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Ruth Kitchen, *A Legacy of Shame: French Narratives of War and Occupation*. Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Wien: Peter Lang, 2013. vii + 191 pp. Bibliography and index. \$81.95 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-3-0343-0856-4.

Review by Angela Kimyongür, University of Hull.

A Legacy of Shame is adapted from the author's 2010 doctoral thesis, the research for which formed part of a major AHRC research project, based at the Universities of Leeds and Durham, which ran between 2006 and 2010 and aimed to map narratives of the Second World War and Occupation in France in order to "assess...the validity of current cultural and literary discourses on Occupation narratives" (p. 8). One part of the project involved the creation of a substantial open access database of war and Occupation novels. What is of particular interest for the purposes of Ruth Kitchen's monograph is that, of the two thousand or so works identified, nearly four hundred were published between 2000 and 2010, indicating quite clearly that the French are still very much preoccupied by their wartime past.

As its title indicates, *A Legacy of Shame* is specifically preoccupied with the articulation and evolution of the theme of shame in cultural production since the war. It also aims to evaluate the ways in which the shame generated by the experience of occupation was not only reflected in culture in the postwar period but continues to resonate into the twenty-first century. Not surprisingly, a persistent reference point throughout the volume is Henry Rousso's substantial body of work on memory and the Second World War in France: *Le Syndrome de Vichy: de 1944 à nos jours* (original date of publication 1987, updated in 1990), *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas* (1994), a study co-authored with Eric Conan, whose contribution is not acknowledged in the bibliography, and *La Hantise du passé* (1998). [1]

The monograph sees itself in part as a response to Rousso's historiographical works, and in particular as a reappraisal of the model elaborated in *Le Syndrome de Vichy* of four phases in the remembering of the Occupation: "unfinished mourning" (1944-1954), a time when the French were unable to fully process the realities of the Occupation; a period of "repression" (1954-1971) during which the Gaullist heroic narrative of war silenced all other narratives; "the broken mirror" phase (1971-1974) when that heroic narrative was finally fractured by other, more contentious memories of the Occupation; and the final phase of "obsession," notably with the Jewish deportations (from 1975 onwards). Running beneath these phases, Kitchen has detected what she refers to as a collective legacy of shame in relation to the events of the Occupation and Liberation. This legacy is examined in her monograph through a reading of a range of literary works and films. Unlike the temporal phases of Rousso's model of memory, the evidence of shame exists without a temporal framework and instead can be found in narratives ranging across the years from the 1940s to the 2000s. While the shame engendered by Occupation exists, and will be traced in the subsequent volume, it has not been acknowledged in collective memories of the war, something she argues that has implications for present-day constructions of postwar identity.

Rousso himself has conceded in his later work that the obsession with the *devoir de mémoire* has left French cultural memory locked into "a loop of repetitively reproducing and remorsefully 'obsessing' over the guilt and shame of the Occupation" (p.23) rather than applying the lessons of the past to contemporary ethical dilemmas. Kitchen contends that until this legacy of wartime shame is laid bare

and fully acknowledged, recovery from the experience will not be complete. The monograph proposes an analysis that will form the first steps towards this recovery.

A long introductory section provides an outline of the historical context, much of which will be familiar to the intended reader, though there is also a useful exploration of the difference between shame and guilt. The analysis identifies a number of key narrative figures, emblematic of shame, that recur in Occupation narratives: ‘the abortionist and *abortée* [sic], the *tondue*, the *revenant*, the *collabo*, perpetrator, *résistant* and child/young person” (p.1). In the first chapter, the shame of defeat is linked to narratives of pregnancy and abortion, seen in the context of Vichy’s attempt to control the female body through legislation. The texts discussed range from Simone de Beauvoir’s *Le Sang des autres* (1945) to Valentine Goby’s 2008 *Qui touche à mon corps je le tue*. Presentation of the texts is potentially confusing for those not familiar with them. One subsection begins with the words “In the narratives” without specifying which narratives were in question. What is more, the texts were presented with little or no contextual information, such as author name or date of publication, in the text. The reader has to go to the footnotes for this information. This latter point underpins a more substantial problem: the choice of texts, while all pertinent in their own way, is not justified or explained in any way, not just in this chapter, but throughout the volume. There is only a very brief indication in the introduction, but I would have liked to have seen a much fuller explanation.

The second chapter focuses on the “*tondues*,” those women deemed to have collaborated with the enemy, often through a sexual relationship, and whose heads were shorn at the Liberation. Head shaving was a particularly powerful reminder of the shame of defeat and Occupation, a shame that the head shaving aimed symbolically to cleanse. This desire to cleanse, to purify is linked back to the way in which Pétain and the Vichy government employed medical metaphors in ascribing the defeat to the social diseases generated by the laxity of the Third Republic. Of course, as a punishment enacted almost exclusively on women who had defiled French identity by their liaisons with German men, it tapped into the shame of the defeat, itself often expressed in sexualised terms. As Kitchen shows in her analysis of a range of texts [from Marguerite Duras’s *Hiroshima mon amour* (1960), Pierre Assouline’s *La Cliente* (1998) and Valentine Goby’s *L’Echappée* (2007)] the punishment was not followed by healing since the shame has lived on in its victims.

In chapter three, the focus turns to the challenges faced by returning deportees—the author uses the term *revenants* to allude to them—and their often problematic attempts at reintegration into postwar society. The chapter approaches the subject from a dual angle, firstly examining the returnees’ shame at their own survival while others have died. The term “survivor guilt” is rejected in an interesting discussion of works by Primo Levi, Lawrence Langer, Giorgio Agamben and Ruth Leys. Secondly, the nature of discomfiture experienced by civilians and politicians alike at the return of camp internees is explored. In order to support her theoretical position, Kitchen offers a detailed analysis of accounts of the return by both survivors and civilians, including narratives by writers such as Charlotte Delbo, Robert Antelme, Jean Cayrol and Marguerite Duras. Bringing back the analysis to Rousso, she concludes that the “obsession” that he detects in repeated narratives of the camps and of deportation, an obsession of which he is critical, actually constitutes a necessary acting out of a “collective national shame” (p.111).

The fourth chapter explores the relationship between shame and the law, ranging from the introduction in 1944 of the concept of *indignité nationale*, through the postwar purge trials to the problematic relationship between the law and the remembering/forgetting of war crimes right up to the trials for crimes against humanity held in the 1990s. Kitchen teases out the problematic relationships between right and wrong, guilt and innocence, individual and collective responsibility in novels ranging from Camus’s *La Chute* (1956), Marie Chaix’s *Les Lauriers du lac de Constance* (1974) and Dominique Jamet’s *Un Traître* (2008). The monograph ends with a chapter considering the tensions between remembering, forgetting and the repression of shame. The author’s examination of Simone de Beauvoir’s *Les*

Mandarins (1954) and Sartre's *Les Séquestrés d'Altona* (1958) demonstrates that, although written during Roussso's repression phase, these were works explicitly referencing "the impossibility of forgetting wartime shame" (p.149) and deploying this memory in order to confront ethical and political decisions in the present.

A Legacy of Shame was the winner of the Peter Lang Young Scholars Competition in 2011, a somewhat odd chronology of events, given that the monograph was not published until 2013. The award is a testament to the book's original take on narratives of Occupation that are not necessarily unknown—a number of the texts chosen are very well known—but are presented in a new light alongside lesser-known works. The resulting discussion is thoughtful and sometimes incisive. However, this discussion is compromised by presentational issues. I would firstly, as a reader, like to have seen a clear rationale for the texts chosen for analysis. This was lacking, bar a few general comments in the introduction. The use of footnotes needed revision. Footnotes sometimes containing material that should have been in the main text were often excessively long and disrupted the reading process. However, more problematic still was the written manuscript. I have yet to encounter a published book that has been so poorly proof-read. It is not clear whether this is the result of poor copy editing by the publisher or the failure of the author to properly check the work, perhaps under pressure to publish, pressures with which we can all sympathise. However, the reality is that responsibility for correcting errors ultimately lies with the author. This book is severely compromised by a plethora of errors: simple spelling mistakes, including frequent missing accents in French quotations; errors of agreement in French; mistakes of punctuation; incomplete or incorrect references in footnotes and in the bibliography; works cited in the text but missing from the bibliography; incorrect transcription of quotations and a number of syntactic errors that made more than one key sentence incomprehensible. This is the case, for example, in the final sentence on p.133, but there were others. I noted five typographical errors on a single page (p.144). While time pressures might explain some errors creeping in, I am at a loss to understand how so many mistakes can have been allowed to get through the various checking processes, something that reflects badly not just on the author but on the publisher.

NOTES

[1] Henry Roussso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy: de 1944 à nos jours* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987; 1990); Henri Roussso & Eric Conan, *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas* (Paris: Fayard, 1994); Henri Roussso, *La Hantise du passé: entretien avec Philippe Petit* (Paris: Éditions Textuel, 1998).

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