

“This is a woman speaking”: The Feminist Writing of Three French Journalists

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ABSTRACT

Over the past several centuries, women in France have been attracted to journalism as a forum for self-expression and a way to promote the causes that they cared about, particularly women's rights. This paper examines the work of three French women journalists who wrote in favor of equality of the sexes and more active social roles for women. In the 18th century, the radical Madame de Beaumer shocked royal censors in her *Journal des Dames*. In the 19th century, the first *bachelière* Julie-Victoire Daubié wrote extensively about women in poverty. In the 20th century, Louise Weiss fought for suffrage and became a prominent politician. The three wrote on issues ranging from religion and marriage to education and employment for women. However, as feminists, they are little known today. This papers seeks to bring their work back to light.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“A woman with a voice is, by definition, a strong woman.” – Melinda Gates

“Nous, femmes journalistes, dénonçons la trop grande invisibilité des femmes dans les médias.” – Prenons la Une¹

The history of journalism in France is closely tied to the tradition of revolt against the status quo. Every revolutionary era in modern French history—the 17th century Fronde, the French Revolution, the 1830 Revolution—has been accompanied by an expansion in journalism, a newspaper boom. Conversely, eras of authoritarianism—the Ancien Regime under Louis XV, the First Empire under Napoleon, the Nazi Occupation—have been eras of strict censorship. Even more than in other countries, journalism in France has attracted those with a mission, a cause—marginalized groups. It is thus unsurprising that women have been attracted to journalism as a means of fighting for equality. However, women’s participation in journalism has not been welcomed. Three women who pushed past these barriers were Madame de Beaumer, Julie-Victoire Daubié, and Louise Weiss. In three different eras of French history, they found in journalism a means of self-expression, a forum in which to express their beliefs, and a way to enter into other fields including politics and economics.²

¹ A collective of French female journalists.

² Daubié and Weiss, in their journalistic careers, primarily wrote on topics other than women’s issues, however, they published books on the subject.

Madame de Beaumer lived and wrote in Ancien Regime France, publishing most of her known work about 25 to 30 years before the French Revolution began. In addition to writing a book of poetry and short stories, she became editor of a newspaper, *le Journal des Dames*. Specifically targeting a female audience, she also sought out female contributors for the paper. It became a place to celebrate female accomplishments and to promote radical social ideas like equality of the sexes and freedom of religion. Unsurprisingly, she quickly tangled with royal censors, leading to her removal from the editor position. Julie-Victoire Daubié lived a century later, writing mainly during the Second Empire, under Napoleon III. After reporting extensively on economics, she wrote a book about one of her other passions, female education. *La femme pauvre au XIXème siècle* advocated for education reform and increased employment opportunities for women. Louise Weiss came of age during World War I and was most active as a journalist during the inter-war period, dedicating more than 15 years to advocating for peace and unity in Europe through her newspaper *L'Europe Nouvelle*. In the 1930s, she turned her attention to the cause of women's suffrage, achieved later in France than in the U.S. and many other countries. She later wrote two books about her work as a suffragette—*Ce que femme veut* and *Mémoires d'une Européenne: Combats pour les femmes*.

Extraordinarily, of these three women, de Beaumer may have been closest to the modern idea of a feminist. While Daubié's writing was heavily moralistic, and Weiss's mired in insecurity and rivalries with other women, de

Beaumer was an unabashed champion of liberty and empowerment for women. However, there are some notable similarities in the subjects they each wrote about. De Beaumer and Daubié both viewed improved education as the key to equality and increased female participation in the public sphere. All three were concerned with the plight of the unmarried woman, particularly women who had been abandoned. All three were lively and audacious in their writing, never worried about offending anyone.

To read their work is to discover the personalities behind it: de Beaumer's radicality, unusual for her time and place; Daubié's intense interest in education and morality, influenced by religion; Weiss's constant search for identity and recognition through writing. With all three, it is important to note that their feminist works did not have the large impact for which they hoped. It would be inaccurate to say that these women have been forgotten. De Beaumer is a footnote in many books on French feminism and female writers. Daubié is remembered as the first bachelière—the first French woman to pass the baccalauréat exam, which allows high school students to continue to a university. Because of her political career, Weiss has buildings, schools, and streets named for her. Yet as feminists, they have become part of a long tradition of female voices fading into a historical silence. It is time to make them heard again.

CHAPTER TWO

MADAME DE BEAUMER

An enigmatic life, an obscure death, an extraordinary literary heritage: Madame de Beaumer was a woman unlike any other of her time. In an era of extreme censorship, she dared to air controversial ideas about society and the role of women within it. As editor of the *Journal des Dames*, she created a space which celebrated exceptional women and provided a forum for their writing. Her life was undoubtedly difficult: she had many debts and was forced out of France multiple times by the government. Still, it took more than two years for Louis XV's all-powerful censors to silence this audacious woman, and her writing has survived to attest to her unique ideas, which would not have been out of place 200 years later.

It is nonetheless important to situate Madame de Beaumer in her place and time, the atmosphere in which she wrote. She could not have published her rebellious writing without the help of powerful friends like the Prince of Conti and the protection offered by her Parisian neighborhood, the Temple. She was most likely a Huguenot, and this religious identity partially explains the secrecy surrounding her life. Additionally, it was the era's censorship that ultimately caused her downfall. Her life and the events of the creation of the *Journal des Dames* form an important background to her writing. Coming after the 1685 Edict of Fontainebleau removed protection for Protestants, de Beaumer's pleas for religious tolerance were considered seditious. She rejected established order in

campaigning for women to be educated as men were and in her deep belief in the equality of the sexes.

To put Madame de Beaumer's work in context, one must consider both the circumstances of her rather unusual life and the varied history of the *Journal des Dames*. Beyond simply placing her in a particular historical time period, this section will situate Madame de Beaumer in a longer tradition of French women who wrote fearlessly about the issues that concerned them, a tradition continued by Daubié and Weiss, while also considering the ways in which she was different from the others. De Beaumer's acts of defiance were particularly daring, her ideas especially radical, her tone always decisive. Her work shows her to be even more ahead of her time than other female journalists. This section will then examine several particularly striking examples of de Beaumer's writing: her foreword from the February 1762 edition of the journal, her response to a young lady's letter to the editor regarding the feminization of professional terms in French, and two allegorical stories from her book *Œuvres mêlées*, which were published in the journal.

A Brief History of the Journal des Dames

The *Journal des Dames*, in its 20 years of publication, existed in a strange journalistic space between "the official, privileged royalist press and the forbidden, furtively exchanged clandestine press that operated beyond the censors' grasp" (Gelbart, *Feminine* 7). It operated with the king's "tacit

permission,” a designation created by Guillaume-Chrétien Lamoignon de Malesherbes, head of the royal censors, to give writers and editors a sense of freedom though they were still in fact under government control. Still, after this designation was created, hundreds of new publications appeared in France. Government censorship tightened in 1757 after the attempted assassination of Louis XV by Robert-François Damiens. In this tense atmosphere, the *Journal des Dames* was created in 1759.

Thorel de Campigneulles founded the journal. A rich young man from Lyon who hoped to establish himself in the literary world, his goal was to publish “purely amusing and mindless” writing for female readers (Gelbart, *Feminine* 40). De Campigneulles believed that women were not capable of higher-order thinking on subjects like science or politics, and he also thought they were frequently bored. His journal would be a light, innocent distraction for them. After the first issue, readers attacked the journal’s frivolity. Opposed by the censors, de Campigneulles stopped publication after four issues. He had discovered, to his dismay, as Gelbart writes, that “simply inviting the participation of women in his paper opened a dialogue that threatened to challenge dominant presuppositions and evoke unorthodox responses” (Gelbart, *Feminine* 66). Jean-Charles Relongue de la Louptière took over the journal from de Campigneulles. In the 20 years that followed, the journal would have nine different editors, each of whom changed its tone and its goals. Some of them defied the censors—the

journal was suspended multiple times—but it was during its rebellious years that it attracted the most attention, both good and bad.

The *Journal des Dames* is best understood as part of a tradition of anti-establishment publications that had started with La Fronde, an anti-royal revolt that lasted from 1648 to 1653. Even a century later, this movement's effect on French journalism was still evident. Revolutionary journals and newspapers first appeared in France during La Fronde, and despite government censorship, never completely disappeared. Eighteenth-century frondeur publications were not silenced for expressing opposition to the government. They were influenced by French-language papers being published in Holland, England, Germany, and Switzerland that favored a parliamentary system over the absolutism of the French monarchy. Frondeur publications, however, could express these sentiments *in* France, under the censors' noses, by using "clever strategies for keeping their papers afloat" (Gelbart, *Feminine* 11). Their editors carefully planned the publication of each issue to occur during calm moments when the censors were less suspicious, or alternately, they obtained the support of the more "malleable" censors (Gelbart, *Feminine* 11). They also benefitted from the patronage of aristocrats: the *Journal des Dames* was sponsored by the Duchess of Chevreuse, the Princess of Condé, the Prince of Conti, the Duke of Chartres, and even, later, Queen Marie Antoinette. Thus in their subversive content and their manipulation of the censorship system, papers like the *Journal des Dames* maintained the spirit of the original Fronde many years later. However, it was not

until Madame de Beaumer took over editorship that the journal became a part of this tradition.

Frondeur editors viewed themselves as “initiators of a healthy movement to use the press to shake things up” (Gelbart, *Feminine* 13). Many important philosophers and authors, including Voltaire and Chateaubriand, denounced them. They varied from “sympathizers with the parlements to . . . seditious, revolutionary enemies of the existing order fighting for liberty at all costs” (Gelbart, *Feminine* 13). They hid their most incendiary ideas under “the guise of the perfectly acceptable,” and in this way, the *Journal des Dames*’s “discourse on women, a gallant literary tradition with a long history in France, became a strident call for social action, a plea for women’s rights that transcended feminism and spoke for persecuted Protestants, starving peasants, overworked *poissardes* [women fishmongers], and the whole Third Estate” (Gelbart, *Feminine* 14). This transformation began in 1761, under the editorial direction of the indomitable Madame de Beaumer.

The Life of Madame de Beaumer

Madame de Beaumer’s life is mostly a mystery today. Even her first name is lost to time. The reasons are numerous. The memory of such a radical woman, so detested by the government, may have been suppressed by those in power. More likely, she was simply forgotten during the long century of political upheaval that followed her death in 1766. Without her literary career, she would have been

completely forgotten, as very few documents relating to her personal life have survived. This lack of documents suggests, among other things, that she was probably a Huguenot. The Huguenots “preferred to baptize their children and marry clandestinely, rather than be branded ‘illegitimate’ by the official Catholic church” (Gelbart, Journal 29). Other aspects of her life support this theory: for example, she lived in Holland, where there was a large Huguenot population, for many years, and:

Her likely religion would also explain the intensity of her commitment not only to women but to persecuted minorities in general; her hatred of Richelieu (“destroyer of La Rochelle”)³; the dedication of her *Journal des Dames* to the Protestant Condé branch of royal cousins; her residence in Paris with the Jaucourt family for over a year, during which she shuttled back and forth to Holland; and finally, her choice of a successor, Mme. de Maisonneuve, who used the paper to seek justice in the Calas affair.⁴ (Gelbart, Journal 29-30).

De Beaumer was mentioned in the 1769 *Histoire littéraire des femmes françaises* by Abbé Joseph de La Porte. De La Porte was not de Beaumer’s

³ Cardinal Armand Richelieu, advisor to King Louis XIII, ordered the French army to attack the heavily Protestant city of La Rochelle during the Anglo-French war of 1627-29. The city was besieged for more than a year before falling to the French.

⁴ Jean Calas was a Protestant merchant who was tried and executed for the murder of his son but was likely innocent. This case is considered an example of France’s religious intolerance in the eighteenth century.

biggest fan, writing that she was “privée des dons de la fortune, des agrémens de la figure et des graces de son sexe” (de La Porte 525). He could not find documents relating to her birth or marriage but noted that she died in poverty in Holland in 1766, only three years after leaving the *Journal des Dames*. Her age at the time of her death is unknown. Despite this dismal end, and perhaps even because of it, her adventures as author and editor merit attention.

Before becoming editor of the *Journal des Dames* in 1761, de Beaumer lived in La Hague. She was probably the editor of a journal called *Lettres curieuses, instructives et amusantes*, founded in 1759 by a Mme. de Beau*[,] and distributed by the same book sellers in Holland who would later distribute the *Journal des Dames* (Gelbart, Journal 31). The denunciation of French censors in this journal suggests that de Beaumer had already had confrontations with them. Despite that, she published a book in France in 1760, *Œuvres mêlées*, which consisted of a series of short historical allegories. In this book, she pretended to be a royalist, all while writing against the rule of kings and in favor of populist figures like Mandrin the bandit, a real-life Robin Hood. An excerpt from this book was published in the *Journal des Dames* before de Beaumer became editor.

Editor of the Journal des Dames

De Beaumer took control of the journal in October 1761. At first, she did not censor herself at all. Since her predecessors had confined the journal to “little nothings,” the censors “did not monitor it closely... [however] she knew she had little time before she would be muzzled again. Her tone was therefore urgent, her

rhetoric bombastic” (Gelbart, Journal 32). In the foreword to the first issue, she warned critics “this is a woman speaking” (de Beaumer Oct. 1761 iii, my translation). Despite the ridicule that inevitably followed, she declared her opinions with vigor and without shame. She advocated for all persecuted minorities, not just women, recommending charity and religious tolerance. Above all, she fought for the education of women. She believed that women were born equal to men intellectually, and that if they were equally well-educated, they could cure the ills of society, including poverty and war. In cultivating their minds, women could “become the very backbone of society,” however, they would have to abandon their vanity. She dared women: “Let us prove that we can think, speak, study and criticize as well as [men] . . . I await this revolution with impatience. I shall do my utmost to precipitate it” (qtd. in Gelbart, Journal 34). To encourage them, she filled her journal with examples of illustrious women—some noble, but also women of the Third Estate. She admired the talents of female artists, merchants, artisans, and musicians, who “seemed to confirm all her arguments” (Gelbart, Journal 35). She and her successors “sought to engage a far wider and more diverse group of women from Paris and the provinces in debate and conversation. They used their periodicals to validate a wide range of women’s voices” (Diaconoff 179). She gave space to women authors, saying, “Des talens des Dames tiendra, sans contredit, la place d’honneur dans ce journal” (de Beaumer, Oct. 1761 iv).

In December 1761, she was officially reprimanded for her radical ideas. She had avoided the censors partially due to her residence in the Temple, “one of the lieux privilégiés [privileged places] de Paris where the court’s police could not penetrate and therefore something of a refuge for outlaws” (Gelbart, *Journal* 37). A walled neighborhood in Paris’s Marais district, it was protected by the Prince of Conti, a libertine and Freemason who had sheltered numerous fugitives. The Temple was a sanctuary for de Beaumer, and in recognition, she glorified the artists and writers of the Temple in her journal.

After December 1761, however, she had to change her tune. The *Journal des Dames* rapidly became very flattering to the king and his government. De Beaumer continued her feminist writing, but she agreed to write a military history despite her pacifist leanings. When she did not complete this project, the journal was suspended. She was accused of being insincere in her praise of the king (which was true). After a long fight with the censors, she took a bold step—threatening them. She visited Holland and warned the censors that she might move her journal there, continuing to spread her incendiary ideas and critiques of the French establishment from a place where they could not touch her. This was the sort of thing only she dared to do, but it worked. She was allowed to start publishing again, although she had to turn over the reins to a new editor, Pierre-Barnabé Farmain Du Rozoi. Du Rozoi’s beliefs were opposite de Beaumer’s—he was a devoted royalist—but she had little choice. She took back control of the journal in 1763.

One of the censors with whom she frequently disputed was François-Louis Claude Marin. He described her outrageous visit to his house in a letter to Malesherbes:

She appeared this morning in my chamber, a large hat on her head, a long sword at her side, her chest (where there is nothing) and her behind (where there is not much) covered by a long *culotte*, and the rest of her body in a worn, narrow, black habit. Questioned about the disguise, she replied that since she ran her paper alone, relying only on herself, she dresses thus for reasons of economy and to be admitted to the orchestra circle to review the latest play for 20 sous. (qtd. in Diaconoff 171).

This incident was yet another demonstration of her eccentricity, designed to shock the conservative Marin. However, Suellen Diaconoff additionally suggests, in an essay on female journalists of the Enlightenment, that de Beaumer had to “unsex herself” to take up her pen, represented in this scene by the sword she carried. In a profession dominated by men, this was the only way for her to succeed or be respected. However, the censor mocked her lack of femininity and still focused on her sex in his comments about her body. Both her costume and her profession were, to him, “an unseemly assault on social and sexual conventions” (Diaconoff 172). Nonetheless, this incident is an especially remarkable demonstration of de Beaumer’s audacity: her rejection of traditional “womanly” behavior, her willingness to go to great lengths to garner attention.

Even Marin recognized that she was unlike any other writer, although he disapproved of her “uncommon rashness” and “singular indiscretion” (Gelbart, Journal 45). When he suspended the *Journal des Dames* yet again in April 1763, de Beaumer left France for the last time and returned to Holland.

The Writing of Madame de Beaumer: February 1762 Foreword

The opinions of de Beaumer were often best displayed in the forewords at the beginning of each issue of the journal. The foreword from the February 1762 issue is a particularly intriguing example: here her ideas on the equality of the sexes and women’s education are especially well described. She begins by saying that the success of the *Journal des Dames* has defied the expectations of men “qui avaient regardé cette Périodique comme un petit Ouvrage” (de Beaumer, Feb. 1762 223). With the *Journal des Dames*, a female editor had proven that she could keep a journal afloat for four months at a time when most journals did not survive much longer than that. In addition, she had made the journal into something more serious, that presented “aux yeux de la jeunesse des images frappantes qui les portent à la vertu” (de Beaumer, Feb. 1762 223). Women were entirely capable of thinking about weighty, important issues, so she did not want to publish the type of journal “qui ne demande que de petites choses pour faire l’amusement de la toilette” (de Beaumer, Feb. 1762 224). In fact, in her opinion, women were not any more interested in fashion than some men, whom she addressed as follows: “[vous] qui passez une partie de votre tems à essayer des modes nouvelles, à mettre artistement du blanc, du rouge et à placer une

mouche avec agrément . . . vous êtes encore plus efféminés que les Coquettes auxquelles vous cherchez à plaire” (de Beaumer, Feb. 1762 224-25). She advised this type of man to become a patriot and serve his country instead of focusing on fashion. She hoped that French women could take their revenge “comme nos anciennes Amazones” by making men spin yarn and do other “feminine” tasks (de Beaumer, Feb. 1762 225). She often referenced the Amazons in her writing: she admired this mythical race of warrior women who lived in a matriarchal society. Undoubtedly she believed France could benefit from a similar system.

She expressed her faith in the intelligence of women in another issue: “we women think under our *coiffures* as well as you do under your wigs. We are as capable of reasoning as you are. In fact, you lose your senses over us every day” (qtd. in Offen 39). In the previously cited foreword, she insisted that “Si l’on ne nous élève point aux Sciences comme vous, c’est vous qui en êtes coupables; car n’avez-vous pas toujours abusé, si j’ose le dire, des forces du corps que la nature vous à données?” (de Beaumer, Feb. 1762 224). That is to say that men had used their physical power to thwart the success of women in scientific fields, and in fact, many other domains. Given the same chance as men, women would accomplish just as much. As Karen Offen explains, male dominance was not natural to de Beaumer: “Some eighteenth-century feminists sensed then, as others have rediscovered repeatedly since, that the relationship of the sexes is a sociopolitical or ‘cultural’ construction” (Offen 39). Like other French

philosophers, these early feminists distinguished between God's natural law and the positive law of men. They also understood that the educational system maintained male dominance, as men were better educated. De Beaumer wrote repeatedly that male dominance had resulted in centuries of war and suffering—avoidable, in her opinion, if women had been in charge.

The Writing of Madame de Beaumer: Response to Mlle. Corr**

The *Journal des Dames* received many letters to the editor, some complimentary, some not, and many of them were published; however, de Beaumer rarely responded to them. One exception: a letter in which she decided to call herself “éditrice,” a feminized version of “éditeur” (editor). In the January 1761 issue, the journal published a letter to the editor from a young woman called Mlle. Corr**. The young woman asked why de Beaumer did not use the term “éditrice” and “autrice” (female author) to refer to women in these professions. According to Mlle. Corr**, these terms “sont bons par principe et par analogie” and if people in authority used them, they would be accepted everywhere (Corr 126). Probably she considered de Beaumer such an authority figure; Corr** said that she herself was “sans prétention de mériter jamais ces titres” (Corr 129). She also said that de Beaumer was too interested “à la gloire de votre sexe pour ne pas revendiquer ces termes” (Corr 127).

De Beaumer's suspicion of men and authority figures is clear in her response, although she replied with verve that she would adopt the use of these

terms immediately. As Mlle. Corr** had noted, other professional names had already been modified for women. She declared that she agreed with Corr** that the masculine terms *éditeur* and *auteur* did not suit women. She linked this issue with other questions of male dominance; men want to deprive women "jusqu'aux noms qui nous sont propres" (de Beaumer, "Réponse" 130). As revenge, she proposed feminizing all words "qui nous conviennent" (de Beaumer, "Réponse" 130). She was never afraid of offending men, as is evident in her other writing and her visit to Marin. She reiterated this lack of fear in this letter: if some women did not want to use these terms "par politesse ou par crainte de ceux qui disent nos maîtres et qui veulent décider de tout... je ne serai pas aussi polie" (de Beaumer, "Réponse" 130). She declared that it was women's right to change these words, and she was prepared to defend this right: "je menace les hommes d'en appeler à leurs tribunaux littéraires, s'ils osent me chercher quelque chicane à ce sujet" (de Beaumer, "Réponse" 130).

Today, the debate over professional terms continues in France: some say it is more sexist to create new terms for women in the same profession as men. Mlle. Corr** said that the natural equality between men and women made it "dishonoring" to use the same terms for both sexes (Corr 127). The use of *éditeur* or *auteur* for women did not give them their own space in the literary world. De Beaumer obviously agreed; she said that in particular, famous female authors had won the right to call themselves whatever they liked (de Beaumer, "Réponse" 130).

Œuvres mêlées excerpt

Even before becoming editor, Beaumer published in the *Journal des Dames*, suggesting that she had already taken an interest in the journal and was positioning herself to take over. A long excerpt from her book *Œuvres mêlées*, for example, appeared in the April 1761 edition. It was accompanied by a glowing introduction, probably written by de la Louptière, who was then the editor (and somewhat more open-minded than his predecessor, de Campigneulles). He began by noting that “malgré les pertes considérables qui ont affligé depuis quelques années la classe des Dames Auteurs, elle n’a jamais été si nombreuse et si intéressante” (*Œuvres mêlées*, 11). He bemoaned the loss of Françoise de Graffigny, author of *Lettres d’une Péruvienne*, and Marguerite de Lussan, a writer of historical novels, who had both recently died. He was pleased to note that a new generation of female writers was taking their place, including Madame de Beaumer, who had the “double avantage” of writing in both prose and verse and using “un style simple et naturel” (*Œuvres mêlées*, 12).

De la Louptière’s glowing introduction was immediately followed by de Beaumer’s short story “Les Caprices de la fortune.” This story is about an impoverished prince, Hippolite, who falls madly in love with a beautiful, virtuous young woman, Bellesamire. After a good deal of drama involving Hippolite’s poverty and illness and the disapproval of Bellesamire’s father, they marry and soon have a child. After several months of happiness, Hippolite is suddenly arrested and their marriage declared illegitimate. Although he initially fights to

legitimize it, over the course of a few months, his love for Bellesamire fades, and he never returns to her. De Beaumer then reveals that Hippolite's father had arranged the arrest and accusations so that his son could marry someone richer. Bellesamire and her daughter subsequently live in poverty, and de Beaumer makes one of the morals of her story quite clear: "Heureux le mortel assez magnanime pour envisager avec indifférence les richesses et les honneurs!" (Œuvres mêlées, 34).

The names of the characters in this story merit some attention. Samire in "Bellesamire" may be a form of Samira, which means loyal companion in Arabic—appropriate for a devoted wife. The name Samira is also associated with a legendary Babylonian warrior princess who became queen of Assyria—just the sort of strong, empowered female that Madame de Beaumer admired. Belle of course suggests beauty, and de Beaumer insists that Bellesamire "ne le cède à aucune Princesse en agrémens et en bonnes qualités" and that "elle est belle et plus recommandable encore par son mérite que par ses charmes" (Œuvres mêlées, 13 & 17). The name Hippolite is undoubtedly a reference to Hippolyta, the Amazonian queen. As noted, de Beaumer greatly admired the Amazons; however, she may have chosen this name for the villain of her story because Hippolyta, in some myths, was the only Amazon ever to marry, thus betraying the traditions and sisterhood of her people (Lee 2002). In some myths, Hippolyta was abandoned by her husband, Theseus, for Phaedra. Phaedra's story would have been well-known to de Beaumer through Jean Racine's seventeenth-century play

Phèdre, in which Hippolytus is also the name of Theseus's son with whom Phaedra falls in love, leading to a tragic ending. The name Hippolite would have probably signaled to Madame de Beaumer's readers that the marriage in her story would not end happily. Finally, Hippolite's father is Théodose, King of Arvarie. Théodose may reference the Roman emperor Theodosius, and Arvarie sounds intriguingly similar to "avarice," which he displays in his desire for a wealthier daughter-in-law.

Most importantly, de Beaumer notes at the end that this is based on a true story: Bellesamire is a young friend of hers. She (or possibly de la Louptière) writes that "L'Auteur n'est pas également responsable de ce qu'il y a de révoltant dans les derniers procédés . . . puisqu'ils ne sont pas d'invention. Un Lecteur philosophe doit se douter que des inconséquences si déplorables, appartiennent à l'Histoire plutôt qu'au Roman" (*Œuvres mêlées*, 35). The journal concludes that the moral of the story is "la fragilité des plus tendres amours" (*Œuvres mêlées*, 35). De Beaumer also mentions earlier in the story the tendency of eighteenth-century men "de regarder le mariage comme le tombeau de l'amour" (*Œuvres mêlées*, 21). She wrote about this idea more than once and thoroughly disagreed, insisting that happy marriages could last and could make one a better person. Thus, it seems likely that "Les Caprices de la fortune" was actually intended to reproach men who abandon their wives and children and to remind her readers how difficult life could be for women.

The excerpt continues with a poem called “Le Mort des héros,” and then two short allegorical stories from her book. These stories are again probably introduced by de la Louptière. It is difficult to tell if what follows is taken directly from *Œuvres mêlées* or if it is a summary; however, the style suggests it was written by Madame de Beaumer. The second of these allegories, “Le Triomphe de la fausse gloire,” is a thinly-veiled account of Queen Christina of Sweden’s abdication in favor of King Charles X Gustav. De Beaumer liked to present examples of strong, talented women to her readers, so she often wrote about Queen Christina, who was recognized at a very young age as “a capable and decisive politician . . . [and] one of the most brilliant and intellectual women of her time” (Booth 2015). De Beaumer likely also admired the queen’s refusal to conform to traditional gender roles: Christina wore men’s clothing and refused to marry (Booth 2015). Given her own religious background, de Beaumer might have also sympathized with Christina’s controversial conversion to Catholicism; although de Beaumer was Protestant, she was staunchly in favor of freedom of religion for everyone, not just Huguenots. Again, in “Le Triomphe de la fausse gloire,” the names of the characters are of note: as the introduction points out, it’s easy to see that “Queen Thincrise” is really Christina and “Prince Vétagus” is Gustav. De Beaumer makes a point of noting Christina’s qualities, and her dedication to the arts: “Elle étoit douée d’un génie supérieur et des vertus les plus sublimes, elle fit ses délices de protéger les arts et de s’attacher à l’étude de la Philosophie. Cette haute science lui fit voir dans tout son jour la foiblesse des

hommes” (*Œuvres mêlées*, 41). After Vétagus takes the throne, he succumbs to “la fausse gloire” and leads his kingdom into several wars, unlike Christina, who was dedicated to maintaining peace. The story reaffirms Madame de Beaumer’s conviction that the world would be better off ruled by women.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, not much of Madame de Beaumer’s writing survives. The rest of *Œuvres mêlées* appears to have been lost. She was supposedly working on two other books during her time at the *Journal des Dames: Histoire Militaire* and *Lettres de Magdelon Friquet*. It is unclear whether or not these were published. Her true legacy lies in the journal that she converted from an “amusing trifle” to a serious, daring publication. Most of the subsequent editors of the journal maintained the controversial and frondeur tone she had established, though none advocated as passionately for equality as she did. Her vehement writing, her personal audacity, her fearlessness in the face of censorship, and her championing of the downtrodden, all serve as proof of her remarkable spirit and advanced ideas.

CHAPTER THREE

JULIE-VICTOIRE DAUBIÉ

Introduction

In the 1860s, during Napoleon III's Second Empire, the first *bachelière* took it upon herself to write a treatise on female education, a subject on which she was singularly qualified to speak. The 400-page result was *La femme pauvre au XIXème siècle*. She considered the importance of education from both a moral and an economic point of view. She expanded this initial topic to include questions of class discrimination, marital problems, and employment opportunities—three things that also concerned de Beaumer. Weiss would write at length about the latter two as well, and all three rightly concluded that these issues were inextricably intertwined.

Because of the breadth of these issues, Daubié's prose can seem alternately rambling—she spends pages and pages on one idea—or abrupt, shifting suddenly from one topic to another. However, the book is an incredible study of daily life for women under the Second Empire. Like de Beaumer and Weiss in their feminist writing, she makes little attempt to be objective; although the book was thoroughly researched, and she makes ample use of facts and statistics, her purpose is not to give a factual account of what poverty entails for women. Her purpose is to elicit sympathy and/or outrage from her readers and to provoke change. Despite the factual basis of many of her claims, she frequently relies on such constructions as “many people say that...” or “these days, one

frequently sees that..." Her arguments are sometimes contradictory, even those involving religion. She frequently critiques the morality of modern France from a Catholic point of view; however, at times, she also argues that the Church has a negative influence on female education. In the 150 years since the book was published, there has attracted relatively little academic analysis. This section will examine certain parts of *La femme pauvre* and consider how Daubié's personal, moral viewpoints are reflected therein.

The Life of Julie-Victoire Daubié

While the details of Daubié's childhood are somewhat hazy, it is evident that her early experiences shaped her later views. She was born in 1824 in Bains-les-Bains, Vosges, in Eastern France, the last of eight children of a bank teller. Her father died when she was only a year old (Thiercé, 13). She studied Latin and Greek with her older brother, Joseph-Florentin, an abbot ("16 août 1861"). She belonged to the generation born during the restoration of the monarchy who then witnessed the downfall of Charles X during the July Revolution of 1830, the overthrow of the monarchy in 1848 and the beginning of the Second Republic, and the rise of the Second Empire in 1851. It was the era of both Victorian moralism, which heavily influenced Daubié, and also of an increase in the exploitation of women, against which she fought tirelessly. She likely saw in all the political turmoil of the period an opportunity for the advancement of her sex.

In 1861, Daubié became the first woman to pass the baccalaureate exam in France. It was awarded to her by the Académie of Lyon, after she had already been rejected by the Académie of Paris. Even then, it took the intervention of Empress Eugénie of France for Daubié to receive her diploma, but she was not allowed to attend university classes. Neither taking the baccalaureate nor attending university was illegal for women, but it was opposed by custom and by the men in charge. After passing the *licence*, she was qualified to become a teacher but chose not to because she refused to swear allegiance to the Empire. She became a *préceptrice* (governess or tutor) instead (Perrot, 9). She became well-versed in economics and was the first woman to write for the newspapers the *Journal des économistes* and *L'Economiste français*. She also wrote for *Le droit des femmes*, a feminist paper. Later in life, she became a dedicated suffragette, even going so far as to try to register to vote. However, she was not in favor of universal suffrage, instead suggesting that the right to vote be based on literacy or “merit” (Thiercé, 25). Although she wrote extensively about the institution of marriage, she never married herself (“elle préfère le célibat à un mariage arrangé,” Perrot, 9). She died in 1874.

Saint-Simonian Influences

Daubié’s feminism was undoubtedly influenced by her friendship with François Barthélemy Arlès-Dufour, a prominent member of the Saint-Simonian social movement. Arlès-Dufour championed her career, introducing her to prominent people who would give her a forum to express her opinions. Along

with the Empress, he helped ensure that Daubié would receive her diploma. Dufour and Daubié also co-founded the Association pour l'émancipation progressive de la femme, which was mainly concerned with women's suffrage. Although the movement ended when Daubié was still a child, the ideas it promoted echoed through other nineteenth-century social movements and appear in Daubié's work. Her belief in the natural sensitivity and maternal instincts of women parallel Saint-Simonian convictions, as does her concern for women of a lower socioeconomic class than her own.

Saint-Simonianism was a social change movement in the early part of the nineteenth century (roughly 1826 to 1834), inspired by Claude Henri de Rouvroy, comte de Saint-Simon, but lead by Barthélemy Prosper Enfantin. Initially, the group opposed the inheritance of wealth and advocated "a new, peaceful relationship between the classes [that] should replace social conflict" (Moses, 242). They established communes for their followers and hoped to eventually create utopian societies in which sexual equality was the norm. By 1832, the group was almost entirely focused on women's rights. They believed that women were naturally peaceful and emotional, traits that were prized in Saint-Simonianism:

[Enfantin's] "feminism," however, was integral to a system that actually prized emotion (the female quality) over reason (the male quality). Saint-Simonians preached that only a sentiment—the universal empathy of humans for humans termed "love"—and not

reason could provide a strong and solid bond for a peaceful society.

(Moses 243)

Enfantin sought to sexually liberate women in order to achieve gender equality, one of the most controversial of his ideas, which would eventually lead to his arrest and the downfall of the movement. Saint-Simonians believed that the sexes were naturally equal and wanted women to participate in all domains of the public sphere (244). These beliefs would eventually lead to a symbolic wait for a new Female Messiah who would right the wrongs of the world. However, as the symbolic power of women in the movement increased, their actual power decreased (249). Nevertheless, Saint-Simonianism heavily influenced other Western feminists later in the nineteenth century, and it was mainly the ideas of Saint-Simonian women that were passed on to later feminists (241). Saint-Simonian women held their own meetings and had a separate organizational hierarchy. They founded a newspaper, the *Tribune des femmes*, in which the writers used only their first names to represent their liberation from men (252).

This journalistic tradition among Saint-Simonian women may have inspired Daubié's own journalistic pursuits. While most Saint-Simonian women were bourgeois, the women of the *Tribune* were proletariats who argued for unity among all classes of women: "Let us no longer belong to two camps, that of the women of the people and that of privileged women: let our common interests bind us together" (qtd. in Moses, 256). They ultimately felt that "women constitute a 'class' whose interests conflict with those of men, and that political and social

change requires that women join together—across male-constructed barriers—to emancipate themselves, by themselves” (Moses 257). Daubié’s writing however, is less concerned with female solidarity; she believed that social change for women *did* require the participation of men, since they were in positions of power over women.

Some other Saint-Simonian ideologies are clearly in conflict with Daubié’s extremely traditional moral views. However, many Saint-Simonian women actually rejected Enfantin’s philosophy of “free love” once they realized that these ideas did not truly liberate women. This realization coincided with the discovery that the movement was not benefitting them economically, because their work and educational opportunities remained as limited as ever. Saint-Simonian journalist Suzanne Volquin wrote: “we must realize that before being morally free [women] must be materially self-sufficient” (qtd. in Moses, 263). Although Daubié championed traditional feminine roles and Christian morality, the issues of employment and education for women were precisely what she would take up in her seminal work, *La femme pauvre au XIXème siècle*.

La Femme Pauvre au XIXe Siècle

Causes de pauperisme pour les femmes

It is significant to note that the entire work was addressed to the Académie de Lyon, the governing body of schools in the region where Daubié studied. She hoped to spark reforms in local girls’ education by bringing to light some of the

many difficulties they and other French women at the time were facing. In a brief letter following her foreword, she addresses the Académie directly—as “Messieurs,” since there were no women directing the schools—noting that their efforts to help women have already made a difference, so that no matter what “le doux fruit de vos efforts nobles et généreux; l’opinion s’est émue, la femme a pris confiance; sur la mer irritée, on ne craint plus le naufrage dès qu’on croit apercevoir le port” (Daubié viii). Just before, in her foreword, she had stated the general goals of her work: “de faire ressortir les conséquences funestes d’un état de choses qui blesse à la fois la morale, la justice, l’humanité, le droit individuel et le droit publique” (vii). She wrote on behalf of women who couldn’t speak for themselves and wanted to study their condition (and her own) from a moral point of view above all. Although she was writing to the Académie de Lyon, she hoped other men in industry and government positions would take note. She hoped to spark change in two chief areas: salary and job opportunities. She believed that women should earn equal salaries as men for equal work. Additionally, she wanted to open to women careers that were closed at the time either because of custom or because men took all the available positions. She believed that the state of women under the Second Empire was worse than it had been in previous generations: the equality achieved by Napoleon III’s government had actually made things worse because women were expected to work and take care of their children at the same time; meanwhile educational and job opportunities that had previously been available to them no longer were. She believed that the

“contradictory laws” governing women held them in a position of inferiority, and this was precisely what she hoped to change (vi).

She begins her crusading text with a chapter on the causes of poverty for women. These fall into several major categories: lack of proper schooling, lack of career options, and laws regarding marriage. The causes of all three issues are clear to her: “nous voyons qu’elles proviennent surtout d’une centralisation administrative qui la [la femme] repousse arbitrairement des écoles et des emplois, et d’une immoralité irresponsable,” which led to “la triple oppression des lois, des institutions et des mœurs” (3). She believes that the increasing secularism of French government and society was depriving women of both the education and employment they could have previously found in convents. However, in the past, not only convents but “de nombreuses institutions leur venaient en aide,” in industry and at home, including the government, which gave endowments (dowries) to provincial women up until 1790 (1). She believes that the laws of 1860s France marginalized women in the name of equality. However, far from glorifying the past, Daubié hopes for a new system where liberty and common rights replaced the excessive regulation of the sexes.

First of all, she wants more and better educational opportunities for women. The lack of convent schools was driving poor women into a type of institution Daubié called an “industrial convent,” where they did manual labor in exchange for low-quality education and food. However, the remaining religious convents were only admitting rich women, excluding “les femmes les plus dignes

de protection”—the poor and the sick (2). This is one of her quibbles with the Catholic Church, and she returns to this problem several times throughout the book. Another conundrum: most professional schools were not open to women, and women who taught themselves trades were denied licenses and patents, which of course prevented them from attracting clients. On the other hand, “Dans les arts, les lettres et les sciences, bien plus que dans l'industrie, une interdiction sévère pèse sur la femme”—neither schools nor jobs in these fields were open to them (3). Daubié's own professional frustrations as the first “bachelière” are clear here: “on peut donc dire que l'instruction est pour la femme un ornement plutôt qu'un gagne-pain, car l'Université ne lui confie pas la moindre charge” (3). She feels limited in her career despite her achievements, and this is something she hopes will change for educated women in the future. Government centralization, meanwhile, was arbitrarily ascribing to women certain subordinate jobs that required little training: “C'est ainsi que nous chercherions vainement des femmes pour la garde de nos musées, de nos bibliothèques publiques, et que nous voyons même dans nos hôpitaux les hommes ventouser les femmes et leur servir d'infirmiers” (3). For less educated women, too, she wants more and better job options.

Daubié was an opponent of government centralization, a movement that began in France with the Revolution and never really stopped. In her discussion of the centralization of schools, she again insists on virtue. Centralization of schools, she claimed, was meant to combat the immorality that arises from men

and women learning together. Girls, she insists, were taught in different, but not equal, conditions to protect them from social ills, but many fell prey to immorality anyway, because there were not enough laws protecting against it. Poor or isolated women were particularly vulnerable. Meanwhile, these separate learning conditions, which failed to protect women, also led to a lack of understanding between married couples, because they brought such different life experiences to the marriage. She compares it to someone from the Arctic marrying someone from the tropics: they could share a thermometer but they would never want the same temperature. Here, Daubié's logic is somewhat hard to follow in that she does not specify what kind of misunderstandings arise in marriages because of separate schooling, nor why it matters. Here, as elsewhere in the book, her strong opinions may have overcome an objective argument, but she remains adamant that unequal education of the sexes is, in itself, the mark of an immoral society.

These problems were not limited to urban areas; traditional jobs for women were disappearing in the countryside as well. Daubié insists that bad morals cause men to move to cities in waves—why exactly she does not say, again relying on her own viewpoint rather than facts—and that creates a dearth of jobs for women in rural areas. This in turn pushes women into cities as well, and while they can no longer afford to live in the impoverished countryside, they the city is too expensive as well. All this relates to the patriarchal structure of society, in her opinion; she expresses disdain for the men who steal lucrative

jobs and other benefits from women. However, rich women were not exempt from the influence of the patriarchy—they too were unable to work, because for them, it was considered demeaning. Their only “work” was to find a rich husband. In this milieu, said Daubié, even 30-year-old women were like ingénues because they were so sheltered; they clung to the idea that they would find a husband even if they had been waiting for years. They were horrified by the idea of independent, working women. Daubié makes no distinction between different types of wealthy women, instead making sweeping statements about all of them. She is in a curious position here, writing about two classes to which she does not belong; however, she seems to believe, correctly, that understanding the situation of one is crucial to understanding the plight of the other.

Again, Daubié’s moral and religious views show in a long, sermonizing section on the laws and customs surrounding marriage in contemporary France. She feels that France needs to regulate marriage more strictly, even writing that governing morality helped equalize a society, making class divisions less clearly defined. This, she writes, is the true character of democracy, and consequently France is the least democratic country in regards to marriage—a very strong and rather hyperbolic statement. Interestingly, despite her religious beliefs, she did not oppose divorce. She believed, probably correctly, that legal divorces led to less adultery and fewer separations in marriages.

Daubié also fervently believed that seduction of women by licentious men was on the rise in France, based on her own observations. She writes of a

certain type of man who believed that monogamous marriage had gone by the wayside (a sentiment that seems to belong as much to the present as to the nineteenth century):

A cette classe de débauchés appartiennent les démolisseurs, logiciens de l'avenir, qui trouvent très-naturel que le progrès social apporte au libertin pauvre les droits effectifs du libertin, riche, en abolissant cette vieillesse risible, ce métier de dupe qui s'appelle mariage monogame et indissoluble, dont il ne faut plus parler dans un siècle de lumière. C'est parmi eux que nous rencontrerons toujours les apôtres fervents et convaincus de la promiscuité des femmes. (14)

She claims that modern French society celebrated these libertines, who in the past would have been decried, and that they were receiving the honors and advantages that would have gone to married men in previous generations. She believes that the bourgeoisie in particular had seduction down to an art form and were completely cynical about it. Most significantly, she blames this culture of seduction—and depraved, self-absorbed Frenchmen—for France's constant political upheaval, citing a decline in marriage rates since in 1789 (the beginning of the French Revolution). The difference has been especially notable since 1830, she says, because of the lack of laws governing morality. This is an intriguing point of view. Since she grew up in this era of constant sociopolitical change, it is natural that she would try to explain it, and to explain it in a way that

fits with her overall argument, that a stable family life is the key to a stable society—although this does not mean that women should be limited to the private sphere.

Because of this desire to improve family stability, Daubié is also very concerned in *La femme pauvre* with the lack of regulation concerning illegitimate children. France at the time had no laws requiring men to provide for children born out of wedlock, and courts tended to rule in favor of men, not women, although the rulings were contradictory, sometimes forcing the husband of an adulterous wife to provide for her illegitimate children while absolving their biological father of responsibility. Courts also sided with men who opposed legitimizing their children. All this, Daubié says, burdened the children themselves, who were blameless, and sometimes led to infanticide. The courts also did not force men to marry women they had seduced or raped.

Today, the idea that women should marry their abusers seems entirely anti-feminist, but it is easy enough to understand Daubié's perspective—at the time, a seduced woman's reputation would have been ruined, and she likely would have fallen into poverty. Her sarcastic conclusion is that the French courts protected horses more than they did women and children. She feels that other countries had much better regulations, citing in particular England, Germany, and the United States, where unmarried men are (according to her) regarded with suspicion and any indelicate treatment of a woman is punished. She considers these countries "dignes de liberté" because their young people are concerned

with personal responsibility and look for happiness at home (15). She is especially impressed with English society, which protects all women, unlike France, where “la famille seule en protégeant quelques-unes, nous avons établi une démarcation de mœurs et d'idées, entre les filles à marier et les filles à séduire” (23).

However, Daubié is most concerned with the question of dowries, which she sees as the root of many domestic and economic problems for women. With the provinces and convents no longer providing dowries to impoverished women, they were either going to great lengths to obtain one, even participating in dowry lotteries, or were unable to find husbands. She believes that rich women indisputably had the upper hand when it came to marriage, because men are so focused on marrying rich. She particularly disdains the kind of men she called “viveurs,” who lived lives of pleasure, seducing women while in their 20s and not marrying until their 40s—and then, only if they could find a wealthy enough wife. Weddings are discussed only in terms of money, she says, i.e., “tomorrow I’m marrying a dowry of 300,000 francs.” Wealthy women can even buy titles with their money, because titled men go “slumming” for money. Daubié considers marriages based on money to be “corrupted” from the beginning. Her ultimate conclusion is that laws regarding marriage desperately need changing:

Que les mariages heureux, sympathiques, soient une règle ou une exception, tant que les lois constitutives de la famille ne seront pas changées, elles créeront une confusion inévitable de principes, car

il est de toute évidence que la vérité ne peut être à la fois dans notre mariage légal, dont l'institution primitive rappelle tous les devoirs, toutes les vertus des sociétés chrétiennes, et dans notre mariage libre qui rappelle tous les vices, toute la licence des sociétés païennes (31).

Daubié continues these arguments on the social and economic situation of French women for several more chapters before launching into her ideas on how to solve these problems, an argument that centers around employment.

Quels moyens de subsistance ont les femmes?: Enseignement

The second and longer section of *La femme pauvre au XIXème siècle* focuses on ways that women can support themselves, and specifically on career fields that Daubié hopes will become open to women. She gives the most attention to teaching. She believes that both teaching opportunities for women and education for girls are in serious need of reform. Despite her religiosity, she opposed the 1850 Falloux Law which gave some control of education back to the Catholic Church, reversing some of the secularization that had occurred following the Revolution. The Falloux Law ultimately increased the number of schools for girls, because it was easier for the Church than for the state to open them (Harrigan 2001). However, Daubié sees this law as detrimental to girls, although her opinions about it were contradictory, perhaps because the long-term effects of the laws had yet to be seen. She calls it a law “réactionnaire... qui asservit

notre enseignement primaire sous la domination cléricale” (Daubié 133). She repeats more than once in *La femme pauvre* that the law has abolished secondary education for girls, which was not true; however, she specifies that the lawmakers have not kept their promises to improve girls’ pensionnats (upper schools), so her talk of “abolishment” may be a dramatic way of calling attention to that issue. She concludes that an “application pure et simple” of the Falloux Law could actually improve secondary schooling for girls, adding that “cette question ne peut se résoudre autrement,” but evidently she does not believe that the law is being properly applied (187).

Overall, she believes that public schooling is better for the common woman. She bemoans that money had been taken from girls’ convent schools during the Revolution but feels that modern convent schools only benefit the rich, whom they were able to attract because they have better resources than the public pensionnats. She feels that while convents can be a tranquil atmosphere for a wealthy girl, they are the opposite for poorer girls who have to work hard for their education and housing, to the point that they sometimes leave the schools because of exhaustion (138-39). She is also concerned by the low number of public secondary schools for girls and by the inconsistency and inefficacy of the laws governing them. She feels that secondary education is an important complement to primary education, “mais il est si peu défini pour nous, qu’il n’a pas encore de qualification propre” (128).

Further assessing the problems with secondary schools, she points out that in previous eras, France had been more liberal about higher education for women, even allowing them to attend classes at La Sorbonne. She gives examples of French women throughout history who were known for their erudition, including Sainte Bertille, Héloïse, and Madame de Sévigné. She notes that many renowned men had written about the importance of educating women, including Saint Jerome, Saint Augustine, and Nicolas de Condorcet. She feels that Napoleon's government, the First Empire, had made some progress in women's education, but not enough, and that since then, the quality of women's education had decreased despite the good intentions of several politicians who had promised to found normal schools for women and to allow them to teach in high schools. She believes that the education of women regenerates society because women bring morality and sensibility to the classroom both as students and as teachers: "il est de toute évidence que la communauté d'éducation et de mœurs entre les sexes, peut seule produire la communauté de vues et d'idées qui reconstituera l'esprit de famille" (179). She admires the American system of secondary education, which is more inherently moral than the French system, she says, because it invites the participation of women. She advocates a similar system for France, one in which the numbers of female teachers and students are higher. She clearly feels here as in other sections that the more power and participation women achieve both in the public and private spheres, the more strong, balanced, and virtuous France will become.

In addition to these concerns over girls' education, she tackles the problems surrounding teaching jobs for women at different levels, from the sous-maîtresses (primary school teachers) all the way to university professors. The sous-maîtresses, she feels, are overworked and under-appreciated. They make very little money, teach large numbers of students, and are subject to the whims of demanding school directors and dissatisfied parents. For these reasons, many end up quitting their jobs. Moreover, the sous-maîtresses themselves are often not very well-educated and thus not able to teach their students adequately, but here again, Daubié feels that the government is to blame, noting that "Grâce à la marche rapide de notre civilisation, la sous-maîtresse de 1820 ne fut plus assez lettrée[?] en 1837" (156). An 1837 law had required more schooling in different subject areas for the sous-maîtresses without increasing or standardizing their salaries. Daubié agrees that a higher level of education should be required for sous-maîtresses, and that it be standard for everyone, but she insists that the state should help them achieve that level of education and should increase their salaries accordingly. With the improvements that she recommends for secondary education, better education for the sous-maîtresses would follow, and primary education would improve as well.

Daubié advocates as well for allowing female professors in universities and for creating female universities. Although she approves of co-ed schools, she feels that they can be dangerous for girls, thus "l'instruction mixte ne sera pas possible avant que nous n'ayons créé une génération rendue à la dignité

humaine par le respect de la femme et de l'enfant sans appui" (191-92). In other words, although she thinks that increased female presence in schools will improve public morality, public morality must improve on its own before co-ed schools can exist—a catch-22. Creating female universities, however, will be difficult mainly because of funding: for teacher salaries, student scholarships, and school resources. She returns to the issue of school funding repeatedly because she feels that the entire future of French schools rests upon it. She points out that teacher salaries in France are significantly lower than in other countries, and that very few scholarships are available for low-income students. She feels that education has become too much of a business, with men trying to make a profit from schools. Her solution: pulling money from France's military budget and putting it towards schools. Wars, she says, are far too expensive anyway.

These concerns of Daubié's feel particularly modern—she could easily be talking about the United States in the twenty-first century. She proposes some steps to open higher education to women, both as students and teachers. She wants to make it easier for women to take the baccalaureate exam—here, her personal experience is obviously an influence. She also suggests a few changes for universities to make, including increasing professors' salaries and appointing professors based on a competitive exam in which the highest scorers would get the job regardless of their sex. This is closer to the modern French system of appointing primary and secondary teachers.

Conclusion

Daubié writes about other potential jobs for women in later sections of the book, such as artisan jobs, but she spends less time on them. For her, the key is getting women into the classroom. Everything else will follow from there: job opportunities, economic empowerment, increased morality, even domestic bliss. Daubié's intense feelings about her subject may have obscured her arguments at times—in her frequent contradictions and lack of evidence for some of her statements. However, Daubié was correct in many ways. Much of the education reform she advocated came to pass in subsequent generations, starting with the Ferry Laws of 1880 that made education in France free, secular, and mandatory. Schools became increasingly open to women, and the number of *bachelières* grew rapidly. In that she called attention to these problems earlier than most, Daubié's work deserves to be thoroughly reexamined and appreciated.

CHAPTER FOUR

LOUISE WEISS

Louise Weiss—journalist, pacifist, feminist, novelist, politician—is a much less obscure figure than de Beaumer or Daubié. Her life is well documented in several biographies and in her own multi-volume memoir. She has schools, buildings, and streets named for her. However, Weiss is remembered more for her pacifism and her promotion of European unity than for her feminism. Because Weiss's feminist writings formed part of her memoirs, they have been discussed by her biographers primarily as an account of her life and of the French political climate in the inter-war period. This section will instead analyze these passages as a manifestation of her search for identity and her preoccupation with legacy. Weiss's biographer Célia Bertin believed that Weiss launched her feminist crusade out of a desire to be in the spotlight, "parce qu'elle avait besoin d'un domaine où elle pourra mener une action qui attirera l'attention du public" (Bertin 219). Her memoirs served the same goal—to draw attention to herself, to ensure that her work would not be forgotten. However, in doing so, they may overinflate her role in both the anti-war movement of the 1920s and the feminist movement of the 1930s. The memoirs "[testify] to her desire to recreate herself, through writing, as one of the significant political players of her era" (Kershaw & Kimyongür 57). Like de Beaumer and Daubié, she used journalism as a way to get her foot in the door, to make her voice heard in a still male-dominated society, but like Daubié, she wrote books later in life, feeling that she

had already exhausted journalism as a means of making herself heard. Thus, this paper will only briefly examine her work as a journalist and will focus primarily on her 1946 memoir *Ce que femme veut*.

In doing so, it is important to consider the limits of Weiss's feminism. She frequently sparred with other women, particularly in the public sphere, seeming to view them less as allies and more as competition (though she claimed otherwise). Her disdain for certain of her fellow feminists is clear in her writing. Her niece, Élisabeth Roudinesco, attributed Weiss's peculiar relationship with women and femininity to "un sentiment de masculinité qui lui faisait craindre de n'être point regardée comme une femme" (qtd. in Loetscher 25). However, Weiss made it clear in all of her personal works that she was writing from a feminine perspective—this is obvious even in the title of *Ce que femme veut*. Another complicating factor in her personal feminine identity—and one that showed in her work—was her unfulfilled desire for motherhood. While most women constructed an identity around their families, she turned to her writing and activism instead (Kershaw & Kimyongür 16). At a certain point, she had had to choose between the two: "Louise Weiss's work reveals a very personal trauma resulting from her simultaneous desire for marriage and motherhood and her rejection of these models in favour of a completely autonomous identity as a politician and journalist" (6). Angela Kershaw and Angela Kimyongür suggest, in their analysis of Weiss's work, that while her struggle for self-definition is certainly not anti-feminist in itself, it may have led to some of the mistrust and even jealousy of

other women reflected in her writing. Some other aspects of Weiss's career might surprise modern-day feminists, such as her strong anti-abortion stance, discussed in her 1973 essay "Lettre à un embryon" (Letter to an embryo). However, her sharp wit and strong sense of independence are timeless.

The Life of Louise Weiss

Louise Weiss was born in 1893 in Arras in northern France; however, she belonged to a prominent, bourgeois Alsacien family who had been supporters of Alfred Dreyfus (Loetscher 21). She had Jewish ancestry on her mother's side, but was raised Christian—she would later have to provide a certificate to prove that she was *not* Jewish during the Nazi occupation of France (Loetscher 22 & 120). Her family had left Alsace after the Franco-Prussian War, but they maintained ties with the region, visiting often. Weiss's particular regional identity—coming from a much-disputed territory with both French and German influences—may have affected her passion for the cause of European unity (21).

In her 20s, Weiss took the *agrégation* exam to become a high school teacher, although her family wanted her to marry instead. The beginning of World War I gave her a third option—becoming a journalist (27). With her family connections, she quickly advanced in the profession, and by 1918 had founded her own newspaper, *L'Europe nouvelle* (29). *L'Europe nouvelle* was dedicated to promoting peace and European unity. It was known for its detailed accounts of each meeting of the League of Nations. Weiss spent so much time in Geneva for

these meetings that she became known as “la dame de Genève” (13). The paper promoted intellectuals who were on the rise, including Pablo Picasso and Jean Cocteau, and several prominent writers, such as Guillaume Apollinaire, contributed to the paper. The offices were frequently filled with famous visitors.

L'Europe nouvelle quickly garnered attention in Paris:

Le contenu, supérieur au contenant, ‘fit sensation par son idéologie et sa liberté d’allure, par la place qu’il accordait à la politique étrangère et aux problèmes économiques, par le contexte international toujours présent dans ses commentaires.’ (Weiss qtd. in Bertin, 90).

During this period, Weiss met many of the famous writers, artists, socialites, and politicians of the day, including Woodrow Wilson and French prime ministers Édouard Herriot and Aristide Briand. Briand’s beliefs were closely aligned with hers and they would travel to Berlin together in 1931. She also met and fell in love with Czechoslovakian statesman Milan Stefanik, but their affair ended shortly before his death in 1919. This loss had a profound effect on Weiss but gave her a renewed sense of purpose in her career (100). Although she later briefly married architect José Imbert, Stefanik was the great love of her life.

Throughout the 1920s, Weiss dedicated herself entirely to the causes of peace and the creation of a European community, but by 1934, the rise of the Nazis made her despair of achieving them. She left *L'Europe nouvelle* and took up a new cause: feminism, and in particular, women’s suffrage. She was

approached by suffragette Marcelle Kraemer-Bach about joining the movement, and she quickly launched herself into the cause with the same single-mindedness she had previously reserved for pacifist causes. Her rather broad goal was to fight “l’injustice de [leur] condition et les torts que causaient aux femmes les coutumes et les lois” (Weiss qtd. in Bertin 219). In 1934, she established an organization, *La Femme nouvelle* (the new woman), to advocate for women’s rights, particularly suffrage. She spent the next several years fighting tirelessly for the right to vote, recruiting as many people as she could to her cause and lobbying both regional and federal governing bodies. The advent of World War II put this fight on hold for several years. In her memoirs, Weiss claims to have worked in the French Resistance during the war, using the aliases Valentine or Louise Vallon, writing for the clandestine newspaper *La Nouvelle République*. However, the veracity of these claims has been debated (Loetscher 120). Her anti-Nazi sentiments were nonetheless well-known and forced her into hiding for several months (121).

Later in life, Weiss dabbled in film directing and traveled extensively (140). She established another newspaper, *Le Fer rouge*, which was published for six months in 1957 and promoted a “model society” (127). She also founded the Louise Weiss Foundation to promote peace and European unity. She received the Robert Schuman Prize for her work in these areas and was named an officer of the French Légion d’Honneur. In 1979, she was elected through universal suffrage to the European Parliament, the culmination of her lifelong commitment

to both voting rights and European unity (143). For her efforts in these areas, German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt nicknamed her “Europe’s grandmother” (145). She served in the European Parliament for three years and died a year later, in May 1983 (146).

“Carrières Féminines d’Aujourd’hui et de Demain”

Although Weiss was not actively engaged in feminist movements until the 1930s, her interest in women’s issues was present earlier in her career. In the third issue of *L’Europe nouvelle*, she wrote a short piece on women in the workforce that is curiously reminiscent of de Beaumer’s and even more so of Daubié’s writing. De Beaumer loved to hold up the example of working women in her own publication, and of course Daubié dedicated much of *La femme pauvre* to a discussion of career options for women. This latter topic is exactly what Weiss addresses in her article. This piece seems to reflect some of Weiss’s pride in her own career—she begins by saying that France’s economy would have been crippled during World War I if not for women going to work. However, rather than focusing on her own more intellectual world, she discusses jobs that require professional training, which she says women are getting in one of three ways: on the job, through apprenticeships, or in school. The women who learn on the job, Weiss says, are often the kind who previously would have only cared about marriage or their social lives, but were thrust into the workforce when their bosses, husbands, or other family members went off to war. Though these

women often proved flexible and creative, sometimes their lack of knowledge of the business eventually forced them to hand it over to a third party. The second kind of working woman Weiss discusses learned from the mistakes of the first. She explores the case of two women who worked their way up through the workforce through apprenticeships and whose professional instruction proved advantageous. She warns that women who take this path must be prepared for severe conditions and/or subordinate positions before they rise to higher levels. To avoid that, she suggests a third option—going to school, specifically to study commerce (all of this is an introduction to a longer piece on commerce schools by Maurice Facy, who was writing a book on the subject called *Quelles sont les meilleures carrières techniques pour les femmes?*).

This meditation on women in the workforce obviously differs from any by de Beaumer or Daubié in that it focuses specifically on opportunities provided by the war; however, Weiss certainly implies that women who perform well in their jobs may be able to keep them after the war. This somewhat contradicts Célia Bertin's assertion that Weiss never addressed the plight of women who worked during the war but lost their jobs afterwards. Bertin's cynical conclusion about this and other limitations in the scope Weiss's feminism is that "Les femmes du people n'existent pour elle que par les fonctions qu'elles occupent auprès d'elle. Les femmes des classes sociales plus favorisées, elle n'a pas de raisons particulières d'être indulgente avec elles. Seul l'autre sexe requiert toute son attention" (220). However, in this particular piece in *L'Europe nouvelle*, Weiss

seems to accord attention to several different classes of women—upper-class women who suddenly have to take an interest in something other than their social lives; the bourgeois who have the opportunity to go to school; and the lower classes who may now have more opportunities than before because of the need for workers. Like other intellectuals of the period, Weiss may have believed that the war would equalize different parts of society, and that it “had done more to redefine relations between the sexes and emancipate women than years or even centuries of previous struggle had accomplished” (Thébaud qtd. in Kershaw, 6). However, in her later feminist writing, Weiss rarely mentioned employment for women, focusing mostly on suffrage. This may have reflected the shift back to the household that many women made after the war:

The new self-confidence which women thus had the possibility to acquire during the war has been seen as a defining moment in the development of the women’s movement. The disruption to gender norms which resulted from this war was perhaps greater than had ever been seen before. And yet, the end of the war was marked in many areas of Europe by a reassertion of traditional gender roles.

(Kershaw, 4).

This piece does not reflect any of Weiss’s complicated feelings about other women—it is instead a celebration of her sex. Coming of age at this time of social upheaval and newly opened doors undoubtedly changed Weiss’s life, giving her opportunities and perhaps a boldness she would not have had

otherwise. Unlike other women who returned to domesticity after the war, Weiss continued to work for the rest of her life, staying firmly in the public sphere.

Ce que femme veut

Ce que femme veut, published in 1946, was Weiss's first book addressing her fight for women's suffrage. She would later cover much of the same ground in the third volume of her memoir, *Mémoires d'une Européenne: Combats pour les femmes*. In a personal, narrative style, using lots of dialogue, she describes her efforts for the movement up until the beginning of World War II. The opening sections focus on her inauguration into the movement, the women she worked with, the state of women's rights at the time, and the initial steps she took to promote women's suffrage.

Weiss describes herself as disillusioned and downtrodden by her efforts for peace throughout the 1920s and early 1930s. She withdrew briefly from public life, because she felt that war with Germany was inevitable; the only other option would be to accept Nazism: "Effrayée par l'avenir, lasse de mes efforts inutiles pour une organisation équitable de l'Europe et certaine que pendant quelques années, déterminer une ligne de conduite sans danger pour le pays me paraîtrait impossible, je cassai ma plume et rentrai dans la vie privée" (*Ce que femme veut*, 11). She decided to take up a cause she had not been previously had time to address—women's rights. It was at this time that she met Marcelle Kraemer-Bach, a leading member of l'Union Française pour le Suffrage des Femmes

(UFSF). Kraemer-Bach was worried about the future of the women's suffrage movement, which had had some momentum at the end of WWI but had stagnated by the early 1930s. Kraemer-Bach hoped to recruit Weiss to the movement because she wanted more coverage of it in newspapers. After some hesitation, Weiss joined in, and her brief retirement was over. She agreed with Kraemer-Bach that spreading information about the movement would be crucial to its success. Weiss's opinion was that "Ce qui manque [de la cause] c'est d'être entendue," imploring her fellow feminists: "Criez! Hurlez ! Servez-vous de la presse, du cinéma, de la radio. Créez donc un nouveau sentiment" (18). This was precisely what she set out to do. She believed that other suffragettes had not yet realized the need to "faire entrer le féminisme dans le domaine de l'information" (18). This was exactly what a demoralized Weiss needed at this point in her life—not only a different cause, but one she hoped to revitalize with her particular talents—her writing, her knowledge of the media, her connections. She had a new anchor in her continual search for her own identity.

She insisted upon the need to spread information to combat the suspicion non-suffragettes felt for the cause and to recruit more people to the movement. Weiss wrote that the cause had lost several prominent champions, and that while some men in government were sympathetic to the cause, they were not yet convinced. Intellectuals did not want to take action. City women were indifferent to the movement, while country women were outright hostile. Somewhat ironically, Weiss ultimately attributed this lack of sympathy from other women to a

misunderstanding of what it meant to be a feminist. Weiss's definition of "feminist" was: "une féministe ne pouvait être qu'une avocate pénétrée de la signification humaine du dossier qu'elle avait à plaider, mieux une militante prête à de lourds sacrifices pour le triomphe d'un procès visant à la modification d'un code désuet" (23). This definition reflects some of Weiss's outlook on life—that one must dedicate oneself entirely to one's cause, no matter the cost. Amazingly, Weiss did recruit women to the cause despite this somewhat alarming definition and the "serious sacrifices" she predicted for feminists.

Disinterest and hostility were not the only obstacles to be overcome; Weiss also felt the need to change French women's perception of themselves and their own interests. She examined this from a cultural perspective, noting that because of the traditional Catholicism of France, French women "avaient été élevées à l'école de la résignation" (26). They accepted their lot in life—the inferiority and servitude that they had not chosen—because it was the role ascribed to them by their religion, and because of the culpability placed upon them for original sin. Weiss had already personally refused to play this role. She also looked to French history, noting that only a century before, the Napoleonic Code had established men's authority within marriage. However, she drew arguments to support her cause from earlier French feminists, including Olympe de Gouges and Madame de Staël, and philosophers like Nicolas de Condorcet. Daubié, of course, had also written about the feminism of Condorcet's writing, and in another section of *La femme pauvre*, had addressed the limitations the

Napoleonic Code placed on women. She and Weiss came to similar conclusions about the inherent sexism of modern French society. Like Daubié, Weiss also drew inspiration from the successes of feminists in other countries, especially the United States and England.

However, as noted, Weiss quickly clashed with other feminists. Early in *Ce que femme veut*, she describes in depth her meeting and subsequent work with Cécile Brunschvicg, secretary-general of the UFSF. Although they shared goals, they often disagreed about how to achieve them. She sympathized with Brunschvicg's exhaustion after many years of futile campaigning, not unlike Weiss's campaigns for peace; however, she disapproved of Brunschvicg's political affiliations. Brunschvicg supported the Popular Front, a populist political party that advocated for the working class, which would rise to power briefly in the 1930s. Although Weiss courted their favor throughout her feminist campaigns, she never trusted the Popular Front, which she viewed as self-interested and thus likely to betray her interests. Shortly after they met, she told Brunschvicg in no uncertain terms that she would have to choose between this "radical" political movement and feminism, but Brunschvicg did not take this advice. Thus began the conflict between them. In *Ce que femme veut*, Weiss describes Brunschvicg in withering terms: "elle n'avait aucun talent ni d'écrivain, ni d'orateur; l'esprit de création lui faisait singulièrement défaut" (*Ce que femme veut* 14). Brunschvicg quickly recognized that Weiss might undermine her authority within the UFSF, but they formed a tenuous partnership nonetheless.

Weiss describes another conflict, this time with Maria Verone, president of la Ligue pour le Droit des Femmes, whom Weiss tried to recruit for her new organization, la Femme Nouvelle. Weiss became convinced that Verone did not want to see a renaissance in the feminist movement, preferring to stick to the status quo. Verone would later speak out against Weiss, and an offended Weiss remembered her as “une avocate dont le grand talent n’éclipsait ni la méchanceté, ni le manque de grâce” (48). Although Weiss was constantly recruiting prominent women to her organization—including three female aviatrixes to whom she devotes a chapter of *Ce que femme veut*—she remained suspicious of some of them, especially those who might eclipse her as a leader of the movement. Weiss was certainly a bit of an egotist, and yielding her platform to anyone else, even briefly, was difficult for her.

It was Weiss’s conflicts with other feminist groups that led her to form her own, La Femme nouvelle, though she claimed she would have preferred to work with existing groups. Recalling her warning to Brunschvicg, Weiss insisted that the organization would not serve any man or political party and would have no political interest except to defend women’s rights (46). On October 6, 1934, she opened La Femme nouvelle’s headquarters in a boutique on the Champs-Élysées with great fanfare. The boutique’s purpose was to inform the public about the fight for universal suffrage. She and other feminist leaders spoke to the crowd at the boutique’s “inauguration,” explaining several arguments for the right to vote, including that women in other countries had that right and that French

women paid taxes yet had no say in how they were spent. To women who felt themselves incapable of voting, Weiss insisted that a woman's only "incapability" was her husband (45). All this was merely the beginning of Weiss's suffrage campaigns, which make up the rest of *Ce que femme veut* and *Combats pour les femmes*.

Conclusion

French women received the right to vote in 1944. After the measure had been voted down numerous times in parliament before the war, it was mandated by Charles de Gaulle's provisional government late in the war ("France marks 70 years"). Weiss wrote that "the worldwide accession of women to a civil status equal to that of men is probably the most significant collective phenomenon of the first half of the [20th] century" (*Combats pour les femmes*). However, she ultimately believed that French women's suffrage would have been achieved without her efforts—probably an unwelcome thought for someone so concerned with legacy. Fearing she would fall into a literary-political abyss, "Weiss's solution was to write herself aggressively into history" (Kershaw & Kimyongür 62). The result is a large and unique oeuvre that paints a detailed portrait of the upheaval and tension of the inter-war period in France and of an unusual woman who desperately wanted to be at the center of it all.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

French female journalists are still fighting to achieve the same respect and recognition as their male peers. In 2013, a coalition of female journalists formed the group Prenons la Une to advocate for better representation and more participation of women in journalism in France. They published a manifesto pointing out the disparities in the industry—only 4 of 10 journalists in France are women, and only 3 in 10 editors are women. They also objected to the portrayal of women interviewed in the mainstream media, who, they argued, are overwhelmingly painted as victims (“Manifeste du collective”). In 2015, another group published a letter condemning the sexual harassment of female journalists (Willsher). A study by the Global Media Monitoring Project confirmed that in 2015, only about 24% of journalists worldwide were women (“Étude mondiale”). All this shows that there is still much progress to be made in this field.

It would be easy enough to say that de Beaumer, Daubié, Weiss, and others like them were simply ahead of their time, and that this is why their writing was not hugely influential and is now not widely known. This is true to an extent, but it is hard to say whether they could have accomplished more, reached more people, or become more famous if they lived today. They would still be fighting the same uphill battle for recognition, though the slope might not be as steep. Today there is still a need for a greater diversity of voices in journalism as in other fields.

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