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Making a case for war

The lost provinces of Alsace and Lorraine in popular French fiction from 1905 to 1914

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Following the conclusion of the Franco-Prussian War in 1871, the defeated French nation accepted peace terms that required it to cede the entire province of Alsace and a large region of the province of Lorraine to Germany. The response to the loss of these eastern territories was immediate, and many French citizens manifested their indignation in a variety of ways. Parisians, for example, draped the statue that personified the city of Strasbourg on the Place de la Concorde in a black shroud, and schoolteachers placed *cocardes tricolores* over the lost provinces on their classroom maps. The French literary reaction to the forced cession of Alsace and Lorraine was equally rapid and notable. One of the best examples of early French protest writing, in fact, is Alphonse Daudet's short story, "La Dernière Classe," which first appeared in the French newspaper *Le Soir* in 1872. In this story, a French instructor gives his final lesson in an Alsatian school before he is to be replaced by a German instructor.[1] After having taught Alsatian students for forty years, Daudet's instructor now exhorts his pupils never to forget their French language because, as he informs them, "[…] quand un peuple tombe esclave, tant qu'il tient bien sa langue, c'est comme s'il tenait la clef de sa prison […]"[2] (*Œuvres*, ed. Roger Ripoll, vol. 1, Paris: Gallimard [1986]; 584) As the story closes, the French instructor writes "VIVE LA FRANCE!" on the blackboard and then tearfully dismisses his students for the final time – one of the very first references in French literature to a spirit of resistance to the German presence in Alsace.

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As Christopher Clark acknowledges in his recent study on the origins of World War I, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (New York: Harper Collins [2013]), the German annexation of these territories created a lingering point of contention in Franco-German relations. "Alsace-Lorraine became the holy grail of the French cult of *revanche*," he writes, "providing the focus for successive waves of chauvinist agitation." (24) Thus, rather than diminish with time, French opposition to the German presence in the provinces continued well into the twentieth century, particularly in response to the growing military power of Germany and its declared colonial aspirations in Africa and Southeast Asia at the turn of the century. Convinced that Germany was a real threat the national security of France, proponents of what would eventually become known in France as *revanchisme* (or a spirit of revenge) attempted to persuade their French compatriots that France's borders with Germany could be secured only by reclaiming the ceded territories of Alsace and Lorraine. Furthermore, many of the most ardent of the French *revanchistes* advocated a renewed military conflict – if necessary – to liberate the lost provinces from Germany and restore them to France. This spirit of revised national sentiment – identified by several prominent scholars as the French National Revival – is commonly associated with the decade that preceded the First World War. As Eugen Weber observes in *The National Revival in France, 1905-1914* (University of California Publications in History, vol. 60, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press [1959]), the movement's adherents had adopted a modern nationalism that had little in common with the liberal nationalism of the French Revolution of the eighteenth century:

> This group stood for *revanche*, for national unity and power based on traditional institutions (Church and army first among them), for clearing out Jews and other foreigners (at least from positions of political, economic, and social power, if not from the country itself), and for an indefinite measure of constitutional reform. It radiated an acute and often exclusive patriotism that blended well with the *revanchard* aspirations and with the exaltation of the army […]. (2-3)

It is certain, however, that the adherents of this movement were not limited to political or military spheres alone but instead included many French authors who similarly aligned themselves with the militant cause of *revanchisme* in the early years of the twentieth century.

Such was clearly the case of several French writers who took up the cause of the annexed provinces in their fiction in the years prior to the First World War. Giving voice to nationalist ideals and adopting the theme of *revanchisme* in their novels of annexation, these writers created popular narratives in which fictional

characters protest the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine, reveal a persistent hatred of the German occupiers, and express a desire to be reunited with France. However, because these novels typically revolve around standard character types and present plots that allow for limited interpretation, modern critics and readers alike tend to have largely neglected or forgotten them. Just the same, even though few would argue today that these novels have much literary merit, it is undeniable that they do have a cultural and historical value, especially in relation to the attitudes and objectives of the French who went to war in Europe in 1914.

To arrive at a better understanding of the rhetoric of these narratives, the modern reader can turn to Susan Suleiman, who offers some direction in her critical work, *Authoritarian Fictions: The Ideological Novel as a Literary Genre* (New York: Columbia University Press [1983]). Considering narratives such as these with their strong ideological contexts as *romans à thèse*, or novels with an agenda, Suleiman writes:

> One may suppose, for example, that the *roman à thèse* flourishes in national contexts, and at historical moments, that produce sharp social and ideological conflicts – in other words, in a climate of crisis; furthermore, the genre is more likely to exist in a cultural tradition that fosters the involvement of writers in social and intellectual debates or problems. (16)

According to Suleiman, authors of such texts will basically hope to manipulate their readers into accepting supposedly absolute truths while convincing them of the "correctness" of a particular doctrine or course of action. As Suleiman suggests, these texts generally attempt to persuade the reader through the example of their characters, who will often reveal the meaning (or objectives) of the story themselves in order to guarantee that the reader will arrive at the author's desired interpretation. To insure that the reader interprets the story correctly, these narratives are typically not open to multiple interpretations and generally guarantee a specific outcome. Furthermore, as Suleiman continues, "authoritarian fictions" are intended not only to inform or convince the reader of a certain political position or ideology but are also meant "to provoke an action or a change of attitude on the part of the receiver." (42)

Keeping Suleiman's theories in mind, one can easily see then that these French novels of annexation served as *romans à thèse* or (to use the terminology of Suleiman) as "authoritarian fictions" in which French writers attempted to convince their French readers of their obligation to the lost territories by emphasizing certain cultural, linguistic, and national affinities that the population within these territories felt for France and by manipulating public fears in France through

the depiction of a belligerent and oppressive German nation. Because the writers of these novels attempted to convey a political message with no room for interpretation, their narratives typically present simple characters that function within predictable plots. Characters that are "bad" must be easily recognizable as such, and these are almost always the German characters. Perceived in these novels as citizens of a nation that was determined to dominate and control the annexed regions of Alsace and Lorraine, these German characters are typically portrayed as "foreigners" who not only defend Germany's cultural supremacy but also promote pangerman doctrines and attempt to impose their Germanic culture on the native population. Moreover, these German characters tend to display a propensity for public intemperance and destructive behavior within the annexed territories. Just as there are "bad" German characters in these novels, there are recognizably "good" characters that serve as acceptable models of behavior as well. Not surprisingly, these "good" characters are nearly without exception the native Alsatians and Lorrainers who remain faithful to their French heritage. Such characters are frequently motivated by two sentiments: either a strong sense of attachment to the land of Alsace and Lorraine or an undying loyalty to France. These "good" Alsatians and Lorrainers are consequently committed to an eventual reunification with France and are always prepared to resist the German annexation.

Of all the French writers to take up the cause of Alsace and Lorraine in their literary writings during the ten-year period that preceded the First World War, one of the foremost and most influential was Maurice Barrès.[3] As an outspoken proponent of French *revanchisme* at this time, Barrès unquestionably had the greatest influence on both the general public and other French nationalists. After having gained widespread recognition at the end of the nineteenth century with his trilogy, *Le Roman de l'énergie nationale* (1897-1902), in which he developed his social theory of "rootedness,"[4] Barrès published *Au service de l'Allemagne* in 1905 – the same year as the onset of the revived nationalist movement in France. Set in Alsace, this annexation novel tells the story of a young Alsatian by the name of Paul Ehrmann, whose family elected to stay in Alsace after the German annexation in spite of its loyalty to France. Surprisingly, when faced with the prospect of conscription into the German army, Ehrmann decides to join his German regiment rather than flee to France. He is not motivated, however, by any loyalty to Germany but is instead inspired by his overwhelming feeling of attachment to Alsace. Believing that it is his duty to remain in Alsace to protect the region from German encroachments, Ehrmann thus criticizes those who would desert their homeland. As he explains, "Notre devoir d'Alsacien est en Alsace."[5] (Paris: Plon [1923]; 126) After Ehrmann completes his military service, his German supe-

riors offer him a promotion and promise him privileges because of his exemplary service record, but Ehrmann refuses to accept because he feels no allegiance to Germany. "Depuis trente-trois ans," he states, "pas une goutte de sang de mes pères n'avait été germanisée. Sous cet assaut bestial, je me connus, plus sûrement que dans aucune minute de ma vie, fils de l'Alsace et de la France."[6] (220) Moreover, Ehrmann is perfectly aware of his true loyalties and boldly informs his commanding German officer that he would never side with Germany in any future military conflict with France. "T'imagines-tu que je vais rester ici," he declares, "quand il s'agira d'une guerre avec la France?"[7] (163)

To help guide the reader of this novel to the proper conclusions, Barrès's narrator then directly links Ehrmann's model service and his enduring loyalty to France to the example of Saint Odile, the patron saint of Alsace who undertook the proselytization of the Germanic tribes that had invaded France in the seventh century. Clearly convinced of the threat that Germany presented at the start of the twentieth century, this narrator attempts to persuade his French readers of the need to protect the annexed territories from the presence of the Germans as did Saint Odile. "Aujourd'hui," he states, "il nous faut le même miracle qu'au temps d'Odile […] Nous attendons que notre sol boive le fond germanique et fasse réapparaître son inaltérable fond celte, romain, français, c'est-à-dire, notre spiritualité."[8] (102) In a final attempt to recall the obligations of the French nation to the land of Alsace, Barrès's narrator evokes Saint Odile's convent in the Vosges as he exclaims: "Comme il éclate sur le sommet de [Monte Odile], notre devoir alsacien."[9] (102)

The social, cultural, and political issues that Maurice Barrès presented in *Au service de l'Allemagne* quickly became central to a corpus of popular French novels that subsequently depicted living conditions in the annexed territories. Like Barrès, other patriotic French writers would develop similar themes of *revanchisme* in their novels of annexation. Without exception, these French authors – following the example set by Maurice Barrès in *Au service de l'Allemagne* in 1905 – typically gave their readers only one viable solution to the predicament of Alsatians and Lorrainers living under the domination of a "foreign occupier": the liberation of France's eastern territories and their reintegration into the French nation. While it would be practically impossible to identify every French novel that took the annexed territories of Alsace and Lorraine as its primary theme from 1905 to 1914, it is still feasible to present a fair selection of texts that provide an adequate representation of the topoi and plots that were fairly typical of these novels, beginning with *Au service de l'Alsace* – an immediate and direct rebuttal of Barrès's *Au service de l'Allemagne*. Published in France in 1906 by Jeanne and

Frédéric Régamey,[10] this novel tells of the return of a young man who had fled from Alsace to France (unlike Barrès's Paul Ehrmann) after the German annexation to avoid conscription. The topos of the "lost son" who lived in exile in France but returns to the annexed territory and decides to remain there reappears in several subsequent French novels that took the annexed provinces as their subject: Jeanne Régamey's *Jeune Alsace* (1909), Paul Acker's *Les Exilés* (1910), and André Lichtenberger's *Juste Lobel, Alsacien* (1911), to name just a few. Interestingly enough, Barrès returned to the topic of the lost territories in 1909 when he published *Colette Baudoche*, an immensely popular French novel of annexation (one of the few still read today). However, by presenting the struggles of a young woman who is courted by a German professor in the annexed region of Lorraine, Barrès switched his attention from the men of the annexed territories to the women, and the plight of women in the annexed territories would become more commonly portrayed in subsequent novels, as in Marthe Fiel's *Sur le sol d'Alsace* (1911), which tells of a marriage with disastrous results between an Alsatian woman and a German man, or Georges Ducrocq's *Adrienne* (1914), which presents a young woman who lives in exile in France on the border with Germany but who longs to return to her home in annexed Lorraine.

As already stated, the writers of these novels attempted to convey a political message with no room for interpretation. Consequently, their narratives typically present simple characters that function within predictable plots. Characters that are "bad" must be easily recognizable as such, and these are usually the German characters. One of the cruelest of the German characters in these novels is Otto Schoen, who ironically appears in Jeanne and Frédéric Régamey's *Au service de l'Alsace* (Paris: Albin Michel [n.d.]) as the justice of peace in the village of Bourgheim. Although he at first seems to be a harmless – if not ludicrous – figure in his yellow gaiters and green velvet hat adorned with a rooster's feather, he reveals his true nature when he attempts to assault Margueritte Matthis in the woods while declaring: "Le plus fort sera le maître!"[11] (227) But Margueritte is not as weak as he believes; using the same stick that she just used to chase away a hawk, she strikes Schoen in the face and shoves him backwards into a well. Leaving him to die in the well, she ominously repeats his threat that the strongest will be the master. Since the Germans of these novels are frequently associated with military force and the threat of the German militarization of the territories is a common topos, Margueritte's warning thus serves to remind French readers of the need to confront German aggression with force.

The image of the German military boot forcibly striking into the soil of Alsace or Lorraine also recurs frequently in the novels, and references to the

Prussians or the Prussian army (which most all French readers of the early twentieth century would have readily linked to the destruction of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71) only serve to reinforce the impression of German militarism. In Licthenberger's *Juste Lobel, Alsacien* (Paris: Plon [1911]), for instance, Lobel comes to understand Germany's true intentions when he observes numerous military units in the annexed territory. In Alsace, he warns, "[…] c'est l'engin de guerre patiemment médité, savamment monté, dont quotidiennement toutes les pièces sont vérifiées, fourbies et huilées: obsession orgueilleuse et passionnée de tout un peuple."[12] (194) Moreover, it's the emotive reactions of the characters who oppose Germany's presence and militarization of the territories that help to guide the reader to the intended conclusion. Such is the case in Ducrocq's novel, *Adrienne* (Paris: Les Marches de l'Est [1914]), in which a convalescent French army officer declares, "Si je rencontre des soldats prussiens martelant le pavé à coups de talons, je détourne la tête."[13] (190)

Just as there are "bad" German characters in these novels, these must be balanced with "good" characters who are committed to an eventual reunification with France and who are prepared to achieve this goal by any possible means. These "good" Alsatians and Lorrainers are thus commonly shown to resist the domination of the Germans. Language – as was seen in Daudet's "La Dernière Classe" – is one frequent means of resistance, and most of these characters persist in using French at home as well as in public. One especially curious example of linguistic resistance is found in Paul Acker's *Les Exilés* (Paris : Flammarion [n.d.]), in which four companions travel from Paris to Alsace, where they are surprised to learn that Alsatian shopkeepers in Colmar insist on using French when they conduct business with German clients. One of these French characters, Madame Dolnay, openly reveals her admiration for their unyielding patriotism to France:

> J'ai pénétré alors qu'il se passait quelque chose de très beau… qu'il y avait toujours ici des conquérants et des conquis… des vainqueurs qui gardaient une proie, et des vaincus qui payaient la rançon de la patrie abattue, et que nulle défaillance ne liait les vaincus aux vainqueurs. J'ai parfois quitté une boutique des larmes aux yeux parce que cette marchande, qui de son comptoir m'avait parlait français, résistait à sa manière, inconsciemment ou non, à l'Allemagne et combattait pour la France.[14] (117-118)

Instilling loyalty to France in the children of the annexed territories through language is equally important. Many Alsatian and Lorrainer characters thus enroll their children in clandestine French lessons. Curiously, resistance to the presence of Germans is common in school classrooms as well, as Frédéric Asmus

learns when his students protest the criticisms of Napoleon Bonaparte in their German textbooks in *Colette Baudoche*. Similarly in *Adrienne*, a young boy tells a French interlocutor from Paris that he does not speak a word of German after he proudly recites a poem by La Fontaine; just the same, he declares that neither he nor his fellow students sit passively in class: "[…] je ne comprends pas ce que dit l'instituteur, et nous faisons des niches aux Prussiens."[15] (142)

These young boys will, however, become young men, and they will face the prospect of serving in the German military. Some of these young men, like Fritz Ilstein in Marthe Fiel's *Sur le sol d'Alsace* (Paris: Charpentier [1911]), will choose to desert the annexed territories rather than serve Germany. As the son of an Alsatian mother and a German father, Fritz strongly favors his mother and begins to rebel against his father's authoritarianism as he grows older. When Fritz finally does escape to France in the middle of the winter to avoid serving in the German military, he collapses in exhaustion into the freezing snow of France, where he will write a letter to his Alsatian mother before he dies to explain his motivations for deserting Alsace:

> Il ne faut pas que les fils d'Alsaciens se montrent inférieurs à leurs pères […]; il faut que notre âme libre s'affirme tous les jours pour que l'ennemi nous sache bien indomptables […] Le passé nous a rendu belliqueux, nous devons souvenir, pour être plus forts quand viendra le moment de combattre.[16] (292)

Nevertheless, in spite of Fritz's bellicose language, most other characters will condemn those who desert the annexed territories. After all, young men must not only protect the lost territories from German encroachment; the young women who remain there must also have acceptable suitors.

The "good" women characters in these novels will not only fill the simultaneous roles of mother, spouse, motivator, and guardian while also remaining faithful to France. There are several examples of promising marriages between the women of annexed Alsace and Lorraine and the men who either remained in the territories or returned after a brief period of exile in France. Of these unions, one of the most interesting is that of Jean Mercky and Lina Vogel in Jeanne Régamey's *Jeune Alsace* (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Nationale [1909]). In this case, Lina is so closely linked to the native soil of Alsace that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the two. When Jean sees her for the first time, for example, she appears to blend naturally into the Alsatian landscape:

> L'image de la jeune fille, maintenant, s'interposait entre ses yeux et le paysage, ou plutôt il lui semblait qu'elle faisait partie de ce paysage même, tant elle y était à sa place comme un portrait dans son cadre; tant sa grâce robuste et saine s'harmonisait avec la vigoureuse nature de l'Alsace![17] (10)

Lina's attachment to the Alsatian landscape is further reinforced because she works in her father's fields, where the scent of the soil will permeate her body. Both Lina and Alsace are thus inextricably intertwined: "Lina, pour moi, c'est l'Alsace, l'Alsace faite femme."[18] (161) Additionally, when Jean dreams of kissing Lina, he imagines that he will embrace something more than a woman: "Avec elle […] je deviendrai plus Alsacien encore […] Il me semble que, sur ses lèvres, j'embrasserai la Patrie…"[19] (162) When Jean Mercky and Lina Vogel are eventually married, their common Alsatian origins and a loyalty to France only serve to strengthen their union.

While it might seem at first as though the writers of this fiction relegated their female characters to secondary roles in support of the male characters, the actual act of providing more children for a war effort, as Helen M. Cooper points out in "War and the Woman: The Con[tra]ception of the War Text" (*Arms and the Woman: War, Gender, and Literary Representation*, ed. Helen M. Cooper et al, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press [1989]), is in itself an act of war. "The study of [war]," Cooper writes, "begins with the acknowledgement that all wars destroy women's culture, returning women to the restricted roles of childbearing and nursing and only the work that helps the war effort." (129) Hence – much like Thetis, who attended to arming her son, Achilles – the women in these narratives (in addition to providing children for a future conflict with Germany) will take appropriate action against the annexation by encouraging their sons to remain faithful to France. To return then to the marriage of Lina Vogel and Jean Mercky, it is of no surprise then that Lina has fulfilled her maternal obligations to France after her marriage by bearing several children. And Jean promises that many more will come.

By emphasizing the natural compatibility of the Alsatians and Lorrainers living in the annexed territories with the French and portraying their unyielding loyalty to France, the writers of these novels would have subsequently implied a latent incompatibility of the annexed populations with their German occupiers. What is surprising to the modern reader, however, is that most all of these writers regularly confused nationality with racial identity in so doing. As Tzvetan Todorov asserts in his seminal work, *Nous et les autres* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), "racial" identifications had shifted in the nineteenth century from purely physical characteristics to essentially ethnic or cultural attributes. As a result, "racial" identities were, as Todorov states, virtually synonymous with culture and nationality at the start of the twentieth century. Moreover, these perceived racial differences were regularly extended to the belief that individual societal units were incapable of communicating effectively with one another. Such perceived divisions between

distinct cultures consequently encouraged a strict "ethnocentrism" according to which societies were unavoidably viewed in terms of *nous* (or *us*: the social community with which the observer felt affinity) and *les autres* (or *the others*: all those communities from which the observer felt estranged). In consideration of this cultural application of "racial" markers in the nineteenth century, it is not surprising that the French and German peoples are frequently portrayed in these early twentieth-century texts as two separate "races." French nationalists of this time, genuinely convinced of the unique nature of the "French race," thus argued that a shared history and "pure blood" united the French nation as well as distinguished its citizens from all other social or ethnic (hence, "racial") groups. In opposition to the "French race" stood the "German race," whose members were identified – as Todorov asserts – as *les autres* because of their different language, history, and culture.

References to "racial" distinctions between the French and Germans are evident in essentially all the novels that are discussed here. In fact, even Juste Lobel, the general secretary of an international pacifist society in Paris, will express his belief in the undeniable "racial" distinctions – and subsequent incompatibility – that exist between the French and Germans in Lichtenberger's *Juste Lobel, Alsacien* when he declares: "Irrésistiblement l'idée s'impose de deux races en présence."[20] (195) Distinct differences between the "French race" and the "German race" were thus believed to be impossible to deny. Charles Matthis supports this idea in the Régameys' *Au service de l'Alsace* when he ridicules the fraternal societies that German authorities organize for the Alsatian and German war veterans who were once enemies in 1870: "La fraternisation peut être apparente, vin et bière aidant. Mais, au fond, on sentira toujours la différence des races."[21] (200) "Racial" tensions between the German occupier and the Alsatians are especially apparent in Acker's *Les Exiles*, when Claude Héring returns to Alsace only to learn that Germans now occupy the house where his family once lived. Greatly humiliated, Claude must now ask permission of the German "other" to enter his boyhood home: "Il lui était dur, tout à coup, d'adresser cette prière à un homme d'une autre race, la race devant laquelle son père et sa mère s'étaient retirés."[22] (51) The perceived incompatibility of these two "races" is most frequently demonstrated in the marriages that exist between Alsatian women and German men. Such is the case of Louise Denner in *Sur le sol d'Alsace*, in which her marriage to an authoritarian German man becomes intolerable: "[Louise] s'apercevait, trop tard, que deux races ennemies ne peuvent s'unir, malgré le mirage de l'amour qui les aveugle un moment."[23] (67) Suggesting that attempts at reconciliation between the French and the foreign "other" in the provinces were futile, Louise's French

domestic offers a harsh reproach to those who might believe otherwise: "Tu savais pourtant que ton fiancé était l'ennemi héréditaire de notre race… qu'attendais-tu?"[24] (90-91)

Given the nineteenth-century tendency to equate culture and ethnicity with race, it can only follow that the writers of these novels of annexation would eventually extend the period's perceived "racial" distinctions between French and German identities to other ethnic groups – such as the Alsatians – as well. Jeanne and Frédéric Régamey actually developed this idea fully in *Au service de l'Alsace*. After Jacques Arnold returns to Alsace in this novel, he contemplates the Alsatian plain from atop a peak in the Vosges Mountains. While looking over the supposedly impassable Rhine River that physically separates the disputed territory of Alsace from Germany, he sees that both the flora and fauna of the region have evolved separately over time on each riverbank, and he naturally extends these observations to the people who have inhabited the Alsatian plain for hundreds of centuries. To support this idea, he will cite the anthropological "evidence" of physical differences between Alsatian and German skulls:

> Crâne d'Alsacien, dur comme le granit de tes montagnes, entêté dans tes haines et tes amours, tu résisteras aujourd'hui, demain, comme autrefois, à toutes les tyrannies, à la pression du casque à pointe, comme aux brutalités du maître d'école allemand![25] (99)

Jacques bases this supposed "racial" separation between Alsatians and Germans on what he believes to be the scientific evidence of "plusieurs savants" (99) whose theories serve, as far as Jacques is concerned, as a justification for resistance to the German presence in Alsace.[26]

Although such "racial" distinctions are astonishingly common in the novels of annexation, one of the most startling – if not troubling – references to race appears in Barrès's *Au service de l'Allemagne*. In this novel, Ehrmann uses race not only to justify the attachment of Alsatians to France but to express a belief in the "racial" superiority of the French: "Nous autres, jeunes bourgeois alsaciens, nous avons grandi dans une atmosphère de conspiration, de peur et de haine et dans *la certitude de notre supériorité de race*. Voilà ce qui explique notre amour de la France."[27] (130)

Finally, in order for these novels of annexation to be most effective, the "good" characters must interpret the lessons of the narrative so that readers can be properly informed of the urgency to liberate the lost provinces from Germany. This imperative is clearly expressed in *Adrienne* by Maurice, a convalescent French officer who journeys to the annexed city of Metz in Lorraine with Adrienne

and her aunt. Inspired by the example of Adrienne, who longs to return to Lorraine from her exile in France, he will declare that he is now prepared to take definitive action – even military action – to free the disputed territory from the German occupier:

> Agir. Ne plus douter de mon pays ni de mes propres forces. Agir. Servir. Etre un soldat dans le rang, un franc-tireur derrière la haie. Ne plus discuter, ne plus m'interroger. Poursuivre silencieusement mon idée. Faire pour elle les actes les plus obscurs, les besognes les plus humiliantes. Tout affronter, tout supporter d'un cœur léger avec la certitude que ces tourments ne sont pas inutiles. M'oublier et songer à ceux qui sont plus malheureux que moi. Vouloir leur délivrance, y consacrer toute mon énergie. Etre un homme pour être digne d'eux et parce qu'une force irrésistible me dit que la partie n'est pas terminée et que nous pouvons regagner ce que nous avons perdus. Faire en sorte que nos fils ignorent nos inquiétudes et nos dégoûts. Lutter pour qu'ils puissent un jour se reposer, lutter parce que la quiétude est ignominieuse sans l'honneur, lutter sans trêve, être l'artisan de la victoire, mourir content.[28] (193-94)

Most French readers of this novel should have detected the undeniable sense of urgency in Maurice's convictions. Prepared to undertake any action or sacrifices necessary to liberate the lost territories of Alsace and Lorraine, Maurice presents himself as an exemplary model for the French readers of this time. The writers of this ideological fiction could have only hoped that their French readers would have followed Maurice's example. It is noteworthy to recall here that *Adrienne* was published in 1914 – the same year that major powers of the European continent went to war.

It should thus be undeniable that the writers of these novels of annexation sought to inspire in their French readers both a sense of community with the Alsatians and Lorrainers living in the annexed territories while simultaneously convincing them of the need to liberate these territories from the German state in the years prior to the so-called Great War. Some one hundred years after these novels first appeared, the modern twenty-first century reader of this fiction might reasonably wonder then to what extent these authors realized these two objectives. Interestingly enough, in *1914: Comment les Français sont entrés dans la guerre* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques [1977]), Jean-Jacques Becker minimizes the importance of the annexed provinces on the eve of the war. Stating that the *revanchiste* mood had actually diminished by 1914 and that most French no longer felt any great animosity for the Germans, Becker contends that the question of Alsace and Lorraine had only a limited influence on French public opinion at that time:

> Le refus de faire la guerre pour les provinces perdues était général, de sorte que la question était assoupie; mais elle subsistait en demi-teinte. Elle n'alimentait plus le nationalisme d'un flux puissant, mais elle était encore capable d'empêcher les courants pacifistes et internationalistes de se développer pleinement.[29] (62)

Other historians have contended on the other hand, however, that the annexed provinces did continue to play a role in fostering a bellicose attitude in France prior to 1914. In *The Guns of August* (Norwalk, Connecticut: Easton Press [1962]), the seminal English-language work on the first month of war in 1914, Barbara Tuchman contends that the French were eager for the long-awaited opportunity to liberate the lost territories. According to Tuchman's account, veterans of the Franco-Prussian War marched in advance of the French military regiments whose soldiers sang patriotic songs about the liberation of Alsace and Lorraine as they paraded through the streets of Paris. Moreover, according to Tuchman, one military regiment that paraded under a banner that proclaimed "Alsatians going home" received enthusiastic cheers from the French crowds that lined the streets. In an even more recent account of the war, Martin Gilbert emphasizes in *The First World War: A Complete History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company [1995]) that many men who joined the French army in 1914 did so with the conviction that France would quickly liberate the eastern territories. "In France," Gilbert writes, "an outpouring of patriotic fervor affected all classes: Alsace-Lorraine would be restored; the humiliation of 1870 and 1871 would be reversed." (32)

As far as the novels of annexation are concerned, however, it would obviously be unrealistic to state that they had *caused* the French to go to war in 1914. It would also be incorrect to claim that this fiction was solely responsible for having inspired the desire of some French nationalists to reclaim the lost territories and reincorporate them into the French nation. Still, given the widespread popularity of the narratives of Maurice Barrès, Paul Acker, and Jeanne and Fréderic Régamey (to name only a few of the French authors who promoted the liberation of the annexed territories in their novels at the onset of the twentieth century) one should concede that these novels would have had some discernable effect on their French readers. To an undeniable degree, these novels of annexation – simple texts though they might have been, yet gripping in their sense of national urgency – must have influenced the formulation of the nation's perceived "duty" to liberate the lost provinces. Consequently, these nationalist texts would have certainly served to make military conflict with Germany appear to be more acceptable – if not entirely necessary – to a large number of French citizens when France went to war in 1914.[30]

NOTES

1. On 14 April 1871, German occupation authorities decreed that all instruction in Alsatian schools was to be conducted in German.
2. "[…] when a people become enslaved, as long as they keep their language, it is as though they hold the key to their prison […]"
3. Born in Alsace in 1862, Barrès was educated in free Lorraine after the annexation of Alsace in 1871 and later pursued legal studies in Paris in 1883. He was twice elected as a conservative member of the French Chamber of Deputies, first in 1889 and again in 1906. He was also an active member of various French patriotic societies, such as the *Ligue des Patriotes* and the *Ligue de la Patrie Française*, and he publicly sided with the anti-Dreyfusards during the Dreyfus Affair.
4. According to Barrès, young people who "uprooted" themselves from their natural, native surroundings for large cities were destined to struggle in their new environments. This idea was best demonstrated in the first volume of the trilogy, *Les Déracinés*, in which a group of young men relocate from free Lorraine to Paris at the end of the nineteenth century and suffer the ill effects of life in the decadent capital.
5. "Our Alsatian duty is in Alsace."
6. "After thirty-three years [of annexation], not a single drop of the blood of my fathers had been Germanized. While enduring this bestial assault [of German military service], I knew myself to be, more certainly than at any other minute of my life, a son of Alsace and of France."
7. "Do you imagine that I am going to stay here [in Alsace] if there is a war with France?" It is important to note that Ehrmann uses the familiar "tu" when he addresses his commanding officer – a clear mark of disrespect directed toward the person in authority.
8. "Today, we need the same miracle from the time of Odile […] We are waiting for our soil to drink up the Germanic presence and to make possible the reappearance of its unalterable Celtic, Roman, French essence, that is, our spirituality."
9. "How radiantly our duty to Alsace shines forth from the summit of [Mount Odile]."
10. Jeanne Heilmann and Frédéric Régamey were a husband and wife who remained in the Alsatian city of Colmar after the German annexation. Together, they wrote nearly twenty anti-German texts and published them in France in the years prior to the First World War. Frédéric Régamey was also an illustrator, and he sketched many of the drawings that accompany their narratives.
11. "The strongest will be the master!"
12. "[…] this is the patiently prepared, wisely assembled war machine whose every part is maintained, polished, and oiled each day: the arrogant and passionate obsession of an entire nation."
13. "If I see Prussian soldiers hammering the pavement with the strikes of their heels, I have to look away."
14. "I thus understood that something very beautiful was taking place… that there always existed conquerors and conquered here… the conquerors holding its prey and the vanquished paying the ransom of the defeated country. I sometimes left a boutique with tears in my eyes because a saleslady who had just spoken French to me at the counter was resisting Germany in her own way – unconsciously or not – and was fighting for France."
15. "[…] I don't understand what the teacher says, and we play tricks on the Prussians."
16. "The sons of Alsatians must not show themselves to be inferior to their fathers […]; our free spirit must affirm itself every day so that the enemy will know that we are invincible […] We must

remember that the past has made us eager for war so that we can be stronger when the time for combat comes."

17. "The image of the young girl now inserted itself between his eyes and the landscape, or rather it seemed to him as though she was a part of the landscape itself, so much was she in her place, like a portrait in its frame, so much did her robust and healthy grace harmonize with the vigorous nature of Alsace!"
18. "Lina, for me, is Alsace, Alsace made into a woman."
19. "With her […] I will become more of an Alsatian still […] It seems to me that I will embrace the Nation on her lips."
20. "Irresistibly, the idea of the presence of two races imposes itself."
21. "Fraternization might be possible, with the help of beer and wine. But, in the end, one will always be aware of the difference of the races."
22. "Suddenly, it was hard for him to address this request to a man of another race, the race before which his father and mother had fled."
23. "Louise realized, too late, that two enemy races cannot be united in spite of the illusion of love, which might momentarily blind them."
24. "You knew, however, that your fiancé was the hereditary enemy of our race… what did you expect?"
25. "Alsatian skull, hard as the granite of your mountains, stubborn in your hatred and in your love, you will resist today, tomorrow, as always, against all the tyranny and oppression of the pointed helmet just as you do against the brutalities of the German school master!"
26. Although Jacques does not identify any of these *savants* by name, it is probable that he is referring to the theories proposed by F. Dollinger and E. Blind, two Alsatian sociologists whose "scientific" articles regularly appeared in the *Revue Alsacienne Illustrée*, a bilingual journal (with subtle pro-French leanings) that was published in Strasbourg from 1899 to 1914. Given that Jeanne and Frédéric Régamey were frequent contributors to the *Revue Alsacienne Illustrée*, it is highly plausible that they were familiar with the theories of Dollinger and Blind. As a matter of fact, the literary rhetoric of Jeanne and Frédéric Régamey practically duplicates the anthropological discourse of Blind and Dollinger word-for-word when the narrator of *Au service de l'Alsace* informs the reader of the "scientific evidence" of the existence of the Alsatian race.
27. "As young, upper middle-class Alsatians, we grew up in an atmosphere of conspiracy, fear, and hatred and with *the certainty of our racial superiority*. This is what explains our love of France." Italics added for emphasis.
28. "Act. No longer doubt either my country or my own power. Act. Serve. Be a soldier in the ranks, a sniper in the hedges. No longer discuss, no longer ask myself questions. Follow my idea silently. Take the most obscure action [for the annexed territory], accomplish the most humiliating tasks. Confront everything, support everything with a light heart with the certainty that these burdens are not useless. Forget myself and think of those who are more unfortunate than I. Desire their deliverance, consecrate all my energy to this goal. Be a man in order to be worthy of them and because an irresistible force tells me that the conflict is not over and that we can win back this time that which we lost. Fix it so that our sons are unaware of our worries and our disgust. Fight so that they can rest one day, fight because peace is ignominious without honor, fight without giving quarter, be the creator of victory, die contentedly."
29. "The refusal to go to war on behalf of the lost provinces was general given that the issue had abated, but it subsisted half-heartedly. It no longer fed nationalism with a strong influence, but it was still capable of preventing pacifist and internationalist tendencies from fully developing."

30. I would like to thank my long-time mentor and advisor, Catharine S. Broman, who read an early draft of this article. Her input was, as always, greatly appreciated. Nevertheless, any errors in this article are fully my own responsibility.