

CONFRONTATION AND CONFLICT IN HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR
AND LE SILENCE DE LA MER

by

HEIDI SCHARFFENBERG

A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Romance Languages
and the Honors College of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts
French

June 1990

Approved: _____

Evlyn Gould

An Abstract of the Thesis of
Heidi Scharffenberg for the degree of Bachelor of Arts
in the Department of French to be taken June 1990
Title: CONFRONTATION AND CONFLICT IN HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR
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This thesis is a comparison of two fictional texts, Le Silence de la Mer and Hiroshima mon amour which present the conflict the French face in their relations with the Germans, specifically at the time of the German occupation of France during World War II. These two works were chosen because they present this conflict from distinct perspectives as they were written in different time periods and in different styles. Specifically I have dealt with three aspects of the works which reflect these differences: the characterizations of the German characters, the characterizations of the French characters, and the formal presentations of each work. In analysing these works I found that in spite of their apparent differences, each author has chosen a similar means of communicating with the reader. Both texts rely on emotional identification, on

behalf of the reader, in presenting the conflict on a very personal level.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Professors Calin and Stevenson for acting as readers on my thesis committee. I would especially like to thank Evelyn Gould, my advisor, for keeping me on track with her support and suggestions, not to mention suffering through my typing skills. Congratulations on your approaching motherhood. And thanks to all my friends for putting up with my moodiness, especially Julie, Elena, Laurie and Gary.

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INTRODUCTION

Part of being French is to be faced with the dilemma of how to react to the conflicting characteristics embodied in one's neighbors, the Germans. This dilemma took on crisis proportions during the German Occupation of France during World War II, but in the pre-war period many novels had already treated the question of whether the German was friend or foe (Atack, 67). It is during the war, however, that the answer to this question becomes of utmost importance. Le Silence de la Mer, a novel written by Vercors in 1941, and Hiroshima Mon Amour, a screenplay written by Marguerite Duras in 1959, each offer very distinct perspectives on the conflict between personal relationships and national duty in German occupied France during World War II. The propaganda and mind control characteristic of World War II further complicated this conflict by obscuring which actually were the patriotic and humanistic paths to be followed. Historically, the French were divided on whether the honorable action for France was to follow Maréchal Petain and the Vichy government, who were in favor of cooperation with the Germans, or to resist the German presence and see Germany unambiguously as the enemy of France. For those who saw Resistance as their national duty, there was an added conflict caused by the presence of individual German soldiers. They had the choice of refusing

to acknowledge the presence of the Germans, which was the "respectable" decision according to the active Resistance, or they could choose to appreciate the human qualities of each individual German soldier and simply resist the war. Each of these works presents a love story that deals with this personal national conflict, but each from a very distinct perspective.

In Le Silence de la Mer, a German Soldier, Werner von Ebrennac, is billeted at the home of a French man and his niece, who both remain nameless throughout the story. The story covers a time span of approximately six months during which the officer makes regular evening visits to the man and his niece. During these visits the officer carries on a monologue; he speaks about various subjects, including his love for France, but the man and his niece maintain the silence they have chosen as an expression of resistance to the Nazi occupation. As the story progresses, a mutual attraction develops between von Ebrennac and the niece, but, because he is an enemy of France, she suppresses her emotions. She chooses to sacrifice her feelings of a personal love for the honor of her greater love for her homeland. In terms of the above personal national conflict, this means she chooses the path commonly associated with the Resistance by respecting what she sees as national honor and the greater humanist cause rather than acting upon her personal feelings.

Hiroshima mon amour offers a distinctly different perspective. Here, too, a young French girl is courted by a German Soldier. However, unlike the niece in Le Silence de la Mer who suppresses her personal emotions for her love of homeland, the girl, referred to simply as Elle or She, ultimately succumbs to her passions and admits her love for the soldier. She thereby dishonors herself and her family. The story is set in Hiroshima in 1957, where a French actress is working on an international film on peace. During the last 24 hours of her stay in Hiroshima she has an affair with a Japanese man and once again both characters remain nameless. This love affair, which is "impossible" because the two characters are "géographiquement, philosophiquement, historiquement, économiquement, racialement, etc., éloignés le plus qu'il est possible de l'être" (11), acts as a catalyst for her memory, and through flashbacks, she relates the story of her first love with the German soldier during the war. That, too, was an impossible love. In both cases, she chooses to follow her personal feelings and to disregard the various national obstacles and implications related to the relationship.

The differences in perspective of the two works reflect the distinct historical contexts in which each work was written. During the war, people needed hope to survive and Le Silence de la Mer gave the reader a sense of strength and direction, by presenting a clear national cause. Duras, however, was writing in 1959, many years after the war. For

her, the reality of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima, the truth about the Nazi death camps, and the cruelty shown by the victors of the war have shattered all illusions of a greater national cause. She portrays war, Resistance, and their effects from a personal, individual point of view. Ultimately, both works have humanitarian, anti-oppression messages. But whereas the Vercors book, which was in fact published as an act of Resistance, seems directed at its specific situation, time and distance have given Duras a wider perspective, allowing her to view the conflict in a more universal light.

Although Le Silence de la Mer and Hiroshima mon amour are two different literary forms, the first a short story and the second a screenplay, they both have very traditional beginning, middle, end structures. In Le Silence de la Mer this structure is achieved through opening and closing chapters that correspond to the beginning and end of the story, the arrival and departure of von Ebrennac. The story itself is a first-person narrative in which the French man acts as narrator. He describes the situation as he sees it; Vercors never explains the inner thoughts of the niece concerning von Ebrennac, but only relates their attitudes as perceived by the old man. Their conflict and inner turmoil are implied rather than stated, thus a distance between the reader and the niece is maintained.

Hiroshima mon amour is also very structured. A synopsis of the work acts as an introduction, and appendices

serve as a conclusion. The screenplay itself is a dialogue divided into the traditional five acts. But despite the structure of the work, the story itself has no apparent beginning or end. Neither the original encounter between She and He, nor their final separation is ever described, and the flashbacks which recount the love story during World War II in Nevers have no apparent chronological order. The dialogue itself has very little order as well, reflecting the characters' natural thought flow. The inner turmoil in this work is voiced, whereas it must be discerned in Le Silence de la Mer. This difference is important because it coincides with the more personal approach that implies that the individual suffering is as important as the choice of solution to the conflict.

In this thesis there are three chapters. In the first chapter, "German Presence: Cause of Conflicts," I will discuss how the German presence, national and individual, during the occupation resulted in conflicts for certain French citizens as well as for certain Germans. I will examine how the characterization of von Ebrennac in Le Silence de la Mer is distinguished from that of the other Germans, and how that distinction contributes to the conflict, both specifically and historically, as well as to Vercors' portrayal of the conflict. I will also look at the characterization of the German soldier in Hiroshima mon amour and how it contributes to the conflict and Duras' portrayal of the conflict. In the second chapter, "French

Reactions," I will treat the characterizations of the various French characters in each work (the girl and her uncle in Le Silence de la Mer; She, her father, and the Resistors at the time of the Liberation in Hiroshima mon amour) and how their reactions are portrayed in relation to the personal national conflict. In the third chapter, "Formal Perspectives," I will discuss the formal differences of the two works, with emphasis on how the structure and style reinforce and enrich the perspective of each work.

CHAPTER 1

GERMAN PRESENCE: CAUSE OF CONFLICTS

In both Le Silence de la Mer and Hiroshima mon amour, the personal national conflicts experienced are due to the presence of individual German soldiers in France. None of the major French characters in either work is portrayed as either pro-Nazi or pro-Vichy that is, on the side of the French government in favor of collaboration during the Occupation. They have already decided which national path to follow. The conflict arises from the question of how they should carry out their resistance: should they resist merely national, political, and military powers, or should they resist each and every German soldier regardless of his personal merit? Historically, the stereotypes of German culture and behavior were very visible in the early months of the Occupation. "Prussian bearing, the musical German, the thoroughness of German administration, the German respect for culture, . . . all were clearly recognized and discussed by the French as they took stock of their occupiers" (Kedward, 10). The characterizations of German soldiers are an integral aspect of the portrayal of the personal national conflict as these characterizations illustrate the very roots of the problem.

The character of Werner von Ebrennac, the German soldier billeted with the French man and his daughter in Le Silence de la Mer, embodies all the characteristics commonly associated with the German humanist tradition. He represents the human German soldier that the French were discovering in the early years of the Occupation. He serves as a prototype for the German soldiers to whom many French people were being introduced. In the story, "Il fut précédé par un grand déploiement d'appareil militaire" (19), just as historically the arrival of the German soldiers in France was preceded by rumors of a barbaric German army and its associated apparatus of military invasion. His arrival is also described in military metaphors, "un torpedo militaire, gris et énorme, pénétra dans le jardin" (19). The war time setting is apparent, and it is equally clear that he is a part of this war. His arrival is described as an invasion. Yet he himself is introduced as "un jeune soldat mince, blond et souriant" (19). This physical description does not necessarily imply a personal judgement by the narrator, yet placed in the midst of the many military allusions of the introductory paragraph, the description takes on a very human appearance. The author is emphasizing von Ebrennac's humanness, even as a part of the war machine. The adjectives, "jeune" and "souriant," even imply a positive image. Positive or not, however, his image is still associated with that of the invading army. He is seen as an enemy soldier, an invading force.

Von Ebrennac retains his positive image in spite of his role as an enemy soldier throughout the story. He is never presented as a vulgar, barbaric soldier, but rather as a very intelligent, motivated musician:

. . . je compose la musique, cela est toute ma vie, et, ainsi, c'est une drôle de figure pour moi de me voir en homme de guerre. Pourtant je ne regrette pas cette guerre. Non, je crois que de ceci il sortira de grandes choses . . .
Il se redressa, sortit ses mains des poches et les tint à demi levées.
--Pardonnez-moi: peut-être j'ai pu vous blesser. Mais ce que je disais, . . . je le pense par amour pour la France. Il sortira de très grandes choses pour l'Allemagne et pour la France.
(p28-29)

As a creative individual he finds it ironic that he is now a soldier, since the traditional role of war is destruction. However, that is not how he perceives this war. He is a man of deep sentiment, and the expressions he uses, such as, "je le pense par amour pour la France," and "je crois," indicate he has given the matter much thought and truly believes in the conclusions he has drawn. Rather than seeing it as destructive, he truly seems to believe that this war is in the best interests of both France and Germany. Thus this passage indicates the idealism of von Ebrennac. War is never a comfortable experience, but the positive outcome he foresees, for France as well as Germany, far outweighs his personal suffering. The passage also underscores his compassionate nature. He realizes that his hosts may not share his idealism and therefore may be hurt by what he has

said. He is characterized as having not only humanist interests, but a very humane bearing as well.

As a musician, he has a great appreciation for French culture, especially the great French literary tradition. When speaking of French authors he exclaims: "Quel apppel! . . . Ils se présentent, ils sont comme une foule à l'entrée d'un théâtre, on ne sait pas qui faire entrer d'abord . . . mais pour la musique c'est chez nous" (31-32). He definitely has a sense of national pride, but that does not keep him from objectively appreciating French culture. This is in direct contrast with the actual goal of the Nazi regime, which was against everything not purely German. Rather than perceiving the union of France and Germany as one culture dominating another, von Ebrennac equates it to a marriage: "nous nous marierons" (32). He has great respect for what French culture has to offer and feels the union of the French and German cultures would be mutually beneficial.

The other Germans in the book represent the brutality of what the Nazi regime was actually trying to accomplish. The contrast between them and von Ebrennac underlines the distinction being made between the positive image of a typical German soldier and the regime he represents. The potential for German violence in a race so renown for its culture, is introduced through von Ebrennac's description of the girl his father would like him to marry:

La jeune fille poussa un petit cri: "Oh
il m'a piquée sur le menton! Sale petite bête,

vilain petit moustique!" Puis je lui vis faire un geste vif de la main. "J'en ai attrapé un, Werner! Oh! regardez, je vais le punir: Je lui arrache--les pattes--l'une--après--l'autre..." et elle le faisait . . . "Heureusement, continua-t-il, elle avait beaucoup d'autres prétendants. Je n'eus pas de remords. Mais aussi, j'étais effrayé pour toujours à l'égard des jeunes filles allemandes. (40)

He realizes that the "jeune fille" he had previously described as "très belle et très douce" is capable of incredible brutality. She does not just instinctively squash the mosquito that has bitten her, a relatively common reaction. She wants to make it suffer. Vercors uses the description as a parallel to the presence of the German army in France. They appear to be nice young boys, merely doing their national duty, exercising their military rights as victors of the war, yet in reality they are capable of great brutality. Von Ebrennac's horror at this brutality, "j'étais effrayé," reinforces the contrast between his character and this potential the German army represents. However, he remains unaware, and does not yet recognize the parallel between the ferocity of the girl and the ferocity of the war implied by Vercors.

His visit to Paris serves a dual purpose in the story. As a plot device, it permits him to perceive the war for what it actually is, but it also serves a propaganda purpose. His account of the trip serves to present the war to the reader clearly. The parallel previously implied between the potential violence of the German girl and that of the German army is now confirmed. The conversation

between von Ebrennac and his former friend, who had been like a brother to him, leaves no doubt that the German Occupation was much more than a purely military phenomenon:

. . . Il a dit: c'est la vie ou la mort.
pour conquérir suffit la force: pas pour
dominer"--"mais au prix de l'Esprit!
criai-je Pas à ce prix!"--L'Esprit ne meurt
jamais, dit-il. Il en a vu d'autres. Il renaît
de ses cendres. Nous devons bâtir pour dans
deux mille ans: d'abord il faut détruire."
Je le regardais . . . au fond des yeux clairs. Il
était sincère, oui. C'est ça le plus terrible."
(56-57)

This passage clearly defines the Nazi goal as one of complete mental and spiritual domination. It is shown not merely as a matter of winning the war, but as a desire to destroy all that could not be controlled. This matches the historical accounts of how the Germans attempted to destroy French culture. Not only were all new art works subjected to great censorship, but the regime was also attempting to gain complete intellectual control of France and destroy French national pride by throwing classic French authors such as Descartes and Rousseau out of the school curriculum because they posed a threat to Nazi ideology (Vercors, 149). All this completely contradicts everything von Ebrennac stands for both as an artist and a person. The thirst for destruction and domination he perceives in his friends disgusts him. His disgust for this violence separates him from the horrors of the regime he represents and thus allows him to remain a sympathetic character, the "model" German.

Many have criticized Vercors for making the portrait of von Ebrennac too sympathetic. Some have even accused him of being in favor of collaboration. But this characterization was necessitated by the perspective of 1941. As Sartre points out in What is Literature?, by 1941, the French had discovered that the German soldiers were not just barbaric invaders. Rather, many were nice people bearing remarkable resemblances to the French themselves (75). If Vercors had presented von Ebrennac as a savage brute, his audience would not have believed him. It would not have been a realistic representation of the actuality. Writing in an act of resistance in 1941, Vercors needed to convince his readers that, regardless of the positive humanist qualities embodied by individual German soldiers, each soldier was still a representative of the Nazi regime, and the Nazi ideology needed to be resisted. The contrast between von Ebrennac and the other Germans in the story shows that the typical, nice German soldier did not represent the ideology of the Regime. Vercors shows that most of these soldiers are unaware of the complete ideological domination and control the regime was attempting to instigate. Von Ebrennac entered France in "une grande voiture blindée" (39). This image may be taken as merely a physical description of the military tank he may have arrived in, but his enlightenment at the end of the story indicates that this image also implies his ignorance of the actual cause he is fighting. He seems satisfied, even happy, as long as he remains

ignorant of the reality behind the war. As soon as he is enlightened, he becomes depressed, overpowered by his own feelings of helplessness. He is defeated.

This ending serves as a call to action for the French. They cannot rely on the Germans to bring the regime under control, even the "best of all possible Germans" is at a loss before the Nazi government. This end also reflects Vercors' perception of the actuality. In La Bataille du Silence, Vercors states that he considered ending the story by having von Ebrennac decide to revolt and convince his hosts to join him; then the love of the two young people would be free to explode. But he claims that

ce happy ending m'apparut sans tarder comme une artifice littéraire, historiquement faux. Les derniers résistants à Hitler avaient disparu depuis six ans, morts ou engloutis dans le Nacht und Nebel des camps de concentration. Tout Allemand resté libre ne pouvait montrer à l'égard du Nazisme qu'une attitude d'approbation ou sinon de soumission, d'obéissance." (183)

Thus a happy ending would have been mere wishful thinking, historically incorrect, and it would have reaffirmed the positive perception many French were gaining of German soldiers. Ultimately the portrait of the German is not too sympathetic, for he feels too weak to stand up for what is right against the Nazi regime. In terms of the personal national conflict, Vercors is clearly showing that as personable as they may be, German soldiers are potentially dangerous and must be resisted.

Whereas the character of von Ebrennac is developed to underline that, although human, German soldiers still represent an ideology that had to be resisted in 1941, Duras is writing over 15 years later under peace-time circumstances. It is no longer important which aspects of the German soldier's character created the personal national conflict. In Hiroshima mon amour, that the soldier's presence did cause a conflict and that this conflict has had ramifications on the heroine's life are presented in a manner so as to take on an aspect of primary importance. By not developing his character in depth, Duras discourages the reader from identifying him with any specific stereotype or cause. His personality is not important; the emphasis is taken away from him and placed on the impact he has had on She's life. Yet her personality is not overly developed either, as is suggested by the use of the pronoun She in place of a name. The lack of names and developed personalities of all the primary characters lends a universality to the book. These characters are never explicitly identified and thus could be anyone. Although the book concentrates on the personal impact of history, and how the war has affected She's life, she herself is nameless, anonymous, and thus a universal character. Because she has no defined identity, she cannot be identified as a specific individual, and therefore the audience is more prone to identify with her. The story

transcends the war in Europe and the bombing of Hiroshima and achieves a sense of universality.

The primary characterization of the German soldier in Hiroshima is that of an enemy soldier. She describes him simply: "mon amour est un ennemi de la France" (97); she does not go on to describe what kind of person he is. However, it is very clear that, as with von Ebrennac in Le Silence de la Mer, it is the soldier as an individual who creates the conflict for her. There is never a question of her choosing the Nazi cause over that of France. Rather, she just ceases to see him as an enemy: "Je ne pouvais plus voir la moindre différence entre son corps et le mien" (147). It is no longer a question of different nations, just two human beings. She chooses him: "J'exceptais cet ennemi-ci de tous les autres. C'était mon premier amour" (147). He is not a random enemy soldier but the man she loves.

The cathartic aspect of Hiroshima makes the Japanese soldier an interesting element in the characterization of the German soldier. Although He does not adopt the character of the German soldier in an attempt to relive with her, and thereby understand, her tragic loss in Nevers, until the fourth act the audience has a sense of the fusion of the two characters as early as the opening of the second act. In the morning while he is still asleep, She watches his hands with "une intensité anormale" (43). The scene

description goes on to inform the reader of what the film audience would be seeing:

Tandis qu'elle regarde ses mains, il apparaît brutalement à la place du Japonais, le corps d'un jeune homme, dans la même pose, mais mortuaire, sur le quai d'un fleuve, en plein soleil. (La chambre est dans la pénombre.) Ce jeune homme agonise. Ses mains sont également très belles, ressemblant étonnamment à celles du Japonais (43).

This brutal superimposition of the body of a dying German soldier onto the sleeping Japanese man, shocks the audience, and at the same time indicates that there is going to be more to Hiroshima than Hiroshima itself. The astonishing physical resemblance between the two characters, causing the presence of He to provoke this subconscious image of the German soldier, indicates that the character He may be very beneficial in an analysis of the German soldier.

Just as the important aspect of the German soldier is not that he is German, that he is the enemy, but that She loves him, the importance of He is also seen in the love She has for him rather than his being Japanese. In the appendices Duras addresses the reader directly and tells the audience how to interpret the characterization of the Japanese man:

Le choix d'un acteur japonais à type occidental doit être interprété de la façon suivante: . . .

Il ne faut pas que le spectateur dise: "Que les Japonais sont donc séduisants!", mais qu'ils disent: "que cet homme-là est donc séduisant!"

. . . Si le spectateur n'oublie jamais qu'il s'agit d'un Japonais et d'une Française, la portée profonde du film n'existe plus. Si le spectateur

l'oublie, cette portée profonde est atteinte
(151).

Thus the importance is once again not that a French woman is in love with a Japanese man, but that these two people are in love. In both instances the love is impossible. Just as He and She are both "happily married" (76)--marital dissatisfaction is not the reason for their love affair--it can be assumed that She fell in love with the German soldier, not because she felt disloyalties to France, but because she simply fell in love.

It is important, however, to note that even though the audience is supposed to forget that He is Japanese, his inherent Japanese qualities are always present. It is that he is Japanese that allows She to relive her love at Nevers with him. In addition to the obstacles presented by both characters being married and living thousands of miles apart, once again there are national obstacles presented. Fifteen years is not long enough to forget deeply ingrained loyalties or resentments of wartime. Once again She is involved with an "enemy" and even though Duras claims that the audience is supposed to forget he is Japanese, He is Japanese. He is also the enemy, which underscores that the German soldier too was the enemy, and it is his role as the "enemy" that brings about the tragic ending to the love story.

The projection of the image of the German soldier onto He implies as well that even though the German soldier's physical presence has long been removed, this soldier and

her love for him still play an important role in who she is today. Her Japanese lover insists on knowing the story of Nevers because, as he says,

A cause de Nevers, je peux seulement
commencer à te connaître . . .
C'est là, il me semble l'avoir compris,
que tu as dû commencer à être comme
aujourd'hui tu es encore (80-81).

He feels that he can only understand who she is in 1957 by knowing what went on in Nevers. The rest of the text seems to support this view. Her characterization in 1957 as "une femme d'une moralité douteuse" (55), and someone who "ne veut plus avoir de patrie" (114), illustrates to what extent the soldier's presence affected her life. It was the public opinion of her homeland that murdered her lover and classified her love for him as a sin, thereby causing her intense suffering. Thus she no longer respects the arbitrary judgements of her society. His importance is therefore shown, not through who he was, but who he was for her: an enemy soldier she loved. This experience played a key role in creating her whole identity, as the concluding line of the dialogue--"Ton nom à toi est Nevers. Ne-vers-en Fran-ce" (124)--confirms. The experience is so much a part of her identity it could be her name.

It is interesting to note, however, that although his character is not developed, the work implies that the German soldier in Hiroshima mon amour shares many of the same characteristics embodied by von Ebrennac in Le Silence de la Mer. His appreciation for music, implied when he listens to

She play the piano through the open window, indicates that he, like von Ebrennac, appreciates culture. The description of his death also indicates a positive characterization: "Seul le hasard a fait que ce soit celui-ci. Le jardin est désormais marqué au signe de la banalité de sa mort" (126). The idea that his death was a banal, random event, that it served no purpose, implies that he was a good person, at least in that he posed no threat to France, and really did not deserve to die. The war was over and France had been liberated. There was no longer any need to resist the individual German. This particular soldier is even described as "heureux parce que c'était la fin de la guerre" (147). He was happy that the war was over, even though the end of the war represented German defeat. Rather than being a threat to France, he was sympathetic to the French position, or at least indifferent to the war.

The implication that both von Ebrennac and the soldier in Hiroshima mon amour oppose Nazi principles brings forth another aspect of the personal national conflict, the conflict from the German perspective. World War II is characterized by the mind control Hitler had over the majority of the German population. But those Germans who realized the atrocities the Nazi regime was committing and did not agree with them were faced with a personal national conflict as well: whether to remain loyal to their country, regardless of the regime in power, or to respect their personal moral principles and resist that regime.

The two works portray this perspective very differently. In Le Silence de la Mer, von Ebrennac is able to respect the silence of his hosts, because he himself has a great love for his country: "J'éprouve un grand estime pour les personnes qui aiment leur pays" (22). It is this love for his country that tears him apart once he realizes the ideology of his leaders. Von Ebrennac represents an ideology contrary to everything he believes in, but he does not know how to resist it without turning his back on his country. He envies his comrades who are able to support the regime with a clear conscience: "Heureux celui qui trouve avec une aussi simple certitude la route de son devoir" (58). That he ultimately chooses to fight and probably lose his life for a national cause which contradicts his personal values represents the ultimate weakness of his character. The reader is finally disappointed in von Ebrennac, because his previous characterization had created an expectation of someone who would not compromise his beliefs. This weakness is the reason Vercors urges his fellow countrymen not to submit to their personal feelings for these German individuals, but to remain loyal to their national ideals which, given his personal position as a writer and publisher of underground literature, clearly indicates resistance.

The German soldier in Hiroshima mon amour does not appear to share the weakness of moral compromise. He too seems to love his country and anticipates his return to Bavaria with excitement, yet the German defeat does not seem

to disturb him. He is just happy that the war is over (147). In an interview in Esprit, Alain Resnais, the director of the film upon whose request Duras wrote the screenplay, claims that this German soldier was in fact anti-Nazi:

C'était pour laisser sa liberté de jugement au public que nous n'avons pas indiqué que le soldat allemand était anti-Nazi, c'était pour nous implicite mais nous avons refusé de le dire pour ne pas dédouaner trop visiblement l'héroïne, ne pas rendre la sympathie trop facile, ne pas favoriser une identification que le public recherche trop. (937)

If this statement is accepted, then the soldier clearly does not let himself confuse patriotism for loyalty to the Nazi cause. Since his character is not developed extensively, the reader is not really aware of how he demonstrates his anti-Nazi feelings. It is unclear whether his anti-Nazi tendencies were merely on an idealistic level, as were those of von Ebrennac, or whether he acted upon them. This distance, between the reader and the characters, designed to prevent her from automatically attaining the status of a sympathetic character, has the reverse effect on our responses to the soldier. It prevents the reader from passing judgement upon his character. As the reader does not really know the soldier, he/she does not see his weakness; instead, he is shown merely as a victim of his national identity. This soldier, who poses no threat, is destroyed by someone who misunderstands. The soldier's death, his physical destruction as a representative of the

Nazi regime, a cause he does not support, gives him the status of a martyr in the book. Von Ebrennac is also shown as a victim of his national identity, but Vercors presents him with a choice, and he chooses to destroy himself. He is a victim, but he chooses to accept his role as a victim. Thus, even though the reader may be sympathetic, Von Ebrennac is shown as ultimately responsible for his own downfall. Duras' post-war perspective permits her to show this conflict in relation to the greater reality of all War, as a threat to all humanity, all justice, and all personal choices. She presents the German soldier as a victim of War. If Vercors had presented von Ebrennac as a martyr of war, it would have undermined his warning to the French to be wary of the humane, but ultimately responsible, German soldier by negating his personal responsibility.

CHAPTER 2

FRENCH REACTIONS

In the previous chapter I discuss how Vercors and Duras dramatize the role the individual German soldier plays in the personal national conflict experienced during the Occupation, and how each work's presentation of German characters portrays this conflict. The characterization of French characters is equally important in the presentation of this conflict. The personal national conflict was not a simple question of choosing between the honorable national path of self sacrifice or the path of self indulgence with national shame. During the occupation, especially the early years, the "honorable" course of action the French should follow was unclear. Two opposing political camps developed: the Vichy government in favor of collaboration and the-- Gaullists named after General de Gualle--who favored resistance; both claimed to promote the honorable course of action for the French. This chapter will discuss the characterization of the French in both Le Silence de la Mer and Hiroshima mon amour, and show how their choices and reactions to the personal national conflicts they experience offer very distinct perspectives on the question of national honor.

Vercors was writing Le Silence de la Mer at a time when French national esteem was at a very low point. The Pétain government felt the way to salvage France's situation after their military defeat was to become an ally of Germany. Thus Vichy was presenting France as a country "submitting to its conqueror and thanking God for its punishment, submitting gratefully, almost gladly!" (Vercors, 129). Pétain presented collaboration as the only way of loyally serving France (Kedward, 33)). The characters in Vercors' Le Silence de la Mer refute this image; they affirm that there was in fact an alternative path, that of resistance, through which the honorable interests of France could be served.

The old man and his niece in the story are portrayed as anonymous characters who exemplify the ideal French patriot as perceived by the Resistance. Their anonymity allows them to represent France and the French spirit rather than merely an isolated French man and his niece. As Attack explains in her article, "Political perspectives in Resistance fiction," the French characters represent a homogeneous element in opposition to the multiple elements of the German character: they "just are and are French" (67).

These characters are defined by their decision to maintain their silence towards a representative of the invading army rather than to recognize his personal merit. This decision is always very clear; they have decided not to change their life in the slightest because of the soldier's presence. Their refusal to acknowledge him is shown as a

refusal of the Nazi ideology, the same ideology the official French government is trying so hard to become a part of as a way of obtaining a positive peace settlement at the end of the war (Paxton, 187). They are forced to lodge this soldier, a symbol of the occupation itself, but even though they cannot openly voice their rejection of the system, they can demonstrate their opposition through their silence. They serve to reinforce the decision of French citizens who are already practicing personal resistance by communicating a sense of solidarity, the sense that they are not alone in the struggle. They also provide a model of a clear patriotic path for those experiencing confusion over what that truly patriotic path is.

Neither character ever questions his/her resistance to the War, yet the humane character of von Ebrennac leads the uncle to question their silence towards him as an individual. The conflict and difficulties he experiences in maintaining his silence are purely personal and never ideological doubts: "je ne puis sans souffrir offenser un homme fût-il mon ennemi" (25). He has no qualms about offending the Nazi cause. It bothers him that his rejection of the cause must carry over to the rejection of a man whose humane aspects are very apparent, and for whom he would have much respect under normal circumstances, but he clearly sees his duty and realizes what he must do. The conflict he experiences adds to the kind and sympathetic aspects of his

character. He is a character the French can relate to. His struggle parallels their own.

The girl never shares the doubts of her uncle. In a scene in which von Ebrennac has just wished them a good evening after one of his regular visits, he voices his doubts to her,

Je terminai silencieusement ma pipe. Je toussai un peu et je dis: "C'est peut-être inhumain de lui refuser l'obole d'un seul mot." Ma nièce leva son visage. Elle haussait très haut les sourcils, sur des yeux brillants et indignés (29).

She is clearly indignant at the suggestion. She recognizes that to resist the cause, she must also resist the individuals who represent that cause. Breaking their silence would imply an acceptance of the ideology of the regime he represents even though his own personal ideology does not seem to match that of his regime. Her clear vision of her duty serves as an example to her uncle; he looks to her for guidance: "Je regardai ma nièce pour pêcher dans ses yeux un encouragement ou un signe" (50). He reads his niece for guidance and strength just as Vercors hopes the reader of 1941 will read the uncle. The French need a role model and by giving the uncle a role model he ultimately gives the reader one as well. The unquestioning vision of the niece presents everything in very concrete terms.

Regardless of her clear vision, however, the niece does experience intense inner conflict which is an integral aspect of her characterization. The suffering she undergoes

is every bit as real as that of her uncle--perhaps more real as a result of the mutual romantic attraction between herself and von Ebrennac:

. . . elle était très pâle et je vis glissant sur les dents dont apparut une fine ligne blanche, se lever la lèvre supérieure dans une contraction douloureuse: et moi devant ce drame intime, soudain dévoilé et qui dépassait de si haut le tourment bénin de mes tergiversations (50)

Her attraction to von Ebrennac results in an intense personal conflict. The uncle presents her as a young woman in love, one who feels she must sacrifice that love because to acknowledge her feelings would be disloyal to her country. She sees her personal feelings as insignificant before the honor of her homeland, so she suppresses her emotions. Never once does she verbalize them, showing how strong her commitment and belief in the cause is. The character Vercors creates never once thinks of letting her attraction for the enemy take precedence over what she knows to be ideologically correct. Her choice and resolution are always clear. Her vision of purpose, however, does nothing to lessen her emotional pain, but it does give her the strength to do what she knows is best.

It is only in a scene after the soldier's return from Paris--where he discovered the realities of Nazism and admits to the man and his niece that everything he has told them the past six months is false--only then does she acknowledge his presence:

La jeune fille lentement laissa tomber ses mains au creux de sa jupe, où elles demeurèrent penchées et inertes comme des barques échouées sur le sable, et lentement elle leva la tête, et alors, pour la première fois--pour la première fois--elle offrit à l'officier le regard de ses yeux pâles (52).

He no longer poses an ideological threat; she can now not only acknowledge his presence, but in letting him see her eyes, the mirrors of the soul, she lets him know her feelings. But when he ultimately decides to remain obedient and go to fight at the front, he is still physically a part of that ideology even though he disagrees with it on a moral basis, and then she only utters a barely discernible "adieu." The "adieu" recognizes her feelings towards him, but also indicates her inability to accept any representative of the Nazi cause, no matter how deceived he himself feels by the regime.

The humanity and suffering of the two characters present throughout the story constantly underscores the conflict; if the characters were not caring human people, the conflict would not exist, the human qualities of the German soldiers would have no affect on them. By presenting the conflict, Vercors recognizes its existence. It is only human to experience conflict, but the examples he creates show that despite this conflict, the path to follow is clear. Vercors shows that it is no longer a question of personalities and personal relationships, but one of national pride. The man and his niece serve as role models

for the French and as affirmations that the French spirit is alive and ready to resist.

Vercors, writing at a time when the French had a great need for direction, depicts characters that reaffirm that there were in fact people in whom the French could take pride and after whom they could model themselves.

Duras takes an entirely different approach. She is not writing during the war as an act of Resistance, so she does not need to depict the ideal, glorious path that should be followed. She is writing in 1959, at a time when one can no longer be certain of the existence of absolutes. Hindsight has shed doubts on even the noblest ideologies. The Resistance, in fighting the atrocities of Nazism, committed acts just as violent and absurd as those committed by the Nazis. The bombing of Hiroshima has been justified by the idea that it ended the War, but even as an end to the War, such a horrible event, the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent people cannot be seen as rational. It was not the French Resistance that dropped the bomb on Hiroshima, but by presenting the two stories together, Duras draws a parallel between the two actions. Both represent how national and ideological causes tend to rationalize horrors which are actually beyond rationalization. Duras looks at the conflicts experienced during the War from the personal perspective in an attempt to avoid the various national and ideological implications associated with a specific cause. She is thus able to choose a victim of the Resistance as her

protagonist. In Hiroshima the character She succumbs to her personal feelings and falls in love with a German soldier. Historically, women who had love affairs with German soldiers were punished as traitors. At the Liberation their heads were shaven, as is the case of She. But rather than being portrayed as an enemy of France and a weak character, She is presented as a victim of the war.

It is very important to note that She narrates her own story. The reader sees what has happened through her eyes, yet never really knows her. The rendition of the story is so subjective and internalized that a full well-rounded concept of who or what She is never really develops. The reader learns her story and knows that she suffers, but never really understands. Her anonymity serves to reinforce the idea that the reader does not really know her. Her struggle is so personal, so internal, that it does not really matter who she is or what her name is. A name would do nothing to clarify her conflict. In fact, the work seems to indicate that a name would only add to the baggage already associated with her, giving the reader another excuse to identify her, which would in turn make it more difficult for the reader to identify with her. Rather than presenting an ideological cause or a character people can identify, she presents a love story with which people can identify.

Love is so personal and individual it is beyond understanding and that is the subject here. But at the same

time nothing is more universal than love. Not everyone loves the same person, the same thing, or in the same way, but every one knows what it is to love. By offering such a personal viewpoint, Duras does not confine herself to the specific ideologies of World War II. She suggests the destruction and horror of all wars and any cause that loses control. By using a universal feeling such as love to communicate this horror, Duras attempts to keep the audience objective and avoid individual opinions in favor of or opposed to any specific ideologies.

She's relationship with the German soldier is never a matter of a political or ideological choice. They are simply two young people in love. She is never shown as someone trying to betray her country. Duras portrays a young woman pursued by a young man: "Un mois durant, il m'a suivie" (146), unable to deny her budding passions: "Comment ignorer qu'il était là pour moi" (147). She chooses to accept and love him as an individual. Nothing in the work indicates that she was motivated by collaborationist intentions. Not only does she attempt to resist him as she has been taught: "je lui pansai la main comme on m'avait appris dans la haine. L'ennemie remercia" (145), but a footnote (143) which indicates the possibility that her mother is actually Jewish, reaffirms the idea that collaboration was never a question. Duras presents her falling in love as a natural consequence to her surroundings. "Les seuls hommes de la ville étaient

allemands. J'avais dix-sept ans" (144). It is only her human emotions, the emotions experienced by any seventeen year old woman, that lead her to "betray" her country.

Rather than being an act of collaboration or treason, then, her affair was a way for her to forget the war and all its misery. Of her life during the war before she falls in love, she says, "la guerre était interminable. Je n'arrivais à sortir, ni de la guerre, ni de ma jeunesse" (144). The war captured her, prevented her from living and experiencing her youth. In contrast, she alludes to the time of her relationship with the German as being "pendant notre bonheur" (98). This image does nothing to evoke a war-time image; their love serves as a means of escaping the war and the misery of it.

The character She is contrasted with the other French characters in the book, especially the resisters who took it upon themselves to punish her. Rather than being characterized as martyrs and heroes as in Le Silence de la Mer, the resisters in Hiroshima mon amour are presented as persecutors. People often forget that a noble cause, such as the Resistance, can become angry and violent. Duras shows that even a noble cause can run away from itself. Thus her characterization of the resisters is anything but glorious. She describes them as "jeunes . . . , des héros sans imagination" (96), and describes their form of justice as "une justice hâtive et imbécile" (139). Yet she does not pass personal judgement upon them. Their personalities are

never the question. She is not discussing whether or not they are actually cruel men; she just presents them as young and blinded by their need for vengeance in the name of a national cause, in much the same way von Ebrennac is blinded by his national pride throughout most of Le Silence de la Mer. She does not offer judgement upon the cause either, she merely points out that horrible violence may be committed in the name of any cause no matter how noble. Shaving the heads of women who had loved German soldiers was a barbaric action. These women were not enemies of France, and had they been, in liberated France they no longer posed a threat. Duras portrays, then, a Resistance just as capable of violence and inhumanity as the regime it is resisting. The resisters are not shown as noble, glorious war heroes, but as young, hasty and "ivre de liberté" (132). Regardless of the national cause, the Resistance at the Liberation had a devastating effect on the life of She. The question presented is no longer which ideological path should be followed, but the question of putting any ideology or cause before human sympathy and understanding. She's own father prefers that people think she is dead because of the dishonor she has brought to the family(89). His choice to favor the public opinion at the expense of the personal father-daughter bond is devastating.

The Hiroshima setting of the story underscores the idea of blinding overzealous patriotism in a war-time situation. Hiroshima is the city that best serves as a reminder of the

type of destruction that can result even in the name of the "right" cause. The bombing of Hiroshima did result in the end of the war, but at an incredible and irreparable cost. Whether the allies were on the right side or not, did they have a right to devastate an entire city of innocent people? The bomb destroyed citizens, not soldiers. If the resisters were fighting for a just cause, did that give them the right to destroy the life of a woman who was only guilty of loving an enemy soldier? Duras is looking at the conflict from an individual viewpoint as the story revolves around the internal conflict she continues to experience. In presenting such a subjective perspective, however, she is also posing a greater universal question about subjectivity in general. The viewpoint portrayed is so personalized and internalized that no absolutes are ever offered, but the very point of view and setting of the story imply a more universal statement about the subjectivity of war and ideologies in general.

Ultimately, both these works illustrate similar actualities. The popular conception of the honorable course of action is to resist the Nazi and fascist values prevalent at the time, which entails opposing or ignoring the German presence. However each work offers a very distinct perspective on this attitude. Vercors, writing in 1941, a time at which the majority of France is still uncertain as to whether Resistance or Collaboration is the honorable path to follow, offers a clear choice in favor of Resistance. He

glorifies his characters and their role as Resistors. He presents two characters the French can be proud of and model their own lives after. By 1957, the very notion of national honor has been placed in doubt: "j'ai eu l'honneur d'avoir été deshonorée. Le rasoir sur la tête, on a, de la bêtise, une intelligence extraordinaire. Je désire avoir vécu cet instant-là. Cet incomparable instant" (105). By equating her humiliating punishment with honor, this passage illustrates the lack of absolutes in the postwar era. She did not want to be spared by the "honorable" cause that killed her lover because of some national bond. She wanted nothing to do with such a feeling of national loyalty, and thus it was an honor for her to be punished by the cause that caused her lover's death. In a war-time setting, sides must be chosen. Vercors needed to present as black and white a choice as possible, but in post-war reality, nothing is certain. There are no longer any absolutes, only questions. Duras poses the question of whether honor can even exist. Her protagonist is a young woman publicly disgraced by her fellow countrymen for choosing to feel for someone arbitrarily classified as an enemy. She is disputing the good Frenchman/bad German stereotypes and showing that both sides are equally capable of absurd violence.

In Vercors' book, the German and French characters all choose loyalty to a national cause or ideal, as opposed to their personal feelings. For the French characters, this is

seen as a positive choice, but for von Ebrennac this choice is presented as his unique flaw. This apparent contradiction implies that Vercors is not advocating blind loyalty to a cause any more than Duras. He suggests that each cause needs to be weighed and evaluated objectively before being chosen. In contrast, Duras questions the very assumption that an objective choice between right and wrong can be made. Her characterizations question the traditional value judgements associated with different prototypic characters, showing that nothing is either all bad or all good. She underscores the negative actions performed in the name of the right cause. No ideology is beyond fault, only the horror of their acts can be judged in definite terms. "Tondre une fille parce qu'elle a aimé d'amour un ennemi officiel de son pays, est un absolu et d'horreur et de bêtise" (15). This citation is taken from the synopsis in which Duras herself is addressing her audience. Throughout Hiroshima, she only judges the actions committed, never the people or the ideologies behind them. To shave a young girls head for having been in love with someone classified as an enemy soldier can be seen in definitive terms. It is both ridiculous and horrible.

Vercors and Duras are both suggesting that people take a more objective look at their own situation and ideologies. But whereas Vercors suggests that the right path can be found, that people can find direction and guidance in a great cause, Duras implies that people need an objective

view of their own subjectivity. Every individual situation needs to be judged uniquely. An action's humanity needs to be based on the action, not on the cause the action supports. This concept is illustrated by the bombing of Hiroshima more than by any other event in recent history, a perspective Vercors does not have while writing Le Silence.

CHAPTER 3

FORMAL PERSPECTIVES

In spite of any thematic or plot similarities, Le Silence de la Mer and Hiroshima mon amour have completely different forms. Le Silence is a traditional first-person narrative, while Hiroshima is a screenplay for a film in the form of a dialogue with scene descriptions that correspond to the visual images of the film. Le Silence is divided into eight different sections and the story spans a six month time period. Hiroshima is divided into the traditional five acts, and the primary story line, the love affair between She and He, takes place within an isolated 24-hour time frame. Duras includes a synopsis which acts as an introduction and appendices which act as a conclusion, adding to the physical structure of the work.

The physical structure of Hiroshima becomes very interesting when one considers the content of the work. The traditional five acts and the unity of time represented by the primary action taking place within 24-hours are used by classical drama to represent a perfect ordered world. The story itself, however, does not seem to be indicative of an ordered world. It seems to have no beginning and no end: it begins in She's hotel room bed. He and She are discussing the tragedy of Hiroshima after having made love.

The audience never sees their initial meeting, but only hears that they met the night before in a café. The story ends with both characters together in the same hotel room, affirming that they will forget, that they have in fact already forgotten, each other. They have lost their individual identity; they are just representations of places: "Elle: Hiroshima. C'est ton nom. Lui: C'est mon nom. Oui. Ton nom à toi est Nevers. Ne-vers-en-Fran-ce." (124). The flashbacks of her first impossible love affair in Nevers during the war are more ordered in that they present a completed or definitely finished action. The flashbacks ultimately reveal her first meeting with the German soldier and his death; thus, even though she may not have resolved his death internally, his death represents certain physical finality to their relationship. But the flashbacks themselves are communicated without any apparent chronological order, just as the conversations between He and She do not seem to follow any specific order. Additionally, the appendices at the end of the book, although they function structurally as a conclusion, contain character descriptions, scene descriptions of Nevers, and the story of Nevers as told by She. All this information serves to situate the story, and that it is placed as a conclusion, also attests to the lack of actual order in reality.

The form of Le Silence is not as elaborate as that of Hiroshima, but it is very deliberate. The work is divided

into eight sections. The first, only two pages long, serves as an introduction to the story by situating it and describing the arrival of von Ebrennac. The six middle sections, each ranging from three to five pages, recount a specific evening representative of all the evenings the characters spend together. The concluding section, twelve pages, seems to be the most important, not only because of its position as the conclusion, but because of its significant greater length as well. It is also interesting to note that this is the only section separated from the other sections by a citation centered on a blank page,

OTHELLO
Eteignons cette lumière, pour ensuite
éteindre celle de sa vie.

This citation distinctly sets this section apart from the previous sections both physically and by indicating the change in tone. The reference to Othello, a violent and tragic, love story, alludes to the tragic element of the story being told. If the story is being read as it was intended to be read in 1941, as a didactic work, as a call to resistance, this distinction and importance corresponds to the content. This is the chapter in which von Ebrennac discovers the reality of the Nazi ideology, but rather than fighting it, he lets it depress him and lets himself be conquered by it. Perhaps he had no other alternative, but according to Vercors' portrayal he did have a choice, and his decision not to fight is shown as a weakness. Thus it

is this weak aspect of his character, not the positive qualities portrayed in the preceding chapters, which is significant and necessitates resistance, in this case characterized by the silence of the man and his niece.

As Hiroshima is a dialogue, He and She tell their own stories. Duras presents their thoughts as they actually occur. This portrayal, realistic at least from the psychological standpoint, takes on a surreal appearance. This surreal, psychological, portrayal is very important considering Duras is trying to take a new approach to history. In the synopsis which acts as an introduction to the dialogue, Duras herself addresses the reader and seems to explain how the dialogue should be read or the film should be viewed.

Toujours leur histoire personnelle, aussi
courte soit-elle, l'emportera sur HIROSHIMA
Si cette condition n'était pas tenue, ce
film, encore une fois , ne serait qu'un film de
commande de plus, sans aucun intérêt sauf celui
d'un documentaire romancé. Si cette condition est
tenue, on aboutira à une espèce de faux
documentaire qui sera bien plus probant de la
leçon de HIROSHIMA qu'un documentaire de
commande (12).

Duras purposefully intermingles the past and the present: the love story of Nevers and the love story of Hiroshima, the tragedy of Hiroshima and She's own personal tragedy. She is trying to create a film with a probing lesson of Hiroshima by inscribing the horrible historical facts in "leur histoire personnelle" which is a love story. Love is

the most personal intimate feeling that exists; it cannot be rationally explained or understood. Yet at the same time love is completely universal. Although the exact circumstances of the love story may be very obscure, the idea of impossible, forbidden, or lost love is an idea that creates an emotional reaction in almost everyone. It is a concept that is real to everyone. Whereas, although the bombing of Hiroshima evokes horror, it is incomprehensible, and therefore unreal to the audience. It does not communicate the impact of the horror in the way the tragedy of lost love can.

Duras is trying to avoid another general informational description of history that will merely present the facts. She wants a story that will make people feel, that will help them to see beyond the facts. The character, She, is herself an actress in a film about peace which Duras describes in the synopsis as "pas un film ridicule du tout , mais un film DE PLUS, c'est tout" (14). The facts of the Hiroshima bombing have been presented in an endless number of documentaries and historical accounts; another documentary is not going to reveal anything any more shocking than its predecessors have. If there is a need for another film about Hiroshima, it is a need for a new type of film. Duras prefers to emphasize the personal impact of history. Thus the usage of dialogue to portray the thoughts of the characters as they occur is very significant. History is still alive, the consequences of the Occupation

and the Liberation continue in She. History cannot be treated merely as isolated facts and events. History affects people, the way they feel, the way they think, the way they act and this impact is what gives history its relevance.

The style and content of the actual dialogue support the claims Duras makes in the synopsis regarding how the film should be viewed or the screenplay should be read. She and He are involved in intimate conversation. Yet, they are discussing things that have become so banal they seem to have lost both their significance and their ability to be communicated. As Duras states in the synopsis, the horrible banality attributed to the idea that one can talk about Hiroshima anywhere, even in a hotel room bed, is voluntary. ". . . On peut parler de Hiroshima partout, même dans un lit d'hôtel, au cours d'amours de rencontre, d'amours adultères. Les deux corps des héros, réellement épris, nous le rappelleront" (10). She is trying to shock us into remembering the atrocity of Hiroshima itself. By associating Hiroshima with a sexual image, Duras brings the topic to a very human, universal level. The banality with which the topic is treated indicates that the utter horror of the atomic bomb itself is being forgotten.

The idea that they are discussing Hiroshima in such commonplace circumstances represents the theme of communication present throughout Hiroshima. Can such a tragedy be communicated to someone else? She seems to feel

that she understands what happened at Hiroshima. He insists throughout the first act that She cannot know what took place. It is a constant series of negations and affirmations:

Lui: Tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima. Rien.
 Elle: J'ai tout vu, tout.
 Elle: Ainsi l'hôpital, je l'ai vu. J'en suis sûre . L'hôpital existe à Hiroshima. Comment aurais-je pu éviter de le voir?
 Lui: Tu n'as pas vu d'hôpital à Hiroshima. Tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima.
 Elle: Quatre fois au musée . . .
 Lui: Quel musée à Hiroshima? . . .
 Elle: J'ai vu les actualités.
 Le deuxième jour, dit l'Histoire, je ne l'ai pas inventé, dès le deuxième jour, des espèces animales précises ont resurgi des profondeurs de la terre et des cendres.
 Des chiens ont été photographiés.
 Pour toujours.
 Je les ai vus.
 J'ai vu les actualités.
 Je les ai vues.
 Du premier jour.
 Du deuxième jour.
 Du troisième jour.
 Lui: Tu n'as rien vu. Rien. (22-27)

This passage underscores the point Duras makes in her synopsis, that knowing the facts does not automatically render some sort of understanding. She has seen things, and the visual images in the film and the descriptions in the screenplay portray the horrors she has seen. The reader or viewer is receiving these images as well. These representations are seeable. She has seen them, the audience sees them. It is almost absurd that He is denying this sight shared by She and the audience simultaneously. The scene only works if his intention in using the word

"sight" is expanded to include understanding. He is saying these representations both verbal and physical, horrible as they may be, do not really convey the tragedy. Yes she's seen the hospital and the dogs and the horrible affects of the bomb. These visions, these facts, although they shock, do not express the greater implications of the bomb, they do not convey the terrible emotional impact the bombing must have had.

Nothing in the work is ever truly communicated. As the work is a dialogue, each character speaks directly and articulates his or her own understanding of the historical events that took place in France and Hiroshima respectively. Yet they are unable to communicate with each other. They speak at one another, but nothing penetrates. She cannot even speak of what happened to her after the liberation. She must relive the experience by projecting the image of the dead German soldier onto He. She must relive the experience to express it, and even then it seems as if He is unable to understand what she is feeling. He wants to understand, as we see him attempting to draw the story from her:

Lui: Tu cries?

Elle: Au début , non, je ne crie pas. Je t'appelle doucement.

Lui: Mais je suis mort.

Elle: Je t'appelle quand même. Même mort. Puis un jour, tout à coup, je crie, je crie très fort comme une sourde. C'est alors qu'on me met dans la cave. Pour me punir.

Lui: Tu cries quoi?

Elle: Ton nom allemand. Seulement ton nom. Je
 n'ai plus qu'une seule mémoire, celle de ton nom.
 Elle: Je promets de ne plus crier. Alors on me
 remonte dans ma chambre.
 Elle: Je n'en peux plus d'avoir envie de toi.
 Lui: Tu as peur? (90-91)

The scene goes on and on as He probes She, trying to discover just what she experienced, trying to know her. Yet he never can. This dialogue is accompanied by scenes of Nevers. The viewer sees and the reader imagines what exactly she is going through. These scenes offer an objective view of what exactly did happen in Nevers. It is important to remember that although the screenplay is a written work and therefore subject to the subjectivity of language and choices of adjectives, it is a description of a potential film which presents a visual picture that the viewer is able to interpret for him/herself. It is as if Duras is reinforcing the idea that communication is subjective, that nothing is understood except as a person can relate to a personal experience. Duras eliminates the subjectivity of a visible narrator, and thus only the inherent subjectivity of the author and that of the audience are factors in interpreting the story. The images and the story itself are very deliberate and meant to evoke a certain type of reaction, but the images themselves rather than the opinion of a narrator elicits the reaction.

Le Silence is told in the form of a first-person narrative. Therefore, it has already interpreted the actions and events it is relating. This approach only allows for a surface view of the emotions of the niece and

von Ebrennac. It is not the same surface view given in Hiroshima in which the words and actions of the characters are presented directly. Le Silence presents the story from the viewpoint of the uncle, the narrator, and thus the descriptions all inherently contain his personal evaluation of the actions and expressions of both his niece and von Ebrennac. The following citation, taken from a description of one of von Ebrennac's regular evening visits, illustrates just how the uncle interprets the actions as he describes them.

. . . Alors il regardait ma nièce, avec cette expression d'approbation à la fois souriante et grave qui avait été la sienne dès le premier jour. Et moi je sentais l'âme de ma nièce s'agiter dans cette prison qu'elle avait elle-même construite, je le voyais à bien des signes dont le moindre était un léger tremblement des doigts (38).

The uncle is reading and interpreting his niece as well as von Ebrennac. He has interpreted von Ebrennac's expression as one of "approbation" and presented it as a fact. It is neither von Ebrennac nor the reader who decides that von Ebrennac's expression is one of "approval," only the uncle, who himself respects and admires the silence of his niece interprets. The reader does not have the liberty of drawing his/her own conclusion from an "objective" description of this gaze. If von Ebrennac, the object of her silence respects her decision to reject him on a basis of national ideals rather than one of individual personality, the personal insult must be of much lesser importance than

loyalty to one's country. The reader also feels the agitation of the niece because the uncle feels it: "Je sentais." He is reading her: "je le voyais à bien des signes," and in turn relaying what he has read to the reader. He infers her turmoil from the trembling of her fingertips and presents it as fact. This narrative form is extremely appropriate for a work of resistance that attempts to indoctrinate the reader with a specific ideology. The very concept of resistance literature is based on the idea that a writer can communicate an ideology to the reader, that the reader can be convinced of something. By presenting the vision of the uncle, a resistor, as truth, Vercors manipulates the reader into adopting this viewpoint.

It is interesting to note that all the French characters in Le Silence are nameless. Thus they cannot be identified, as opposed to Von Ebrennac who, although a prototype, does have a definite identity. The difference is that the man and his niece are supposed to evoke a sense of identification. The reader is supposed to identify with the uncle, to see as he sees, and thereby to draw the same conclusions he draws, whereas rather than identifying with von Ebrennac, the reader needs to be able to identify him in order to resist the ideology he represents.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the niece is characterized as an ideal resistor, she serves as a role model or symbol for French citizens looking for guidance and support in their very difficult decisions. The distance

between the narrator and the niece allows her to maintain that idealized image. It also adds to the establishment of reason and order in the book. A person's exterior can easily hide the full extent of his/her inner turmoil, inner doubts present a person's weaknesses, and by avoiding insight into any possible doubts, Vercors creates a very strong character who is beyond such doubts. That she is beyond these doubts indicates the absolute terms in which Vercors presents the conflict. The first person narrative allows the reader to see that the uncle is in fact ashamed of having even the slightest doubts. After his niece raises her eyebrows quizzically at his suggestion that perhaps it is inhumane to not speak a single word to von Ebrennac he states "Je me sentis presque un peu rougir" (29). But his voiced doubts are just as important as the silent exterior of the niece that presents such a certain course. Once again it encourages an identification between the narrator and the reader, especially the reader of 1941 who is experiencing the same type of conflicts. The personal national conflict is very real. This portrayal acknowledges the conflict, but ultimately implies the existence of a definite answer, resistance.

When it is compared with Hiroshima mon amour, the fact that silence is a primary theme of Le Silence de la Mer becomes very interesting. Even though the story revolves around the silence of the man and his niece toward the German soldier, communication is achieved through this

silence. The niece does not speak more than two sentences through the entire story, yet her uncle, the German soldier, and the reader all assume they understand her. To a great extent the power of this work is found in the descriptions Vercors uses to convey the feelings or attitudes of the character across the silence.

Le silence tomba une fois de plus. Une fois de plus, mais, cette fois, combien plus obscur et tendu! Certes, sous les silences d'autan,--comme, sous la calme surface des eaux, la mêlée des bêtes dans la mer,-- je sentais bien grouiller la vie sous marine des sentiments cachées, des désirs et des pensées qui se nient et qui luttent. Mais sous celui-ci, ah! rien qu'une affreuse oppression...
(55)

It is the silence here that clearly communicates everything. This passage not only indicates that a certain mood is being communicated through this particular silence, a stifling feeling of oppression and helplessness, but it indicates that the mood was communicated through previous silences as well. In spite of the silence, the uncle has sensed not only his own conflicting emotions, but those of his niece and von Ebrennac too. It is not simple tension that is being sensed, but opposing desires struggling to deny, to repress each other. The silence he describes is as alive as the sea, and it achieves communication, even though the idea of silence itself implies a lack of communication. Vercors is describing a world in which communication exists everywhere.

Although, as noted earlier, Hiroshima mon amour is a dialogue, the text is actually a representation of a lack of

communication. The French woman and the Japanese man are involved in intimate conversation. Yet they never really communicate. They talk at each other rather than to each other. Their lack of communication raises the question of whether communication is even possible. The process of communication involves not only the transmitted message, but the received message as well. The message must be translated from a mental ideal into words and in turn translated into a new mental image, which may or may not resemble the original image. Even among native speakers of the same language, words often have slightly different nuances or connotations. Duras is often associated with the contemporary French literary tradition referred to as the "nouveau roman." This tradition questions the idea of language, many "nouveau roman" authors have played at telling the same story in several different ways to show just how subjective language can be. Language has been placed in question, many of these authors no longer believe in the value of words. Duras relates this problem of communication to history, specifically the tragedies, both global and personal of World War II. Traditionally, history is the representation of the past through language, but if language has been placed in question, then history too must now be placed in doubt. Our understanding of what took place in Hiroshima must likewise be placed in doubt..

In the synopsis Duras states that "Tout ce qu'on peut faire c'est de parler de l'impossibilité de parler de

Hiroshima" (10). Throughout the book Duras asks if communication, real understanding, is possible. The whole premise of the film, the new approach Duras takes, questions traditional methods of communication, of trying to portray exactly what happened. The actual images of Hiroshima are so horrible that they shock, but they are too awful to promote real understanding. Thus she conveys historical "truths" through a fictional love story. She and He have no names just like the uncle and his niece in Le Silence. Once again this anonymity prevents the characters from being identified, but the love theme encourages an audience identification. She is constantly drawing parallels between the tragedy of Hiroshima and her own personal tragedy. ". . . Ecoute, moi, comme toi, je connais l'oublie..." (31). She formulates her own idea of what happened in Hiroshima with respect to her own tragic loss. In the same way, personal experiences with love may be called upon by the audience to achieve some sense of comprehension of the film and of both tragedies. The audience is not to identify with her loss because the German soldier was a part of a noble cause. Rather the identification should result from the idea of any tragic loss. Whether the ideology was "right" or "wrong" the love loss that She experiences is what is important.

That the ideology is not important in measuring the loss the major distinction between the perspective of Duras' work and that of Vercors. Vercors is presenting the proper ideological path to follow, and Duras is going beyond

ideologies. Yes, the Resistance may have been an honorable cause, hindsight of the Nazi atrocities seems to support the Resistance movement, but that does not mean all the acts committed in the name of this honorable ideology were also honorable. Horrible actions resulting in great suffering were committed in the name of the Resistance at the Liberation of France. The combination of She's tragic loss and suffering at the Liberation and the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima underscores the idea of national or ideological subjectivity present throughout the book. Shaving a woman's head because she loved an enemy soldier is an inhumane action, just as dropping an atomic bomb on thousands of innocent people is horrible. Although one is a global tragedy affecting hundreds of thousands of people, and the other is a personal tragedy only affecting She and her family, both actions are so awful they are almost unthinkable under peaceful circumstances, yet both actions were committed in the name of the "right" cause.

Ultimately, both Le Silence de la Mer and Hiroshima mon amour evoke formally what they seem to communicate. The narrator of Le Silence de la Mer has an exterior view of the suffering of his niece. Only through minute details--"ma nièce tricotait lentement d'un air très appliqué" (26)--is her suffering portrayed. The concentration she devotes to her knitting implies her inner struggle. The narrator here must be very observant--it is up to him to perceive this struggle. Vercors is encouraging his fellow countrymen to

follow the example of the narrator and look carefully around them in order to realize that the French spirit is alive and willing to fight against Nazi ideals. The silence and immobility described in the book can be seen as a reflection of France itself, a calm exterior that is unable to openly oppose the occupation. But it is a very tense, thick silence with all kinds of turmoil and undertones beneath the surface, like the sea. France may have a calm exterior, but the Resistance is growing beneath the surface. The very publication of Le Silence de la Mer is proof of the relationship between the oppressive controlling government and the Resistance. The novel had to be published clandestinely, but it was ultimately published. Vercors is suggesting that French citizens follow not only the examples set by his French characters, but that they follow the example he has set by publishing this novel as well: to make personal sacrifices and take risks for the attainable ideal of greater national honor.

Hiroshima mon amour, on the other hand, is not the story of France, of a great cause, or of an ideology. It is the story of She. It is an attempt to show not only the personal impact of history, but to show as well that history can only be understood from a very intimate and personal perspective. Thus she chooses to write History from the personal perspective. Why write national history when the ideas of language and communication are in such doubt? Since objective communication is no longer possible, the

audience needs an intimate history it can identify with rather than a factual history it can understand and know. It has already been noted that She constantly draws from her own personal tragedy in order to have some grasp of what actually happened at Hiroshima. In describing all she has seen at Hiroshima, She acknowledges that the representations of the tragedy do nothing to convey the magnitude of it:

Les reconstitutions on été faites le plus sérieusement possible.

Les films ont été faits le plus sérieusement possible.

L'illusion, c'est bien simple, est tellement parfaite que les touristes pleurent.

On peut toujours se moquer mais que peut faire d'autre un touriste que, justement, pleurer? (25)

The "reconstitutions", the photographs, the films, the museums, have all been very serious attempts to give an exact rendition of the horrors of the bomb, "the illusion is perfect." Once again these horrors shock, but they do not promote understanding. That the crying of the tourists could be seen as laughable--"On peut toujours se moquer"--indicates that the tourists have no real concept of how tragic Hiroshima actually was. The situation disturbs them, makes them uncomfortable, but they cannot accept it or the possibility that it could happen again. Here again Duras is not criticizing the tourists' inability to understand, but rather History's portrayal of the tragedy and the very idea that history can be understood. How could all these horrible images possibly be understood--"mais que peut faire

d'autre un touriste que , justement, pleurer?" Just as the tourists are not able to truly understand, She herself can only imagine what it must have been, based upon her own experience of tragic loss. Hiroshima has the same relationship to the reader. Although the reader sees what has happened to She, just as the tourists are shown documentations of what happened at Hiroshima, and are told the story from her point of view, the perspective is so personal, so internalized, that the reader never really understands. She and He express their personal thoughts, their opinions. As opposed to Le Silence in which the inner thoughts and emotions must be discerned by the uncle who ultimately interprets these things for the reader, everything is clearly laid out for the reader. But even though the inner thoughts of He and She are expressed for the audience, the audience still does not understand the relationship any more than it understands Hiroshima or World War II. It is only through identification with personal pain and loss that the audience senses what She must feel, but the audience is only able to sense, to imagine, never to know. Duras seems to suggest that as pure communication is impossible, the writing of "knowable" history is also impossible. A novel or a work that does not assume to relate facts is much more honest and accurate than a work that "knows" the truth.

CONCLUSION

These differences in form and characterizations reflect not only the different literary styles of 1941 and 1957, but the very distinct purposes of Le Silence and Hiroshima. Vercors presents a very logical and ordered story in which right and wrong are very clearly defined to convince the reader of 1941 that there is a right path to follow, Resistance. Duras presents an apparently ordered work which appears to say everything, but a work in which nothing is clear and nothing is either entirely good or entirely bad. This forces the reader to look beyond ideologies to the greater concept of universal humanity and inhumanity. Yet both Le Silence and Hiroshima subscribe to Duras' idea of communicating history. Although Duras treats the personal national conflict from a historical perspective, and Vercors treats the conflict as a contemporary problem with a definitive answer, both are based in an "impossible" love story which have traditionally been used to communicate feelings of tragic loss. Both authors choose to use an emotional appeal, based upon anonymous characters, to communicate to the reader.

Vercors and Duras are working under the same assumption. Whether in a world in which communication is ultimately possible or always in question, they both suggest that the greatest possibility for communication lies in

emotional identification. Vercors uses this emotional identification to create a sense of solidarity, in favor of a cause, and Duras uses it to expand the identification to humanity, rather than limiting it to a specific ideologically or nationally based group. But both assume that a fictional representation which reaches the audience emotionally is a much more effective way of conveying ideas than factual, logical argumentation. Yet, Vercors uses this approach to communicate his vision of "truth," the path to be followed. Duras carries the assumption to a point that questions any possibility of "factual" or "true" communication. No answers or truths are ever portrayed in her book. Neither the personal tragedy nor the global tragedy is ever explained or judged for the reader in terms of ideological values. The images portrayed are carefully chosen to evoke a specific type of reaction from the audience, but it is not a reaction based on knowing. This text assumes that knowing is not possible, not only for He and She, but for anyone.

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