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## Introduction

During the summer of 1940, Britain was expecting invasion by Germany. It suddenly seemed possible that Hitler might win the war. Bombardment was anticipated in the major cities, and Margaret Kennedy was among many who hurriedly left the south-east of England, moving with her children to Cornwall. Her journal of the terrifying months from May to September 1940 was published the following year by Yale University Press and is now brought back into print for the first time.

*Where Stands a Wingèd Sentry* tells of a period of intense uncertainty, when ordinary life was transformed – not only by government restrictions but also by the pervasive fear of an invisible enemy. As I write this introduction, during the summer of 2020, the parallels with our contemporary experience of covid-19 are continually present to my mind. Kennedy's diary entries, with their plain style, astute political analysis, and unexpected humour, are compelling, and the book has an enormous power of immediacy. While the text was being written, and later typed out and sent to the US for safekeeping, its author still did not know whether the invasion would happen, nor whether the Allies would be victorious.

At the time when she wrote her wartime journal, Margaret Kennedy had been a celebrity for more than fifteen years, ever since the publication, when she was 28, of her novel *The Constant Nymph* (1924). A story of doomed love between a brilliant but moody composer and a fourteen-year-old girl, the book was admired by intellectuals from Thomas Hardy to Antonio Gramsci. It also became a major bestseller, and inspired stage and film versions starring Noël Coward, John Gielgud and Ivor Novello. Owing to the exceptional popular and critical success of *The Constant Nymph*, Kennedy is forever associated with the romantic atmosphere of the twenties and with the bohemian milieu that she depicted in the novel. Few readers are aware of her later work or of her important achievements in drama and non-fiction, and hardly anyone would think of her as a war writer. Yet *Where Stands a Wingèd Sentry* demonstrates that she was one, and an excellent one. She wrote, not of the London Blitz nor of factory work or hospital nursing, but of that rarely described period when Britain was getting ready for full-scale war. As the *New York Herald Tribune's* reviewer commented: 'For the first time ... some one who lived through it tells us now what happened to the English between the surrender of the Belgian army and the full force of heavy bombing. What happened was transformation' (Becker 1941, 3). Kennedy examines how the events of that phase of the conflict worked on her mind and on those of her neighbours: her book is an extraordinary record of what she describes as 'an inner battle'.

### 'More in the girl than meets the eye'

Margaret Kennedy's mother, Elinor Marwood, was from Yorkshire, and her father, Charles Moore Kennedy, was of Anglo-Irish heritage. Margaret, eldest of their four children, was born in 1896 in London, where Charles worked as a barrister. The household was a prosperous one. The family had access to the cultural resources of the capital as well as to the scenery of Cornwall, where they spent summer holidays (and where Elinor and Charles later settled for a time). Margaret Kennedy had a favoured education, attending Cheltenham Ladies' College and, from 1915, Somerville College, Oxford, where she was a student

alongside Vera Brittain, Winifred Holtby, Naomi Mitchison and Sylvia Thompson. In a 1928 essay about this generation of women students, Holtby remembered Kennedy in this way:

Down the street, carrying a pile of books, a kettle, and a bicycle pump, comes a woman student in a dark green coat and a rather limp Liberty scarf. Her hat is well on the back of her head, revealing an oddly-shaped face, with an intelligent nose and quietly observant eyes. She is an unobtrusive sort of person. Apart from two or three friends, she speaks to few people; but now and then at a college debate or during a dinner-time discussion, she suddenly opens her mouth and makes about three remarks, so witty, so disconcerting and so shrewd that College pricks up its ears and wonders whether perhaps there is more in the girl than meets the eye. 'Rather a brain at history. I expect she'll go down and write a text book', said Rumour. (GREC [Holtby] 1928, 1271) <sup>1</sup>

And she did. Kennedy's first book, published in 1922, was *A Century of Revolution, 1789-1920*. Her career as a fiction writer began with *The Ladies of Lyndon* (1923), which is set in the Edwardian era and interweaves the stories of two main characters. Agatha is a debutante who makes a brilliant marriage and becomes mistress of Lyndon, a beautiful country house, but always regrets her first love. James, her brother-in-law, a painter of genius, is treated as a half-wit by the family but achieves happiness through his surprising marriage to a housemaid. A highly accomplished piece of work, *The Ladies of Lyndon* was well received but did not attract a large readership until after Kennedy's second novel, *The Constant Nymph*, had appeared.

*The Constant Nymph*, too, is set before the First World War, and centres on the eccentric Sanger family, who are remote from ordinary life in many senses. Living in an inaccessible Alpine chalet, the Sangers and their assorted houseguests are wholly absorbed by music and by a series of fantastical quarrels and romances among themselves. When the household is broken up, the young Sangers struggle to adapt to the modern world, with consequences that are initially comic but ultimately disastrous. Some readers noticed similarities between the Sanger household and the domestic set-up of Augustus John, who established an artists' colony in Dorset in 1911 and lived there with his mistress, his legitimate and his illegitimate children, and numerous long-term guests. This is plausible, since Kennedy was slightly acquainted with another painter, Henry Lamb, who had lived for a time at the Dorset colony. However, the fictional Albert Sanger can by no means be identified with a single real-life model. He is, rather, an embodiment of the idea of genius.

*The Constant Nymph* is about genius, and it was itself repeatedly hailed as a work of genius. Among its high-profile admirers, several of whom wrote to congratulate Kennedy or to request to meet her, were John Galsworthy, Thomas Hardy, J M Barrie, Cyril Connolly, A A Milne, George Moore, A E Housman, Walter de la Mare, William Gerhardie, Jean Giradoux, Antonio Gramsci, L P Hartley, Heywood Broun and Augustine Birrell. It is intriguing that these are all men: indeed, the novel was placed in a tradition of male-authored fiction, and numerous reviewers expressed surprise that it should have been written by a woman. It was, apparently, difficult for contemporary commentators to reconcile 'genius' with female authorship. And the themes of *The Constant Nymph* are not those that were expected in a 'woman's novel' of the period. There are no scenes of comfortable domesticity; rather,

Kennedy takes up debates about art and culture. She does not shrink from the investigation of unconventional sexuality, and refuses her heroine a happy ending.

*The Constant Nymph* received most of its serious tributes during the first few weeks after its publication, while sales remained modest. Soon, the appeal of the novel crossed the Atlantic and, somewhat belatedly, it reached the bestseller lists. By October 1926, it was reportedly selling a thousand copies a day in the US. Its huge readership, and its successful adaptation for stage and screen, turned the book into a cultural phenomenon and Margaret Kennedy into a household name.<sup>2</sup>

Numerous magazines and newspapers published profiles of Kennedy, and most of these constructed her as an accidental celebrity: an ordinary woman who, in spite of her growing public reputation, had retained an appropriate feminine modesty. Some of the journalists commented on Kennedy's unexpectedly tidy and elegant appearance, which contrasted so strikingly with the outlandish styles worn by the heroine of her novel. Indeed, Kennedy did not pursue a Bohemian lifestyle, although during the early 1920s she did establish herself independently in London – much to the dismay of her more conservative relations – and *The Constant Nymph* was written in a bed-sit. However, the year after the novel appeared, Kennedy returned to a more conventionally domestic existence when she married David Davies, a barrister, who would later become Sir David Davies QC. They lived mainly in Kensington, and had two daughters, Julia (in adult life, the novelist Julia Birley) and Sally, and a son, James. (These family members feature in *Where Stands a Wingèd Sentry* under different names.) After her marriage, Kennedy continued to publish under her maiden name, which had been made so famous by her bestseller.

*The Ladies of Lyndon* and *The Constant Nymph* were followed by fourteen more novels. Kennedy also wrote several plays, as well as screenplays, novellas, a biography, and essays on film and fiction. Chronologically, her novels fall into two groups: those published between 1923 and 1938, and a second set, produced from 1950 onwards. Thematically, there is no clear distinction between these two waves of fictional production. She was adept at historical fiction, but also wrote contemporary stories about topics such as celebrity (*Return I Dare Not*, 1931) and divorce (*Together and Apart*, 1936). Her settings range from a Cornish seaside hotel (*The Feast*, 1950) to a Greek island (*The Forgotten Smile*, 1961), and artists, musicians and writers feature frequently in her work, as they did in her social life. Although Kennedy's readership was at its largest during the interwar years, she continued to garner respect and admiration in later decades. Her novels of the 1950s received numerous accolades: *Troy Chimneys* (1952), set during the Regency, won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize, while *The Feast* was a Literary Guild choice and *Lucy Carmichael* (1951) a Book Society selection. Over subsequent decades, her best-known work has remained in print, and in 2014 Vintage reissued a series of her novels. She has, however, attracted barely any attention from academic critics.<sup>3</sup>

Since Kennedy did not write fiction during the 1940s, this period has often been seen as an hiatus in her career. However, she continued to develop her dramatic and non-fiction writing during this period, producing some of her most fascinating but least known texts. Alongside *Where Stands a Wingèd Sentry*, her works of the forties include an insightful essay on contemporary cinema, *The Mechanized Muse* (1942)<sup>4</sup> and several plays, some of them original and others adapted from her novels. The plays did well: for instance, *How Happy With Either* ran at the St James Theatre, London in 1948, starring Constance Cummings and

directed by Basil Dean, and was discussed on the 'Theatre Programme' on BBC radio ('Friday'). This was just one among many occasions during the Forties when Kennedy or her work featured on the BBC. For example, she was interviewed for the television show *Kaleidoscope* and for *Woman's Hour* on the Light Programme; both *The Constant Nymph* and *The Feast* ran as *Woman's Hour* serials; and her plays *Escape Me Never!* (1934) and *The Constant Nymph* (1926, with Basil Dean) were also broadcast on the Light Programme ('Friday April 30').<sup>5</sup>

Basil Dean, the influential theatre and film producer and director, was an important figure in Kennedy's career. In 1926, he persuaded her to adapt *The Constant Nymph* as a play with his help, and its success engendered Kennedy's enduring interest in writing for stage and screen. During their early attempts to write together, she was annoyed by his attributing her ideas and achievements to 'instinct', as if, as she said in a private letter, 'any mental effort on my part must be involuntary'. But a few months later, once she had watched him in action as a director, she wrote to the same friend: 'my feelings about Dean underwent an enormous change when I saw him on what is really his job'.<sup>6</sup> Dean later worked on both the silent (1928) and the sound (1933) film versions of *The Constant Nymph*, and on other projects involving Kennedy, such as the 1937 production of her co-authored play *Autumn*.

During the 1930s and 1940s, she received commissions to work on screenplays: for instance, for *Little Friend* (1934), *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1934) and *The Man in Grey* (1943). In the same period, several of her own novels and plays were turned into films: among them, *Escape Me Never!* in 1935, and *The Midas Touch* in 1940. With at least 25 film credits to her name, Kennedy made a notable contribution to the cinema of the period. At the time when she wrote her journal of the early phase of the Second World War, Kennedy was by no means experiencing a fallow period in her career; rather, she was becoming increasingly well-known via the new media of the period.

### ***Where Stands a Wingèd Sentry: Living Through History***

In 1937, Kennedy contributed an essay to a collection in which ten novelists give the 'biographies' of their most successful books, explaining where their inspiration came from and how the writing process unfolded. In her account of the genesis of *The Constant Nymph*, Kennedy comments on the necessary time lapse between seeing a real scene and transforming it into fiction. 'Nothing is easier than to "report" – to put characters, scenes, and experiences straight into a book, to describe them in the manner of the good journalist', she claims, adding: 'Reported material can be striking and effective; skilfully faked it may even produce a temporary illusion of truth. But it can have no artistic merit whatsoever, no beauty, and its truth is too superficial to stand the test of time' (Kennedy 1937, 42). Three years later, *Where Stands a Wingèd Sentry* disproved all of this. It consists of reported material and yet it is a very powerful narrative, beautifully written and certainly of enduring significance.

Since she reached adulthood during the First World War, losing her brother in its final year, and then experienced the next war as a mother of young children, it is perhaps surprising that none of Kennedy's fiction is set against a backdrop of international conflict. Indeed, her novels perhaps tend towards escapism in their themes and atmosphere. But this makes *Where Stands a Wingèd Sentry* all the more distinctive, as an achievement in an entirely

different mode. She had long kept a diary, but in spite of her literary fame, had never intended it for publication. It is interesting to find that her wartime journal makes not a single mention of her literary career. She features in the narrative purely as a wife and mother and a British citizen.

In the opening entries, written in Surrey, Kennedy records the rapid alterations taking place around her – the installation of road-blocks, removal of signage and building of shelters. The sense of unreality is heightened because, at home, she is still surrounded by the comfortable appurtenances of her usual existence:

Miss Chapman, a visiting dressmaker who has come to put our wardrobes in order ... asked when she could fit my black dinner dress which needs to be taken in. I wonder if it is worth bothering. I have an idea I shan't wear it this summer. In fact I wonder if I shall ever wear it again. (XX)

The journal evokes a growing sense that whatever is about to happen will be so momentous that there will be no chance of life returning to normal afterwards. Formal dinners will likely disappear, along with the servants who make them possible. Kennedy relishes the idea of no longer having maids, since hers 'disapprove of everything I do and give me notice because they have seen me strolling down Oxford Street licking a penny ice cone, which no "gentry" would do.' After the war, she predicts, 'there won't be any more gentry, and I shall be able to walk down Oxford Street licking anything I like. If Oxford Street is still there' (XX). Kennedy's habitual sense of the comic potential of everyday scenes is always inflected, in this book, with foreboding. She simultaneously fears, and welcomes, the war's potential upending of the social order.

When it became necessary to leave for the south-west, Kennedy took no maids with her, and managed her household alone while her husband remained in London. One of her entries is written in the station waiting room, just after she has said goodbye to him:

I have an actual, physical pain in my chest as if my heart had been torn out of my body. I wonder if it would hurt as much if it had been the children I was leaving. I wonder just how many millions of women in the world have this pain now because war has parted them from their husbands. But David is right. The mother of a child as young as Charles should stay with him as long as there is any chance of invasion. (XX)

As so often in this narrative, two strong instincts are in conflict with one another. Kennedy works through this conflict by a process of internal questioning and logic, just as she works through her uncertain feelings about the international situation through discussion with others and – via the diary – with herself. For instance, her attitude towards France is particularly complex. She reports the opinion of an acquaintance who claims that German propaganda has taken root in France, and that the French are not going to put up a fight. 'All this is simply frightful and I do hope her informant is an alarmist', writes Kennedy. 'Still, if I

am honest, I must admit to myself that I have been stifling qualms for months and years about the French' (XX). After outlining her reasons – including the allegation that they refused to pay taxes – she then considers the case for the defence: 'But then they had a far heavier measure of conscription than we had' (XX). There is a pattern of advance and retreat in Kennedy's commentary on the group characteristics of different nations and social classes; she tests out positions – many of which might strike us as racist or classist now – but often ends up rejecting or modifying them. Her discussion of current political sentiment in France is pursued through an extended dialogue with her friend Jacynth, reported in detail in the diary, and this in turn ends in a comic scene which defuses the tension between them.

A diary is usually considered a transcription of the self, but Kennedy so frequently incorporates the voices of others into her entries that they take on, instead, the quality of a debate. She quotes the comments of friends with political opinions different from her own, wondering which of them is in the right. She transcribes the speech of her neighbours, her servants and her children: sometimes with humorous intent, but never dismissively. Her small daughter writes on a postcard to a school friend: 'The waw is getting very bad and we are lerning to nit'. Kennedy comments: 'if you think of it as the waw it does not seem so frightening somehow' (XX). Yet the comfort she finds in her children's resilience is always tempered by fear for their safety, and at one point she even wishes that she had never brought them into the world: 'If Hitler wins they had much better be dead' (XX). Another, less privileged, child who figures in the diary is 'Pearl, a little servant, a regular alley-cat of a girl from a terribly poor slum home' (XX). Pearl, on hearing of Hitler's boast that he would be in London by August 15, comments: 'Eh! The cheeky monkey!' (XX). Kennedy is cheered by this unsuggestibility. It helps her to believe that the British population might be able to cope with bombs if they can avoid succumbing to a belief in Hitler as invincible, or a superman: 'We must remember that monkeys have always had this habit of getting up aloft and dropping things on the heads of their betters' (XX).

Down in Cornwall, Kennedy continues to observe the behaviour of adults and children from different social classes. She chose to live in St Ives, a place so familiar to her from her girlhood that she sometimes referred to it as 'my home town'.<sup>7</sup> In the published journal, the town is renamed Porthmerryn, but it is still easily identified since she retains the real names of Upalong, Downalong and the Artists for the main residential districts. Kennedy prefers the 'vividly alive' Downalong to the 'genteel' Upalong, and notices that the residents of the former, though they are the less prosperous group, are far more welcoming to the children who are evacuated to the town. Kennedy was reassured by the arrival of 800 evacuees in St Ives since this proved that the government considered the town a safe place. In reality, it might have been a strategic target. Joachim Von Ribbentrop, Hitler's foreign minister, made several visits there during the late 1930s, and some historians argue that the information he gathered there formed part of the German plan for invasion, and that St Ives was a possible landing site.

The last section of *Where Stands a Wingèd Sentry* contains entries from September 1940, the first one beginning: 'It has come at last'. The bombardment of London had started. As Kennedy notes: 'This is what we have been waiting for, ever since the war began. Ever since Munich. *Ever since Guernica*' (XX). Yet her daily life in Cornwall remains much the same: there is still nothing she can do but wait. The journal entries pick up pace, becoming daily instead of occasional, as Kennedy awaits news of her husband and wonders whether their

London house would be destroyed by a bomb (it would be, though not until 1944). In the final entry, she observes that during the past summer, 'we have certainly taken life to pieces and found out what it is made of' (XX). The story ends on a note of continued uncertainty and ongoing dread, yet something has been discovered, and there is a new sense of hope and determination: Neither Kennedy nor anyone around her knows what is going to happen, yet, she says, 'I feel a force generating a resolution which is simply terrific' (XX). In the book's Foreword, written in 1941, Kennedy comments that during the previous year:

we in this country were living through a supreme experience: supreme in the collective life which is our history and supreme in our individual lives. Many of us were more frightened than we had ever expected to be. Many, before the year was out, found themselves being braver than they had ever expected to be. We discovered unsuspected passions and loyalties. We realised which things we valued most. (XX)

The collective nature of the experience – the fact that all are subject to the same regulations and the same threats, even though their responses to them are varied – is emphasised throughout. 'We all find it difficult to sleep, these days', she writes, adding: 'I expect we shall learn how to, in time, when we have got used to living through history' (XX). This is where the real connection with our contemporary moment lies. The covid-19 lockdown is not really much like the Blitz, though the comparisons have been frequent. But we are certainly living through history. *Where Stands a Wingèd Sentry* demonstrates that these summer months in 2020 do have similarities to the anxious period eighty years ago when daily life changed so dramatically, and when British people began to move about, to work, and to relate to one another, in new and unprecedented ways.

### **Publication and reception**

The 1941 Foreword gives a bulletin from a later moment in the war, and it is not the only part of the text to do this. There are also some insertions, set in italic, which Kennedy added in while she was typing up a copy of the journal. In some ways, these are reassuring, since they tell the reader that no-one in the family got killed during the events described in the 1940 entries. Yet the interpolated entries also confirm that much of what they feared in 1940 did indeed come to pass. One of the entries reads:

*(January 25, 1941, 10.30 P.M. It's queer to think of those quiet July days now, while I am typing this out to send to the USA for safekeeping. Something very noisy is going on, and the house keeps waving about. The children are on a mattress under the kitchen table. ... Lord Halifax has arrived in USA ... And we are still waiting for this here invasion. But this is not an 'experiment in time' so I had better go back to July 1940.) (XX)*



Kennedy says in the opening section of her journal that she has written it for the benefit of her great-grandchildren. However, the effort that she went to in typing a copy and sending it overseas suggests that she saw the document as having historical and public, rather than merely personal, significance. The friend to whom she sent it, a fellow author named Julian Leonard Street, certainly thought so. The two had never met, but had conducted an extended correspondence which had its origins in Street's admiration of Kennedy's work. Born in Chicago in 1879, Street worked as a journalist, with notable contributions in art and drama criticism, and was also the author of short stories and travel books in a light-hearted, humorous mode.

Street was also an experienced editor, and in her Foreword, Kennedy thanks him for editing her journal for publication. This was actually not the first book in this genre which he had brought out. In 1918, a volume entitled *A Woman's Wartime Journal* by Dolly Sumner Lunt, edited and annotated by Julian Street, was published in New York. The journal covers the years 1864 and 1865, when its author lived on a Georgia plantation through which the Union army, led by General Sherman, passed on its 'March to the Sea'. In his Introduction, Street writes:

At the time of my visit to the plantation the world was aghast over the German invasion of Belgium, the horrors of which had but recently been fully revealed and confirmed .... What, then, I began to wonder, must life have been in this part of Georgia, when Sherman's men came by? What must it have been to the woman and the little girl living on these acres, in this very house? For though Germany's assault was upon an unoffending neutral state and was the commencement of a base war, whereas Sherman's March through Georgia was an invasion of what was then the enemy's country for the purpose of 'breaking the back' of that enemy and thus terminating the war, nevertheless 'military necessity' was the excuse in either case for a campaign of deliberate destruction. (Street 1918 viii-ix, ellipsis in original)

Street's interest in a woman's response to conflict must have been piqued, once again, by Kennedy's manuscript, which has several similarities to Lunt's. Both women debate with themselves as to the rights and wrongs of the war itself, combining this with records of anticipated and actual assaults on domestic life and property, and Kennedy refers to Lunt's work in her memoir (XX).

The most powerful parts of each narrative focus on fear, physical danger and separation from family members. At the same time, both Kennedy and Lunt write in evocative terms of the loss of the treasured possessions which they used to make their houses into homes. Lunt describes herself and her neighbours burying china and silver, only to have it dug up again and smashed by the soldiers. In the September entries in her journal, Kennedy records that the plate and linen from her London house is in storage, but that if the property is bombed, 'I shall mind most about my dining-room chairs' (XX). The detailed description of these cherished chairs points to the affective potential of objects, and reminds us of the special importance of material culture to a generation of women who were brought up to be, above all, home-makers. Kennedy, though, was educated to a far higher level than most of her female contemporaries, and her journal demonstrates an unusually wide range of interests. A couple of pages after her entry about the dining-room chairs, she is discussing the Munich crisis. Next, she narrates a conversation about floor polish, held with a woman she meets on

the beach, made poignant by the revelation that this woman has lost her home in the bombing. A few pages further on, Kennedy moves to the subject of immigration to America. It was perhaps the combination of this rich content with a plain directness of style which convinced Street of the journal's potential for publication.

The letters Street sent to Kennedy before the war had a considerable influence on the content of *Where Stands a Wingèd Sentry*.<sup>8</sup> He told her a great deal about contemporary America and its attitudes, and she reflects frequently on this theme, and on the contrasts and connections between Britain and the US. The published journal, indeed, is explicitly addressed to an American audience. In her 1941 Foreword, she observes: 'America was constantly in my thoughts last summer. But I was thinking then of *her* future as the sole surviving democracy, the sole trustee of the Rights of Man, if we should succumb.' She adds: 'I felt a desperate ... anxiety lest the American people might repeat our mistakes' (XX). Kennedy hoped that the journal might aid mutual comprehension between Americans and British, for whom, she suggests, a common language brings its own risk, that of assuming that the two peoples understand one another better than they really do.

The importance of *Where Stands a Wingèd Sentry* was immediately recognised by the American literary world. In Kennedy's archive at Somerville College, there is a typed extract from a letter written by Dorothy Canfield Fisher, an influential member of the Book-of-the-Month Club's selection committee, to Julian Street. Enclosing the text of her review, to be published in the *Book-of-the-Month Club News*, Fisher invites Street to use it for publicity purposes. (It was quoted from on the back cover flap of the published volume.) She comments: 'It would be an honor to be able to help this grand book to a wider distribution.' The obvious way to guarantee a large readership for *Where Stands a Wingèd Sentry* would have been to select it as a Book-of-the-Month. Fisher explains, however, that she was not recommending it to the committee since this would entail delaying publication for about three months after selection, a dangerous move given that the wartime situation was changing so fast. This comment reveals Fisher's belief in the book's potential to intervene, to have a tangible impact in the world.<sup>9</sup>

The book was, however, published by Yale University Press (where Street had connections) rather than by a trade publisher, and whilst this enhanced its intellectual prestige, it also restricted sales. *Where Stands a Wingèd Sentry* was the only one of Kennedy's books that was never published in Britain, and consequently, it was reviewed only in American periodicals. It was, though, uniformly well received. More than one reviewer objected to the title, since its source, Henry Vaughan's poem 'Peace', was not easily recognised and was thought to be 'pretentious' (Editorial 1941). But there were few other criticisms, and a large amount of praise. Many reviewers commented on the book's 'insight and integrity', as the *New York Times* put it (Woods 1941), and on Kennedy's avoidance of dramatics and hyperbole. Her style was much admired: the book is 'exquisitely and sparingly written', according to one columnist (Gannett). Reviews often dwelt on Kennedy's narrative of individual and national awakening. *The New Yorker*, for instance, wrote:

During those four months in which England, drugged by Chamberlain, at last awoke to its danger, Miss Kennedy too awoke to certain elements in her character of which she had not been aware. The war, for all its horror, functioned as an instrument of self-discovery. And that self-discovery, she makes you feel, was no isolated personal

experience. In varying forms it flowered in the minds of millions of Englishmen and Englishwomen, and from it a better England may rise. (Fadiman 72)

The reviewer is sensitive to Kennedy's strategy of alternately describing her own responses and those of the people around her, so as to build an impression of a collective mind and a shared determination. Others remarked on the way that the book supplemented and amplified more factual reporting. The *Indianapolis News* commented: 'It is a kaleidoscopic picture ... really more complete than the official picture of gains and losses, for it is a picture of English morale' ('The New Books'). Indeed, 'morale' is a repeated term across the reviews. Kennedy's narrative avoids the jingoism and sentiment of many overtly morale-boosting wartime texts, speeches and broadcasts. Yet its capacity to influence and to inspire was very widely recognised in 1941, and will be appreciated anew by twenty-first-century readers.

## Notes

- 1: For a discussion of this essay, and the accompanying illustration, see Clay 2018, 127-28.
- 2: See Hammill 2007, 124-151, for a detailed discussion of the reception and cultural status of the novel and its relationship to Kennedy's celebrity persona.
- 3: Among the works listed under 'Further Reading', those which discuss Kennedy's work are Cockburn, Hammill, Leonardi, and Melman; see also Powell's biography.
- 4: *The Mechanized Muse* is referred to in several books on cinema history; for recent examples see Cartmell 77; Marcus 437.
- 5: This information comes from the BBC's Genome Project, which provides a digital archive of issues of *The Radio Times*. <https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/>
- 6: Margaret Kennedy to Flora Forster. Margaret Kennedy Collection, Somerville College, Oxford, Add. mss. Box 26, SC/LY/SP/MK 26/2. Letter 31 (8 April 1926); Letter 33 (8 October 1926).
- 7: Margaret Kennedy to Flora Forster. Letter 17 (9 November 1924).
- 8: The letters are held in the Julian Street Papers, Firestone Library, Princeton University (Box 21: Davies, Margaret Kennedy) and in the Margaret Kennedy Collection, Somerville College, Oxford (Box 12: Julian Street Papers). As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, these archives remained closed while I was preparing this Introduction. I had not consulted these letters during my previous visit to Somerville, so I cannot quote from them.
- 9: A typescript of the review, with an undated extract from Fisher's letter, is included in an envelope of clippings relating to *Where Stands a Wingèd Sentry* in the Margaret Kennedy Collection, Somerville College, Oxford, Box 11: American Reviews, SC/LY/SP/MK 11/3. My thanks to Kate O'Donnell, archivist, for sending these.

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## Works by Margaret Kennedy

### Novels

- The Ladies of Lyndon* (Heinemann 1923)
- The Constant Nymph* (Heinemann 1924)
- Red Sky at Morning* (Heinemann 1927)
- The Fool of the Family* (Heinemann 1930)
- Return I Dare Not* (Heinemann 1931)
- A Long Time Ago* (Heinemann 1932)
- Together and Apart* (Cassell 1936)
- The Midas Touch* (Cassell 1938)
- The Feast* (Cassell 1950)
- Lucy Carmichael* (Macmillan 1951)
- Troy Chimneys* (Rinehart 1952)
- The Oracles* (Macmillan 1955; as *Act of God* Rinehart, 1955)
- The Heroes of Clone* (Macmillan 1957; as *The Wild Swan* Rinehart, 1957)
- A Night in Cold Harbour* (Macmillan 1960)
- The Forgotten Smile* (Macmillan 1961)
- Not in the Calendar: The Story of a Friendship* (Macmillan 1964)

### Novellas

- A Long Week-End* (Doubleday 1927)
- The Game and the Candle* (Heinemann 1928)

*Dewdrops* (Heinemann 1928)  
*Women at Work* (Macmillan 1966)

### Plays

*The Constant Nymph*, with Basil Dean (Heinemann 1926)  
*Come With Me*, with Basil Dean (Heinemann 1928)  
*Escape Me Never!* (dramatisation of *The Fool of the Family*; Heinemann 1934)  
*Autumn*, with Gregory Ratoff (adapted from the book by Ilya Surguchev; Nelson 1940)  
*The Phoenix and the Dove* (dramatisation of *A Long Time Ago*; broadcast 1941)  
*Who Will Remember?* (Dramatic Publishing Company 1946)  
*How Happy with Either* (unpublished; performed 1948)

### Non-fiction

*A Century of Revolution, 1789-1920* (Methuen 1922)  
*Where Stands a Wingèd Sentry* (Yale University Press 1941)  
*The Mechanized Muse* (Allen & Unwin 1942)  
*Jane Austen* (Barker 1950)  
*The Outlaws on Parnassus* (Cresset 1958)

Kennedy's uncollected works include film scripts, short stories, and essays.

### Further reading

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Melman, Billie. *Women and the Popular Imagination in the 1920s: Flappers and Nymphs* (Macmillan 1988).

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