

The Dogs and the Wolves

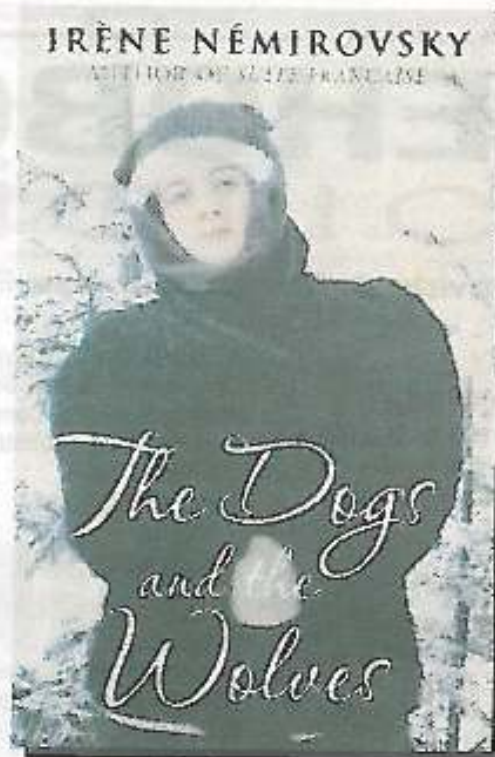
By Irène Némirovsky
(Chatto & Windus)

Originally published in France in 1940, *The Dogs and the Wolves* has only now been translated into English amid new interest in Irène Némirovsky's work, following the successful discovery and publication of *Suite Française*.

This novel reflects the difficult situation of Jews in Europe in the 1920s and '30s. Némirovsky herself was a Russian Jew whose family fled to France, from where she was later deported to the Auschwitz concentration camp, where she tragically died.

With little historical distance between now and when the action takes place, the novel reflects both the immediacy of life lived under German occupation, and possibly providing an escape into a better world with a happy end, visible in the sometimes very obvious plot development.

The novel's hero, Ada, flees from Ukraine to Paris as a young girl together with her ambitious aunt, her half-brother and sister, and her French teacher. Némirovsky paints a sweeping portrait of immigrants' lives while vividly contrasting the



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in impoverished Ada with her distant cousin Harry, who belongs to a rich family of Jewish bankers and whose lavish lifestyle casts a spell on her.

Ada is resourceful and proud. Although very poor, she slowly makes a name for herself as a painter, finally attracting Harry's attention. Both are drawn to each other and embark on a relationship, abandoning their respective families. But the recession of the 1930s is destroying the rich banker's wealth, and Ada must eventually make a very difficult but proud decision.

The historical dimension, the contrast between the rich and poor, the fate of immigrants and the vivid character descriptions make this novel a richly woven tapestry, and one that stands out due to Némirovsky's characteristic storytelling style.

At times it is a somewhat obvious variation on the Cinderella theme, however the beautifully descriptive language and the author's eye for minute detail overcome the weakness of the plot and make it a captivating read.



Isabel Roleff has written articles and reviews for various magazines in her native Germany. More information about her work can be found at irishwritersexchange.com