# Rejecting a Cleansed French Morality: Female Blood Imagery

in Fautrier's La Juive and

Saint Phalle's Grand Tir-Séance de la Galerie J

Regatu Asefa

Carleton University

#### Introduction

In June of 1961, Raymond Hains and Jacques Villeglé's exhibition, *La France déchirée*, was held at Galerie J in Paris. The exhibition featured a number of *décollage* creations the artists had made throughout the preceding decade. The works incorporated torn posters taken from Parisian city streets, many of which made reference to the ongoing Algerian War of Independence. Pierre Restany, founder of the Nouveaux Réalistes, wrote the introduction to the exhibition in which he states, "[t]he dirty laundry of politics is that of a woman of good breeding who was having her monthly visitor. Our history is filled with enough blood, frills, and charms to make a bit of poetry, providing that one has a lucky hand and a pure heart."

Examining Restany's text, there are distinct connections between women and purity. France, characteristically feminine, is metaphorically female. She is well bred, implying a nobility and morality inherent in her upbringing. However, by the misfortune of being a woman, she has experienced the shame of menstruation. Blood, and most especially menstruation, is categorically polluting, as Julia Kristeva discusses in her book, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Women in Western Europe did not wear underpants until the mid-nineteenth century and until then, menstruated freely onto

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Thomas McDonough, "Raymond Hains's 'France in Shreds' and the Politics of *Décollage*," *Representations* 90, (Spring 2005), 75.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Ibid., 81-83. Restany's original French reads, "les dessous de la politique sont ceux d'une femme du monde qui aurait eu des malheurs. Notre histoire est pleine de sang, de chichis et de charmes, de quoi faire un peu de poésie, à condition d'avoir la main heureuse et le coeur pur." Aude Bodet and Sylvain Lecombre, "Chronolgie," in *1960: Les nouveaux réalistes* (Paris: Paris-Musées et Société des Amis du Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1986), 81-83.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 71. Kristeva categorizes pollutants into two categories: excrement and menstrual. For more, see ibid, 71-72.

their petticoats and skirts.<sup>4</sup> By the beginning of the twentieth century, menstruation products were available to women in both Europe and North America.<sup>5</sup> These products allowed women to conceal their shame and embarrassment by promising cleanliness and discretion.<sup>6</sup> Women could now deal with their menses through private methods that kept the pollutant hidden. In Restany's metaphor, therefore, French politics are hidden, shameful, and insidious.

Moreover, France's politics are 'dirty laundry,' – or more precisely, "les dessous." These are undergarments dirtied with menses and in need of cleaning. As Mary Douglas presents in *Natural Symbols*, the purity rule subjugates the physical body (in this case, the act of menstruation) to the social body (here, the woman of good breeding). Kristeva examines in depth the relationship between bodily discharge including blood and the impurity thus associated. The polluting blood, infected with its impurity, has defiled the intimate apparel. Menstruation must be concealed, and in Restany's text, it has sullied and soiled the woman. Politics and history have sullied and soiled France's good breeding. Restany embraces the purity rule; he presents purity as the cleansing tool for understanding and deciphering history. Only by having a 'pure heart' can one make sense of history, suggesting, perhaps, that purity and morality are essential to restoring history. For Restany, France's politics and history need washing and it is only with a pure and moral heart that it can be done.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> W. Peter Ward, "Cleanliness and the Beauty Business," chap. 8 in *The Clean Body: a Modern History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 227.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Aude Bodet and Sylvain Lacrombre, "Chronologie," in *1960: Les nouveaux réalistes* (Paris: Paris-Musées et Société des Amis du Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1986), 81-83.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Mary Douglas, "The Two Bodies," chap. 5 in *Natural Symbols Explorations in Cosmology*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2003), 80.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 102.

Restany's words aim to rehabilitate French national pride. In doing so, Restany reveals his colonial upbringing – he grew up in Casablanca where his father worked. 10 Paul Restany had spent his academic and professional career theorizing and implementing French policy in colonial states. He had even written his doctorate thesis titled, "Placements des capitaux français dans les colonies françaises." <sup>11</sup> This is the environment in which Restany grew up and the ideology with which he understood France's position in world politics. Restany's own career followed that of his father's; he, too, served the French state. In 1953, Restany worked for the Ministry of Transportation writing reports on highways. 12 In 1958, two years before founding the Nouveaux Réalistes, he worked for cabinet minister, mayor of Bordeaux, and future Prime Minister, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, who at the time was in the Ministry of National Defense and Armed Forces. 13 When Chaban-Delmas left his position with the Armed Forces, Restany began working as a speechwriter for Édouard Corniglion Monlinier in the Ministry of the Sahara. 14 Restany's career, immediately preceding La France déchirée, entailed serving the French government in matters directly related to Algeria. In principle, his work at these ministries is part of the very dirty laundry he writes of in the 1961 exhibition introduction.

Douglas goes on to state, "the social experience of disorder is expressed by powerfully efficacious symbols of impurity and danger." <sup>15</sup> Restany's introduction captures the symbolism of impurity and danger in the menstruating woman. His remarks

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Henry Périer, *L'alchemists de l'art* (Paris: Cercle d'Art, 1998), 12. Périer discusses Restany's childhood in Morocco in his book. For more detail, see pages 12-19.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Douglas, "The Two Bodies," 90.

equate female blood with historical shame, both of which need to be cleaned and examined through a lens of purity. The aversion to blood marks a 'covering up' of France's political skeletons. France sought to be 'propre' in both senses of the French word. She aimed to be clean and tidy, rid of the decay and violence of the recent wars in which she was involved. Emerging as a newly cleansed France, she also sought the virtue that accompanied this purification. In presenting France's dirty history as a woman's period, Restany's remarks highlight the relationship between female blood imagery and repressed French memory. I use the term 'female blood imagery' to encompass bodily discharge, both violent and natural, that is associated with women. The aversion to female blood imagery manifests itself in a 'cleaning up' of French virtue.

Restany's 1961 introduction to *La France déchirée* represents French disavowal of history. French virtue is promoted as a cleansing tool to readdress the impurities of politics. Restany's introduction, on display while the country was actively engaged in the Algerian War of Independence, presents France as a virtuous woman who has had some misfortunes. However, *La Juive* by Jean Fautrier and *Grand Tir – Séance de la Galerie J* by Niki de Saint Phalle complicate the French virtue Restany's writing espouses. These works challenge the image of a pure and virtuous France by emphasizing female blood imagery and therefore exposing the violence of the country's politics.

## French Rebuilding Post-WWII and Fautrier's La Juive

Roland Barthes writes France was hungry in the post-World War II reconstruction period: "Decay is being expelled (from the teeth, the skin, the blood, the breath)': France is having a great yen [fringale] for cleanliness." <sup>16</sup> In her chapter, "Hygiene and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Barthes, as quoted in Kristin Ross, "Hygiene and Modernization," chap. 2 in Fast Cars, Clean Bodies:

Modernization," Kristen Ross explores the connections between modernity and cleanliness in France in this reconstruction era, emphasizing alongside Barthes that France yearned to be clean.<sup>17</sup> In order to be clean, the country had to metaphorically rid itself of the decay, stains, and complicity of the Occupation.

Jean Fautrier's 1943 painting, La Juive (Fig.1), contests this French political cleaning and moral reshaping. Painted two years before the end of World War II, La Juive emphasizes the violence Europe was seeing and France was sanctioning. It disrupts French reconstruction ideals by presenting the horrors of her immediate political climate. La Juive, along with its sister piece, Sarah, are the largest works within Fautrier's Otages series. 18 La Juive is 73cm long by 115.5cm wide. 19 The larger-than-life torso commands contemplation, most especially in comparison to the other smaller pieces in the series. The work depicts a woman's torso seemingly rotting and decaying into the background on which it lies. The gangrenous colours that dominate the artwork make no distinction between the body and the background, seeping between the figure and the rest of the work. Greens and yellows, reminiscent of infection, pus, and other bodily fluids, create a haze of illness throughout the piece. As Kristeva outlines, bodily discharge is impure.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the red line, curving over the torso's presumed breast, indicative of blood, further reinforces the impure decayed and diseased state of the Jewess. The Jewess is dead and Fautrier presents her carcass. According to Kristeva's writing on abjection, corpses threaten to pollute the earth and must therefore be buried immediately. 21

Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 73.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Rachel Perry, "Jean Fautrier's *Jolies Juive*," *October* 108, (Spring 2004): 59.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Timothy Matthews, "The Offerings of Decay: Jean Fautrier, *Les Otages*," in *Literature, Art and the Pursuit of Decay in Twentieth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 121.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 102. For more, see ibid, 102n3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Ibid., 109.

However, by not doing so, and instead making a corpse the subject of the work, "[the impure] slips into that of *abomination* and/or prohibition." La Juive is therefore an abomination. The artwork is vile because of its colours, its title, and its decayed subject matter. Moreover, the torso is without a head or limbs. The figure is anonymous; she is therefore anyone and everyone. The title, too, renders the figure as the anonymous Jewess; she represents all Jewish women. However, decayed and without limbs to enact the threats Nazi and Vichy France have perpetuated, Fautrier repositions this decaying figure as a pathetic threat. How can this figure, and therefore all Jewish women, be threatening if they are in such a state?

## Complicating Victimhood: La Juive

Fautrier's *La Juive* reclaims Jewish victimhood in a period where France seemingly prioritized her own. France saw itself as a victim of the Vichy regime. Ido de Haan writes, "[t]he persecution of the Jews was a relatively minor point in comparison to the crisis of the French nation that the Vichy regime had caused." In his August 1944 speech, de Gaulle called the liberation, "a moment of national recovery," neglecting to explicitly mention the suffering and extermination of Jews under the Vichy and Nazi regimes. Instead, it was France that had suffered, France that had been violated. As stated, France wished to be clean. In the post-war years there were movements to scrub the memory of Vichy, emphasizing French national purity and social hygiene. In 1945, Paris municipal councillor Marthe Richard campaigned for, "[m]oral cleanliness!

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Ido De Haan, "Paths of Normalization After the Jews: The Netherlands, France, and West Germany in the 1950s," in *Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History During the 1940s and 1950s*, ed. Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 85.
 <sup>24</sup> Ibid.

Purification.... Pull[ing] out the evil by the root!"25 She did so by advocating for the closing of brothels. <sup>26</sup> This social hygiene campaign targeted women. Women were considered immoral and their ability to seduce and entice impacted and negated the country's moral progress in the years after the Second World War. The goal was redemption and restoration of French morality. However, it is La Juive's decaying state that confronts the cleansed French victimhood. So much so, the painting was not shown until 1963, twenty years after its creation.<sup>27</sup> As Rachel Perry addresses, including La Juive in the original 1945 Otages exhibition would have, in Perry's words, "invariably suggested the complicity-and duplicity-of the French audience."<sup>28</sup> Sixty years after the war ended, France still struggled with their role in the extermination of Jews. In 2007, Maurice Papon's funeral became a point of contention. He had been given the Légion d'honneur in 1962 by de Gaulle but had been convicted for complicity in crimes against humanity in 1998 for his role in the German occupation of France.<sup>29</sup> Not only in the years immediately following the end of the Second World War, but into the twenty-first century did France reconstruct the memory of the war. Sarah Wilson calls the Occupation, "a lieu de mémoire" – a place the nation has ascribed a certain authenticity and moral value deemed as "unproblematic absolutes." 31 In the French collective memory, the nation's honour was the victim. La Juive, however, redirects victimhood to Jews. The decaying body, titled 'The Jewess,' offers no ambiguity over who the true

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Ross, "Hygiene and Modernization," 74.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Perry, "Jean Fautrier's *Jolies Juive*," 69.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Serge Guilbaut, "Foreword," in *Art of the Defeat: France 1940-1944*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Los Angeles: Getty Research Center, 2008), VIII.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Sarah Wilson, "Paris Post War; In Search of the Absolute," in *Paris Post War: Art and Existentialism* 1945-1955, ed. Francis Morrin (London: The Tate Gallery, 1994), 26.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Ibid.

victim is. The impure discharge of pus and bodily fluids and an exposed decaying corpse relentlessly emphasize Jewish victimhood through female blood imagery.

# Saint Phalle's Tirs

In the decades following *La Juive*, female blood imagery continued to contest French virtue and cleansed memory. Only a month following *La France déchirée* and therefore the public display of Restany's introduction panel, Niki de Saint Phalle exhibited *Feu à volonté* at Galerie J.<sup>32</sup> The exhibition consisted of Saint Phalle inviting artists and the public to shoot at her works, bursting the pouches of paint that then exploded and ran down the pieces.<sup>33</sup> Known as *Tirs*, these works embody a violence and anthropomorphic physical trauma. As Saint Phalle said, "I imagined the paint starting to bleed. Wounded, in the same way people can be wounded. As far as I was concerned, the painting became a person with feelings and sensations." For Saint Phalle, *Feu à volonté* represented an act of violence and the harm was personified in the finished product. The holes from the bullets, shot not only by the anonymous French public but also known artists including Yves Klein (1928-1962) and Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008) are read as wounds; the paint is transformed into blood. The pieces are victims, assaulted and murdered by the very society who created them.

Among the works created at the exhibition is *Grand Tir-Séance de la Galerie J* (Fig.2), standing 142.9cm tall by 77.6cm wide.<sup>35</sup> The piece is riddled with bullet wounds that have punctured through the plaster and other materials that make up its surface. Paint

<sup>32</sup> Bodet and Lecombre, "Chronologie," 83.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> As quoted in Jill Carrick, "Phallic Victories? Niki de Saint-Phalle's *Tirs*," *Art History* 26, no. 5, (November 2003): 724.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Caroline Wallace, "Grand Tir - Séance De La Galerie J (Big Shot – Gallery J Session)," *Haus Der Kunst*, Accessed March 20, 2022.

has spilled from these holes. Greens, blues, reds, yellows, oranges, and browns have bled the length of the work creating a rainbow of violent human action that stands out against the pale white background. Near the middle of the piece is a particularly large hole, drawing the eye to the centre of the physical pain and violence of the artwork. The piece has undergone trauma, reflecting the trauma Saint Phalle herself endured as a child. In 1993, Saint Phalle confessed her father had sexually abused her as a child, stating this experience contributed to her *Tirs* practices.<sup>36</sup>

## Tirs: The Social Failures of France

Her *Tirs* embody Saint Phalle's frustrations with the violence women endure at the hands of French male power. Of course, her personal experiences as mentioned above influenced her work, but Saint Phalle also shot her works for all women who suffered at the hands of men, both physically and socially. Saint Phalle had witnessed the social injustices French women were subject to. Women were only given the right to vote in 1945.<sup>37</sup> In 1961, the year Saint Phalle exhibited her *Feu à volonté* and created *Grande Tir-Séance de la Galerie J*, women still were not able to have independent bank accounts.<sup>38</sup> Writing about Saint Phalle's 1962 work, *Kennedy-Kruschev*, Amelia Jones redirects Saint Phalle's anger towards male politicians and presents her work as political commentary.<sup>39</sup> Saint Phalle said,

WHO was the painting? Daddy? All men? Small men? Tall men? ... or was the painting ME? ... I was shooting at MYSELF, society with

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Saint Phalle as cited in Carrick, "Phallic Victories?," 724. Saint Phalle said, "I was raped by my father when I was eleven, so perhaps it's no wonder I started shooting my paintings."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Wilson, "Paris Post War," 39.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Carrick, "Phallic Victories?," 719.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Amelia Jones, "Wild Maid, Wild Soul, A Wild Wild Weed: Niki de Saint Phalle's Fierce Femininities, c. 1960-1966," in *Niki de Saint Phalle 1930-2002*, ed. Phillip Sutton (Bilbao: FMGB Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa and La Fábrica, 2015), 162.

its injustice.... I was shooting at my own violence and the VIOLENCE of the times.<sup>40</sup>

Her *Tirs*, including her *Grande Tir- Séance de la Galerie J* can be read as socio-political commentary as well. *Grand Tir-Séance de la Galerie J* is therefore also a manifestation of anger towards the French government that upholds gender inequalities, both sexual and social. The work, through female blood imagery of wounds and the impure discharge as Kristeva outlines, criticizes French society.

Furthermore, the blood imagery of *Grand Tir-Séance de la Galerie J* undermines and challenges the virtuosity of France. In a country grappling with the Algerian War of independence, Saint Phalle's *Grand Tir-Séance de la Galerie J* distinctly exposes France's moral failings. The state was actively censoring images and information coming in to France about the Algerian war, cleansing the reality of the international events in which the country was involved. As Mainmonides said, one who sets his heart on cleansing himself from the uncleannesses that beset men's souls ... becomes clean as soon as he consents in his heart to shun those counsels and brings his soul into the waters of pure reason. Algerian the reality of the Algerian war, France attempted to make itself pure – her pursuit since the 1940s. However, Saint Phalle's *Grand Tir-Séance de la Galerie J*, with its bleeding, wounded visuals harkens back to Kristeva's writing on abjection. The 'blood' of Saint Phalle's work "show[s] up in order to reassure a subject that is lacking its 'own and clean self'." France lacks her 'own and clean self,' Saint

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Carrick, "Phallic Victories?," 724.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Ross, "Hygiene and Modernization," 111.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 91.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Ibid., 53.

Phalle makes that explicit. France cannot be clean and pure while French women experience violence.

In 1951, *Elle* magazine published an investigation titled, "La Française, est-elle propre?" In doing so, the magazine questioned women's hygiene and therefore targeted the "innermost structure of the society." Women bore the hygiene of the country. Through washing, cleansing, riding oneself of blood and dirt and generally controlling the body, women – and therefore France – would be closer to "the priestly-aristocratic image" Douglas discusses in her writing. He magazine's investigation, therefore, encouraged women to re-evaluate their cleanliness and thus re-evaluate their own moral purity. As Frantz Fanon said concerning the campaign to colonize Algeria: "[L]et's win over the women and the rest will follow." Controlling women so as to shape a nation's image was the ultimate goal. If women were clean, then France was clean, as Ross argues. Therefore, by cleaning up women, France could achieve cleanliness as Barthes says she so desperately sought.

However, with *Grand Tir-Séance de la Galerie J*, Saint Phalle refused the controlled and cleansed imagery of women. Her shooting upended the socially controlled image of a French woman. By centering the violence as manifested in the bullet wounds and bleeding paint, Saint Phalle exposes the 'dirty laundry' Restany wrote of; France

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Ross, "Hygiene and Modernization," 76. Françoise Giroud, co-founder of *Elle* magazine and author of the investigation, later admitted "[it] was really meant to provoke." See Ross, 77.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Douglas, "The Two Bodies," 88.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Ross, "Hygiene and Modernization," 77.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Ross writes: "If the woman is clean, the family is clean, the nation clean. If the woman is dirty, then France is dirty and backward. But France can't be dirty and backward, because that is the role played by the colonies. But there are no more colonies. If Algeria is becoming an independent nation, then France must become a *modern* nation: some distinction between the two must still prevail." See ibid., 78.

cannot have 'a lucky hand and a pure heart' so long as she denies the violence against women captured in *Grand Tir-Séance de la Galerie J*. Kristeva says, "[t]he body must bear no trace of its debt to nature: it must be clean and proper in order to be fully symbolic." Here, symbolic is synonymous with pure as Kristeva argues that it is bodily discharge that makes one impure. Grand Tir-Séance de la Galerie J not only bears the trace of nature, its composition cannot be extrapolated from the secretions that ooze, stain, and make up the visual. As such, it is impure. Thus, while *Grand Tir-Séance Galerie de la J* is impure, Saint Phalle emphasizes the impurity of France.

It is not just France's history that is filled with blood, as Restany says, but her contemporary treatment of women is violent as well. In 1961, with the country at war in Algeria, women at home and in the colonies were subject to France's destructive power. Scandalous news of rape and torture of Algerian women at the hands of French soldiers made its way to France.<sup>51</sup> The horror of France's colonial failings caused Minister of Culture André Malraux to take a stand in 1958 against her torturous practices in Algeria.<sup>52</sup> It is this abuse Saint Phalle makes explicit in *Grand Tir-Séance de la Galerie J*; women's blood is on France's hands. France herself is dirty; she cannot consider herself virtuous.

### Conclusion

In 1961, when Restany wrote his introduction to *La France déchirée* and used menstruation as a defiling image, he contributed to the prevailing French disavowal of

.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 192.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Ibid., 102. The debt to nature consists of the bodily secretions. Kristeva states: "Any secretion or discharge, anything that leaks out of the feminine or masculine body defiles." See ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Wilson, "Paris Post War," 40.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Ibid., 44. Other public protestors include Sartre, Mauriac, and Roger Martin du Gard protested de Gaulle's. See note 15, "VIII The Imaginary Museum," in ibid, 51n15.

historical and political failings. Through language including 'laundry' and 'pure,' Restany's introduction mirrors national efforts to cleanse and purify French society in the decades of reconstruction and decolonization. De Haan, citing political scientist, Arend Lijpart, states,

Sometimes 'national traumas' are equated with a given formative experience on a national scale and considered, 'serious disruptions of the tranquility of everyday life [that] tend to be remembered and to become embedded in a collective perception of society as moral community.<sup>53</sup>

Restany, a product and enforcer of French colonization, fed into the 'moral community.' His use of female blood as the impure, immoral underbelly of French national pride denies the agency with which the country participated in the Occupation, the Algerian War of Independence, and enacted violence against women. Barthes says, "obsession with cleanliness is certainly a practice of immobilizing time." Cleanliness, and the abjection of female blood imagery, was a tactic for French moral relationships to Vichy France and its role in the Algerian War of Independence. By denying and purifying the memory and reality of both wars, France immobilized these periods. A clean memory stands outside the historical context — it is devoid of agency. By contrast, a dirty and impure memory represents the shame and historicity.

It is this historicity that Fautrier's *La Juive* and Saint Phalle's *Grande Tir-Séance* de la Galerie J address. Through female blood imagery including death, decay, wounds, and blood, these two pieces reveal the image of a virtuous and clean France as a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> As quoted in De Haan, ""Paths of Normalization After the Jews," 67.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Ross, "Hygiene and Modernization," 105-6.

falsehood. The female blood imagery in these works emphasizes the moral failings and dirty history of the nation. Both Fautrier and Saint Phalle, victims of French disavowal, refused the collective memory of France as pure and moral. Their works undermine and expose the image of France as virtuous. The artworks make evident France's political and historical violence and reject the country's cleansed morality. It is through female blood imagery that *La Juive* and *Grand Tir-Séance de la Galerie J* that Fautrier and Saint Phalle challenge, contest, and refuse French constructed morality in the mid-twentieth century.



**Figure 1**. Jean Fautrier, *La Juive*, 1943, Musée d'Art moderne de Paris. AMVP 1496. <a href="https://www.parismuseescollections.paris.fr/fr/musee-d-art-moderne/oeuvres/la-juive#infos-principales">https://www.parismuseescollections.paris.fr/fr/musee-d-art-moderne/oeuvres/la-juive#infos-principales</a>



**Figure 2.** Niki de Saint Phalle, *Grand Tir-Séance de la Galerie J*, 1961. Private Collection, Courtesy Galerie GP & N Vallois, Paris © Niki Charitable Art Foundation / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2016. Photo: André Morin.

 $\frac{https://postwar.hausderkunst.de/en/artworks-artists/artworks/grand-tir-seance-de-lagalerie-j-grosses-schiessbild-veranstaltung-der-galerie-j}{}$ 

## **Bibliography**

- "La Juive." Paris Musées. Accessed March 31, 2022.

  <a href="https://www.parismuseescollections.paris.fr/fr/musee-d-art-moderne/oeuvres/la-juive#infos-principales">https://www.parismuseescollections.paris.fr/fr/musee-d-art-moderne/oeuvres/la-juive#infos-principales</a>
- Bodet, Aude and Sylvain Lecombre. "Chronolgie." In 1960: Les nouveaux réalistes. Paris: Paris-Musées et la Société des Amis du Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1986, 43-104.
- Carrick, Jill. "Phallic Victories? Niki de Saint-Phalle's *Tirs*." *Art History* 26, no. 5, (November 2003): 700-729.
- De Haan, Ido. "Paths of Normalization After the Jews: The Netherlands, France, and West Germany in the 1950s." In *Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History During the 1940s and 1950s*, edited by Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann, 65-92. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Douglas, Mary. "The Two Bodies." Chap. 5 in *Natural Symbols Explorations in Cosmology* 3rd ed. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Guilbaut, Serge. "Foreword." In *Art of the Defeat: France 1940-1944*. Translated by Jane Marie Todd, VIII-XIII. Los Angeles: Getty Research Center, 2008.
- Jones, Amelia. "Wild Maid, Wild Soul, A Wild Wild Weed: Niki de Saint Phalle's Fierce Femininities, c. 1960-1966." In *Niki de Saint Phalle 1930-2002*, edited by Phillip Sutton, 156-163. Bilbao: FMGB Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa and La Fábrica, 2015.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.
- Matthews, Timothy. "The Offerings of Decay: Jean Fautrier, *Les Otages*." In *Literature, Art and the Pursuit of Decay in Twentieth-Century France*. 114-136. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- McDonough, Tom. "Raymond Hains's "France in Shreds" and the Politics of *Décollage*." *Representations* 90, (Spring 2005): 75-97.
- Perry, Rachel. "Jean Fautrier's Jolies Juives." October 108, (Spring 2004): 51-72.
- Ross, Kristin. "Hygiene and Modernization." Chap. 2 in Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995.
- Wallace, Caroline. "Grand Tir Séance De La Galerie J (Big Shot Gallery J Session)." Haus Der Kunst. Accessed March 20, 2022.

 $\underline{https://postwar.hausderkunst.de/en/artworks-artists/artworks/grand-tir-seance-de-lagalerie-j-grosses-schiessbild-veranstaltung-der-galerie-j}$ 

Ward, W. Peter. "Cleanliness and the Beauty Business." Chap. 8 in *The Clean Body : a Modern History*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019.

Wilson, Sarah. "Paris Post War; In Search of the Absolute." In *Paris Post War: Art and Existentialism 1945-1955*, edited by Francis Morrin, 25-52. London: The Tate Gallery, 1994.