



# A Legacy of Shame: French Narratives of War and Occupation

*Ruth Kitchen*

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*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.

This book is the winner of the Peter Lang Young Scholars Competition in French Studies 2011.

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