CHAPTER 4

Re-imagining History Teaching by Challenging National Narratives

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Introduction

Although it is relatively common to highlight, if not bemoan, the separation between theory and practice within the field of education generally, we would argue that this debate takes on a rather unique tone within history education and social studies education.[1] In particular, we contend that perennial, broader debates about theory and practice tend to manifest as a tension not only between the terms "history" and "education" within the *history of education*, as Richardson argued, but also between teaching content (or "knowledge") and teaching for historical thinking.[2] In the first case, the tension is between a field having a culture valuing purely the academic study of the past and a field having a culture concerned—to some extent, at least—with practical questions of application of ideas to classroom settings and issues pertaining to a profession.

[1] Throughout this chapter we will use the term "history education" to stand in for both history education and social studies education. This decision is not to make light of the differences between the two, or the histories of how these teaching subjects developed in difference contexts. It is, however, a reflection of the fact that we believe our argument is justifiable across both fields.

[2] William Richardson, "Historians and educationists: The history of education as a field of study post-war England Part I," *History of Education* 28, no. 1 (1999): 1–30.

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As Richardson argued at the beginning of his comprehensive history of the history of education in the UK: "The inherent conservatism of academic history ensured that its professional priorities changed only slowly."[3] As many have noted, the question of whether one is a historian who studies education or an educationist who uses history is a perennial one that, to this day, remains salient to those who contribute to the history of education—if for no other reason than, like the history of art and the history of science and technology, the history of education tends to have a complicated relationship with history. As McCulloch noted, the history of education is a contested discipline, "a condition rooted in its strategic yet unstable location in relation to history, education, and the social sciences."[4] We would argue that this contestation becomes magnified if one considers the relationship between the history of education and history education.

One might justifiably argue a further complicated relationship between the tension of teaching historical knowledge and teaching for historical thinking. We argue that this tension, which has played out in national curriculum documents the world over, is strongly linked to competing national narratives around what history education is for, how history might be taught in schools, and for how long history must be taken by students. Further, we in the teaching of history are necessarily bound within its own history of teaching history within a particular cultural context. In this chapter, we use the rhetorical device of a *roman national* to frame and interrogate our central hypothesis on the need to re-imagine the education of future history and social studies teachers.

In this chapter we posit that national narratives are a part of both the content of school history and a grammar of the history of teaching history. We use France and its republics as case studies for the ways in which the French national narrative, the *roman national*, was constructed and implicitly and explicitly reinforced by the state. We further argue that the three orders of interaction in education—the government curriculum, the sanctioned textbooks, and the choices made by teachers—must be considered as a group of interactions in order to understand both the persistence of national narratives and the ways in which they might change. If history and social studies teachers are the vanguard of helping students describe, interpret, and analyze the *roman national* to which they are being exposed daily by virtue of citizenry, to say nothing of the materials with which they interact in history classes, then history and social studies teacher educators need to re-imagine their pedagogies of teacher education.

In some ways, our arguments are not new: the idea that national grand narratives permeate history education in both substantive and syntactic ways has been taken up by scholars such as Den Heyer and Abbott, Korostelina, and

[3] Ibid., 1.

[4] Gary McCulloch, *The Struggle for the History of Education* (London: Routledge, 2011), 112.

Stanley.[5] Korostelina posited that it is important to "present to students narratives that provide a comprehensible and legitimate story about the nation and institutionalize collective memory."[6] Stanley argued in part that historical narratives can contribute to "popular racism" because they tend to posit histories that count and histories that are made invisible and that "[u]nchallenged, nationalist historical narratives create a binary in terms of possible (read acceptable) identities."[7] Our assertion that those who would teach history and social studies need to be acutely aware of their dominant national stories and those who teach these future teachers need to explicitly provide opportunities to teach and examine critically the history of the development of said national stories might be equally obvious. Indeed, we do not presume that future teachers are completely ignorant of the received national stories they have grown up with.

We do, however, argue that debates around how history should be taught, what history might be taught, and whose history might be taught require both history teachers and history teacher educators to take stances as public intellectuals and, in so doing, develop a deep understanding about how and why national stories tend to exert considerable force on the teaching of history in a particular context at all levels. In our view, teachers and teacher educators are public intellectuals by default: they teach in public, make decisions about how curricula are enacted, and respond to questions from students, parents, guardians, and colleagues about things that they have said or done in their public classrooms, presentations, lectures, and writings. Re-imagining history education, then, requires acute clarity on how national narratives develop and strategies to interrogate said stories within history teacher education classrooms, K-12 classrooms, and the broader public sphere.

One way to gain such clarity, we believe, is to examine the ways in which national narratives and the history curriculum have developed in a context likely to be unfamiliar to many reading this chapter and entreat the reader to consider the points of resonance and dissonance within their own context, from the perspective of both research on the development of national narratives and their effects on history education and research on history education, and the history of history education, writ large. Our purpose here is not to exhaustively review existing research in history education published in English, with which we assume most readers are familiar, but to invite comparisons between ideas presented through a case study of France and context(s) that the

[5] Kent Den Heyer and Laurence Abbott, "Reverberating Echoes: Challenging Teacher Candidates to Tell and Learn from Entwined Narrations of Canadian history," *Curriculum Inquiry* 41, no. 5 (2011): 610–635; Korostelina Karina, "Constructing Nation: National Narratives of History Teachers in Ukraine," *National Identities: Critical Inquiry into Nationhood, Politics, and Culture* 15, no. 4 (2013): 401–416; Timothy Stanley, "The Struggle for History: Historical Narratives and Anti-Racist Pedagogy," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 19, no. 1 (1998): 41–52.

[6] Korostelina, "Constructing Nation," 412.

[7] Stanley, "The Struggle for History," 50.

reader might be familiar with. We wish to avoid, to be blunt, an officialized story of research that has been done in other contexts as a stand-in for the history of history education in France. Research can have its own set of grand narratives. As Den Heyer and Abbott concluded in their study of future history teachers, a desire to "avoid culturally reductive or stereotypical images of others" and "the taming of historical complexity for ease of communication" is a process filled with tensions.[8]

We have decided to take the question of teaching history in France as our case study for two additional reasons. First, the debates around the nature and role of the national stories are recurrent, politically charged, and tend to be widely discussed within both academic and popular press in France. The reasons for the prevalence of interest and discussion around France's national story are many and varied but, in our view, have much to do with the fact that they have effects on curricular issues and schooling, the nature of the public's collective memory, and the way in which the past is framed by the citizenry and the government: "France was a victim during two World Wars"; "France was occupied but formed a resistance comprised of patriots"; "De Gaulle liberated Paris"; "Religion is separate from the state." These statements are both true from certain perspectives and yet also incomplete; their brief trueness evokes a shallow consensus for many that circumvents the need for questioning, particularly at the school level. Second, we believe that it is far too tempting for those working with future teachers to quickly dismiss the idea of national stories as something that does not have an impact within our history teacher education classrooms, filled as they are with students who have at least some academic history qualification, or assert that the problems of national stories are so clear to educationists, historians, and researchers that they bear no additional mention. It is highly unlikely that a given future history teacher will have a robust academic background in each of the time periods and topics they will be called upon to teach; our own recent experiences invoke modernists sat next to medievalists, who are in turn sat next to social historians—each ostensibly with topics in history that fill them with either joy or dread and each on their way to professional certification. Of course, the presumption also risks assuming that academic knowledge of history is a sufficient inoculation against the shallow consensus of the national story. It is not. Even if it was, the gaps in academic knowledge for beginning future teachers, in our experience, tend to be filled with intrusions from national stories. In England, this may manifest as the reduction of the history of the UK as a history of 1000 years of kings, (some) queens and their actions, with little attention paid to surrounding countries in the UK, or the world more generally. In Canada, this may manifest in the comfortable assertion that Canadian history has tended to be on the side of justice and peace—a problematic assumption to say the least given the history of residential schooling and societal complicity in the erasure of histories of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Thus, we entreat the reader to take

[8] Den Heyer and Abbott, "Reverberating Echoes," 612.

on the notion of the national story within their own context to consider the ways in which national stories have an impact on public ideas, government agendas, the curriculum, and ideas about history teaching. We will use the term *roman national* throughout this work to call attention both to our case study of France and because we believe the term itself is evocative—we are called upon to read a *roman*, a novel, particularly one with national importance. How we then frame and query that reading as historians of educations charged with teaching future teachers is part of our goal in this chapter.

In part, our chapter was inspired by a recent special issue of the left-leaning French national newspaper *Le Monde* that questioned the ways in which the *roman national* should be taught in schools.[9] Within origins dating back to at least the late nineteenth century, the issue posits that the *roman national* is supported by a clearly articulated national story of how history should be taught and further posited that this story is guarded by a particular subset of the teaching profession. In order to better understand the relation between school history, school historiography, and its teaching, it is important to question not only the specific nature of both school history and its stated goals, but also the narrative modalities of the goals for teaching.

The *Revue des Deux Mondes* (founded in 1829) also devoted a special issue in November 2017 to this theme, whose title was *Faut-il supprimer le roman national*? (Must we suppress the national narrative?).The fact that the special issue presupposed a debate on the "end" of the *roman national* testifies to the relationship historians and educators have with these kinds of questions for some times, echoing Loubes who argued "history teachers are reflecting on the 'proclaimed' death of the *roman national* at the school level."[10] The increasingly common sentiment is that our collective narrative, our *roman*, needs to disappear. This so-called end of history is in fact what the early twenty-first century has labelled the "end of the *roman national*."[11] De Cock explained the "proclaimed death" by arguing that "the national question at the heart of debates around traditional narrative modalities (*roman national*), is regularly a lever for controversy because it reflects the tense relationship between the state and society vis-à-vis the presence of cultural and/or social heterogeneity in the classrooms."[12]

It is thus advantageous, she continues, to announce that the *roman national* is dead, at least officially, because doing so condemns the idea that the *roman national* serves to offer a homogeneous model of identity and collective belonging. Of course, proclaiming the death of an idea and its actual removal from discourse are two different things. Centralized, reductive, patriotic narra-

[9] Didier Daeninckx, "Roman national, 'il était une foi'" *Les querelles de l'histoire, Le Monde,* Hors-Série October–December 2017, 50–51.

[10] Olivier Loubes, "D'un roman national, l'autre. Lire l'histoire par la fin dans les programmes de 1923 et de 1938," *Histoire@Politique. Politique, culture, société*, no. 21 (2013): 53.

[11] Unless otherwise noted, all translations from text originally written in French are our own.

[12] Laurence De Cock, "Le roman national a-t-il des vertus intégratrices? Surquelques polémiques actuelles autour de l'enseignement de l'histoire," *Diversité* 168 (2012): 128.

tives die hard, regardless of the volume of research that has been done exploring the effects of said narratives on students and teachers. We propose that exploring how the *roman national* developed in different educational contexts, and why it persists to this day, is a worthy endeavor.

"Le Roman National": A Socially and Culturally Constructed Narrative

The expression *roman national* was popularized by Pierre Nora; it refers to a patriotic, normalizing narrative that both helps to construct the nation-state and approaches the status of a myth.[13] A *roman national* is a bearer of a collective memory, which tends to crystallize around certain places, characters, symbols, currencies, and events. It functions to legitimize official discourse to better establish and control particular foundations of the state whilst authorizing a particular kind of unity for a nation. De Cock highlighted the interaction between the construction and action of a *roman national* in the following way:

> The *roman national* is based on an act of faith: a knowledge of the national past, that motivates particular feelings such as admiration, identification, commemoration, rejection, and morality in the name of producing a 'common good' that is enough to draw people into a sense of homogeneous belonging, whatever their particular cultural and social heritage may be. This is what we can call the "performative virtues" of the *roman national* as tool for integration and assimilation.[14]

It is therefore a socially and culturally constructed narrative object, and its teaching, as part of the teaching of history, is "a political issue of the first order."[15] The performance of the *roman national* may also be interrogated and understood through the lenses of individual and community-based identities, particularly if one uses Durkheim's ideas about the development of collective representations.[16] Doing so in an era of globalization, mobility, and identity de- and recompositions, however, begs the question of how one might "make a memory from contradictory memories."[17]

History teaching in France took firm hold of the idea of a *roman national* beginning with the Third Republic (1870–1940), and the relationship that has remained strong to this day. The regime of the Third Republic was based largely on the institution of school and its power to ferment and consolidate

[13] Pierre Nora (Ed.), *Les Lieux de mémoire*. (Paris: Gallimard (Quarto, 3 tomes), 1997).

[14] Laurence De Cock, "Le roman national a-t-il des vertus intégratrices? Sur quelques polémiques actuelles autour de l'enseignement de l'histoire," *Diversité* 168 (2012): 129.

[15] Yves Poncelet and Wirth Laurent "L'enseignement scolaire de l'histoire dans la France des 19e et 20e siècles. Fondements. Introduction," *Histoire@Politique. Politique, culture, société*, no. 21 (2013): 3.

[16] Émile Durkheim, "Représentations individuelles et représentations collectives," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, tome VI (1998): 273–302.

[17] Valérie Toronian, "Histoire: le roman national est-il mort?" Editorial, *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, November, DATE? 2017, 4.

the unity of the country, through linguistic and cultural means. Although the French Revolution also linked the unity of the State and the Nation to the idea of linguistic unity of French land (and "soil"), Ragi reminds us:

> The culturally-based nation considers the state as the only institution capable of culturally homogenizing populations. Because of its extraordinary size, it has a formidable branching with an extreme capillarity that touches the most remote villages of the Hexagon; the State has an unrivalled socializing power; it is through the state that the "nationalization" of the people will be achieved.[18]

Ragi also went so far as to suggest that the institution of school becomes the heart of republican dispositions in this system, appearing "not only as the direct emanation of the state, but also as the condition of perpetuation of the republican ideal."[19] Thus it is through education (and especially civic education) that the foundation and the perennial legitimacy of the entire republican regime are aimed at. Among other things, this regime was framed with a particular *roman national* to remove the educational system from the tutelage of the Church.[20] From there, the republican model, in a "centralizing and egalitarian Jacobinism" and through its *roman national*, composes a collective narrative that aims both to guarantee a modern nation-state and to forge a national identity.[21]

Nora, however, also warns us that the very notion of *roman national* leads to an instrumentalization of history and memories. Indeed, it should be remembered that the history that is taught in schools is a recomposition of history, in the sense that our understanding of historical events has developed over time and with different interpretations. School history, for example, is often unlikely to include findings from the latest historical scholarship and research. The historical events taught in schools have been officially selected and thus represent a certain kind of authoritative discourse, particularly from the perspective of a country that has one national curriculum. In this way school knowledge is "socially constructed, as the result of a process of elaboration in which one observes confrontations of interests and values as well as stakes of power."[22] Thus the very act of construction required wilful omission of certain facts and lines of historical enquiry. It also can, paradoxically, open up new avenues for discussion.

The Gaullist story of the Resistance, constructed at the end of the Second World War, is one example. The story, installed at the end of the fighting to

[18] Tariq Ragi, *Minorités culturelles, Ecole républicaine et configurations de l'Etat-Nation* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997), 76.

[19] Ibid., 149.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Louise Dabène, "Caractères spécifiques du bilinguisme et représentations des pratiques langagières des jeunes issus de l'immigration en France," in Georges Lüdi, *Devenir Bilingue, Etre bilingue* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, Verlag, 1987), 7.

[22] Patricia Legris, "L'élaboration des programmes d'histoire depuis la Libération. Contribution à une sociologie historique du curriculum," *Histoire@Politique. Politique, culture, société*, no. 21 (2013):71.

avoid a civil war in France and deeply embedded in France's *roman national*,[23] has tended to present France and French people as victims of the Nazi war machine, often glossing over issues such as wartime collaboration (particularly between French police and Nazi occupying forces) and the rampant anti-Semitism present in France well in advance of the Second World War.[24] More recently, however, this same story of resistance has created some space for a plurality of voices, particularly the voices of women who participated in the resistance. Although very much in line with the concept of resistance within the *roman national*, such stories broaden the often-gendered conceptualizations of what resistance means within wartime.

Questioning the *roman national* requires one to ask how the teaching of history addresses the prevalent—yet sometimes tacit—articulation of collective memories. As noted earlier, such collective, authorized, state-supported memories often come into conflict with the community and individual memories that are part of diversity and plurality in any human society. Boucheron argued that history is "diverse, plural and complex,"—such an argument is unlikely to provoke considerable rebuke from future teachers of history.[25] We question how we are preparing future history teachers for this diversity, plurality, and complexity within the concept of nation-states, such as France, which have been built and unified around founding myths relayed in textbooks and school history programs. As Sarason pointed out, we all come to school with inherited insider perspectives.[26] This is true particularly when one considers Tyack and Tobin's "grammar of school," their name for the cultural agreements and customs governing education and schooling that are so highly resistant to change.[27] As Tyack and Cuban would later argue:

> The grammar of schooling is a product of history, not some primordial creation. It results from the efforts of groups that mobilize to win support for their definitions of problems and their proposed solutions. The more powerful and prestigious the groups, the more likely it is that they will be able to buttress their reforms with laws, regulations, and accreditation requirements … Habitual institutional patterns can be labour-saving devices, ways to organize complex duties. Teachers and students socialized to such routines often find it difficult to adapt to different structures and rules. Established institutional forms come to be understood by educators, students, and the public as necessary features of a "real school."[28]

[23] Robert Gildea, *Comment sont-ils devenus résistants? Une nouvelle histoire de la Résistance (1940–1945)* (Paris: Les Arènes, 2017).

[24] Laurence Rees, *The Holocaust* (London: Penguin, 2017).

[25] Patrick Boucheron, *L'histoire mondiale de la France* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2017).

[26] Seymour B Sarason. *Revisiting "The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change."* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1996).

[27] David Tyack and William Tobin, "The "Grammar Of Schooling": Why Has it Been so Hard to Change," *American Educational Research Journal* 31, no. 3 (1994): 453–479.

[28] David Tyack and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 86.

Tyack and Cuban's comments remind us of the ways in which the grammar of schooling tends to reinforce the status quo and the subtle way it might function to keep schools and the teaching of any particular subject area relatively conservative. Writing anonymously in the *Guardian* newspaper, one "secret teacher" reflected on how children tended to be much more interested in topics they perceived as being a part of British history (i.e., the Royal Family, Winston Churchill, and the Second World War).[29] This perception must stem, at least in part, from deeply internalized assumptions about what is British and what is not—in other words, the *roman national*.

Tyack and Cuban's comments also give pause around how the myths at the core of the *roman national* give form to an idea of what counts as "real school." As we have seen, France has had a tradition of using the *roman national* as an educational device to push forward ideas around republicanism and a certain set of ideas of what it means to be French. It has been used in service of the doctrine of "one language, one people" for nearly 150 years. To disrupt the place of the *roman national* in the education of future history and social studies teachers, we much return to a fundamental question.

Why Teach History?

Before thinking about what history to teach and the ways in which such histories may or may not interact with official state-sanctioned *roman national* history, and particularly before reflecting on how we might teach future history teachers, we need think about why history should be taught in the first place. Seixas might argue it important to enable students to understand "their own historicity into school history programs."[30] Tambyah explored the challenges of teaching for historical understanding—a laudable reason for why we might teach history—given gaps in the disciplinary knowledge of middle-school teachers.[31] VanSledright argued that changes in immigration patterns in the USA have significant effects on how and what history is taught.[32]

Although it might sound strange to North American frames of reference, scholars such as Marchand would argue that the teaching of history is relatively recent, historically.[33] He states: "[T]he process of institutionalizing the teaching of history … launched under the Restoration and the July Monarchy

[29] Anonymous Author, "The Secret Teacher," *The Guardian*, 26 May 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2018/may/26/secret-teacher-history-bias-school-fear-student-future

[30] Peter Seixas, "Progress, Presence and Historical Consciousness: Confronting Past, Present and Future in Postmodern Time," *Paedagogica Historica*, 48, no. 6 (2012): 868.

[31] Malihai M. Tambyah, "Teaching for 'Historical Understanding': What Knowledge(s) Do Teachers Need to Teach History?" *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 42, no. 5 (2017): 35–50.

[32] Bruce VanSledright, "Narratives of nation-state, historical knowledge, and School History Education," *Review of Research in Education* 32 (2008):109–146.

[33] Philippe Marchand, "Les attentes institutionnelles vis-à-vis de l'histoire entre 1880 et 1940," *Histoire@Politique. Politique, culture, société*, no. 21 (2013): 5–21.

(1830–1848) continued under the Second Empire."[34] The institutionalization of the discipline was ratified in the 1860s by the minister Victor Duruy, who made the teaching of the history of France (from early beginnings "until our days") compulsory from 1863 for the primary school level and from 1867 at the secondary school level. The idea of teaching history from, implicitly, the beginning "until our days" reflects a desire to use history as a way of ensuring children have some competence in officially sanctioned stories of the construction of France.

One of the influential—and thus controversial—figures who participated in the constructions of the French *roman national* was Ernest Lavisse, educational reformer for history curricula in the 1890s. Lavisse worked during the formation of the Third Republic (1870–1940) and, particularly following the 1870 defeat of France by Prussia, the aims of teaching history needed to be intellectual, moral, and grounded in civic duty. Lavisse felt that school history enabled students to consider critically political and social changes in the present; history was positioned as a window to the world that put both national and international change in historical perspective whilst aiding in the formation of a citizenry: "History as reflection on time … the civic function of discipline and … the need to study the present, finally … the search for truth and … openness in the world."[35] One can note similarities in the kinds of ideas invoked nowadays to justify and support the teaching of history. The current National Curriculum in England, for example, states:

> A high-quality history education will help pupils gain a coherent knowledge and understanding of Britain's past and that of the wider world. It should inspire pupils' curiosity to know more about the past. Teaching should equip pupils to ask perceptive questions, think critically, weigh evidence, sift arguments, and develop perspective and judgement. History helps pupils to understand the complexity of people's lives, the process of change, the diversity of societies and relationships between different groups, as well as their own identity and the challenges of their time.[36]

The current national curriculum in France, at the level of Cycle 4 (12–15 years old), notes:

> The teaching of history in Cycle 3 encouraged students to understand that the past is a source of knowledge and something to be questioned. Students were encouraged to develop both an interest in and an enjoyment of history from primary source materials and documents. In the wake of these learnings, Cycle 4

[34] Ibid., 5.

[35] Jean Leduc, "Pourquoi enseigner l'histoire? La réponse d'Ernest Lavisse," *Histoire@Politique. Politique, culture, société*, no. 21 (2013): 45.

[36] Department for Education. "Statutory Guidance: National Curriculum in England: History Programmes of Study," GOV.UK, last modified 11 September 2013, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-history-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-history-programmes-of-study

> proposes an approach to historical narrative that allows students to enrich and refine their knowledge of the past over a chronological and thematic progression. Students will thus be able to find markers that characterise the major periods of the history of humanity. Such major periods of history include developments such as turning points and breaks in a history from both national and global perspectives. Students will thus acquire elements that illuminate the contemporary world in which they live and learn to situate the history of France in a more global context.[37]

In both cases, but in slightly different ways, we see how national curricula appeal to some notion of "truth" in historical narratives as well as the role of history, particularly national history, in fostering senses of citizenship—both national and global. One might well argue, of course, that notions of civic engagement have changed considerably. That may be so, but the fact that the curriculum remains grounded in both civic duty and ideas of using national history as a jumping off point for understanding other histories of the world is telling.

We know, however, that it is necessary to meaningfully consider the critical, emancipatory, and inclusive dimensions of a teaching of history. The debates surrounding the question of the teaching of the *roman national*, and its teaching (or not), relate precisely to the critical dimensions and postures that must be adopted in the face of both the history taught and the ways in which said history provides particular lenses through which teachers and their students interpret their relationship to the world. De Cock calls this an emancipatory and inclusive history, representative of the students to whom it is taught.[38] The work of Marc Bloch catalyzed a questioning of the linearity of the received *roman national* throughout the 1930s.[39] In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the *roman national* was again called to task through debate provoked by immigration and decolonization. Said themes, along with the taboo theme of collaboration under the Vichy regime, lead to widespread denouncement of the political bias of school programs. Of particular note was the vehemence with which the fictions of the *roman national*, reified in textbooks and thus presented as authoritative facts, were criticized. Haydn White[40] may have argued that all history requires a certain amount of fictional narrative, but the reaction of the general public against the received fictions of France's *roman national* in the 1970s remind us that fictions can be and should be rewritten in light of new historiographies, particularly those that challenge hegemonic, Whiggish thinking. Fictions are not necessarily solely linked to written text, either, as

[37] Ministère de l'éducation nationale et de la jeunesse, "Programme du cycle 4," education.gouv.fr, last modified November 2018, https://cache.media.eduscol.education.fr/file/programmes_2018/20/4/Cycle_4_programme_consolide_1038204.pdf

[38] Laurence De Cock, *Sur l'enseignement de l'histoire* (Paris: Editions Libertalia, 2018).

[39] Marc Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1929).

[40] Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

newfound reactions against the use of Vercingétorix and Charlemagne in popular imagery are also notable at this time period.

Leduc notes: "[F]or some decades now, historians of the profession have been working on the idea of *reflexivity*, an epistemological and historiographical aggiornamento [set of new ideas] from which it emerges that history cannot claim to reach the truth about the past … even if this truth must remain on its horizon of work."[41] Although the *roman national* has been a foundational answer to the question of "Why teach history?" in France, the narratives it produced have been under question for a considerable amount of time. Yet we would argue that it remains, tacitly and explicitly, a reason that history occupies a particular status within the French school system. To understand why, we need to examine how history tends to be taught.

Teaching History: Tensions Between Institutional Expectations and Educational Concerns

At this point it is useful to consider the place of teachers within the school system and the roles that are delegated to teachers within the teaching of history in France. The teaching of any discipline, and we argue history in particular, is caught between the tensions and pressures of educational issues, political objectives, and the construction and reconstruction of collective memory. It is only natural that these pressures have repercussions on the development of school curricula and thus of the textbooks designed to support said curriculum. The frames given by school curricula and their supporting textbooks, grounded in the *roman national*, then have an effect on the sorts of primary and secondary sources that tend to get used in classrooms. Calling on teachers to use primary source materials in their teaching is one thing; recognizing that the ways in which teachers will enact said request is necessarily constrained by their starting off point—the national curriculum and its associated *roman national*—is quite another. We recall Poncelet and Wirth's three "orders of selection" that tend to affect how any given discipline is likely to be taught: the school curriculum dictated by ministries of education, the official textbooks developed to support said prescribed curriculum, and the choices made—governed by personal professional understanding—of classroom teachers.[42]

It is productive to look at each of these *orders of selection* in turn—we find the term "order" particularly helpful as it helps us be mindful of the explicit hierarchy in school systems and the tension between Apple's official and hidden curricula.[43] At the level of the national curriculum, one finds tensions of

[41] Jean Leduc, "Pourquoi enseigner l'histoire? La réponse d'Ernest Lavisse," *Histoire@Politique. Politique, culture, société*, no. 21 (2013): 49.

[42] Yves Poncelet and Laurent Wirth, "L'enseignement scolaire de l'histoire dans la France des 19ᵉ et 20ᵉ siècles. Fondements. Introduction," *Histoire@Politique. Politique, culture, société*, no. 21 (2013): 1–4.

[43] Michael W. Apple, "The Hidden Curriculum and the Nature of Conflict." *Interchange* 2, no. 4 (1971): 27–40.

inclusion and exclusion between the disciplines. The history of history teaching at school in France illustrates that the institutional expectations of the discipline, which are more or less strong, generally, depend greatly on both the context and time. The recurring and indeed somewhat vociferous debates on the place of history in compulsory education in secondary school in France in comparison to, for example, the natural sciences are an illustration of the power issues surrounding the discipline. France continues to make history a compulsory course until the age of 16 (up to the *brevet des collèges*); afterwards its status in *lycée* very much depends on the mixture of courses chosen for the *baccalaureat*.

One might also invoke the place of the *roman national* within the presidential campaign of 2017 to highlight the links between the teaching of history, education, and politics. The use of the *roman national* during the presidential campaign of 2017 testifies to the tenuous link that exists between historiography, education, and politics. For Legris:

> Each controversy engenders civic discourse because history is to create, in students, a sense of belonging to a national community endowed with a common collective memory. Said collective memory is to play a vital role in the formation of a critical citizen capable of understanding the world in which they evolve. For those on both the right and on the left, who defend an important place for the discipline of history in schools, it is precisely this civic end of history that is essential. History's presumed fulfilment of the function of creating a citizenry makes it, for many, a fundamental scholarly discipline.[44]

In France, as in many countries, history curricula are mandated by the Ministry of National Education, which is already an indicator of the relationship that the school has with the content to be taught. Legris points out that "according to a deliberate programming" it is the state that both imposes and orients what is the appropriate knowledge to be taught and, by extension, what knowledge is to be omitted (or suppressed).[45] These decisions, we argue, have historically been made alongside a continually constructed and reified *roman national*, although we should note that "the programs are also not completely closed to the evolution of historiography, or to social expectations and certain political demands: the study of the production of school knowledge makes it possible to show their relative levels of openness to the demands and educational, memorial and political issues."[46] In other words, the *roman national* is subject to change, albeit slowly.

The sociology of curriculum is concerned in part with the ways in which contents for teaching are selected, shaped, organized, validated, and distributed.

[44] Patricia Legris, "L'élaboration des programmes d'histoire depuis la Libération. Contribution à une sociologie historique du curriculum," *Histoire@Politique. Politique, culture, société*, no. 21 (2013): 69.

[45] Ibid., 72.

[46] Ibid., 71.

Theorists such as Apple, Forquin, and Perrenoud help illustrate the relationships and power networks that influence school programs.[47] In his article on the development of the curriculum in France after the end of the Second World War, Legris underlined the complex and highly politicized nature of the issues surrounding the development of the history curriculum, relying on examples of school history reform projects.[48] Legris distinguishes between school curricula that: (a) call into question the place assigned to the discipline, particularly in relation to other school subjects, (b) revisit the contents to be taught, and (c) call for changes in teaching practices and, on the other hand, the more or less sustained political interventions that lead to either the blocking of educational reforms or the introduction of new content. Legris uses the example of the introduction of the history of immigration—in Noiriel's words, a long time "illegitimate object,"—as an example.[49] While the history of immigration has, for a long time, been "a fallow story" in that it has not been cultivated as a part of the *roman national*, the significance of its introduction into the official school curriculum cannot be overstated.[50] According to Legris, it speaks to a palpable public desire to interrupt the *roman national*; she argues that the inclusion of the history of immigration "is not a reflection of the historiographical evolution [on immigration] within history that has been observed since the 1980s"; it is, rather, "before politics."[51] Her comments remind us that there is "a political filtering of the teaching content that takes place during the development of curriculum."[52] The history of immigration does not exist in the curriculum due to the latest trends in research or due to political willpower—it is, rather, a capitulation to the force of the general public.

Continuing on with the example of the history of immigration and its exclusion from the curriculum, Noiriel argues that French textbooks have long considered, like politics, that "immigration [was] a 'external' question (transient, new, marginal) that has nothing to do with the construction of France, nothing to do with the French and their past."[53] From this perspective, then, it is hardly surprising that the history of immigration was not included within either the French curriculum or French textbooks—it did not serve the development and enactment of the *roman national*. And so, alongside the official curricula they

[47] Michael W. Apple, "The Hidden Curriculum and the Nature of Conflict." *Interchange* 2, no. 4 (1971): 27–40; M. W. Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Jean-Claude Forquin, *Sociologie du curriculum* (Rennes: PUR, 2008); Philippe Perrenoud, "Curriculum: le formel, le réel, le caché," in Houssaye, Jean (dir.) *La pédagogie: une encyclopédie pour aujourd'hui* (Paris: ESF, 1993), 61–76.

[48] Patricia Legris, "L'élaboration des programmes d'histoire depuis la Libération. Contribution à une sociologie historique du curriculum," *Histoire@Politique. Politique, culture, société*, no. 21 (2013): 69–83.

[49] Gerard Noiriel, *État, nation et immigration – Vers une histoire du pouvoir*. (Paris, Belin, 2001), 67.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Legris, "L'élaboration des programmes d'histoire depuis la Libération."

[52] Ibid., 82.

[53] Noiriel, "*Etat, nation et immigration – Vers une histoire du pouvoir,*" 20.

are ostensibly meant to support, textbooks also offer their interpretation of what should or should not be included in the books proposed to teachers.

For Choppin, textbooks even constitute "a false historical evidence" because "the school textbook is neither historical source material nor data, but the result of a particular intellectual construction."[54] Studying the development of school history textbooks allows to update what Gaize calls "the plot of an official history"; this is a history which, again, we argue is deeply rooted in a *roman national* dating back to at least the founding of the Third Republic.[55] The work on this writing of history therefore places textbooks at the interface of a "scholarly enterprise building a history of the present time and the social demand for history."[56] In this sense, textbooks also participate in a writing of history, in which the re-presentations of past and present come into resonance or dissonance. In their analysis of French textbooks, Soysal and Szakács argued, "As the teaching tools depart from a predominantly French-oriented history to one that incorporates other civilizations into the citizens' heritage, France's position on its late colonial experience and decolonization remains ambivalent at best."[57]

For example, it was not until the early 1980s that the Algerian War and the concurrent colonial aspirations of France were featured in the national curriculum. Speaking about the Algerian War remains, to an extent, somewhat taboo in today's France due to, in no small part, a long complicit and consensual *roman national* of the Fourth Republic in which certain stories were suppressed. President Macron's explicit recognition of French use of torture and his apology to the widow of Maurice Audin in September 2018 was, for many, one of the first steps in recognizing the problematic narratives of the Fifth Republic. For Gaïti, in fact, the writing of the history of the post–Second World War reveals the co-existence "[of] controversial periods (related to the Algerian war) [which] insert in a cold, dull, generally consensual history, a devalued history, surrounded by two moments of restored grandeur – Liberation on the one hand, the Fifth Republic on the other – and which seems permanently measured, at least implicitly, at these heights."[58]

Although the introduction of the Algerian War into the secondary history curriculum in France dates back to 1983, its teaching is still a delicate question as topics of the Algerian War are always caught in the "tensions between history

[54] Alain Choppin, "Le manuel scolaire, une fausse évidence historique," *Histoire de l'éducation*, 117 (2008): 56.

[55] Gaïti Brigitte, "Les manuels scolaires et la fabrication d'une histoire politique. L'exemple de la IVème République," *Genèses*, 2, no. 44 (2001): 50.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Yasemin N. Soysal and Simona Szakács. "Reconceptualizing the Republic: Diversity and Education in France, 1945–2008." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 41, no. 1 (2010): 104.

[58] Gaïti, "Les manuels scolaires et la fabrication d'une histoire politique. L'exemple de la IVème République," 59.

and memory."[59] These tensions are found particularly in classrooms, where teachers present the official content to students who have been, in many cases, directed connected to the consequences of the Algerian War and its prior non-inclusion in the *roman national*. As part of a continuing education program for secondary school teachers in the suburbs of Lyon, as Boyer and Stacchetti showed "teachers treat the Algerian War as an example of *decolonization by war* as evidenced by the official curriculum and present official materials, often comparing it with the case of the decolonization of India, considered as a *peaceful decolonization*."[60] This classification of decolonization, framing the Algerian War as an undesirable "type" of decolonization, serves to support the existing *roman national*. We see here an example reminding us that merely including a topic on the curriculum does not necessarily serve to disrupt a powerful political story. In secondary school, the teaching of the Algerian War is discussed in terms of the nature of the conflict, the difficulties of its political management, and its implications for metropolitan political and social life. But beyond so-called facts and historical events, another more important consideration emerges: How one might present the subject to students of Maghreb origin and how student citizens react to a story that does not fit in with a certain idea of France, supported by a *roman national*. Here, the teaching of history must be considered with how one frames one's own identity. As Lorenz pointed out, a historical identity is "a type of identity defined by its development in time."[61] Time, as we have seen, allows for the suppression and expression of particular stories depending on the will of the state, its curriculum, its official texts, and the ways in which teachers navigate these three.

Mounting a challenge to the *roman national* of an inclusive France is linked to questions of identities that undermine the representation of a linguistically and culturally homogeneous nation. As Soysal and Szakács noted, France has consistently projected a universalistic, perspective particularly within its official forms of public discourse.[62] The teaching of the history of the Algerian War, decolonization, and immigration helps to redefine the contemporary aims of a discipline that today must renew its questions, because "the history taught is constantly changing."[63]

[59] Gilles Boyer and Véronique Stacchetti. "Enseigner la guerre d'Algérie à l'école: dépasser les enjeux de mémoires?," in Frédéric Abécassis, Gilles Boyer, Benoit Falaize, Gilbert Meynier and Michelle Zanarini-Fournel (Eds.), *La France et l'Algérie: Leçons d'Histoire. De l'école en situation coloniale à l'enseignement du fait colonial* (Lyon: EnsEditions, 2014), 241.

[60] Ibid. Emphasis added.

[61] Chris Lorenz. "Towards a theoretical framework for comparing historiographies." In Peter Seixas (Ed.), *Theorizing historical consciousness* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 31.

[62] Yasemin N. Soysal and Simona Szakács, "Reconceptualizing the Republic: Diversity and Education in France, 1945–2008," 2010.

[63] Olivier Loubes, "D'un roman national, l'autre. Lire l'histoire par la fin dans les programmes de 1923 et de 1938," *Histoire@Politique. Politique, culture, société*, no. 21 (2013): 59.

Conclusion

We follow De Cock's premise of "pleading for" a new *roman national* that relies on new forms of narrative, those that rely on the social interactions at the core of historical scholarship.[64] Such narratives go beyond the traditional binary divisions to place events, actions, and people in their historical context. A difficulty in France is the deep investment that has been made in constructing a *roman national* that is so deeply embedded in the public consciousness that it is often difficult to see. Compounding this difficulty is that France has tried, for hundreds of years, to articulate (and impress) universal values that were to form the foundations of a Republic and nation-state—beginning, of course, with a national language decided upon by a monarch, which was spoken by relatively few people at the time.

We wish to extend this reasoning further, however, by suggesting that future history teachers need more than a new *roman national*. We acknowledge it will always exist in some sense through an official curriculum, supported by texts. To pretend that a country, a state, or a province does not have a *roman national* is problematic and to contend simply that a new one is required, once acknowledged, is similarly problematic. We wish to state, in no uncertain terms, that a central tenet of teaching future history and social studies teachers needs to be a description, analysis, and interpretation of the *roman national* in which they are learning to teach. Part of this approach might include a close examination of the *roman national* with which they are less familiar, with a view to understanding that it is often simpler, initially, to analyze histories that are distal before turning to the proximal. Part of the reason for using both French examples and scholarship in this chapter is to provoke the reader, an English reader, to consider the effects of the *roman national* for their context and for their roles as teacher educators. These considerations, we hope, will provoke tension.

McCulloch opined that "the study of the history of education is also a site of struggle … it is riven by fissures and beset with insecurities."[65] We would argue that one of the struggles is the struggle that teacher educators must face when working with future teachers who will, in one way or another, be explicitly implicated in their *roman national*. In the UK, currently, there is a massive debate around the importance of content expertise in teacher training (as it is called in official UK governmental documents) and the content area experience that future teachers will have in their school placements. Yet paradoxically, teacher licensure is general and not linked to a particular content area knowledge. Either a teacher has Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) or they do not. Here, we at once see another struggle for the history of education and history education more generally: We live in an age in which rigor is defined by a certain kind of subject knowledge that is meant to be taught in schools, mandated

[64] Laurence De Cock, "Le roman national a-t-il des vertus intégratrices? Sur quelques polémiques actuelles autour de l'enseignement de l'histoire," *Diversité*, 168 (2012): 133.

[65] Gary McCulloch, *The Struggle for the History of Education* (London, UK: Routledge, 2011), 1.

by the state through its curricula, yet future history teachers are not explicitly recognized as being qualified to teach with expert professional knowledge.

The struggles contained within the *roman national* for what is to be taught in a history classroom extends to how the teaching profession, including but not limited to history teachers, is itself defined. Perhaps by encouraging future history and social studies teachers to make the *roman national* a critical site in their teaching, we might also engender the kinds of conversations necessary to ensure that the teachers are not further de-professionalized in increasingly neoliberal environments. Here we also link to Christou's comments that the history of education should be a foundational part of all teacher education and that its marginalization has been due to, in no small part, the all-too-easy assertion that the history of education is "theoretical" and thus not applicable to classroom concerns.[66] We would argue here that the history of education as a subject within teacher education programs, as used both by future history teachers and by future teachers more generally, might provide precisely the sort of tools required for deconstructing the *roman national*.

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[66] Theodore Christou, "Gone but not forgotten: the decline of history as an Educational Foundation," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 41, no. 5 (2009): 569–583.

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