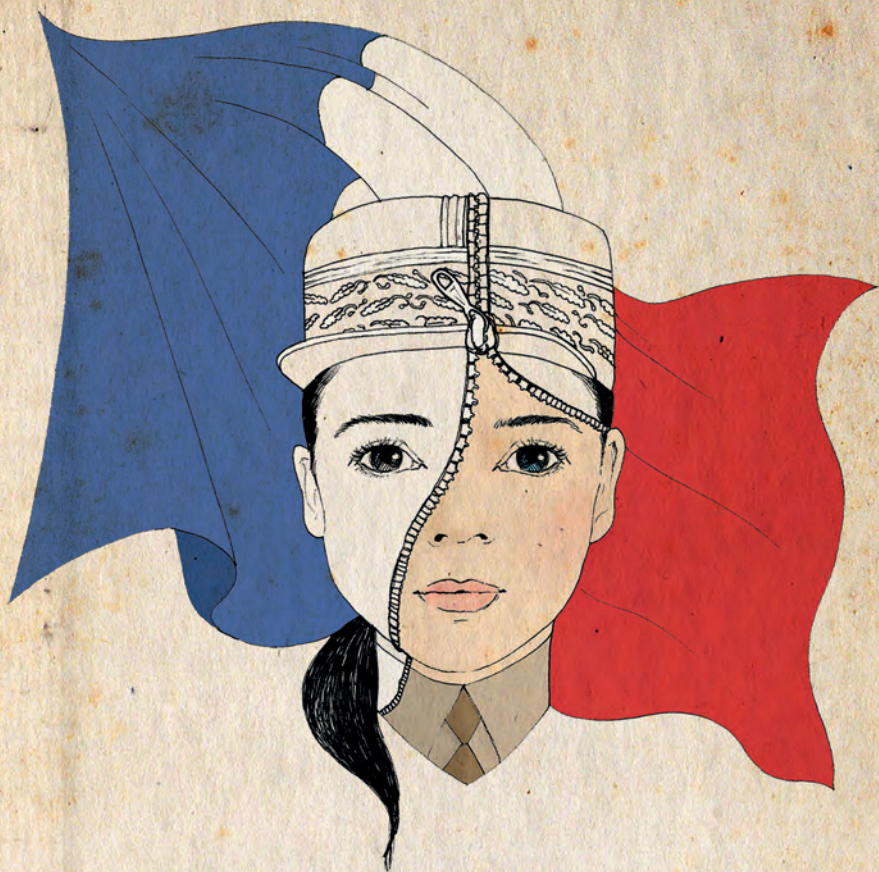


Ruth Kitchen



A LEGACY OF SHAME

FRENCH NARRATIVES OF WAR AND OCCUPATION

Peter Lang

Winner of the Peter Lang Young Scholars Competition in French Studies 2011

A Legacy of Shame is the first in-depth study of shame in French narratives of the Second World War and the Nazi Occupation of France. Wartime shame continues to be a recurrent theme in literature and film and is an ongoing topic of cultural and political debate and yet the problem of shame has only been mentioned incidentally by cultural critics. In the concluding lines of *Le Syndrome de Vichy*, Henry Rousso locates the 'syndrome', the continual return of wartime memories in the present, in the postwar desire to restore national unity and identity. This book proposes that beneath Rousso's syndrome lies a *disintegrated* sense of shame. Although this shame is painfully exposed in narratives, it remains unacknowledged as a collective, national memory and has consequently continued to trouble postwar constructions of national identity and history. By investigating narrative expressions of shame and theories of shame produced by the events of this historical moment, the book examines the issues that this legacy presents for cultural history, collective memory and, implicitly, for postwar national identity.

Ruth Kitchen is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Leeds. Her research examines twentieth- and twenty-first-century French literature, film, philosophy and cultural history. Her next project will examine the philosophical and educational theories underpinning cultural representations of deafness in Francophone cinema.



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French Narratives of War and Occupation

RUTH KITCHEN



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INTRODUCTION

Setting the Scene

Over seventy years since the invasion, France is still preoccupied on both a political and a cultural level with the guilt and shame of the Nazi Occupation. The ethical ambiguities of this era and its aftermath continue to raise political, historical and juridical debates in the present day. This book examines the different expressions of shame in literary and filmic narratives of the war and Occupation produced since the end of the war and explores how over the intervening years these narrative manifestations of the wartime shame of individuals constitute a collective legacy. By legacy, I mean a haunting trajectory over time within each generation and between generations. A legacy of shame recognizes the different 'faces' of collective shame and presents their *disintegrated* status in collective memory and history.

The book demonstrates how shame is intimately connected to a wide range of long-standing and unresolved issues of the Occupation era. Shame has a different narrative economy from guilt. It is revealed through the stigmatized or degraded identities of narrative figures and groups; shifts in how war crimes and collaboration have been defined and viewed in the eyes of the law; and the resistance to both forgetting and remembering the events of the war in the postwar era. I will explore how the narrative figures of the abortionist and *abortée*, the *tondue*, the *revenant*, the *collabo*, perpetrator, *résistant* and child/young person express both individual *and* collective shame about the Occupation era. The book reappraises and critically evaluates, historian of memory, Henry Rousso's model of incomplete mourning, repression, the broken mirror and obsession from his seminal work *Le syndrome de Vichy* to reveal the *disintegrated* collective shame that lies beneath the syndrome. Each chapter demonstrates how a phase of the syndrome corresponds to a feature of the narrative economy of shame. In

contrast with Rousseau's historical model, the analysis demonstrates that narrative expressions of shame are not bound to a certain 'moment' or period of cultural production. It is this unanchored temporality of shame, which has continued to be expressed in wartime narratives over the last seventy years, that communicates the legacy of its difficult and unreconciled status in national memory and history.

In this introductory chapter, firstly, I set the scene by giving a brief overview of the way in which guilt and shame underpin the ethical dilemmas that have been consistent features of the war and Occupation history from the time of the defeat. These inform the issues that I will be examining in my analysis of the narratives. I then move to an examination of Henry Rousseau's historical model of memory of this period and consider how this framework reveals shame as the driving force of the syndrome. Finally, I discuss the mechanisms of guilt and shame. I make clear the distinction between my use of these terms, which are often used interchangeably and explain how guilt and shame find expression in the narrative economy of war and Occupation texts.

Guilt and Shame in War and Occupation History

The Occupation period is often represented as a time of moral dissolution where opportunism and individualism reigned, perhaps illustrated by the profiteering, grasping grocers of *Au bon beurre* or the teenage police recruit Lucien Lacombe.¹ However, the sense of guilt about transgressing pre-war legal, moral and personal codes and the shame of social stigma and oppression were also constitutive elements of life under the German Occupation. The political and geographical division of France into the Occupied and the Free zones from June 1940 and the Northern and Southern zones from

1 Jean Dutourd, *Au bon beurre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1952); *Lacombe Lucien*, dir. Louis Malle (Optimum Releasing, 1974).

November 1942 fixed by forbidden zones along the borders meant that experiences of the Occupation differed enormously across the breadth of France. This internal segregation sowed seeds of suspicion about the ways and means in which people in different areas were coping with rationing, and the shortage of food, fuel and material goods. Political dissent and social division were evident in all communities. The defeat and subsequent occupation were considered to have brought shame upon French cultural identity. Maréchal Pétain intimated that the defeat was due to the culture of moral decadence spawned by the Third Republic. His project of National Revolution highlighted the need to restore a puritan morality to the heart of French society. This would help the country's revival through a return to the core values of family, community and work.

In his infamous October 1940 speech, Pétain announced that France would collaborate with Germany.² This brought France into complicity with Nazi ideology. The myriad and contradictory perspectives of commentators and politicians on the nature of France's political position generated ambivalence and uncertainty amongst the general population whose unchosen compliance with the policy of collaboration and forced cohabitation with the implications of Occupation and/or the Occupying forces resulted in day-to-day interactions with the 'enemy' that posed complicated ethical dilemmas.

Racial persecution led to the concealment of identities through name changes, the falsification of documents and the hiding of people wanted by the authorities. The collaborationist press and radio stations encouraged the public to 'support' the state by denouncing Jews and political dissidents. The climate of suspicion inspired a cultural vogue for denunciation which resulted in the authorities receiving over three million letters.³ The introduction of the Jewish star in June 1942 provoked public protest and the *rafles* in Paris in July and in the South in August caused shock and moral outrage. The official silence about the function of French-run camps such

2 Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years 1940–1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 173.

3 André Halimi, *La délation sous l'Occupation* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998).

as Drancy, Pithiviers, Compiègne and Beaune-la-Rolande, where victims of Vichy's political and racial policies were held before being deported to the concentration and extermination camps in the East added to the population's ethical burdens. Further social schisms were caused by the introduction of Service de Travail Obligatoire (STO) in February 1943. This deeply unpopular directive fed a growing spirit of public dissidence. As a result, many members of the population found themselves in violation of the law and prevailing moral and social codes while still maintaining their own moral rectitude.⁴ This impasse typifies the ethical conflicts and ambiguities of the times.

During the summer of 1944, the newly liberated populace took justice into its own hands by trying, punishing and executing those accused of collaborating. One punishment for more minor crimes was the shaving of the heads of women (and men) believed to have collaborated. The *tonte* (head shaving) came to be associated specifically with the 'crime' of sleeping with the enemy.⁵ Subsequent to this first spate of localized retribution and punishment, the official *Épuration* began. The term itself is indicative of the fervour for moral purification. The trials of wartime crimes and collaboration expressed a public desire to condemn the Vichy government and 'the collaborators' and distance the new Fourth Republic and its citizens from the moral iniquities of the Occupation. This process highlighted the difficulty of assessing and pronouncing on the ethical determinancy of the attitudes and acts of people living in an occupied country, after the fact. Chris Lloyd observes that definitions of collaboration range between blaming the entire nation, 'quarante millions de pétainistes' to identifying a few thousand 'fanatics'.

The two extremes actually meet in the sense that 'we are all guilty' effectively means that everyone has to be acquitted. Nonetheless, the idea of mass support for Pétain

- 4 Rod Kedward observes that the hunt for the *réfractaires* brought about a systematic undermining of the law. Even the most law-abiding of citizens were prepared to make this transgression which meant that belief in the law had foundered. Kedward describes this mentality as an 'outlaw culture'. H.R. Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis: Rural Resistance in Southern France, 1942–1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 56.
- 5 Fabrice Virgili, *La France virile* (Paris: Petite Bibliothèque Payot, 2004).

seems well founded, and the notion of an enduring national shame or culpability for the crimes and humiliations perpetrated by his state helps explain the continuing obsession with the occupation in contemporary France.⁶

The national shame of collaboration was given a specific legal counterpart in the sentence of *indignité nationale*, which removed the rights of citizenship. It punished the accused for dishonouring the nation. Although those involved in policy-making and implementation were clearly guilty of racial and political persecution, it was not possible to draw a clear dividing line between 'good' resistance and 'bad' collaboration. Some resisters had pillaged and executed. Some collaborators had rescued those in danger and double-crossed the Vichy and German authorities. Some resistance fighters were former *réfractaires* (men and women who had run away from being drafted into the obligatory STO to work for the war effort in Germany), while those who had followed the national directive and gone to Germany were considered, at the Liberation, to be guilty of collaboration. Although some accusations were legitimate and well founded, malicious and false ones were rife and their punishment was severe. The return of the deportees in April 1945 was a further harrowing reminder of the atrocities of National Socialism with which the French nation had been politically complicit. During the trials, the question of Vichy's racial persecution and role in deportation was portrayed as emanating from German rather than French policy. Collaborators were therefore charged with anti-Semitism as proof of their betrayal of France.⁷ Yet, the moral crusade to cleanse the murky waters of Occupation ethics was popularly considered to have resulted in failure. The perturbing quandaries posed by the war crimes trials resulted in the retrial of a number of alleged collaborators before those judgments were repealed by the amnesties of 1951 and 1953. The amnesties expressed a desire for national unity and aimed to achieve that reconciliation by forgetting the divisions of the Occupation and the Épuration.

6 Chris Lloyd, *Collaboration and Resistance in Occupied France: Representing Treason and Sacrifice* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 26.

7 Philip Watts, *Allegories of the Purge: How Literature Responded to the Postwar Trials of Writers and Intellectuals in France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 25.

In the first few minutes of Alain Resnais' 1955 film about the Nazi camps, *Nuit et brouillard*, there is a wartime photo of families carrying their household possessions towards barrack buildings in a barbed wire enclosure. In the image, the unmistakeable shape of the *képi* of a French policeman is (obviously) scratched out of the celluloid. This doctoring of the image and memory of French involvement in the war suggests a conscious awareness of governmental and public reluctance to remember French complicity in the crimes of National Socialism.⁸ Charles de Gaulle's return to power in 1958 during the escalating violence of the conflict in Algeria reactivated comparisons with the 18 June 1940. In 1964, two years after the negotiation of Algerian independence and in commemoration of the Liberation of France twenty years earlier, the ashes of resister Jean Moulin, who had been tortured to death by the Gestapo in Lyon in 1943, were transferred from Père la Chaise cemetery to the Panthéon in an elaborate state procession orchestrated by de Gaulle. The ceremony came two days after an amnesty of minor war crimes committed in Algeria and a week after a law was passed, making Nazi war crimes imprescriptible crimes against humanity (i.e. not subject to temporal limitation). Historian of memory Henry Rousso notes in the selective nature of these acts an attempt to unify the nation by forgetting the national divisions rendered by the war and war crimes trials, while undertaking never to forget the crimes committed by Nazism.⁹

A new cultural vogue for shame about the Occupation began with the death of de Gaulle in 1970. Coupled with the release of Marcel Ophüls's film *Le Chagrin et la pitié* in 1971, it marked the inception of a new era in thinking about the ethics of war and Occupation. The trend that became known as the *mode rétro* heralded a flood of films and novels by the second generation exposing the devastating guilt and shame of the wartime generation's inglorious involvement in denunciation, persecution and collaboration.

The later 1970s and 1980s initiated another surge of novels and films on the topic of the deportation of the Jews. In 1978, Serge Klarsfeld produced

8 In this case, the memory of the French holding camps from which 70,000 Jews and other political and 'racial' undesirables were deported.

9 Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy*, 112.

the findings of his research which recorded, convoy by convoy, the names, birthdates and birthplaces of the 73,154 Jewish men, women and children who died as a result of their deportation from France during the Occupation.¹⁰ The work, entitled 'le Mémorial de la déportation des juifs déportés de France', was made into a symbolic sepulchre erected in Israel in January 1981. Serge and Beate Klarsfeld were also instrumental in bringing to justice Klaus Barbie, head of the Lyon Gestapo, who was successfully tried for crimes against humanity in 1987.¹¹ This led to the reopening of the cases against René Bousquet and Paul Touvier and to a surge of public interest in the role of the French state in the deportations.

On 16 July 1995, Jacques Chirac became the first French president to formally acknowledge the role played by the French state in deportation. He made a public apology for the 'collective fault' of the French people in committing 'an irreparable act' at the 1995 commemoration of the 1942 Jewish round-ups in Paris. In June the following year, Paul Touvier became the first Frenchman to be convicted of crimes against humanity for acts carried out during the Occupation.¹² And in 1998, Maurice Papon was also convicted for complicity in crimes against humanity. Julian Jackson notes how once again this induced a public outpouring of guilt and shame:

The trial sparked off an orgy of collective repentance for France's guilt in the Holocaust. For the first time, the Catholic Church performed a public *mea culpa*, so too did the official spokesman of the French medical profession. More than ever, Vichy seemed to haunt the imagination of contemporary French novelists.¹³

10 Lloyd, *Collaboration and Resistance in Occupied France*, 23.

11 Barbie had organized Jewish round-ups and led hunts for and tortured resisters but the crimes he became most infamous for were the torturing and murder of Jean Moulin and the round-up and deportation of forty-four Jewish children from the village of Izieu on 6 April 1944.

12 Touvier, a railway clerk, had become an officer for Vichy's paramilitary police force and had been promoted to the head of the Militia's Second Service, or intelligence branch. The main crime of which he stood accused was the arrest and shooting of seven Jews on 29 June 1944 in retaliation for the assassination of Philippe Henriot.

13 Jackson, *France: The Dark Years 1940-1944*, 623-4.

Memories of guilt and shame associated with the Occupation have continued to play a significant role in French political and cultural life in the 2000s. Although in his 2007 speech in Caën, French president, Nicolas Sarkozy vehemently expressed his desire for France to overcome her 'culture of repentance' for 'crimes' committed during the Occupation, on 14 February the following year, Sarkozy proposed that every French eight-year-old should learn the individual story of a child who was deported in the Shoah.¹⁴ While teachers and parents generally opposed the suggestion arguing that there was already sufficient provision in place to teach children this history, Serge Klarsfeld favoured Sarkozy's initiative as, he explained, the most meaningful engagement with this history is in response to individual stories.

The findings of this book form part of the recent work of the FRAME research project (2006–2010), a collaborative venture between the University of Leeds and University of Durham, analysing French narratives of war and Occupation since 1939 to assess both empirically and critically the validity of current cultural and literary discourses on Occupation narratives. Our team identified almost 2,000 war and Occupation novels over the seven decades of literary production, which were catalogued in an open access electronic database.¹⁵ Of those, almost 400 were published in the decade 2000–2010. This suggests that the topic is still very much alive in the spheres of French cultural production and imagination.

This book will examine how the theme of shame in film and literature of the war and Occupation has evolved with and been informed by observable events and changes in the law, politics, history, individual and collective memory, and cultural production and criticism. It will consider how this legacy of shame continued to present challenging ethical questions for twenty-first-century politics and culture. The analysis will reveal that the expression and experience of shame has been a consistent feature of war and Occupation history from the time of France's defeat to

14 <<http://sites.univ-provence.fr/veronis/Discours2007/transcript.php?n=Sarkozy&p=2007-03-09>> accessed 25 February 2013.

15 For further details about the FRAME project and access to the online database of war and Occupation narratives: www.frame.leeds.ac.uk.

the present day. By examining narrative representations of the stories of individuals and groups, who were 'shamed' as a result of the war, the legal and political implications of shame, and resistances to both forgetting and remembering wartime shame, the analysis will reflect on the role of shame in national history and memory and its impact on questions such as the duty to remember, the law of imprescriptibility, and state memory of 'irreparable' acts. It will observe how wartime shame left indelible marks on those it touched but also consider the potentially affirmative role of wartime shame in informing present day ethical decisions.

History of War and Occupation Memory

In engaging with cultural production, memory, and history to identify and examine the legacy of shame over the decades, the analysis responds to Henry Rousso's historiographical work on the memory of Vichy and the Nazi Occupation in *Le syndrome de Vichy de 1944 à nos jours* (1987), *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas* (1994) and *La hantise du passé* (1998). Rousso considers himself to be a historian of the memory of French experiences of the Second World War. He defines the term *mémoire* (memory) as meaning both the act of remembering and a reference to the past itself. He points out that the use of the term can be problematic because it is sometimes difficult to ascertain whether speakers are referring to individual or collective memory or, in fact, history. Rousso describes memory as an organization of forgetting.¹⁶ In *La hantise du passé*, he qualifies this by explaining that: 'l'usage actuel du mot mémoire se fait spontanément par opposition à celui d'« oubli », alors que celui-ci comme le refoulement (ce sont deux choses distinctes) sont par définition constitutifs de toute mémoire.'¹⁷ His definition is useful to the argument proposed by this book as the notions of

16 Rousso, *Le syndrome de Vichy*, 12.

17 Henry Rousso, *La hantise du passé* (Paris: Éditions Textuels, 1998), 17.

forgetting or 'selective remembering' are vital in understanding how shame is manifested both individually and collectively and as much in discourses of forgetting as those of remembering. This relationship between forgetting and shame is important in understanding the haunting presence of wartime shame in present-day French cultural memory.

Rousso makes a further distinction between memory and history by explaining that memory is based on lived experiences, which have left perceptible traces on the living, whereas history is a scholarly reconstruction of the past, which may pick up traces which have completely disappeared from collective memory. For Rousso, memory is inscribed in the domain of identity. It provides continuity between the past and the present.¹⁸ In this sense it is concerned with repetition and maintaining coherence. History, on the other hand, presents the past at a distance incorporating an understanding of the changes that have occurred in the interim. History then reveals the difference between the past and present and presents us with the potential to act freely without the past predetermining our actions.

On peut même avancer que la seule leçon réelle que l'histoire, étude de l'Histoire peut fournir, c'est la prise de conscience que l'homme et les sociétés peuvent changer, lentement ou rapidement, et même que le changement en tant que tel peut obéir à des modalités différentes suivant les époques. Elle est donc un apprentissage de la liberté puisque l'être historique est celui qui s'affranchit de la fatalité du temps, qu'elle soit d'origine divine ou matérialiste, pour imposer son propre cours.¹⁹

In this study of the legacy of war and Occupation shame, I aim to demonstrate that it is necessary that these two perspectives marry and act together to inform both the relationship to the past and our understanding

18 'La mémoire elle s'inscrit dans le registre de l'identité, elle charrie de l'affect. Elle tend à reconstruire un passé idéal ou diabolisé. Elle peut compresser ou dilater le temps, et ignorer toute forme de chronologie, au moins rationnelle. Elle n'est pas une démarche de connaissance, mais elle relève de l'existentiel, voire de l'incontrôlable: peut-on maîtriser ses propres souvenirs et ses propres oublis, peut-on contrôler son inconscient, lui imposer, par exemple, un devoir de mémoire? La mémoire a pour caractéristique de préserver une continuité et de permettre à l'individu ou au groupe d'absorber les ruptures, d'intégrer celles-ci dans une permanence.' Rousso, *La hantise du passé*, 22.

19 Rousso, *La hantise du passé*, 23.

of freedom in the present.²⁰ This combination of memory and history blends the continuous and stable thread of identity with the past through memory, with the understanding that the past and the present are necessarily distinct and their separation by history is a recognition of human agency and freedom.

In his seminal 1987 *Le syndrome de Vichy*, Rouso applies the analogy of the Freudian traumatic syndrome as a metaphor to describe how cultural memory of the war years evolved from the Liberation in 1944 to the end of the 1980s.²¹ He observes that Vichy has become the symbol and metonym for the collective trauma and divisiveness of war, defeat, and Occupation.

Le syndrome de Vichy est l'ensemble hétérogène des symptômes, des manifestations, en particulier dans la vie politique, sociale et culturelle, qui révèlent l'existence du traumatisme engendré par l'Occupation, particulièrement celui lié aux divisions internes, traumatisme qui s'est maintenu, parfois développé, après la fin des événements.²²

Rouso describes the period from 1944 to 1953 as a stage of *deuil inachevé*, incomplete mourning, claiming that the losses sustained as a result of the war could not be fully processed or accepted. From 1954 to 1971, Rouso contends that the wartime generation desired to forget: to not know any more about this past and to keep silent about the topic of the war. Rouso

20 In fact, Rouso also proposes that the study of collective memory and scholarly history combine in the study of historiography, in which it is possible to see the evolution of historical ideas over time: 'La mémoire collective comme l'histoire savante sont donc elle-mêmes tributaires d'une *histoire*, aussi paradoxal que cela puisse paraître. Un même événement ou une même période n'aura pas la même signification une décennie, un siècle ou un millénaire plus tard. L'idée était couramment admise en ce qui concerne la discipline historique, et tout historien s'intéresse, de près ou de loin, à l'historiographie, c'est-à-dire l'histoire de l'histoire érudite, l'évolution de sa propre pratique et des énoncés successifs qu'elle a produit, sur telle ou telle période ou de manière globale'. Rouso, *La hantise du passé*, 26.

21 Rouso has countered charges about his application of the psychoanalytic syndrome to historiography restating the metaphorical usefulness of the Freudian syndrome in identifying the different historical moments or trends of French memory of the Occupation. Rouso, *Le syndrome de Vichy*, 23; Rouso, *La hantise du passé*, 17; Henry Rouso, 'Le syndrome de l'historien', *French Historical Studies* 19 (1995), 519–26, 524.

22 Rouso, *Le syndrome de Vichy*, 18–19.