Parca's *Le italiane si confessano*', in *Women in Italy 1945-1960. An Interdisciplinary Study*, ed. by Penelope Morris (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 109-130.
[306] Gabriella Parca, *Le italiane si confessano* (Feltrinelli: Milan, 1977), p. 2.

in the stories are of a radically different nature, as previously argued, it is still evident that, in the context of a comparative analysis, *Il rimorso* provides a clearer, and one might even say a more accessible and effective encouragement towards female emancipation than *Les Mandarins* — and this despite the fact that it is de Beauvoir who is seen nowadays as a prominent figure of feminism, although of course, at the time, she rejected such a label.[307] This assessment is also significant for an appreciation of de Céspedes' intellectual commitment, and of *Il rimorso* as a work of *impegno*, as will be discussed in the next chapter. Certainly, in de Beauvoir's novel, Nadine, who is approximately of the same generation as Francesca in *Il rimorso,* and appears to share her will for independence, gives a bleak outlook on the prospects of liberation from the established view of marriage. Keefe notes that she is very much conscious of the struggles that lay ahead for those women who, like her, wish to break through the traditional assessment of their rightful places in society. He remarks that Nadine:

> feels capable of doing whatever men do and is keen to try, though, like others, she is well aware of how much more difficult it is for women than for men to succeed in the world of work. She is also lucid enough to see that she will probably end up with a husband and children.[308]

This depressing conclusion that her life would be limited in this way is certainly corroborated by her fate in the novel, and her ensuing dissatisfaction is evident in Henri's observation that 'ce qui était sûr, c'est qu'elle se résignait mal à n'être plus qu'une mère de famille' (*LM II,* p. 436). It is telling that Nadine's feisty character, her will to work (until her maternity, she worked as her father's secretary) and her personal conviction that women can do as much as men are still not enough to provide her with a satisfactory opening in the public sphere, nor to spare her the frustration at the traditional view of a woman's role if not when she marries, then at least at the birth of her child. By contrast in *Il rimorso,* the prospect of Francesca's private life appears a much happier one, even if, as already mentioned, de Céspedes took great care in the narrative not to play down the difficulties facing women willing to embark on a radically different type of love relations or love dynamics. After all, *Il rimorso*

[307] see Chapter Four.
[308] Keefe, p. 121.

may have been published a good deal later than *Les Mandarins*, but it still comes before 1968 and before feminism's second wave. The novel's closing words undoubtedly highlight the uncertainty of her and Gerardo's futures in the same manner as *Les Mandarins* does with respect to Anne. Even more tellingly, the motivations behind Guglielmo's attempts to save his marriage clearly betray the traditional view of the wife as property of her husband or as an object that he can control. As he tries to use his professional contacts in order to secure Francesca a comfortable salary, he comments: 'mi pareva di poterla tenere nuovamente in pugno' (*IR*, p. 636). Despite this, Carroli judges that Guglielmo's gesture betrays his desperate wish to break free from the hypocrisy of his existence, on a private as well as on a public level, and to embrace the integrity of Francesca and Gerardo's lives, an integrity that the milieu he belongs to leaves no place for. She states that 'la sua corazza di ferro si sfalda nel tentativo di inserirsi nella vita di Francesca and Gerardo, cercando di far ottener un aumento di stipendio a Francesca'.[309] Guglielmo's failure to be part of Francesca's new life gives evidence of the radical differences between the lines of ethical thought each represents, and of their incompatibility with regard to love relationships, one being based upon the idea of subjugation of the Other (or the Hegelian master-slave dialectics), and the other upon the respect of each other's subjectivity. While Guglielmo lets his conception of marriage be dictated by societal requirements, Francesca chooses to conduct her relationship with the Other — and thus her love relationship too — according to her own set of ethical beliefs. In this sense, Guglielmo very much belongs to the Sartrean tradition of existentialist thought which Carroli's assessment of *Huis-clos* — whose objective she likens to that of *Il rimorso* — perfectly sums up: 'dimostra che gli altri possono essere la causa dell'infelicità se lasciamo che le nostre azioni siano governate dalle loro aspettative'.[310] Indeed he reveals the painful consequences of his professional success and sustained renown in the type of society in which he lives: a deep moral suffering incurred by the renunciation of his true ethical principles, and now by the breakdown of his marriage. He writes to Isabella:

> Il mio prestigio morale aumentava ma nasceva in me, irresistibile, il desiderio di quel potere economico e mondano che, in seguito, avrei

[309] Carroli, p. 106.
[310] She remarks that 'Alba de Céspedes rappresenta lo stesso stato di cose attraverso i personaggi del Rimorso'. Carroli, p. 106.

> dovuto pagare, rinunziando al tentativo di contribuire a una nuova idea della società. Un prezzo troppo alto: dovevo rifiutare di pagarlo (*IR*, p. 424).

In contrast, the dynamics of Francesca's new relationship with Gerardo are based on the qualities that de Céspedes deemed essential in human relations and that she defended in her column, whether it was at work ('lavorare con persone che, invece di umiliarle, le incoraggiano e rispettano la loro personalità')[311] or in a marriage ('sposandosi, deve scegliere un compagno rispettoso della personalità altrui (…) un uomo che non ostacoli, ma stimuli con la sua conversazione i nostri pensieri e propositi').[312] Therefore it is not unreasonable to conclude that Francesca and Gerardo at the end of the novel are presented as the prototype couple.

The difference between the novels' endings and the fact that Anne stays with Robert and Francesca leaves her husband is not only indicative of a changing environment, but also of de Beauvoir's distinguished intellectual education which permeates the narrative. The way in which the question of women is addressed in the novel reflects her philosophical background; it is interwoven with political and psychoanalytical issues in such manner that it reads as being less central to the plot than in de Céspedes' *Il rimorso*. Anne's final decision to remain in her marriage is in fact consistent within the scope of the novel. When asked why in *Les Mandarins* Anne is portrayed through her love life and does not appear a truly liberated woman, de Beauvoir answered:

> I wanted to describe women such as they are, and not as they should be. (…) I wanted to take typical women, like the ones I know, as they are, and not an ideal woman. In other words, what you suggest goes in the direction of socialist realism, where there must always be positive heroes. I didn't want to have positive heroines. That genre of writing — too moralizing, too didactic — irritates me.[313]

Notwithstanding the novels' chronological differences, and the changed environment, it is still reasonable to conclude that, in the light of de Beauvoir's

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[311] *Epoca*, 3 June 1957
[312] *Epoca*, 14 July 1957.
[313] Susan J. Brison, 'Beauvoir and feminism: interview and reflections', in *The Cambridge Companion to Simone de Beauvoir*, ed. by Claudia Card (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 189-207 (p. 194).

declaration, Francesca's fate at the end of *Il rimorso* removes the possibility of her ever being a true de Beauvoirian character.

*Women, Work and Relationships*

This marked difference between the endings of *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* is matched by the way each author chose to include, or to disregard, the topic of women and work as part of the conclusions to their main female characters' narratives: Anne continues to be financially dependent on her husband and de Beauvoir does not give any additional details about how new awareness of the Other may influence and benefit her career as a psychoanalyst. By contrast, de Céspedes places this topic at the forefront of her storyline. Work is in fact the essential means to Francesca's final independence and freedom, and it is the fundamental part of the new type of love relationship that is put forward at the end of the novel. It is significant that in the society depicted in *Il rimorso*, whilst many areas of employment were opening up to women, there was also a renewed effort in keeping them firmly in the home.[314] This may suggest that realistically, de Céspedes thought it a good time to put a strong emphasis on the matter of female financial independence as she did in her column throughout the 1950s, and thereby the novel demonstrates her commitment or *impegno* towards the release of women from the tyranny of social standards and traditional beliefs. In the narrative, Isabella's comments that before becoming a widow, her mother 'ignorava tutto della nostra condizione economica' and that after the inheritance from her husband 'd'un tratto aveva scoperto, insieme con la libertà, l'agiatezza' (*IR*, p. 447), together with her recalling that after their father's death the decision of whether or not to sell the family house 'toccava a Vera e a me; e il marito di Vera e Rinaldo decisero di vendere' (*IR*, p. 263), clearly expose the cultural obstacles to women's financial independence in Italy. Gender hierarchies were to remain very much the same in the face of the dramatic economic and social changes of the postwar period: the man continued to be the sole or principal breadwinner, and as such, full authority over pecuniary matters was bestowed on him.[315] This was reinforced in the late 1950s by an improvement in male earnings which

[314] See Chapter Two.

[315] During the postwar years, the majority of Italian women were housewives, as was also the case in France. In 1950, 32% and 49.5% of women aged 15- 64 were employed in Italy and in France respectively. In 1970, they were 33.5 % in Italy and 48.3 % in France. See Willson, pp. 118- 19.

'enabled more married women to become full-time housewives as their husbands now commanded a "family wage"'.[316] The following discussion posits that with regard to the topic of female financial independence, *Il rimorso* has more affinities with *Le Deuxième sexe,* in which de Beauvoir argues that work for women is sine qua non to their well-being, than with *Les Mandarins.* The definition of the word feminism that the French conservative family lobby UNAF's magazine *Pour la vie* proposed in 1950 is a telling instance of the political exploitation of the popular notion of motherhood with a view to keep women firmly in the home and away from the public sphere and therefore from work and financial independence.[317] It reads:

> true feminism is the feminism that knows that a woman's being is fulfilled and enriched more by feeding a baby and wiping its bottom than by completing a philosophy thesis or working in a factory, because there is no personal enrichment without fulfilling one's vocation.[318]

There is little doubt that the magazine's conceitedness in claiming to hold the key not to feminism but to true feminism, and its definitive tone in asserting that every woman's vocation lies in maternity, is a counter-reaction to de Beauvoir who advocated work for women a year before in *Le Deuxième sexe*. The denigration of the enrichment to a woman's life that work or studies provide, and the direct reference to a philosophy thesis is quite evidently a dig at the French author who openly chose not to have children, and to pursue her career. As early as 1949, de Beauvoir argued in *Le Deuxième sexe* that work and financial independence are, for women, the essential factors to their integrity and to good mental health. In her view, women who, by free choice or not, gave up any prospect of independence in order to stay at home, to look after household, husband and children —and, by doing so, who also gave up the chance of realizing the dreams they might have fostered when they were 'unattached' — would sooner or later experience a profound anguish and even suffer from psychological disorders. She gives the following example:

> J'ai connu, entre autres, une vieille femme qui chaque matin se levait à cinq heures pour inspecter ses armoires et en recommencer le rangement ; il parait qu'à vingt ans elle était gaie et coquette; enfermée

[316] Willson, p. 117.
[317] UNAF: Union Nationale des Associations Familiales.
[318] *Pour la vie*, No. 34, February-March 1950, p. 13. Quoted in Claire Duchen, *Women's Rights and Women's Lives in France 1944-1968* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 106.

> dans une propriété isolée, avec un mari qui la négligeait et un unique enfant, elle se mit à faire de l'ordre comme d'autres se mettent à boire (*LDS II*, p. 270).

De Beauvoir was not speculating on the issue of mental distress, or depression, incurred by the repetitiveness and isolation of the housewife-and-mother lifestyle. The female Protestant movement's periodical *Jeunes Femmes*, created in 1948 by young French graduates who had given up their career prospects in order to look after their children, provides a valuable testimony. The magazine offered a forum in which gradually more and more of these women wrote to complain of the barrenness of their everyday lives at home. Chaperon notes that 'en lisant ces revues, on constate la souffrance de ces femmes coupées du monde, confinées dans leur univers domestique stérile'.[319]

Joulin and van der Ende comment on French women's increasing consciousness of the vacuity of their lives and its ensuing discontent. They assess that:

> les mères au foyer des années 1945-1965 ne remettent pas en cause le modèle sur lequel elles bâtissent leur vie. Pourtant sont-elles heureuses? Pas forcément. Peu à peu certaines femmes, une fois leurs enfants devenus grands, ont le sentiment de
> s'être fait piéger, de ne pas avoir vécu pour elles.[320]

This burgeoning female awareness will not be effectively addressed until the mid-1960s, and the alarming evidence of women's frustration remained largely ignored at a political and cultural level until then.[321] It is interesting that in her agony column 'Dalla parte di lei' de Céspedes also raises the issue of women and work in a similar manner to de Beauvoir: by talking about it as necessary

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[319] Sylvie Chaperon, quoted in Maëlle Joulin and Mélanie van der Ende, *Je Vous parle d'un temps* (Cahors: City Editions, 2005), p. 64.

[320] Maëlle Joulin and Mélanie van der Ende, *Je Vous parle d'un temps* (Cahors: City Editions, 2005), p. 64.

[321] In France, the rights for married women to work and to open a bank account without their husbands' consent were granted in 1965. The extent to which the promotion of motherhood consequently changed during those years clearly demonstrates the politicized usage of maternity. Duchen comments that 'by the late 1960s, the dominant view on the mother at home was that she was a luxury that the country could not afford, who was resented by many (…) even the most conservative family associations accepted that mothers worked outside the home and that it did not necessarily damage the child'. Claire Duchen, *Women's Rights and Women's Lives in France 1944-1968* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 115.

for female independence and by drawing attention to the psychological hardship suffered by many housewives. In one of many such instances, she writes of the woman's increased isolation in the case of the husband's infidelity — a case that the agony column, by its very nature, reveals to be a very common one — and that 'finito l'unico amore che le era permesso, la donna non avrà più che la cura della casa e dei figli'. She adds that once the children have left home:

> Alcune, assillate da un'angoscia cui non sanno sottrarsi con nuovi interessi, con una nuova rivalutazione di se stesse, rischiano di naufragare in quella patologica 'malinconia senile'di cui abbiamo talvolta visto soffrire le madri e le nonne, senza domandarci che cosa l'avesse provocata.[322]

It is for this reason that she relentlessly advocates work for her female readers, not merely as a way to some financial independence or at least financial relief, but most importantly as the only means to keep one's self esteem and thus one's mental well being. As Morris comments, in de Céspedes' view 'the most important thing, and here she seemed to be addressing women above all, is to try to maintain one's dignity, and the best means to do this is to work, whatever kind of work it might be.'[323] Her standpoint is similar to de Beauvoir's who in *Le Deuxième sexe* declared that 'il n'y a qu'un travail autonome qui puisse assurer à la femme une authentique autonomie' (*LDS II*, p. 315).

It is interesting that the reasons behind Anne's hesitation at leaving her family to go to America on a conference trip indicate that the crippling guilt she feels towards her daughter and her surrendering to the traditional idea of the woman's place also affects her on a professional level. De Céspedes' novel may be called *Il rimorso*, but it is Anne who feels more guilt at the prospect of distancing herself from the established criterion of femininity. For this reason, *Les Mandarins* highlights more strongly the profound difficulties, both practical and psychological, for women in combining family life and professional life in a society striving to keep the public sphere a male dominion. Keefe also judges that with Paule, 'far more than in the case of

[322] *Epoca*, 21 April 1957

[323] Penelope Morris, 'From private to public: Alba de Céspedes' agony column in 1950s Italy', *Modern Italy*, 9 (2004), 11-20 (p.16).

Anne, Beauvoir makes excellent use of the whole matter of a woman's career'.[324] The story of Paule, analysed earlier in Chapter Five, exposes in a disturbing and deeply unattractive light the life of the woman who has given up her chance of a career in order to dedicate herself to her lover.

Therefore the ending of *Il rimorso* offers a more positive and attractive approach to the subject of women and work than *Les Mandarins.* Francesca's salvation is brought eventually by a clear abandonment of her life as Guglielmo's wife and by her newly acquired status of liberated working woman. Work, not love, is the instrument to recovered integrity, as de Céspedes often advises in her column, and while Francesca undoubtedly faces an uncertain financial future, her newly acquired independence is very positive because it allows her to regain contentment in her life. Her fate is consistent with what Andreini calls the author's 'fiducia nella positività del lavoro'.[325] De Céspedes' strong work ethics are comparable to de Beauvoir's who advocated in *Le Deuxième sexe* that a woman's identity is to be found in her engagement in society, in her opportunity for positive transcendence, and not in her submission to the social construct of the couple; de Céspedes' equally irrefutable faith in the value of work for women is plainly expressed by Irene's belief in *Prima e dopo* that 'una donna che lavora vale piú di quelle che si fanno mantenere: perciò, deve sentirsi piú felice' (*PD,* p. 110). In the next chapter, we shall see that, by the time of writing *Il rimorso,* it is this idea of identity and integrity in one's commitment to society that determines de Céspedes' attitude towards the value of fiction as opposed to journalism.

In *Il rimorso,* de Céspedes replicates the plot of *Les Mandarins* to convey the need for a reassessment of love relationships: she gives a depiction of her main female character's marriage breakdown and the failure of her ensuing affair. However, the fate she assigns Francesca at the end is considerably different from that which de Beauvoir assigns Anne. Bearing in mind the novels' chronological differences, the fact that Francesca is able to break free from her marriage and to become financially independent is undoubtedly indicative of changing times and mores. The optimism and faith in the potential of the

[324] Keefe, p. 120.

[325] Alba Andreini, 'La scrittura giornalistica' in *Alba de Céspedes. Scrittrici e intellettuali del Novecento,* ed. by Marina Zancan (Milan: il Saggiatore/Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 2005), pp. 330-49 (p. 336).

female character conveyed in de Céspedes' *Il rimorso* in 1963 and the closing depiction of a woman free from the oppression of the patriarchal idea of love relationships is quite remarkable compared with *Dalla parte di lei* in 1949 where Alessandra kills her husband, and *Quaderno proibito* in 1952 where Valeria remains in her family. In *Rooms with a View*, Lombardi notes that in the 1960s, 'in literature, Existentialism lent further force to the many inspired voices set out to describe the female malaise' in Italy. He likens *Il rimorso* to Dacia Maraini's early novels which 'betrayed the deep influence of the existentialist movement' in their 'disturbing representation of women who failed to conform to societal norms'.[326] The present analysis establishes that de Céspedes' portrayal of characters' anxieties and of the question of engagement of the Self with the Other in the novel undoubtedly inscribes *Il rimorso* in the existentialist school of thought; however, it is significant that the way in which she addresses such issues also reveals an interpretation of the philosophical concept that is specifically de Beauvoirian. The drive that pulls the characters in both novels out of their desperate states to allow them to reconstruct their Selves in relation to the Other or to recommit or re-engage in both private and public spheres is consistent with de Beauvoir's particular perception of Existentialism. It is the experience of the joy of existence and the acknowledgement of the relationship of the Self to the Other as positive which allows Francesca to break free from marriage and social conventions and to re-engage anew in love and in work; which allows Gerardo to leave a working environment that denied him the expression of his Self and resume his writing career; which pushes Henri to temporarily give up journalism for the same reason and subsequently to associate with Robert in a new political and literary venture, as I shall discuss in the next chapter; and which compels Anne to rise against Robert's attitude, to ultimately reject suicide and to reconsider her place and role within her family. Both novels end on a vision of the Other that is far removed from the Sartrean version of Existentialism because the Other is not considered the oppressor any longer, but it is a partner, a positive and fruitful presence. The narratives of *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* alike have their roots in de Beauvoir's specific existentialist premise as she exposed in *Pour Une morale de l'ambiguïté,* namely that 'si nous n'aimons pas la vie pour

[326] Giancarlo Lombardi, *Rooms with a View. Feminist Diary Fiction, 1952-1999* (London: Associated University Presses, 2002), p. 18.

notre propre compte et à travers autrui, il est vain de chercher d'aucune manière à la justifier' (*PMA*, p. 168).

## Chapter Eight

## Intellectual Commitment in *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso*

Both narratives make use of the disagreements between their main male characters to convey a critical analysis of the issue of intellectual *engagement* or *impegno* in the postwar years. In *Les Mandarins*, the dispute between Robert and Henri over whether or not to publicise the discovery of the working camps in the USSR raises the question of the social consequences of such knowledge, and whether telling the truth is always the best policy. Will making the existence of the Gulags known to the French public help in any way to get rid of them? Or, on the other hand, won't it destroy the hopes of a significant portion of the French population who counted on the Communist Party and the USSR to combat oppression? This dilemma illustrates de Beauvoir's concept of situated freedom on a public level this time, and her belief that one's ethical conduct — here relating to the topic of the intellectual's duty towards the improvement of mankind, or *engagement* — is always contingent. Morality is continually dependent on a context, on particular events and on circumstances; therefore it can never be defined by universal principles or moral codes.

In *Il rimorso*, the ideological divergence between Guglielmo's cynical take on the possibility of changing society and his acceptance of the vacuity of both his private and professional life, and Gerardo's determination to return to creative writing as a vehicle for his ethical beliefs, exposes the dilemma of the literati in postwar society in a similar manner. Gerardo's dilemma arising from his need to work for practical reasons and the possibility of doing so in the politically corrupt environment of the press in the years of the economic miracle in Italy,

and his final withdrawal from such a milieu, establishes the concept of intellectual *engagement* — or *impegno* — as a dynamic entity that is dependent on one's immediate situation, and that cannot be universally imposed on the individual without risking falling into bad faith or *mauvaise foi,* in public as well as private.

The present chapter thus establishes that *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* deal with the same themes in this respect: the place and the function of the intellectual in society, and the question of intellectual *engagement* or *impegno.* Both novels illustrate the difficulties the literati face as subjects of ideological self-determination in their distinctive historical, political and social contexts; this ultimately dictates, between the two narratives, very different accounts of the status of the intellectual in society and very different representations of the press. This section investigates firstly de Beauvoir's and de Céspedes' own views on the question of intellectual commitment, and how these are portrayed in the two novels. I shall then compare their treatment of journalism, which marks a notable difference between the two novels, and see how, not only the changed environment but also de Céspedes' own experience of such a milieu may have influenced her portrayal of the press and of the status of the literati in *Il rimorso* — a bleak and desperate image that contrasts with de Beauvoir's in *Les Mandarins.* Finally, the comparison of the fate assigned to the literati in the two narratives allows for a concluding assessment of how far each novel may be considered as a piece of *littérature engagée.*

*Commitment and the Authors*

De Beauvoir and Sartre held the view that engaging in political struggles is intrinsic to the intellectual's role in society. In *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* Sartre argued that all writers carried a political responsibility towards the positive transformation of the world through their works.[327] In an interview for Radio Canada in 1959, de Beauvoir expressed her belief in associating *engagement* with action and with ideological opposition in a very clear manner when she stated that her duty as an intellectual was to rise up against all forms of oppression in order to contribute to the good, the happiness and the freedom of mankind.[328] Already in 1947, she urged: 'Que les "élites éclairées"

[327] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature ?* (Paris : Gallimard, 1964)
[328] Simone de Beauvoir (Paris: Arte Video, 2008), [on DVD-ROM]

s'efforcent de changer la situation de l'enfant, de l'illettré, du primitif écrasé de superstitions, c'est là une de leurs tâches les plus urgentes' (*PMA*, p. 172), thus defining intellectuals as superior beings whose task it is to enlighten the masses with their knowledge. In *Il rimorso*, the status of the literati and their absolute duty with regard to the social improvement of society is conveyed in terms that concur with de Beauvoir's ideas. One of Gerardo's entries establishes the excellence and distinctiveness of the intellectual — significantly since this character may be considered de Céspedes' alter-ego.[329] He recalls his Jewish girlfriend Sarah's fascination for his pens and notebooks that she saw as the signs of his 'anormalità' (*IR*, p. 363). He creates a telling analogy between writers and Jews when he adds: 'Forse pensava che essere scrittore è come essere ebrei: un'altra razza' (*IR*, p. 363). It is interesting that his remark not only provides an illustration of society's treatment of the intellectual as an outsider — somebody whose difference means s/he cannot be regarded as a mainstream citizen — but also by extension and in the light of wartime persecutions, it betrays the idea of a period of active discrimination against literati. Consequently, when Sarah asks her grandfather why Jews are considered different, his answer 'Perché siamo il popolo eletto' (*IR*, p. 363) also implies a view of the intellectual that is similar to de Beauvoir's when she writes of the 'élites éclairées'. Therefore *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* do not so much address the issue of whether or not the intellectual should be committed to the improvement of society — since this is understood as his or her essential duty — but rather that of how to be so in a way that does justice to one's principles in the social and political backgrounds of the postwar. In this sense, Zancan gives an appreciation of *Il rimorso* that fits de Beauvoir's novel too when she notes that it articulates clearly:

> — in una lucida e appassionata partecipazione alla crisi dei princìpi dell'*engagement* — la ridefinizione delle modalità e delle possibilità di una scrittura come partecipazione attiva alla costruzione di una nuova cultura e di una società moderna e democratica.[330]

[329] In a letter to Arnoldo Mondadori in 1960, de Céspedes writes: 'Adoro Gerardo, anche perché sotto molti aspetti sono io'.

[330] Marina Zancan, 'La ricerca letteraria. Le forme del romanzo', in *Alba de Céspedes. Scrittrici e intellettuali del Novecento*, ed. by Marina Zancan (Milan: il Saggiatore/Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 2005), pp. 19-65 (p. 23).

It is evident from de Beauvoir and de Céspedes' lives that both shared a consciousness that their duty as intellectuals was to engage actively in the reconstruction of their countries after the war. Certainly, de Céspedes had already demonstrated her commitment to defending her ideas and values at a political level: in 1943, she left Rome and managed to reach the liberated South where she worked under the pseudonym Clorinda for Radio Bari's transmission of *L'Italia combatte.* Then in 1944 she created and directed *Mercurio*, a magazine that grouped anti-fascist intellectuals and dealt with politics, arts and sciences. In an open letter commemorating the birth of the magazine, De Sanctis, who had contributed as chief editor, recalls de Céspedes' vision of what *Mercurio* should be. He writes:

> Nacque in te l'idea di una rivista nuova che rompesse la tradizione disimpegnata umanistico-letteraria di *La Voce* o di *Lacerba* e de *La nuova antologia,* e che fosse un punto di incontri e di scontri tra politica e cultura, tra guerra e rappresentazione. Insomma, una rivista impegnata; ma allora non sapevamo nemmeno che esistesse la parola.[331]

De Sanctis emphasizes the fact that de Céspedes was effectively breaking new ground by providing the thinking subject — scientists, literati, artists — with the public medium the magazine represents in order to contribute to the life of the country, or to engage. Her project can be compared to that of Sartre, de Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty who, a year after the first edition of *Mercurio*, created *Les Temps Modernes*, a political, literary and philosophical magazine still published in France today. All of de Céspedes' novels are in fact about contemporary society and engage with issues she considered to be particularly urgent, mostly for women. For example, in *Quaderno Proibito,* she deals with the topic of the family and the difficulties for women in finding a personal space, and identity, in the home, away from domestic oppression. In *Prima e dopo,* she reveals the cultural resistance to change with regard to the status of women and, with Irene, the female struggle in finding a new place, and independence, in society in the aftermath of war.

*The Intellectual in Context*

[331] De Sanctis, quoted in Franco Contorbia, 'Appunti per uno saggio su "Mercurio"', in *Scrittrici e intellettuale del Novecento. Alba de Céspedes,* ed. by Marina Zancan (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2005), pp. 307- 29 (p. 309).

The question of *engagement* or *impegno* therefore brings de Beauvoir and de Céspedes together since the involvement of literary writing in the political life of the country is very important to both authors, to which the creation of *Mercurio* and *Les Temps modernes* may be said to testify. It is a topic that adds to the thematic similarities between *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso,* but it is also one that sets the two novels firmly apart: the contexts in which each narrative takes place means that in fact, the whole question of commitment and literature is treated very differently. When *Les Mandarins* starts in 1944, the old generation of intellectuals who had been discredited for their collaborationist views was replaced by a new, uncompromising one made up of writers, artists, journalists and political activists. Generally in their thirties or forties, they were too young to have experienced the First World War, and their political education had been that of the Fronts Populaires and the anti-fascist movements. According to Judt, in France, François Mauriac who was born in 1885 was the only one of the older age group that could be compared to Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Albert Camus in terms of influence, precisely because he did not partake in the Vichy regime. In Italy, the Neapolitan philosopher Benedetto Croce, born in 1866, was the only survivor from the previous generation of Italian personalities; now the novelist and political commentator Alberto Moravia, born in 1907, and the communist writer and journalist Elio Vittorini, born in 1908, prevailed amongst others.[332]
The complexity of the situation for French intellectuals who faced the daunting task of contributing to the reconstruction of a nation left in ruins by the war can be appreciated when Henri reflects that 'Le malheur, c'est que l'action avait changé de figure. La Résistance était une chose, la politique une autre' (*LM I,* p. 29). *Engagement* as it became known in the Résistance would have to be redefined against the intricate setting of post-war politics. No more a matter of straightforward concrete action against one clear enemy followed by some immediate result or even reprisal, commitment now required a careful consideration of its broader social impact. In de Beauvoir's novel, the question is posed to the literati against a background that, as Brand describes, 'forces a choice between ethical action, i.e., some form of doing in terms of political activity, and unethical inaction, considered here to be synonymous with

[332] See 'Guerres culturelles', in Tony Judt, *Après Guerre* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2007), pp. 241-273 (p. 243).

aesthetics (and presumed to be apolitical)'.[333] The pro-American Russian émigré Scriassine judges that:

> De deux choses l'une; ou bien des hommes comme Dubreuilh et Perron regarderont la situation en face, ils s'engageront dans une action qui les exigera tout entiers; ou bien ils tricheront, ils s'obstineront à écrire: leurs œuvres seront coupées de la réalité et privées de tout avenir; ce seront des travaux d'aveugles, aussi navrants que la poésie des alexandrins (*LM I,* p. 58).

His statement plainly indicates that the value of the writer can now only be substantiated by political *engagement*. Scriassine may be said to express de Beauvoir's conviction that French intellectuals must shun the comfortable and tranquil life of the aesthete, or the life of non-*engagement* that I shall argue Lewis comes to represent in the novel, and truly commit their works to the overall betterment of humanity. In the postwar context, if literature was to survive, it would have to engage actively in the current political debate. This was clear to the younger generation who had taken an active part in the Resistance and by doing so had earned the right to contribute their influence to the radical political and social changes that were expected after the war. Dubreuilh's view that 'il ne faut plus abandoner la politique aux politiciens' (*LM I,* p. 19) holds an implicit accusation of the detachment of past politicians who had allowed the Vichy regime. His remark also conveys his own belief that the intellectual must play an intrinsic role in the politics of the country, and take part in the creation and maintenance of a new fair society. The reinstatement of the pre-war status quo was clearly impossible: the past could never be reproduced, and it was now necessary to reassess all those points of reference and values that had made up existence before and during the German occupation. In early postwar France, all political parties and newspapers of conservative right-wing inclination were forbidden. Fascism was proscribed everywhere, with the notable exceptions of Spain and Portugal where dictators Franco and Salazar still ruled. Amongst intellectuals in France and Italy, the experience of war had similarly left no space for moral compromise, and those who embraced communism and socialism restricted the new ideological realm to an inflexible binary opposition: good against evil, freedom against servitude,

[333] Peg Brand, 'Salon-Haunters', in *The Contradictions of Freedom*, ed. by Sally J. Scholz and Shannon M. Mussett (Albany: Sate University of New York Press, 2005), pp. 211-226 (p. 213).

Resistance against obedience to or collaboration with the enemy. In both countries educated individuals, artists and writers who came from a bourgeois milieu marveled at proletarian values and at the revolution of the working classes: they could redeem their embarrassing privileged backgrounds by welcoming communism, even if they did not go as far as joining the party, and by standing united in the reconstruction effort. This postwar climate of a widespread fervor for Marxist and socialist ideals that the USSR epitomized changed after the discovery of the harshness of the Soviet regime and Stalinism from 1947, and more so after the Kravchenko trial in 1949 and the discovery of the Gulags that same year, as discussed in Chapters One and Two. This new reality led to an ideological split: those for whom communism still meant concrete social advantages, and those for whom it now only meant discrimination and repression. Subsequently, European cultural and intellectual life became more deeply divided between East and West, between the Left and the Right.

By 1961, the year of the narrative of *Il rimorso*, Italy was rapidly developing into a highly-industrialized nation. As well as the aforementioned discovery of the Gulags in the early postwar period, the Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956 had also deterred many Italians from communism. De Céspedes' novel is set in a time when US influence now prevailed in Italy: the changes that the years of the economic miracle were bringing, together with the increased disrepute of the Soviet regime, converged in promoting and implementing a socio-political model based on capitalism and consumerism. Burns rightly assesses that 'the political charge of *impegno* had been attenuated by the early 1960s' and that this was a result from the Americanisation of Italian society and culture, or the confirmation of the US victory in what she calls 'the post-war superpower tussle over Italy'.[334]

*Adulterous Relationships as Rejected Ethics*

[334] Jennifer Burns, *Fragments of Impegno. Interpretations of Commitment in Contemporary Italian Narrative 1980-2000* (Leeds: Northern Universities Press, 2001), p. 27. Hutcheon also acknowledges the impact of postwar politics on literary production, notably of the unpopularity of the Soviet regime after the Hungarian event, when she notes that 'it was the failure of the Communist party to gain control in the 1950s that probably provided the impetus for the birth and growth of the neoavant-garde. If politics proper had failed, perhaps literature as socio-linguistic contestation might succeed'. Linda Hutcheon, 'The Outer Limits of the Novel: Italy and France', *Contemporary Literature,* 18 (1977), 198-216 (p. 200).

*Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* are therefore set in very different historical and social contexts which, as I shall discuss further on, ultimately dictate that the treatment of the place, and the status of the intellectual and of the press is very dissimilar in the two novels. However, despite these marked differences, it is interesting to consider de Céspedes' reworking of the story of Anne's affair again here. As well as functioning, as it does in de Beauvoir's novel, as a means of commenting on female sexuality (as discussed in the previous chapter), it also allows her to present in *Il rimorso* — again in just the same way as in *Les Mandarins* — a portrayal of conduct both authors reject. The affairs and more significantly here, their breakdown, suggest the inadequacy of the alternative ethics embodied by Lewis, an American writer and Matteo, an architect who has given up his work and has retired to an island. In the two narratives, the lovers are used to provide different lifestyles and moral principles to those Anne and Francesca experience in their married lives in Paris and Rome. Moreover, Lewis and Matteo's attitudes towards social obligations are carefree, and therefore both can be said to embody detachment or *désengagement*, and to symbolically represent the aesthete's hermitic way of life that de Beauvoir and de Céspedes disapproved of, as shown by the earlier discussion on their ideas of the literati's duty to society and on their own experiences with intellectual *engagement*. Both men enjoy a closeness to nature that contrasts greatly with both Robert and Guglielmo who spend most of their time enclosed in their offices. In the two novels, the feeling of opposition between husbands and lovers is further emphasized by the sea, or water, which establishes the physical distance between them. The same use of spatiality thus results in a similar allegorical isolation of two ways of living: that of the monotony of married life and the entrapment of social conventions, and that of free-spirited escapism in the arms of men who are non-conformist and who live in a rather hedonistic manner. Matteo lives on an island. The name of his house, 'La Zattera', or the raft, as well as the circumstances behind their first encounter, when he saved her from sunstroke, are highly symbolic of the affair as Francesca's rescue. Anne finds solace in Lewis' house, on the side of a lake, across the ocean in America, away from Paris, and from her family and from social conventions. In a sense, being there is also for her like being on an island. It becomes clear that the apparent contrast between the lives of Lewis and Matteo on one hand and that of Robert and Guglielmo on the other,

together with the fact that these affairs fail to satisfy anyone in the long term, lead to the conclusion that in both novels, the extra-marital affairs are treated in a similar fashion as temporary and ultimately ineffective alternatives to Anne and Francesca's lives in Paris and Rome respectively at the time of the narratives.[335] Fallaize sees the expression of Anne's discontent in her affair with Lewis as a representation of the author's own sense of disillusion about American society. At the time of the Liberation, 'America is the country of the future' and 'the opening of the novel reflects French enthusiasm for their liberators'.[336] During her one and only date with Scriassine she observes that: 'Scriassine avait passé quatre ans en Amérique, le grand pays libérateur, le pays où les fontaines crachent des flots de jus de fruits et de crème glacée: je l'interrogeai avidement' (*LM I,* p. 111). When she meets Brogan, she is already questioning American foreign policy. Significantly by the time of her last visit, she is critical of the intellectuals' lack of social and political involvement at the beginning of the Cold War. During a first-time visit to Chicago with her Denver friends Myriam and Philipp, the latter accused French writers of being obsessed with political action. Over dinner, Anne declared that:

> Tous les intellectuels américains plaident l'impuissance (…) c'est ça ce qui me parait un curieux complexe. Vous n'aurez pas le droit de vous indigner le jour où l'Amérique sera complètement fascisée et où elle déclenchera la guerre (*LM II,* p. 421).

In this way, Anne's affair with Lewis at the beginning of the Cold War 'enables Beauvoir to show a change in Anne's view of America and its intellectuals over a period of some two years',[337] which in itself may be said to reflect the author's own political viewpoint and acts as an early warning against the American model. In *Il rimorso,* de Céspedes reworks de Beauvoir's character Lewis to her own purpose: with Matteo, she is able to denounce his hermitic attitude as a facile ethical option. Francesca chooses to leave him rather than taking up his romantic, hedonistic and ultimately socially

[335] Indeed Terry Keefe comments that 'Although Anne's American adventure actually ends as it does because Brogan is unable to tolerate the situation, it could not in any case have provided her with any more than temporary relief from her deep preoccupation with aging, decline, suffering and death'. Terry Keefe, *Simone de Beauvoir: A study of her writings* (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble Books, 1983), pp. 191-92.
[336] Fallaize, p. 102.
[337] Terry Keefe, *Simone de Beauvoir* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1998), p.105.

disengaged lifestyle; she rejects resigning herself to the idea that his principles are the only possible alternatives to the materialistic and de-humanised society of the time. Thus Francesca's affair with Matteo allows de Céspedes to denounce the ills of a society already largely influenced by America, that of the 1960s 'Italia del boom' where, as will be shown, little place was left to the political *impegno* of the intellectual, and its pursuits of the good for humanity. *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* are therefore particularly alike in the treatment and the narrative functions of the extra-marital affairs with regard to the question of the individual's *engagement* in society; the type of society each novel depicts, however, determines the possibilities for such *engagement*. For this reason, the status enjoyed by the committed literati, or the way in which literature is regarded, in the historical context of *Les Mandarins* is very different from that portrayed in *Il rimorso.*

*Society and the Status of the Literati*

In *Les Mandarins,* literature first appears as an obsolete tool which cannot respond to the urgent needs of the early post-war period. The task at hand, that of constructing a fair society after the horrors of the Holocaust and the Occupation, called for a re-evaluation of all past notions, including that of the work of the intellectual. It is measured against more immediate and palpable forms of progress that the domains of science and technology can effectively deliver. Scriassine predicts that:

> Les progrès de la science et de la technique, les changements économiques vont à tel point bouleverser la terre que nos manières mêmes de penser et de sentir en seront révolutionnées: nous aurons du mal à nous rappeler qui nous avons été. Entre autres, l'art et la littérature ne nous sembleront plus que des divertissements périmés (*LM I,* p. 56).

The press is an effective medium for the circulation of information and ideas, a direct and instantaneous vehicle for the *engagement* of intellectuals in the social and political struggle — and therefore one that may be preferable to literature and creative writing in times of urgent reconstruction. It is presented in the novel as a tool for reaching and shaping public opinion, and one that has a powerful and significant influence on the life of the country, as Scriassine's remark to Henri about the early political neutrality of his newspaper shows: 'On m'a dit que *L'Espoir* a beaucoup de lecteurs dans la classe ouvrière (…)

Ainsi tu as en main le seul journal non communiste qui atteigne le proletariat! Tu te rends compte de tes responsabilités? (*LM I*, p. 34)'. Significantly, he also maintains that creative writing and commitment to the social struggle have become incompatible in this new era. He comments that in the past, Dubreuilh managed to reconcile 'de hautes exigences esthétiques avec une inspiration révolutionnaire. Dans sa vie il avait réalisé un équilibre analogue: il organisait les comités de Vigilance, et il écrivait des romans' ; however, he then concludes that 'c'est ce bel équilibre qui est devenu impossible' (*LM I*, p. 55). Indeed Robert's decision to suspend writing his memoir in order to invest himself wholeheartedly in the political struggle demonstrates an inability to fathom how literary writing could effectively contribute to the socio-political needs of the time. The precedence of journalistic writing is definitively established when he manages to persuade Henri to associate his neutral paper *L'Espoir,* with Robert's independent leftwing grouping, the SRL, thus channeling all of the writer's energy into the work of the media. *Les Mandarins* depicts a transition phase for the literati who must now attempt to carry out their duty as 'enlightened élite' through a new channel, that of writing for the press.

In *Il rimorso,* on the other hand, the place and the function of the literati is not re-assessed according to political needs: the novel offers a bleak vision of a society in which literature has now become useless. Rapid financial gain was given priority in a time of intensive consumerist encouragement in late 1950s and early 1960s Italy. Gerardo's hesitation about leaving his work as a correspondent in order to become a full-time writer is motivated by the economic insecurities he will have to face. Creative writing, or literature, which more often than not brings little if any remuneration at the cost of huge efforts, is thus portrayed as a hobby in the novel, rather than a viable professional activity. Guglielmo's observation about his experience as one of the literati may be seen as a general comment that literary production in a sense has been neutralized by the consumerist drift, and that intellectual ideological self-determination has not resisted the lure of power and money. Referring to his own individual choice, which nonetheless may be interpreted as one many opted for (general use of the 'tu'), he declares that:

> la passione delle lettere, il piacere delle ore solitarie a tavolino, sono stati sostituiti dalla passione del potere, del prestigio sociale che credi di

> possedere perché sei uno scrittore e che, in certo modo, possiedi. (...) Insomma hai barattato il potere intellettuale e morale dello scrittore contro il potere sociale e mondano di coloro che (nel migliore dei casi) offrono ad altri la possibilità di scrivere (*IR*, p. 311-2).

A most effective illustration of this general climate is conveyed by the sheer incredulity and suspicion that Gerardo's decision to abandon his career as a reporter in order to dedicate himself to his art provokes in his work environment. In the entry dated 6 November, he recalls that his manager Ribolla could not comprehend why one would be willing to give up a certain financial status for the sake of literature and that, persuaded that Gerardo was moving to Milan to work for another newspaper, he attempted to entice him with the promise of a better salary. Gerardo's work colleague, the literary critic Carloni, also wonders what place there is for the writer since he bleakly suggests that literature is useless. He judges that

> Il vero problema (…) è che a forza di ricevere libri — montagne, vedessi, sulle sedie, sui mobili, la Pinuccia dice che un giorno li butta tutti — a forza di leggerli, ti domandi a che serve scrivere. A che serve, di'? Esce un libro, ne esce un altro, anni di lavoro, e tutto rimane come prima. Non spostano nemmeno un poco d'aria. Stiamo soffocando (*IR*, p. 397).

Therefore when compared with *Les Mandarins, Il rimorso* conveys a much darker view of the situation of the intellectual and of literature. In de Beauvoir's novel, the very function and the relevance of the literati in the immediate postwar period are certainly being re-evaluated, even questioned, but nonetheless intellectuals are offered an opportunity to explore a new medium to their *engagement* in the reconstruction of society: the press. When journalism is shown to fail as a satisfactory vehicle for the literati's duty — and by this I mean the duty defined by de Beauvoir as mentioned earlier — there is always in the end the possibility of writing in a magazine combining literature and politics. In de Céspedes' novel, society regards literature as irrelevant to most people, and the literati are considered as outsiders. This is conveyed by a very unfavorable representation of the press and the option of a literary and political magazine does not appear in the narrative, another significant difference between the two novels and one that may have to do with the author's own experience, as I shall discuss shortly. The comparative analysis of the question of commitment affords an overall assessment of the evolving

status of the literati and of creative writing in the post-war years; it also shows the consequences of the political harnessing of the press in general that is only just initiated in *Les Mandarins,* and that is in full force in early 1960s Italy.

*Intellectual Engagement and the Press*

In order to expose the engulfment of the press by politics and the ensuing changing position of the intellectual in society, de Beauvoir's novel shows Henri's difficult experience with his newspaper, *L'Espoir,* in postwar France, and de Céspedes details Gerardo's indecision and his final choice to leave the newspaper he works for, *La Gazzetta,* in a very different context. *Les Mandarins* merely foreshadows the potential risks that journalism takes in being bound in politics by raising the issue of, as Scholz and Mussett put it, 'whether a paper can exist as a moral body in spite of its financial ties to an immoral action'.[338] This is conveyed firstly by Henri's realization that despite his will — 'Je n'aurai jamais de programme a priori (…) Je tiens à dire ce que je pense, comme je le pense, sans me laisser enrégimenter' (*LM I,* p. 34) — *L'Espoir* cannot remain politically neutral or a-political. Secondly, he has no choice but to accept the money Vincent extorted from collaborators in order to save his newspaper from financial ruin, before finally losing it altogether to a political party. Keefe also accurately comments that:

> The financial problems of *L'Espoir*, and the machinations that result, confirm the extent to which the attempt to change things in France is failing: collaborators are finding their way back into society, and it is money that counts above all else.[339]

The fate of Henri's newspaper signals the advent of the control of intellectuals by a political agenda, and of a process of depreciation of the literati's credentials in France. On this point, it is significant that Ross attributes the failure of Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber and Françoise Giroud (the founders and editors of France's first weekly mass magazine *L'Express)* to ever reach the same status of a great intellectual couple as Sartre and Beauvoir did around 1955 partly to the fact that 'leur règne [Sartre and de Beauvoir's] annonça le déclin de la valeur même d'intellectualité'.[340] It may be said that *Les Mandarins* portrays the intellectuals' last attempt to resist political engulfment.

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[338] Sally J. Scholz and Shannon M. Mussett, eds., *The Contradictions of Freedom* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), p. 9.
[339] Keefe, p. 100.
[340] Kristin Ross, *Rouler Plus vite, laver plus blanc* (Paris: Flammarion, 1997), p. 92.

By doing so, the novel itself is a piece of *littérature engagée* that warns of the impending demise of commitment unmarred by the necessity of taking sides in the climate of black-and-white choices of the Cold War that Scriassine predicts: 'l'hégémonie du monde appartiendra à l'U.R.S.S. ou aux U.S.A (…) L'impérialisme américain comme le totalitarisme russe exigent une expansion illimitée: il faudra qu'un des deux l'emporte' (*LM I*, p. 56-7).[341]

Robert and Henri decide to withdraw from politics altogether, albeit temporarily, rather than having to compromise their convictions: the acrimony of their dispute over whether or not to publish information about the Soviet Work Camps testifies to a passionate intellectual energy that is missing from the more fatalistic overtone of *Il rimorso*. Anne recalls: 'j'ai eu le coeur en deuil le matin où, en dépliant *L'Espoir*, j'ai vu imprimées les deux lettres où ils échangeaient Henri et lui des désaveux insultants' (*LM II*, p. 188). When the two men resume their friendship, this same passionate energy that had compelled them to react so uncompromisingly to the course of events will ultimately be projected into a new venture: that of a new weekly paper. Despite the fact that, as Keefe comments, 'in the year since Liberation a new world has come into being, while at the same time the hopes of major reform in France itself are diminishing, as the old order comes to reassert itself',[342] both characters still reunite in a renewed *élan* towards *engagement*. They use the press again, this time with the launch of their politico-literary magazine *Vigilance*, which is usually considered to be a fictionalized equivalent of *Les Temps Modernes*, the magazine created by Sartre, de Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty in 1944.[343] *Les Mandarins* endeavours to maintain the worth of intellectuals in a context increasingly dominated and influenced by politics. For this reason, the novel urges the literati to progress into new forms of expression in order to engage and to contribute their voices to the immediate needs of humanity. As Tidd rightly assesses: '*The Mandarins* demonstrates that literature must resist its own deathly silencing but only through its ethico-political commitment',[344] and while it does not play down the difficulties and uncertainties in doing so given the social climate of the time, the novel

[341] On the Cold War, see Chapters One and Two.
[342] Keefe, p. 104.
[343] See Sally J. Scholz and Shannon M. Mussett, *The Contradictions of Freedom* (Albany: State University of New-York Press, 2005), p. 8.
[344] Ursula Tidd, 'Testimony, *Historicité*, and the Intellectual in *The Mandarins'*, in *The Contradictions of Freedom*, pp. 87-103 (p. 101).

proposes the new means of intellectual *engagement* to be the press, or the magazine.

In contrast, *Il rimorso* offers a categorical denunciation of the inadequacy of the media as a means of *engagement* for intellectuals. By doing so, *Il rimorso* is, because of its form and its content, effectively a work of *impegno,* and conflicts with Nerenberg's assessment that, after *Mercurio,* 'accompanying the passage from journalism to fiction writing comes a radical inward turn' for de Céspedes.[345] Moreover, it is important to point out that she did not in fact abandon journalism altogether after her experience with *Mercurio,* but she went on to write, notably but not exclusively, for *Epoca* and *La Stampa,* and her columns certainly give abundant evidence, not of an 'inward turn', but, on the contrary, of her *engagement* in the problems of contemporary society.[346] In *Il rimorso,* the newspapers are desperately corrupt, and Gerardo is shown to have no other option but to withdraw completely from such environment. This uncompromising stance on the state of the press in Italy is undoubtedly influenced by the author's own experience. De Céspedes' *Mercurio* may be seen as a precursor to the proliferation of various literary magazines that would work towards the promotion of new writing and ideas for the commitment of the intellectual during the late 1950s and the 1960s, a time captured in *Il rimorso* when the rise of science and technology and the impact of mass culture called for a reassessment of the status of the writer.[347] The reasons she gives for the cessation of her magazine in 1948 are echoed in *Il rimorso* by the motives given by Gerardo, her fictional alter-ego, for giving up journalism. In October 1994, she writes in the 'Corriere della Sera' that:

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[345] Ellen Nerenberg, 'Resistance and Remorse', in *Writing Beyond Fascism,* ed. by Carole C. Gallucci and Ellen Nerenberg (London: Associated University Presses, 2000), pp. 223- 46 (p. 232).

[346] See Chapters Six and Seven. Andreini emphasizes de Céspedes' continued *impegno* in the press environment when she states that 'la parte dell'attività giornalistica successiva alla tappa di "Mercurio" segna un'apertura a ulteriori collaborazioni con giornali e riviste ("La Gazzetta del Popolo", "Settimana Incom" dal 1949 al 1951, "Omnibus", cui collabora con un articolo al mese sulla vita americana a partire del 1950, "La Fiera Letteraria"), ma anche, per un ampliamento degli orizzonti geografici, a periodici francesi (come "Elle" e "Marie Claire")'. Alba Andreini, 'La scrittura giornalistica', in *Alba de Céspedes. Scrittrici e intellettuale del Novecento,* ed. by Marina Zancan (Milan: il Saggiatore, Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 2005), pp. 330- 49 (p. 334).

[347] Amongst those, it is worth mentioning *Officina* which, between 1955 and 1959, managed to target simultaneously intellectual non-commitment, and neo-realism. Also of note between 1959 and 1967 is *Il Menabò* founded by Vittorini and Calvino and which focused on creative writing and social, cultural and literary theory. See Michael Caesar, 'Contemporary Italy (since 1956)' in *The Cambridge History of Italian Literature,* ed. by Peter Brand and Lino Pertile (Cambridge: Cambridge University Presses, 1996), p. 561- 603.

> La rivista 'Mercurio', che io avevo fondata nel 1944 e che dirigevo, terminò le sue pubblicazioni nel 1948. Il finanziatore della rivista, che, tenuto conto prima della particolare situazione bellica e poi della svolta di Salerno, mi aveva lasciato le briglie lente sul collo, d'un tratto mi proponeva di sterzare verso posizioni di ortodosso atlantismo. Scoprivo come il potere mercantile sia permissivo agli inizi e come si serva di un titolo di giornale allorché un congruo numero di lettori si è abituato a seguirlo. Rifiutai.[348]

Gerardo expresses a similar sense of frustration at the financial and political command over *La Gazzetta,* the right-wing newspaper he works for, and its control over what can or cannot be written. He states 'Non posso scrivere quello che voglio: devo essere nella linea del giornale. Dell'azienda' (*IR*, p. 303). When Guglielmo exhorts him to come up with some new ideas, his answer betrays the journalist's helplessness in contributing to the advance of social welfare. He points at the Party, which is clearly the Democrazia Cristiana, and at the Vatican, and their determination to maintain certain old ideologies in the face of changing times. This may be interpreted as an implicit disclosure of their responsibility in creating and sustaining a harmful discrepancy between the legal status quo and the urgent need in actual life to change legislation.[349] He asks: 'Nuove idee! (…) Perché mi prendi in giro, Direttore? Che cosa direbbe, altrimenti, il Segretario del partito? Anzi il portavoce del Vaticano?' (*IR*, p. 303).

Gerardo's confrontations with Guglielmo reveal how the latter has become a mouthpiece for the influence of the socio-political on the individual. Guglielmo is of the same generation as Robert in *Les Mandarins*, and, like him, he is regarded with respect because of his involvement in the Resistance. Unlike Robert, however, he is not willing, nor able, to take part in the social struggle anymore. The contrast between the novels is very striking here. Guglielmo discloses a sense of lassitude and resignation towards the established system that differs greatly from Robert's willpower and sense of integrity in immediate post-war France. When he could not fathom how to contribute effectively to the social struggle without compromising his ideals any longer, Robert decided to give up politics altogether, albeit temporarily. By contrast, in the historical context of 1960s Italy, Guglielmo agrees to side with party politics, or one might say to sell his persona, in return for the lifestyle he has

[348] Contorbia, p. 327.
[349] See Chapter Two.

become accustomed to. He writes to Isabella: 'Non saprei più rischiare nulla, tanto meno resistere per difendere un principio, un ideale, o soltanto l'idea che ho di me stesso' (*IR*, p. 593). He gives a hopeless picture of his work in the press: 'l'unico impegno cui adempi quello di sederti ogni mattina a un tavolo ingombro di manoscritti da leggere oppure di pratiche inerenti ai problemi che devi risolvere, ai dati che devi diffondere per rafforzare quell'azienda, quell'ente, quella sigla'(*IR*, p. 311**)**. The great intellectual impetus that sees Henri and Robert embark on a new writing venture at the end of *Les Mandarins* is completely absent in *Il rimorso.* In this sense it can be said that de Céspedes' novel describes a state of being rather than trying to suggest a solution to the crisis facing intellectuals in Italy. This contributes to an impression of fatalism and helplessness regarding the state of the intelligentsia that is carried throughout the narrative right to the very end with Gerardo and Francesca's uncertain future as writers. However, it is important that whatever bleak vision of the literati she presents in her novel, quite obviously de Céspedes has not given up writing, and in fact after *Il rimorso,* she devoted herself to fiction.

I have argued that both novels are very different in the way they portray the literati in society, and in their treatment of the press, and this is of course indicative of the context in which each narrative is set. It is interesting that such dissimilarity is reflected in the very titles of the novels. Fayard gives an enlightening definition of the mandarin, and he contrasts this figure with the samurai. A Chinese mandarin is a 'lettré, politique serviteur de l'Etat et qui gagne son rang du fait d'un mérite acquis par l'étude'.[350] The title of de Beauvoir's novel is therefore opportune since she focuses on giving a picture of the French intelligentsia enjoying public esteem in the postwar era and their attempts to take part in the polis via the medium of the press. De Céspedes' title conjures up the idea of a *fait accompli*, of something bygone which brings an oppressive sense of regret to the present. Indeed *Il rimorso* depicts a time when the literati's function is not to engage actively in the reconstruction and improvement of society any more, but rather to put his/her status at the service of the agendas of the political parties. In fact, Fayard's definition of the Japanese samurai may be said to describe the position of the intelligentsia and

[350] Pierre Fayard, 'Le Mandarin et le Samouraï, figures emblématiques des cultures stratégiques chinoises et japonaises' <http://www.societe-de-strategie-asso.fr/pdf/agir14txt1.pdf > [accessed 30 March 2010]

the press in de Céspedes' novel. He writes that a samurai is a 'guerrier à la devotion absolue au clan, et plus particulièrement à son chef (…) [il] ne compte que sur son *engagement* plein et entier dans le présent'. This last point is opposed to the mandarin who has 'le souci du temps long et du maintien des équilibres pour assurer la pérennité de l'Etat'. In de Beauvoir's novel, Anne and her daughter Nadine express the mandarin's worry about not yielding too fast to changes and about considering the passing of time in their work for the welfare and the durability of society. The former challenges Robert and his willingness to put the past behind him and embrace the new in his work. When Lambert finds Henri's play *Les Survivants* despicable because 'les morts sont morts, qu'on les laisse tranquilles; ce n'est pas la peine de venir exaspérer la haine entre les Français', Nadine answers that on the contrary, 'les gens ont drôlement besoin qu'on leur rafraîchisse la mémoire' (*LM II,* p. 89). It is the mandarin's concern with the maintenance of ethical values and conduct matured through the experience of time that the society depicted in *Il rimorso* has abandoned altogether in exchange for fast economic growth and consumerism in the present.[351] In a sense, the intellectual in de Céspedes' novel has become a samurai whose work is devoted to the clan, or is subjected to the immediate authority of the political agenda followed by the newspaper he writes for.[352] Spinazzola actually attributes the discontinuing of the author's own literary journal to the advent of precisely such a trend in postwar Italy. He assesses that 'è senza dubbio sintomatico che "Mercurio" cessi le pubblicazioni nel 1948, cioè l'anno in cui l'impegno democratico della cultura artistico-letteraria italiana appare già avviato a un decline precoce'.[353] It is significant, however, that de Céspedes continued to work as a journalist for *Epoca,* and for *La Stampa,* where she had the column *Cronache per le donne,* in 1963. Therefore her rejection of the press and its ensuing portrayal in her novel

[351] See Chapter Two.

[352] This observation suggests that a comparative study of *Il rimorso* and Kristeva's 1990 novel *Les Samouraïs* may be fruitful. Lazar writes of the similarities between *Les Samouraïs* and de Beauvoir's novel that 'as *The Mandarins* shows the postwar dilemmas of the French leftist intellectuals, *The Samurai* reconstructs another pivotal moment of twentieth French history: Paris in the late sixties and the student revolts of 1968. It records, as did *The Mandarins*, the disillusionment and ferment of a generation of intellectuals'. Liliane Lazar, 'When the *Samurai* Meet the *Mandarins*', *Simone de Beauvoir Studies*, 13 (1996), 66- 77 (p. 68). In the context of intertextuality, the present thesis may contribute to establishing de Beauvoir's *Les Mandarins* as the source text to both Kristeva's *Les Samouraïs* and de Céspedes' *Il rimorso.*

[353] Vittorio Spinazzola, introduction to 'L'impegno politico-culturale', in *Alba de Céspedes. Scrittrici e intellettuali del Novecento,* ed. by Marina Zancan (Milan: il Saggiatore/Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 2005), pp. 263-65 (p. 265).

appear to be motivated not just by the events that led to the demise of *Mercurio,* but also, and perhaps more importantly, by these subsequent experiences. In *Il rimorso,* journalism has become a normative medium through which information is filtered, shaped or censored. The integrity of the writer is thus denied by party politics: in the novel, Guglielmo embodies the influence of mass culture and economic development on the ideological self-determination of the individual. The reader is left aghast at his audacity when he criticizes Gerardo and the intellectuals of his generation for lacking the courage to make their voices heard despite their discontent. To be sure, Guglielmo was imprisoned for his writings during the Resistance, but the individual he has now become hardly gives him the authority to call upon his wartime image any longer and disparage those who find themselves effectively in the same situation as he is. His words pronounced in ire also implicitly reveal the necessity to re-assess the writer's mode of expression:

> Perché non provate a rischiare qualcosa? (...) Tu deplori che questo sia un porco tempo: è il tuo, ne sei tu responsabile. (...) La colpa, il rifiuto, lo straniamento, l'alienazione (...) accumulate parole davanti a voi come pietre di un muro a secco e ve ne state lí dietro a giocare coi vostri quaderni. Formiche, piccole mostruose formiche (*IR*, p. 331).

However, where the ending of *Les Mandarins* proposes the literary and political magazine as a new channel for the intellectuals, *Il rimorso* ends with Gerardo's withdrawal from the world of the press altogether. This could be interpreted as a will to cut himself off from politics and social concerns entirely — since in the context of *Il rimorso* the newspapers are portrayed as the organs of the parties — and to retire into facile intellectual aestheticism, the attitude both de Beauvoir and de Céspedes disapprove of. Undoubtedly the prospects for Gerardo's intellectual *impegno* in the type of society he lives in appear rather hopeless compared with the direct political involvement that *Vigilance* may offer to Robert and Henri in *Les Mandarins.* Nevertheless, the substance of Gerardo's diary that he and Francesca decide to publish signals his commitment to the improvement of society, or to what both authors considered the duty of the literati as discussed earlier. His existential malaise recorded in the diary acts as a denunciation of the political and social climate of the time, just as Valeria's diary in *Quaderno Proibito* amounts to a critical analysis of traditional family dynamics. Though his may appear as a feeble option compared to Robert and Henri's new literary and political venture, it is fair to

assess that Gerardo's diary — effectively a more 'private' form of communication — is portrayed as the best a writer can do to voice his concerns in 1960s Italy. The ending of *Il rimorso* thus suggests that the novel, and even the intimate autobiographical writing that Gerardo's diary represents, has now become the only possible vehicle for intellectual *impegno.* In this way, it may be said that de Céspedes foreshadows the developments in the 1970s and second-wave feminism's motto that the personal is political.

The mention of historical markers such as Hiroshima or the discovery of the Soviet Work Camps in *Les Mandarins* allows its author to voice her concerns over the politics of East and West within the narratives, and thus contributes to the appreciation of the novel as an evident piece of *littérature engagée*. The same may not be said of *Il rimorso* where, in the climate of the Cold War, de Céspedes does not ever mention the US or the USSR directly.[354] However, Gerardo's diary together with de Céspedes' challenging of patriarchal domination in the narrative that the present thesis has explored — and in particular her direct denunciation of the role of the Catholic Church in maintaining women imprisoned in immanence, as discussed in Chapters Five and Six — make of *Il rimorso* a very fine and sharp-witted piece of intellectual *impegno* in the political climate of 1960s Italy.

This chapter has suggested that the fact that both de Beauvoir and de Céspedes launched their own literary and political magazines at the end of the war may be seen as evidence of a shared self-awareness of their roles as intellectuals in the social reconstruction and of the question of *engagement* or *impegno.* In *Il rimorso,* de Céspedes may be said to borrow the theme of the extra-marital affair from *Les Mandarins* and to use Matteo in the same way as de Beauvoir uses Lewis: the ultimate rejection of a life which has the social and political remoteness of aestheticism. The two novels are radically different, however, in the way in which they depict the status of the literati and the world of the press. Despite the fact that *Les Mandarins* strongly highlights the dangers of the political harnessing of the media, the magazine is ultimately portrayed as a potentially viable medium for intellectual commitment in postwar France. In this way, the French literati are given a voice in the reconstruction of the country, albeit a precarious one. On this point, it may be significant that

[354] This was perhaps out of careful consideration for her diplomat husband Francesco Bounous.

whereas *Les Temps Modernes* is still in circulation to this day, de Céspedes decided to cease the publication of *Mercurio* in Italy in 1948. The unequivocal and definitive condemnation of journalism in her novel, compared with a period when 'la necessità di far giungere ovunque la voce della cultura italiana contro chi, in casa e fuori, tentava di farla tacere'[355] had actually stimulated the creation of *Mercurio*, gives the measure of the political and financial control over the Italian press at the time of writing, and of the ensuing restrictions that de Céspedes had encountered first-hand while working for *Epoca*.[356] The disparity between the motivations behind *Mercurio* and the portrayal of the media in *Il rimorso* thus reveals the demise of the press as a channel for *impegno*, and exposes the dramatic changes of the status of the intellectual in postwar Italy — which may have played a significant part in de Céspedes' definitive move to Paris in 1967. Thus it is fair to assess that *Il rimorso*, as a novel in the midst of such an inauspicious climate for the intelligentsia, is a testament to her belief in the value of literature.[357] The topics of the literati and the press provide evidence that despite some striking similarities and even some less obvious ones, *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* are still very distinct because of their authors' experiences of the different historical, political and social contexts each novel sets out to capture.

[355] Gianni Battista, quoted in Contorbia, p. 323.
[356] See Chapter Three.
[357] On the significance of the epigraph, see Chapter Three.

# Conclusion

This research was stimulated by some scholarly remarks on the resemblance between de Beauvoir's *Les Mandarins* and de Céspedes' *Il rimorso*, and was carried out with an aim to remedy the fact that the relationship between the two novels was yet to be recognized and defined. Thus the present thesis is a first-time in-depth comparative analysis that establishes precisely the nature of the rapport between the works. From this, two conclusions can be drawn: firstly, it may be said that, on an ideological and philosophical level, de Beauvoir did influence de Céspedes; secondly, on an intertextual level, *Il rimorso* may be considered a *récriture* of *Les Mandarins.*

I have shown that the two narratives share a sophisticated analytical account of the concept of commitment which may be regarded as a gendered illustration of de Beauvoir's Existentialist philosophy. *Il rimorso*'s treatment of the presence of the female voice in society at the time, and of the woman question in general, follows de Beauvoir's particular analysis of the notions of immanence and transcendence. She developed her own perceptions of the concepts in *Pyrrhus et Cinéas* and *Pour Une morale de l'ambiguïté* and she later exposed them as opposing gendered entities in her study of male/female boundaries in *Le Deuxième sexe*, using the idea of situated freedom. As de Beauvoir does in *Les Mandarins*, de Céspedes portrays in her novel the anxiety suffered by her female characters because of the traditional and cultural views of the role of women in society. These views are shown to imprison them in immanence and to deny them of the possibility of transcendence and, in the light of de Beauvoir's thinking in which, I have argued, de Céspedes partook,

they determine the contingency of freedom by depriving women of a worthy *engagement* in the world.

It is the assertion of this thesis that it is also with a decidedly de Beauvoirian take that de Céspedes treats of the notion of commitment in her novel. I have shown that in this case too her narrative demonstrates the endorsement of the French author's ideas and of her specific interpretation of Existentialist philosophy as it appears in her early philosophical texts. De Beauvoir's perception encompasses the concept of existential joy and by doing so encourages an active mode of existence and a positive contribution to the constructive endeavours of the human race. The closeness of de Céspedes' writing to de Beauvoir's is measured by the former's rejection of the more traditional Sartrean understanding of Existentialism — and this despite her declaration that she introduced Sartre and his philosophy to Italy — in favour of the altogether more positive interpretation of the concept upheld by the latter.[358]

In this sense, de Céspedes' *Il rimorso* can be described as a *récriture* of de Beauvoir's *Les Mandarins*. We have seen that a work of *récriture* includes a balance between similarities and differences between hypotext and hypertext, and that it shows evidence of intentionality from the secondary author vis-à-vis the primary text or hypotext, and finally that it is an adaptation of the hypotext to a different readership, and/or milieu, and/or context. This research has shown the similitude between the novels' thematic contents, characters' situations and predicaments, settings, and structures with the *mise en abyme* or the mirror stories: we have seen that these similarities are to such a degree that it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to consider the connection between *Les Mandarins* and *Il rimorso* a mere matter of chance. The study of perhaps less obvious and more sophisticated elements of resemblance between the two

[358] When asked about her experience as director of the literary journal *Mercurio*, de Céspedes expresses her enthusiasm and remarks: 'Pensi che ci sono stati degli autori che abbiamo proprio rivelati, per esempio nessuno aveva mai letto Sartre e quando io ho pubblicato un racconta di Sartre tutti mi hanno telefonato per chiedermi chi era'. Pierra Carroli, 'Colloqui con Alba de Céspedes', in *Esperienza e narrazione nella scrittura di Alba de Céspedes* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1993), pp. 131- 94 (p. 140). The investigation of the influence of Existentialism on Italian literature in general is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is part of a wider future project in response to Pacifici's observation in 1955 that 'some day, when we come to have a better perspective of the history of Italian literature in the postwar period, we shall perhaps come to the conclusion that for no small measure [...] many Italian writers owe a distinct debt to Existentialism'. Sergio J. Pacifici, 'Existentialism and Italian Literature', *Yale French Studies,* 16 (1955), 79- 88 (p. 88).

novels concerns their philosophical contents. With reference notably to *Pour Une morale de l'ambiguité*, I have argued the presence of a typically de Beauvoirian Existentialist discourse not only in *Les Mandarins*, but also more significantly in *Il rimorso*. This, together with the aforementioned idea of intentionality that results from the degree of blatancy concerning overall (or one might say superficial) similarities, suggests that *Il rimorso* gives evidence of not just a common ideology on the part of both authors, but also, when taking the works' chronology into consideration, that it signifies de Céspedes' own acknowledgement of de Beauvoir's role in her very own ideas, especially those concerning the question of women.

My conclusion is that de Céspedes deliberately introduced such similarities and steered her (more perceptive) readership in the direction of *Les Mandarins* and Simone de Beauvoir. Her narrative thus displays the author's intentionality to establish a rapport with another text and with another author — an author with whom, as this research has demonstrated, she clearly felt considerable affinity.

Significantly, *Il rimorso* also comprises important differences that are revelatory of the different socio-political background in which it is set. I have shown in Chapter Six that these concern the novels' representation of those institutions that influence the individual's life and past, and that aim at normalizing behaviours. In Chapters Seven and Eight, I have argued that the denouements and the portrayals of the press as a medium to commitment are significant dissimilarities between the two texts. In all, these variations bear witness to the chronological and cultural differences between the types of society each novel depicts. In the context of an intertextual reading, they are representative of de Céspedes' work of adaptation of *Les Mandarins* in her writing of *Il rimorso*. Therefore the present investigation has also determined that de Céspedes' *Il rimorso* fulfills the necessary conditions to be considered a *récriture* of de Beauvoir's *Les Mandarins.*

This thesis also contributes to an area of research that has long been overlooked: the investigation of the presence of a consistent feminist discourse as a reaction to the social construction of womanhood in the postwar years, a time generally regarded as fairly quiescent on the subject.[359] The methodology applied here, that of corroborating in terms of Existentialist philosophical

[359] Or the dissolution of what Tarrant calls 'the myth that in the 1940s and 1950s, women's rights advocates gave up and feminism died'. Shira Tarrant, *When Sex Became Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 20.

thinking the influence of French writer Simone de Beauvoir on the Italian author Alba de Céspedes' outlook on the question of woman in particular as evident in *Il rimorso*, provides a fresh approach to the study of an era in which, as Willson points out, 'the pioneering generation of feminist historians in the 1970s and 1980s mainly showed little interest',[360] and yet is described by American social historian Jacqueline Jones as 'seedtime years for the modern civil rights and women's liberation movement'.[361] In turn this opens a path for new research: the investigation and possible charting of an Italian protofeminist discourse which may specifically use the tools and language of Existentialism, the basic concepts of which pave the way for the later second-wave of Italian feminists who shunned European tradition and Simone de Beauvoir in fact and turned to America. Moreover, the study of de Beauvoir's philosophical and ideological legacy worldwide has become increasingly popular since the fiftieth anniversary of *Le Deuxième sexe* in 1999 and the centenary of her birth in 2008. However, it is quite remarkable that the influence and reception of de Beauvoir in Italy has not been subject to any real substantial study, and therefore this research provides a starting point to an original investigation and to a wider project.[362]

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[360] Perry Willson, *Women in Twentieth-Century Italy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 113.

[361] As quoted in Sheila Rowbotham, *A Century of Women: The History of Women in Britain and the United States* (New York: Viking, 1997), p. 278.

[362] In 2002, the book issued from the conference held in Paris in 1999 on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of *Le Deuxième sexe* includes studies of its reception and translations in Catalonia, Germany, Spain, Japan, Russia, America, Québec, and Switzerland. See 'Réceptions et Traductions du *Deuxième* sexe', in *Cinquantenaire du Deuxième sexe. Colloque international*, ed. by Christine Delphy and Sylvie Chaperon (Paris: Éditions Syllepse, 2002), pp. 351- 523. It is also interesting that in the call for papers for the 18th International Simone de Beauvoir Conference to be held, at the time of writing, between 23- 26 June 2010 in Cagliari, organizers Matteo Tuveri and Andrea Duranti stress that '"Mediterranean" perspectives on Simone de Beauvoir and gender issues will be particularly welcome'. In the programme of the seminar, the papers announced in the section dealing with the reception of *Le Deuxième sexe* will focus on Greece, Spain and China, and the only connection between de Beauvoir and Italy — apart from the geographical location of the conference — will be that presented in Tuveri's talk entitled *150 anni di donne italiane; ma chi sono? Dal Codice di Famiglia del 1865ai giorni nostri. Un' analisi beauvoiriana.*
<sites.google.com/site/sdbconference2010/> [accessed 28 May 2010]

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