

## **The Defeat and Occupation of France: Representing the Crisis of Rights and Identity in Post-War French Fiction**

I would like to examine how selected novelists published in the last fifteen years (notably, Patrick Modiano, Irène Némirovsky and Pierre Assouline) offer fictional reconstructions of aspects of the defeat and occupation of France during the Second World War, aspects sometimes neglected by historical writing. In particular, to examine how the crisis of personal and national identity following military defeat and the abrogation of republican rights under Vichy forced ordinary individuals to redefine their relationship to civil society and the polity in France. These issues are illustrated by these novelists' treatment of, respectively, anti-Semitic persecution, the re-integration of survivors and class conflict (e.g. in *Dora Bruder*, *Lutetia* and *Suite française*). An important related question is the extent to which the novelist has become, if not an unofficial historian, at least a guardian of memory with an ethical function, that of asserting the tragic consequences of the neglect or abuse of rights by state organisms which claim mendaciously to be defending them. In this context, the rediscovery or reinvention of Irène Némirovsky in 2004-06, as both chronicler and victim of the tragic abuses of rights perpetrated in occupied France, is arguably more significant than the novel *Suite française* (which avoids dealing with Jewish identity, unlike Némirovsky's pre-war work, or her daughter Elisabeth Gille's fictionalised memoir *Un paysage de cendres*).

C.D. Lloyd  
Durham University.