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William Kidd

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Occupation–Liberation: A View from the *lycée*

WILLIAM KIDD
University of Stirling, Stirling, Scotland

In offering a 'view from the *lycée*', my paper examines a relatively under-researched and un-synthesised aspect of France's Second World War experience of occupation and liberation, namely the extent to which the ideological dimensions of the conflict between resistance and collaboration impacted upon and were refracted by the secondary school environment, which functioned as a forum for the development and expression of opposing, often highly-charged, political attitudes. My principal sources are a combination of published individual memoirs and a recent archival-based survey of a particular Parisian lycée during the war. By identifying pre-war aspects of the phenomenon, and revisiting post-war cultural representations of the period, the analysis steps outside the conventional chronological parameters of June 1940–August 1944 in which liberation/the Liberation are subsumed into the overarching narrative of the resistance movement, and offers a personal perspective on otherwise familiar events.

KEYWORDS occupation, collaboration, resistance, liberation, education, *lycée/lycéens*

In January 1945, nineteen-year-old Claude Lanzmann, fresh from a year in the *maquis* (armed clandestine Resistance units) in the Auvergne, entered *lettres supérieures*, the post-baccalaureate Arts stream at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand in the Latin Quarter. For the future lover of Simone de Beauvoir and creator of the epoch-making Holocaust film *Shoah* (1985), entry into the upper echelon of a prestigious Parisian *lycée* with its nexus of contacts and influences, intellectual challenges and opportunities, presaged a major, perhaps decisive, stage in his development. Of much more immediate impact, however, on the young Jew, was the proposal by senior pupils, on the day of his enrolment, to name one of their two study rooms (K1 and K2) after the collaborationist writer and journalist Robert Brasillach, tried and condemned to

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death on 19 January for his pro-German activities.[1] A pupil at Louis-le-Grand from 1925 to 1928, Brasillach had acquired a significant literary and critical pre-war reputation. In the post-Liberation context,[2] however, the idea of so honouring him was at best a provocation – for Roger Quilliot, also at Louis-le-Grand during this period, it was an attempt by the 'Robespierristes' among the pupils to embarrass the school authorities (Quilliot, 1999: 231); at worst – Lanzmann's reading – an overt expression of ideological affinity with Brasillach by a group of young bourgeois whom the realities of war and Occupation had passed by, and for whom the humanitarian and moral catastrophe represented by the fate of European Jewry counted for little. Unsurprisingly, the proposed 'Salle Robert Brasillach' came to naught (Lanzmann, 2009: 131–32) and in one respect is little more than a historical footnote.[3]

Across Paris, however, in the seventeenth *arrondissement*, the episode would have resonated with another Jewish schoolboy, Pierre Vidal-Naquet, who had returned from the South to resume his studies at the right-bank Lycée Carnot in October 1944 and who admitted to a hitherto 'abysmal' degree of political ignorance (Vidal-Naquet, 2007: 191). Born in 1930, the eldest of four brothers whose parents had been deported,[4] Vidal-Naquet quickly realized that although collaboration in the schools had disappeared with the Germans, and only one of his new classmates admitted to having been a member of Doriot's Parti Populaire Français (PPF), some pupils and teachers continued to harbour extreme right-wing views. Despite the abrogation of Vichy's racial statutes, a toxic Maurrassianism,[5] anti-Masonic, anti-Communist, and anti-Semitic, permeated the wider society and periodically surfaced in the very *lycée* whose former pupil Guy Môquet (1924–41) was one of the youngest Resistance martyrs. When, during an altercation with other pupils on the eve of the general elections of April 1945, Vidal-Naquet was the object of a racial taunt – 'go on, clear off to your promised land!' – the incident, reported to the *Proviseur* (headmaster), was quickly dismissed as (merely) 'political' (Vidal-Naquet, 2007: 189).

Apparently localized in time and place, these episodes have a more general significance. Several months after the Liberation of Paris, they highlight the continuing symbolic and ideological legacies of the paroxysmic 'Franco-French' civil war that punctuated much of 1944 and accompanied the gradual withdrawal eastwards of the German forces.[6] That the ending of physical occupation was not of itself commensurate with the elimination of totalitarian tendencies in the French body politic that pre-dated the Occupation and survived its demise, is a truism piquantly encapsulated in Jean Cocteau's reported observation of January 1945, 'Now we'll get to know Occupation, French-style' (Brassié, 1987: 259). That the nature and intensity of those tendencies were reflected in the allegedly rarefied environment of the *lycée* is however a proposition whose local incidence and potential complexities might repay further scrutiny. Using a number of hitherto under-exploited sources including the aforementioned works by Lanzmann and Vidal-Naquet, and Bertrand Matot's *La Guerre des cancres. Un lycée au cœur de la Résistance* (2010), this article contextualizes and examines these phenomena in a broadly chronological (Occupation–Liberation) sequence, and concludes with an exploration of the ways in which, transcending the institutional framework, they found an echo in subsequent literary and filmic reconstructions of the period.

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[1] Formally, 'intelligence avec l'ennemi', in practice criminal, prejudicial, or treasonable activity on behalf of a hostile foreign power. Unless otherwise indicated, translations from the French are my own.

[2] The period between the judgement and Brasillach's execution on 6 February witnessed intense public debate between those arguing for clemency (embodied in a petition to General de Gaulle, acting head of the provisional government), and the proponents of Resistance values for whom Brasillach's outspoken anti-Semitism and a much publicized visit to the French fascist leader Jacques Doriot, fighting with the German forces on the Eastern front, merited nothing less than the death penalty.

[3] According to Lanzmann, the proposal was overturned after a vocal protest that degenerated into serious fisticuffs led by Jean Cau, a future classmate and life-long friend. Thanks to Peter Tame, Lanzmann's account is now accessible online, at http://arb6245.over-blog.net/2015/01/traduire-en-justice-a-louis-le-grand.html.

[4] Lucien and Margot Vidal-Naquet, arrested by the Gestapo in Marseilles on 15 May 1944 and presumed dead in Auschwitz on or about 6 June.

[5] A doctrine of absolute monarchy formulated by Charles Maurras (1868–1952) whose dislike of Germany was trumped by his even greater antipathy towards the French Republic and republican values.

There is to my current knowledge no overarching history of 'liberating the *lycée*'. Nor, despite abundant material on individual pupils or teachers involved directly or indirectly in Liberation,[7] have I found any reliable statistical data from which to explore the wartime *lycée* as demographic entity.[8] Unlike other social, political, or professional groups, of which the *cheminots* (railway workers) are the classic example, the school cohort is a transient one, internally differentiated by age and by gender, and in public perception often indistinguishable from the larger 'student' population as a whole. Matot himself, as we shall see, refers to the wartime emergence within the same school of radical young 'étudiants' (students) seeking to indoctrinate the 'lycéens' (Matot, 2010: 99). This partly reflects the historically rather loose application of the term to both pre- and post-baccalaureate pupils, some of whom had already progressed to university, while others undertook an additional two years of specialist *lycée*-based study (*hypokhâgne* and *khâgne*) in designated establishments such as Henri IV or, as we have seen, Louis-le-Grand, taking preparatory courses for admission to the *grandes écoles*.[9] Older than the main cohort and usually exempt from the normal attendance timetable, such students were free to pursue other activities beyond the school's internal regulations and the constraints imposed by the occupier or the Vichy authorities. Historically too, in a tradition of protest that extends to May '68 and beyond, school and university groups have mobilized for joint action. Over and above the ninety-three arrested after the 11 November 1940 demonstrations in Paris, 299 university students and 547 *lycéens* were called in for police questioning. And, to take but one example from the provinces, as Robert Gildea has shown, in Nantes (Loire-Atlantique), 'University students made common cause with students from the Lycée Clemenceau and the Lycée de Jeunes Filles' in local protests that prompted German demands for the closure of the Lycée (Gildea, 2003: 162–63). More tragically, of the 1700 resistance deportees on 27 April 1944, no fewer than 170 were students and *lycéens* (pupils). For convenience and unless otherwise indicated by context, I shall refer hereafter only to the latter.

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[6] Strasbourg was not liberated until 23 November, Colmar until 2 February 1945.

[7] See 'hommage-aux-lycéens-dans-la-résistance' at http://maquisardsdefrance.jeun.fr/t6593-hommage-aux-lyceens-dans-la-resistance. Among these, Jacques Lousseyran of Louis-le-Grand, who founded the Volontaires nationaux in 1941; the five 'martyrs du Lycée Buffon', executed in February1943; the part played by teachers and pupils at the Lycée Lalande (Bourg-en-Bresse) and Pierre Fermat (Toulouse); and the 500-strong battalion raised from pupils and former pupils of Janson de Sailly in August 1944, which fought alongside De Lattre de Tassigny's first army through the battles for Mulhouse, Rischviller, and Strasbourg until their incorporation into the regular forces.

[8] The collective *Radiographie du peuple lycéen. Pour changer le lycée* by Establet et al. (2005) is beyond the scope of the present study, though some general issues still resonate.

[9] The 'Grandes écoles' are prestigious and highly selective national institutions for which candidates in subjects such as philosophy and literature, politics and economics, science and mathematics, and engineering and administration, bypassing the normal University courses, apply on a competitive basis.

The Nantes example is a useful reminder that the pre-war *lycée* was a gender-segregated community, especially though not exclusively in Paris, which in 1939 boasted eight all-girls state secondary establishments in addition to the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Jeunes Filles (female teacher-training college) in Sèvres.[10] There were some exceptions to the rule, usually in provincial institutions, including Blaise-Pascal, where a female student provided useful 'girlfriend' cover during Lanzmann's weapon-courier sorties at Clermont-Ferrand railway station (Lanzmann, 2009: 33–38). Moving from Henri IV to the Lycée Thiers in Marseilles in 1949, Pierre Vidal-Naquet was surprised to discover that young women were admitted, though not to the same competitive streams (Vidal-Naquet, 2007: 245). It is true, as wartime records from Rollin and elsewhere show, that female pupils demonstrated and were sometimes arrested alongside their male companions: of twenty young Communists arrested at the end of November 1940, four were from Rollin or former pupils at the school, and five were young women (Matot, 2010: 101). Others featured quite prominently in newsreel photographs of the Liberation (Brossat, 1994), while major figures such as Danielle Casanova and Lucie Aubrac made deservedly acknowledged contributions to the wider Resistance movement.[11] In the narrower educational context, however, historic practice effectively dictated a numerical disproportion in the distribution of roles and that is reflected in the present discussion.[12] Generic difference is also reflected in vocabulary such as the invariably male 'potache' (schoolboy) and 'cancre' (dunce), the latter normally deployed as an expression of dismissive contempt, but sometimes – as in Matot's title – used to assert a group identity, an 'awkward squad' pre-disposed to rejecting authority and one whose disparaging connotations mask the sometimes exceptional intellectual abilities of those thereby designated.

In the early summer (May–June) of 1940, the Lycée Rollin, a substantial building in the ninth *arrondissement*, had afforded temporary accommodation for civilian refugees from the invading German forces and for retreating French troops. Following the Occupation, the sixteenth *arrondissement* Lycée Claude-Bernard was requisitioned by the German authorities, and in 1944 the left-bank Lycée Saint-Louis served as a barracks for the Vichy government's paramilitary Milice. Generally, however, school premises were not physically occupied, and the daily existence of pupils and teachers was typical in some ways of the constraints to which the population was subjected: food and fuel scarcity, insecurity, curfews, and developing repression. Matot cites efforts made by Rollin's kitchen staff in 1942–43 to improve pupil diets, over and above the nominal rations and the vitaminized supplements available to thirteen to twenty-one-year-olds through the official 'Secours national' (National Aid) organization, by scavenging for vegetables and other discarded produce at the Les Halles market (Matot, 2010: 229). A young Olivier Todd recalled the disappearance of the vitamin-added biscuits with which his teacher mother had eked out their meagre fare, and his participation in the 'équipes nationales' (government-organized working parties) in clearing bomb damage from Allied air raids on the marshalling yards at La Chapelle in June 1944 as a distraction from the boredom of classes in the Lycée Henri IV (Todd, 1981: 42). And despite the grimness of a city 'literally and metaphorically criss-crossed with barbed wire' (*ibid.*), he could still go to the Parisian theatres.

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[10] In typical Republican tradition, all named after men: Camille Sée, Fenelon, Jules Ferry, Lamartine, Molière, Racine, Victor Hugo, and Victor Duruy.

[11] For a recent bibliographical update, see Andrew Knapp's online compilation *Il y avait des femmes dans la résistance*, 28 October 2014, French Studies Discussion List [FRANCOFIL@liverpool.ac.uk].

[12] Gendered secondary education disappeared slowly; the state sector only became generally co-ed in the 1970s.

Such details not only add a lived texture to the Occupation school experience, they offer a useful context and part-corrective to claims, exemplified in the post-war reform proposals issued by the Communist left, that secondary and higher education were remote from the world of work and wider society (Rigby, 1994: 241–51). That the *lycée* was still largely the preserve of a middle- or lower-middle-class clientèle destined invariably to white-collar and not manual jobs cannot be gainsaid. Vidal-Naquet noted that Latin and Greek remained the preserve of the elite and that with some notable exceptions the curriculum, both formal and informal, conspired towards 'the gradual elimination of pupils from more modest social backgrounds' (Vidal-Naquet, 2007: 93). Dominique Fernandez made the same point in pithier terms in his post-May '68 novel *L'Etoile rose* (1978), highlighting the mystifying epithets 'terne' (dull) or 'brillant' applied by teachers to essays by working-class pupils to whom they would have been more meaningful in a metal-working context or the Citroën car factory (Fernandez, 1978: 40–41). But just as the much-denigrated *lycée-caserne* (barracks) of May '68 sloganizing was never as carceral as its detractors claimed, so in political terms the pre-war *lycée* environment was never as rarefied as its opponents and even some of its practitioners purported to believe. The latter include some official online resources which emphasize the traditional isolation of an institution that war and Occupation would render more porous and susceptible to outside influences.[13] If the events and pressures of Occupation impacted politically on the school system, they did so in two ways: directly, by the promulgation within the schools of official Vichy ordinances and propaganda, and indirectly by reinforcing or inflecting existing stances by individual teachers and pupils, a trend already present in the 1920s,[14] and significantly intensified in the pivotal year 1933–34. Matot's study of the Lycée Rollin, subsequently Lycée Jacques Decour, offers supportive evidence and a fuller canvas on which to illustrate these related phenomena.

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[13] http://www.cndp.fr/lycees-dans-la-resistance/introduction.

On the eve of the Second World War, Rollin was a large and socially diverse *lycée* with a significant proportion of immigrant pupils or pupils of immigrant origin (fifteen nationalities were represented in the 1939–40 roll of 1200) including Jews, many of whom perished in deportation.[15] In re-creating its profile and atmosphere from the 1930s to the Liberation, Matot underlines the school's pre-war credentials as an 'anti-fascist factory' (Matot, 2010: 31) whose pupils included future Resistance members such as Dionys Mascolo (1932–36), Henri Alleg (1932–38), Claude Dreyfus, Jacques-Francis Rolland, and Edgar Morin. Among wartime pupils who paid the supreme penalty for resistance activity were Claude Lalet, Karl Schoenhaar, Tony Bloncourt, and Olivier Souef. Resistance members among its teaching staff included the Germanist Daniel Decourdemanche (future founder of the *Lettres françaises clandestines*, executed in May 1942), Jean Baby, Jean-Toussaint Desanti, and René Maublanc; and, post-Liberation, Lucie Aubrac and Annie Hervié. Berty Albrecht and Yvonne le Tac figured among school parents who encouraged their sons' political alignments and became resistance figures in their own right.

During the 1930s, writes Matot, Rollin already resembled a political 'pépinière' (nursery) whose classrooms had become a forum for the expression of widely divergent views; a minority professed royalist, nationalist, or fascist allegiances, a larger cohort was variously composed of anti-fascists, pacifists, Trotskyists, or Stalinists (Matot, 2010: 31). At no point does Matot attempt to quantify numerically the extent of the phenomenon, but he cites Alleg's observation that broadly left- and right-wing alignments emerged during the third year and crystallized into party-specific allegiances in the fourth. Edgar Morin recalled the adoption by pupils in 1934 of political lapel badges and emblems: communist hammer and sickle, socialist red arrows, and royalist fleur-de-lys (Morin, 1994; cited in Matot, 2010: 36–37). The election of the Popular Front government in 1936 and the near-simultaneous outbreak of the Spanish Civil War intensified the tendency to political position-taking that reflected divisions in the outside world. Jacques-Francis Rolland related a confrontation at the school gates between himself, Morin, and Claude Dreyfus and supporters of the far-right paramilitary 'Jeunesses Patriotes' who taunted them for their Spanish republican sympathies. On the eve of war, there was a numerically small but active membership of the Student Christian Movement

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[14] Of 1920s Louis-le-Grand, William R. Tucker wrote: 'Most of the *pensionnaires* (boarders)… were from modest, petty bourgeois families. Some were oriented towards royalism, others towards communism, some were practicing [sic] Catholics and others were not' (Tucker, 1975: 33).

[15] A memorial plaque records twenty-six Jewish pupils who died in deportation and another who was shot for 'faits de résistance' (resistance activity).

(Jeunesse étudiante chrétienne, hereafter JEC), some of whom would incline towards Vichy paternalism, others to more extreme positions. The teaching staff numbered a declared Maurrassian, a popular figure with pupils and colleagues but an exotic species in this multicultural and multi-ethnic establishment, and the historian and geographer Georges Lefranc, chronicler of the Popular Front, whose pacifism and subsequent disenchantment with socialist strategy and workerist politics would take him towards Vichy and outright collaborationism after 1940.

The Vichy regime, established on 10 July 1940, was precipitated by military defeat, formalized by the Third Republic's last national assembly which voted plenary powers to the eighty-four-year-old Marshal Pétain, and endorsed by the occupying German forces. Pétain promptly initiated a 'National Revolution' based on a return to the traditional right-wing values of *Travail*, *Famille*, *Patrie* ('Work, Family, Fatherland'), the dissolution of democratic institutions, and the exclusion of dissident political, ethnic, or religious groups. Its educational agenda focused mainly on the primary sector (introducing subsidies to Catholic institutions, offering religious instruction as an option in state ones, and in seeking to control the real or perceived subversions of the historically republican primary teachers' union, the Syndicat National des Instituteurs). But the Education Ministry's purlieu extended into secondary and higher education, and under successive incumbents such as Jacques Chevalier and Jérôme Carcopino went beyond the normal expectations that school heads would ensure trouble-free enrolments at the start of term and deliver the curriculum. Educational 'neutrality', often more tangible in the breach than the observance, was formally abandoned with the instruction in August 1940 to incorporate elements from the Head of State's speeches in school assemblies and propagate the virtues of the National Revolution (Matot, 2010: 84–85), a mission that led at least one institution in the unoccupied zone – Vidal-Naquet's Lycée Périer in Marseilles – to adopt the name Lycée Maréchal-Pétain (Vidal-Naquet, 2007: 84). From November 1940, the Parisian Lycée Voltaire, belying its name and left-wing reputation, hosted a section of the Pétainist youth movement, the 'Jeunes du maréchal' established by the grammarian Jacques Bousquet who became chief of staff to the ultra-collaborationist Education Minister Abel Bonnard in 1942 (Matot, 2010: 100 and 196).

Alongside the dissemination and implementation of Vichy decrees went a hardening of political attitudes among the pupils. Before the war, Claude Lalet and Michel Courage, future leaders of the clandestine Etudiants communistes[16] and the youth wing of Marcel Déat's collaborationist Rassemblement national populaire (RNP) respectively, sat on the same benches. Another Déatiste, Henri Macé, had been a pre-war member of the young Socialist 'Red falcons', but changed his allegiances with the Occupation. Formerly vigorous but usually good-humoured opposition spawned more virulent antagonisms:

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[16] The French Communist party and its subsections had been banned since September 1939 in the wake of the Germano-Soviet pact of 23 August 1939.

> Extremist gangs form in the playground. 'Des potaches en culotte courte' ('schoolboys in short trousers') dream about wearing uniforms and engage in war games. The more radical seek to indoctrinate the others along Nazi lines, fanatics who despise the 'republican values' that, in their view, led to disaster [in 1940] and behave like predators, untroubled by a school administration in disarray. (Matot, 2010: 99)

Under the Jewish statute of 3 October 1940, four Jewish teachers lost their posts at Rollin, to no reported internal or public protest (Matot, 2010: 92–93). Similar dismissals took place in Marseilles in December 1940 'with the customary discretion' (Vidal-Naquet, 2007: 83), while those at Lanzmann's Blaise-Pascal acquired a subsequent notoriety in Marcel Ophuls' controversial documentary *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* (1969). In 1941, head teachers were issued with lists of banned textbooks, and when, under the second Jewish statute of 2 June 1941, public employees were required formally to certify that they did not belong to the 'Jewish race', only ten of Rollin's 108 personnel refused to comply (Matot, 2010: 126). The head teacher, Perrin, who had moved to Rollin from the requisitioned Lycée Claude-Bernard, seems not only to have been largely compliant but sympathetically pro-active, as evidenced *inter alia* by the proposed refurbishment in 1942 of the school's disused pre-Republican chapelle Sainte-Barbe (Matot, 2010: 182–84). That this endorsement of the regime's vaunted 'return to religion' was occurring at the same time as the arrests and deportations of France's Jews, whose number included pupils from the school, is one of the tragic ironies in Rollin's wartime history. The re-consecration was celebrated on 5 November 1942 by the pro-Pétainist Cardinal Suhard at a Mass during which the future film director François Truffaut, a junior pupil in the school, recalled making his First Communion, an episode subsequently incorporated into his Occupation film *Le Dernier Métro* (1980).

Among other events beyond the school gates that had a significant impact within was the German invasion of the USSR on 22 June 1941, which marked a quantum leap in the global scale of the conflict and triggered a series of Communist resistance attacks on German military personnel and facilities in France. In the cycle of violence and reprisal that followed, an early victim was Etienne Lalet who, imprisoned since his arrest in November 1940, was executed on 22 October 1941 as one of the Châteaubriant hostages. His fellow pupils and fellow Communists Tony Bloncourt, Karl Schoenhaar, and Olivier Souef were executed on 19 March, 17 April, and 9 August 1942 respectively, the latter in Auschwitz. The opening of the Eastern front also prompted the creation of the anti-Bolshevik Legion of French Volunteers, raised to fight alongside the German forces and subsequently incorporated into them. In tandem with the increasingly high-profile activities of collaborationist intellectuals such as Brasillach, the ideological divide had never been so clear-cut, nor more conducive to the development of a proclivity to denounce or betray.

In March 1943, Rollin's Georges Lefranc, who had joined Bonnard's Education Ministry where he organized Franco-German school exchanges, was warned to desist from his pro-German activities in an anonymous tract whose author's identity – seventeen-year-old Communist André Bessière – was then exposed by collaborationist pupils (Matot, 2010: 198–99).[17] Moved to another institution, Bessière narrowly escaped arrest by the Milice in 1944 but was subsequently captured in Perpignan and deported. At Blaise-Pascal, Claude Lanzmann recalled the atmosphere of latent hostility and sometimes overt confrontation between the boarders, predominantly Resistance-inclined or affiliated, and the day-pupils whose number included supporters of Vichy, and Milice sympathizers or active members:

> They knew who we were, and we knew who they were. You have to imagine the big school playground during recreation breaks, with different groups spying on one another, scrutinizing or eye-balling them, sizing each other up and then looking or turning away. The children of collaborationist families were the same age as ourselves. (Lanzmann, 2009: 33)

This passage is couched in terms that dramatize the underlying danger of stand-off and the risks of denunciation within the school. Conversely, however, pupils from similar backgrounds sometimes opted for diametrically opposed camps without sacrificing their friendship or mutual respect: at Rollin in January 1944, the long-standing classmates Jean Gay and Jacques Frantz, fellow members of the JEC, went their separate ways, the former to the Resistance, the latter to the Waffen-SS. Arrested and tortured by the Gestapo, Gay was executed two days after the Liberation of Paris. Frantz was wounded during the defence of Berlin against the Red Army on 26 April 1945.Three of the ten Rollin pupils who had openly declared themselves Nazis, one a former member of the JEC, joined the Milice, progressing from the gamma buttonhole badge to full uniform and membership of its paramilitary guards. Two of Matot's interviewees recalled coming face-to-face with uniformed classmates in the street or on sentry duty outside the Lycée Saint-Louis barracks in the Latin Quarter in May 1944 (Matot, 2010: 243–44). That this was recorded at a very late point in the Occupation – D-Day, 6 June, was only weeks away – underlines the strength of some convictions and the febrile atmosphere, part-desperation part-defiance, in which such choices were made right up to and sometimes beyond the Liberation of Paris on 25 August, swelling the ranks of potential targets in the developing climate of summary justice known as the 'purges' (*l'épuration*).

Despite the Liberation's insurrectionary dangers and tragedies, the period has also been characterized as a 'fête folle' (Brossat), a crazy carnival-like experience in which the tearing down or defacing of German flags and signs and barricade-building imparted a ludic as well as a symbolic, cathartic dimension to the process. Over six decades later, Matot's eyewitness accounts of events around Rollin and elsewhere in the city enabled some of the school's 'Gavroches en herbe' ('would-be boy-soldiers')[18] to emerge from the largely anonymous ranks of the Parisian participants.

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[17] Matot twice in these pages refers to *miliciens* or *des élèves miliciens*. Since the Milice, founded in January 1943, was only authorized in the former Occupied zone a year after its founder Joseph Darnand's appointment as Secrétaire-général au Maintien de l'Ordre in the final Vichy government, this may be shorthand for militants in the youth wing of the RNP or the PPF.

In September 1944, six members of staff at Rollin were arraigned for their wartime activities; one was banned from teaching for 5 years, two dismissed without pension (Matot, 2010: 262). What became of its three pupil members of the Milice, shown but not individually identified in class photographs, is not recorded, but the auguries were not good. Alain Brossat cites the case of a young man from the Hérault department in July playing 'maquis or Milice: heads or tails?'. Fate decided the latter, and he was shot a month later (Brossat, 1994: 82). Transferring to a boarding school in Saint-Germain-en-Laye west of Paris, Olivier Todd met a former pupil from Henri IV who had 'disappeared' at the Liberation because his *milicien* brother was suspected of denouncing a teacher to the Germans (Todd, 1981: 57). In late September, Vidal-Naquet read newspaper reports in the Drôme of a *milicien* publically executed despite having been tried and spared by a Resistance tribunal (Vidal-Naquet, 2007: 160).

In March 1945, the former Lycée Rollin, renamed Jacques Decour after the Resistance sobriquet of its most celebrated wartime teacher, became a reception centre for displaced persons and the first prisoners-of-war (POWs) returning from Germany. Its own deportees, those who died and those who survived, were duly honoured in the school. In 1951, the martyrdom of Daniel Decourdemanche was commemorated in a fresco by art teacher Alfred Lop-Montel, closing a momentous chapter in the history of an institution in which perhaps only one teacher in ten had resisted (Matot, 2010: 280) but which, via the ideological re-alignments of the Cold War, had evolved from the erstwhile 'anti-fascist factory' into a 'red' *lycée* (Matot, 2010: 278), a reputation it retained into the turbulent 1960s.

In common with the rest of society in post-war France, the problematic aspects of the Lycée's past were occluded by the competing mythologies of Gaullism and communism and consigned to a form of collective amnesia which only began seriously to be dispelled in the 1960s and 1970s in the process of rediscovery whose principal stages and cultural vectors were codified in Henri Rousso's ground-breaking work on the 'Vichy syndrome' (1987). Central to that process was the recognition and ultimately, official acknowledgement, of Vichy and much of French society's complicity in the racial persecution of the Jews, in the active repression and elimination of opponents, declared or suspected, and in the espousal by many of overtly pro-collaborationist views. The exposure in 2010 of Rollin's 'dark legend, its hidden face' (Matot, 2010: 99) marked a relatively late and inevitably bi-focal manifestation of that process, combining the quasi-documentary, archival re-constitution of the past, and the contemporary awareness of subsequent cultural and paradigmatic shifts, in the light of which events acquire a significance previously glossed over or unperceived.

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[18] Their historical antecedents were the young revolutionary fighter in Delacroix's celebrated 'Liberty leading the people towards the barricades' (1830) and Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* (1862).

Notable among these is a series of convergences with the literary and filmic domain. In addition to the previously mentioned reference to Truffaut, Matot cites the case of Roger Vailland's early Resistance novel *Drôle de jeu* (1945). Based partly on the activities of the wartime network that included Edgar Morin and Claude Dreyfus, it was adapted for the screen in 1967 by Jacques-Francis Rolland and Pierre Kast whose associates included the Rollin Communists Lalet, Daix, and Souef. Wholly coincidental in source terms but retrospectively symbolic is Jean-Louis Curtis's *Les Forêts de la nuit* (1946), awarded the Prix Goncourt in 1947. At that point, under his real name Laffitte, the author was teaching English at Rollin and in January 1948 may have met Jacques Frantz whose judicial dossier during the purges, after prolonged investigation, was closed early that year (Matot, 2010: 330–32). In fact, the novel drew on Laffitte's experiences in a 'free corps' in Autumn 1944 and an encounter with a member of the Liberating Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur who had previously served in the Milice, a segue that reflects that of his fictional protagonist Philippe Arréguy, who fights successively for collaborationism and resistance. It also distantly foreshadows Louis Malle and Patrick Modiano's *Lacombe Lucien* (1974) whose eponymous protagonist, recruited by a collaborationist gang in mid-June 1944 and executed by the Resistance in October, remains a thought-provoking parable on the experiential and representational complexities of the Occupation–Liberation interface.

La Guerre des cancres was prefaced by Modiano, fictional specialist of 'l'atmosphère trouble du Paris de l'Occupation' ('the troubled atmosphere of Occupied Paris' – Modiano, in Matot, 2010: 11) and chronicler of his own experience as a *pensionnaire* in schools and colleges there and in the provinces.[19] But his role as prefacer offers an unexpected if highly appropriate coincidence with a hitherto unpublicized aspect of Rollin's wartime history: for three months in 1942, the *lycée* sheltered the German-Jewish refugee schoolboy Hans Helmut Michel who subsequently found sanctuary in a religious boarding school at Avon near Fontainebleau... There, in October 1943, under the pseudonym Jean Bonnet, he met Louis Malle, director of the semi-autobiographical *Au revoir les enfants* (1987) in which, denounced to the Gestapo by a disgruntled school employee, he was arrested and deported to Auschwitz in January 1944. Rousso has written that *Lacombe Lucien* was ahead of its time whereas *Au revoir les enfants* reflected aspects of its own epoch (Rousso, 1990: 272); it is also a commonplace that in terms of their content and historical timelines, they were produced in the wrong order, a regressive sequence symptomatic of Malle's avowed inability in 1973–74 to confront his own adolescent wartime memories, and emblematic of the pre-eminence acquired by the primary school and *collège* in literary and filmic representations of the period.[20]

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[19] The Ecole du Montcel at Jouy-en-Josas (1956–60), the Collège de Thônes (Haute-Savoie), from 1960 until the baccalaureate in 1962, and, briefly, the Lycée Henri IV, form backdrops to the fictional exploration of an imagined wartime past.

[20] The post-primary *collèges* catered for three overlapping pupil cohorts: the twelve- to fourteen-year-olds (the school leaving age established in 1936); those who continued beyond that age, sometimes to the baccalaureate; and a minority who would transfer to the *lycée* to complete their secondary education. Unlike the state sector, the collèges were often privately funded, religious institutions, predominantly Catholic, often with a residential element.

That trend is discernible in the immediate post-Liberation years in a cluster of works by right-wing novelists that have been interpreted as a rejection of the dominant existential-resistance culture and as a form of exculpation vis-à-vis the problematic events of the Occupation (Hewitt, 1994: 292). They include Antoine Blondin's *L'Europe buissonnière* (1949) and *Les Enfants du bon Dieu* (1952), Roger Nimier's *Les Enfants tristes* (1951), and Jacques Laurent's *Le Petit Canard* (1954) whose storylines and locations differ but whose titles variously evoke a return to themes and tropes of childhood schooldays present in their common precursor, Marcel Aymé's *Le Chemin des écoliers* (1946). Minus their ideological underpinning, Francis Ambrière's early POW novel *Les Grandes Vacances* (also 1946) is thematically cognate insofar as adult demobilization and imprisonment are lived as a form of Liberation, of schoolboy de-responsibilization. Without constituting a genre, this literature enjoyed a long if intermittent shelf life; a film version of *Le Chemin des écoliers* was released in 1959, and a major transition in focus occurred with Joseph Joffo's *Un Sac de Billes* (1973), based on the wartime adventures of two young Jewish brothers in the unoccupied zone. Its sequel, *Babyfoot* (1977), recounts a Chaplin film showing in newly liberated Paris that foreshadows Malle's use of *The Immigrant* in *Au revoir les enfants* (1987). Now regarded as a quintessential expression of the French wartime/Holocaust experience, *Au revoir les enfants* also enjoyed a more universal appeal based on the familiarity of the school decor and its sympathetic but unsentimental portrayal of 'l'adolescence éternelle' (Rousso, 1990: 271). Jew and gentile, classmates and rivals, friends and co-participants in playground rituals and extracurricular adventures, Bonnet and Quentin are still 'schoolboys in short trousers' but already tempted by adolescent attitudinizing. If some older boys, including Quentin's brother, evince pro-Resistance sentiments, the film is silent on the possible, indeed probable, existence of contrary attitudes among the pupils, though in context one rather self-pitying 'on n'a rien fait, nous' ('we haven't done anything') is unintentionally revealing.[21]

That such elements invest *Au revoir les enfants* with a significant recognition factor emerges from Vidal-Naquet's account of his wartime schooling in the Midi. As an eleven-year-old in Marseilles in 1940–41, he noted a variety of political opinions among his classmates but as a corrective to those who offered dogmatic predictions on the outcome of the titanic struggle in the East between the Wehrmacht and the Red army, there was a large map at home on which to follow the real course of events (Vidal-Naquet, 2007: 91). Maps are of course a normally unremarkable part of the school decor, and a map of the eastern front features in a pivotal classroom scene in *Au revoir les enfants* which, Vidal-Naquet later acknowledged, accurately recaptured the atmosphere of a Catholic boarding school he attended in 1942–43. These indications among others suggest that *Au revoir les enfants* represents a 'site of memory' whose topoi permeate subsequent writing and against which or through which the latter might be re-read.

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[21] Pétainist sympathies are embodied in Madame Quentin; anti-Semitism appears in the restaurant where the Milice threaten a Jewish diner. As in *Lacombe Lucien*, collaborationism is embodied in a lower-class figure, the kitchen porter Joseph.

Even an otherwise unremarkable cameo in Lanzmann's account of his experiences at Brioude's Collège Lafayette seems to counterpoint Malle's film. It evokes Freimann, another Jewish pupil whose family had sought refuge in Brioude and who became Lanzmann's classmate and intellectual rival. Tormented for his brilliance by the other pupils whose motives had no ostensible racial dimension, he was tied to a playground tree from which he was triumphantly rescued by Lanzmann, exercising some adolescent seniority (Lanzmann, 2009: 36). Freimann and his family were subsequently victims of the *rafles* (round-ups) in the summer of 1942. Unlike *Au revoir les enfants*, Lanzmann's text recounts a childhood friendship between two Jews, and it nowhere replicates the film's defining moment, Julien's inadvertent betrayal of Bonnet by his momentarily complicitous glance. Intriguingly, however, as one of three Jewish pupils enrolled at Blaise-Pascal with the complicity of senior staff, Lanzmann later revealed the guilt he felt when, as a result of advice given to a young Communist resister, the latter, surrounded by Germans in Clermont-Ferrand, took his own life (Lanzmann, 2009: 39–40).

That Malle's portrayal of life in a wartime French school evoked a familiar reality on which Lanzmann's memoirs might be construed as offering a retrospective gloss and perhaps even an indirect homage from the director of *Shoah* to the creator of *Au revoir les enfants* would be unduly speculative. But it would be surprising if the iconic duo of Bonnet and Quentin was not spectrally present in Claude Ventura's recent TV documentary adaptation of *La Guerre des cancres*, *Les Garçons de Rollin* (Flach films, 2014)[22] which, foregrounding the camaraderie between the Resistance partisan Gay and the Waffen-SS volunteer Frantz, shifts the representational focus deservedly back to the *lycée*.

Envoi

Commentators such as Lanzmann, Vidal-Naquet, and Todd offer invaluable personal accounts of aspects of Occupation and Liberation which, even at their most intense, directly involved only a minority of the (school) populations. And their narratives, stylized to a greater or lesser degree, were written from positions of reputation and authority as well as retrospectivity. By contrast, Matot's archival reconstruction of the wartime Lycée Rollin affords us a more contemporaneous, more spontaneous, and more general insight into the experiences of pupils and teachers and evokes, beyond the militant minority, a school community challenged by events and divided by convictions that were sometimes softened by underlying ethos and an abiding 'chaleur humaine' ('human warmth': Madaule, 1973; in Matot, 2010: 28). In the historically contested annals of the period, that is no mean tribute.

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[22] Released on 3 October 2014 on France-3.

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Note on contributor

William Kidd is Honorary Senior Research Fellow in Stirling University School of Arts and Humanities. He has published extensively on war and memory in twentieth-century France with a particular focus on representations of collaboration and resistance. He is the author of monographs on Vercors (1991), and war memorial iconography in the Moselle (1999), and co-editor of *Contemporary French Cultural Studies* (Arnold, 2000), and *Memory and memorials. The commemorative century* (Ashgate, 2004). Recent published research has covered memory communities in the Pyrénées-Orientales, the iconography of post-colonial migration, and Louis Malle's *Lacombe Lucien*.