

**Commentary on French Historical Studies Special Issue:
*May '68: New Approaches, New Perspectives***

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For those engaged in the serious study of the events of May-June 1968, after 50 years the most fundamental problem is becoming: is it possible any longer to say anything new about them at all? To begin on such an apparently pessimistic note is no doubt in part a problem of perspective. One way or another, I have been professionally engaged in researching the '68 years' ever since the 30th anniversary in 1998, and can even just about recall the odd snippet of media coverage from the 20th anniversary; my own first faltering steps as a student protester in 1993 are now equidistant in time between 1968 and the present. But I think there is a wider point to be made. Even in the Eighties and Nineties, "1968" already seemed, at least for those born afterwards, a mythical, hazy and very distant era. It was clear that the world had changed in many ways since, some of which were neither foreseen nor desired by the *soixante-huitards*. Thus the task for scholars as the historiography of 1968 has become more developed and professionalized has been to understand this issue in a more precise manner, mapping out empirically the various routes through which 1968, and the backlashes against it, changed, and did not change, the course of French and world history.

So 1968 has, for better or worse, been history for a long time. As the Introduction by the Special Issue editors Donald Reid and Daniel Sherman notes, as early as the autumn of 1968, an exhibition was held in Vienna that used "PARIS MAI '68" and the now familiar accompanying imagery of policemen, barricades and paving stones in a way that already indicated how May "had a global resonance that could be captured in a relatively small number of iconic images." This was not an event lacking in instant analysis at the time, or over the months and years that followed. Indeed one of the most persistent clichés about May is that everything about it has been said – and its opposite. And fifty years on, it is probably no longer "too soon to tell," as the Chinese Communist leader Zhou En Lai had it in 1972 (in a comment often misinterpreted as referring to the French Revolution but in fact responding to a question on May 1968.)

The challenge for more recent historians has been how to escape the easy, clichéd understandings of what 1968 signified, to exit the cozily familiar narrative of a "student generation in revolt"¹ and branch out into uncharted or at least less raked-over territory. To a considerable extent the period since the 30th, and especially since the 40th anniversary, has achieved that decentering. If a comparably influential myth-busting equivalent to Robert Paxton's 1972 *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order* can be located to signpost this revisionist turn of historiography on '68, it is probably Kristin Ross' 2002 *May '68 And Its Afterlives*.² Since then an international wave of scholarship has established, monograph by

¹ Ronald Fraser, *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1988); Hervé Hamon and Patrick Rotman, *Génération*, 2 vols (Paris: Seuil, 1987-1988).

² Kristin Ross, *May '68 and its Afterlives* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002).

monograph, edited conference volume by edited conference volume, that 1968 is no longer just May, and is no longer the personal property of a Latin Quarter in-crowd. We now have '68 revealed in its true diversity with, amongst others, a peasant '68, a regional '68, an LGBT '68, an immigrant '68, a transnational '68, a humanitarian '68, a backpackers' '68, and a police '68.³ In short, we have, as Reid and Sherman note, a “long '68.”⁴

Thus the groundwork has in many, though not all, respects been done. It is getting harder to find a '68 topic with genuine originality. I was thus not totally convinced by Reid and Sherman's slightly overblown claim that “The essays in this issue mark a new stage in the transformation of 1968 and its memory into subjects of history” because it rests too much on the fairly banal observation that “None of the authors of the articles in this issue are of an age to have been veterans or witnesses of the events they analyze.” This fact has been true of much '68 historiography since at least the mid-2000s and should hardly come as a revelation after 50 years: it would be the equivalent of claiming for a book published in 1968 some fresh insight into the First World War simply by virtue of the author not having fought in it. As any historian of '68 should know, youth is not a virtue but a transient phase of the life cycle. Nevertheless, important aspects of the '68 years are still probably less central to contemporary historiography than their significance at the time really merits; for example, the experiences of factory workers are still somewhat neglected⁵ (which is still the case with all the articles here except for that of Ludivine Bantigny and Boris Gobille); and, as Sandrine Sanos points out in her article, “The subject of gender has remained absent from most scholarly work.”

So have the contributions to this special issue passed the test of having anything new to say? It is a measure of the issue's achievement that the answer is definitively yes. While one recent direction in historiography has already pointed to a global or Third World '68 emancipated from the standard European and North American-centered narratives,⁶ Françoise Blum's article is distinctive in drawing together some remarkable features that '68 in Francophone Africa had in common with '68 in France. A little like in Burleigh Hendrickson's work on Tunisia and

³ A comprehensive survey would be beyond the scope of this essay, but one example of each is: Jean-Philippe Martin, *La nouvelle gauche paysanne* (Paris: La Découverte, 2005); David Hamelin and Jean-Paul Salles, eds, *Mai 68. Aspects régionaux et internationaux*, special issue of *Dissidences*, 5 (October 2008); Michael Sibalís, “And What Then about ‘Our’ Problem? – Gay Liberation in the Occupied Sorbonne in May 1968,” in Julian Jackson, Anna-Louise Milne and James S. Williams, eds, *May 68: Rethinking France's Last Revolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011), pp. 122-136; Daniel A. Gordon, *Immigrants and Intellectuals: May '68 and the Rise of Anti-Racism in France* (Pontypool: Merlin Press, 2012); Maude Bracke and James Mark, eds, *Between Decolonisation and the Cold War: Transnational Activism and its Limits in Europe, 1950s-1990s*, special issue of the *Journal of Contemporary History*, 50:3 (July 2015); Eleanor Davey, *Idealism Beyond Borders: The French Revolutionary Left and the Rise of Humanitarianism, 1954-1988* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Richard Jobs, *Backpack Ambassadors: How Youth Travel Integrated Europe* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2017); Oliver Davis, ed, *The Anti-Police of Mai 68 Fifty Years On*, special issue of *Modern and Contemporary France*, 26:2 (May 2018).

⁴ This tendency away from May 1968 to the “68 years” was initially mapped out by Geneviève Dreyfus-Armand, Robert Frank, Marie-Françoise Lévy and Michelle Zancarini-Fournel, eds, *Les années 68. Le temps de la contestation* (Brussels: Complexe, 2000); and Philippe Artières and Michelle Zancarini-Fournel, eds, *68: une histoire collective [1962-1981]* (Paris: La Découverte, 2008).

⁵ With some exceptions, notably the work of Xavier Vigna.

⁶ For example, Samantha Christiansen and Zachary Scarlett, ed, *The Third World in the Global 1960s* (New York: Berghahn, 2012).

Senegal,⁷ Blum insists on the links that intertwined France's former colonies with the metropole even as the postcolonial era struggled to begin: the "Franco-African community" was not simply a deceptive mirage, but also a real space within which opponents of neocolonialism lived as much as did its apologists. The worker and student revolt of Senegal is a case in point. It emerges strongly from Blum's article that the Senegalese May '68 had its own "De Gaulle," in the shape of the equally paternalistic providential-father-of-the-nation figure Léopold Senghor; it had its "General Massu," in the shape of the St Cyr-trained General Diallo; it had its "student-worker liaison;" it had its Molotov cocktails; and it had its "Grenelle agreements" – complete with minimum wage increase – signed just 17 days after the French equivalent. Senegal even had that essential accoutrement of a decent-sized national '68, namely a "foreign plot" thesis. Just as hundreds of foreigners, including at least eight African students, were being expelled from France, a number of Malians and Dahomeyans were being deported from Senegal. Such symmetries were not pure coincidence: as Senghor himself cuttingly if conveniently noted, the timing of the revolt suggested that those in Senegal who were usually the first to denounce French neo-imperialism seemed rather keener to copy protesters in France than their counterparts elsewhere in the developing world. Indeed one of Blum's very useful findings is that the Senegalese embassy occupation in Paris, which I had previously assumed to be particularly facilitated by the May events in France, albeit aimed at change in Senegal,⁸ was only one of a chain of similar occupations that stretch from the Togolese and Malian embassies in December 1967 to the Madagascan embassy in May 1972.

Blum's article is not confined to the comparatively well-known example of Dakar, but encompasses other, more forgotten African "Mays." The so-called "teachers' plot" in Guinea in November-December 1961 was an early sign of what was to come, with a revolt by school students shouting "Non au Mercedes!" to denounce the corruption of Sekou Touré's government and the arrest of their teachers. In some ways Guinea is a comparison harder to fit with the French May, given that the country did not yet have a university at all, but then the role of *lycée* students was a widespread aspect of youth politicization in France too, albeit one overshadowed by that all-purpose historical actor of '68, the university student. The Congolese insurrection in August 1963, though, was close in spirit to May in being very self-consciously a youth revolt, yet differed in actually succeeding in the seizure of state power. Blum argues that the ideological tone for the Congolese revolution was set by the Fédération des étudiants d'Afrique noire en France (FEANF), which might explain why I found that FEANF was viewed with particular paranoia by the French government in May 1968 in spite of its limited involvement in the French events.⁹ In two cases, Blum's examples were literally other Mays: student revolts in May 1969 in Dahomey (later Bénin) and May 1972 in Madagascar, the latter bearing a particular emphasis on both festivity and sexual liberation that marked a similarity with certain aspects of the French May.

By contrast to Blum's rescuing of movements all but forgotten in Europe, it is significant that two of the articles return to a topic that might appear almost too obvious to research. If there is an aspect of 1968 that "every school student knows," it is that protests took place in many different countries against the Vietnam War. Yet the French case is paradoxically under-researched and under-memorialized, for historians have tended to assume that it was rather

⁷ Burleigh Hendrickson, "Migrations intellectuelles, «Indépendance Inachevée» et 1968 à Dakar et à Tunis," *Migrance*, no 39 (2012), pp. 110-122.

⁸ Gordon, *Immigrants and Intellectuals*, pp. 81-82.

⁹ Gordon, *Immigrants and Intellectuals*, p. 82.

counterproductive for people who hated American imperialism to target De Gaulle, given that he had probably done more in practical terms than any other individual to undermine American hegemony over Western Europe (which contrasts to the relative prominence of anti-Vietnam War activism in memorialization of 1968 experiences in closer U.S. allies such as the U.K. or West Germany). However, Salar Mohandesi's "Bringing Vietnam Home: the Vietnam War, Internationalism, and May '68" deconstructs this French exceptionalism by powerfully insisting on the centrality of Vietnam to the French far left – who wished, in the words of Jean-Luc Godard, to "let Vietnam invade us" by opening up a kind of second front via the creation of a radical international in the heartlands of Western imperialist power, thereby fulfilling Che Guevara's commandment to "make two, three, many Vietnams." Mohandesi thus evocatively returns us to the world of the young ideologically-motivated radical leftist typified by the *Jeunesse communiste révolutionnaire* (JCR), who have almost gone out of fashion in recent '68 historiography for not being sufficiently peripheral, but who were certainly at the heart of the *Comité Vietnam national*. This is an important corrective to normally Algerian-centric accounts of the anti-colonialist origins of the *soixante-huitard* left (although from what appears in this article it would appear they had surprisingly little to say about the role of French colonialism in the origins of the conflict in Vietnam.)

Yet in this analysis, May itself almost becomes marginal, as "merely one front in the worldwide revolution, with the Vietnamese at the head." The nature of Mohandesi's source material at times risks reproducing the self-important self-understanding of French radicals as somehow striking blows for the Vietnamese revolution without having to do the hard work of leaving the Latin Quarter, although this is mitigated by the acknowledgement on the final page of the article that the decline of the French radical left a decade on was linked to their belated discovery of some of the less savory features of Vietnamese Communism. Yet what I think is original in Mohandesi's archival research is that, whereas normally accounts of the build-up to May '68 have rightly emphasized what the JCR learned from its links to the German student movement (and even here the Berlin Vietnam conference of February 1968 receives obligatory mention), in this article it is rather their associations with American radicals, both theoretical and practical, that come to the forefront from as early as 1965. During the 40th anniversary of 1968, I heard Alain Krivine address a public meeting in London, and wondered why he speaks such fluent English inflected by North American idiom, in a manner untypical of older French leftist intellectuals ("this guy is a shit" was, I recall, his pithy verdict on Nicolas Sarkozy). Well, perhaps here is the answer: even as some of the Vietnam-obsessed French leftists were urging boycotts of American produce, they were also busily building solidarity with groups like the Paris American Committee to Stop War (PACS). Here, then, was the Franco-American version of the "Other Alliance" that Martin Klimke has identified between revolutionaries in the United States and their ostensibly anti-American counterparts in West Germany.¹⁰

Which brings us to the work of a specialist on PACS, Bethany Keenan. Mohandesi does admit that there was a lull in Vietnam War activism after May, and the reasons why are ably documented in Keenan's "'The US Embassy is Particularly Sensitive About This:’ Diplomacy, Antiwar Protests, and the French Foreign Embassy During 1968." Indeed Keenan's emphasis, in contrast to Mohandesi, is on the weaknesses of anti-Vietnam War protest in France. By early 1969 they could only muster a few hundred people to their meetings: I was surprised to discover how little protest was actually generated by Richard Nixon's visit that year given that it did feature quite prominently in some *gauchiste* literature in advance of the visit. The difference

¹⁰ Martin Klimke, *The Other Alliance: Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

in emphasis between Keenan and Mohandesi thus to an extent reflects differences in the source material used, which in Keenan's case is predominantly diplomatic archives and the mainstream press. Keenan argues that the decline in antiwar activism was because the French government was successful in clamping down on protest in response to thinly-veiled behind-the-scenes threats from the American administration, who correctly perceived that De Gaulle's government, weakened by May, was vulnerable to external pressure. The way the French government achieved this was rather subtler than we might think from conventional images of baton-wielding, tear-gas-canister-firing CRS in action. It generally took the form of paying lip service to notions of free speech while actually quite heavily circumscribing it in practice, by tolerating antiwar events on condition that they took place in private and by invitation only, and preferably in the provinces rather than Paris (shades of Herbert Marcuse's "repressive tolerance," perhaps?). Implementation of such policies was, though, sometimes limited by the usual inter-bureaucratic rivalries between the Foreign and Interior Ministries.

Of course the decline in the antiwar movement was also because French protesters had plenty of other fish to fry during May: Keenan found that, as PACS put it on 29 May, the war became "almost forgotten in this period of local disturbance." Yet PACS itself became a particular target of repression: while Keenan mainly emphasizes that this was a way of pleasing the Americans by helping them clamp down on antiwar subversives abroad, she also acknowledges the role of French concerns about foreign residents' political neutrality. Keenan's theory of US government pressure would provide one possible explanation for my finding that the Interior Ministry's "foreign agitator" files for May '68 contain a surprisingly large number of American draft evaders (35, more than any other nationality), considering that most of them were not actually accused of specific examples of political activity in France but more often were under suspicion either because they had been arrested for vagrancy or simply because of their desertion. On the other hand, PACS founder Schofield Corryel was actually singled out in a speech by Interior Minister Raymond Marcellin as an example of how foreigners were abusing French hospitality.¹¹ Thus the clampdown on US activists killed two birds with one stone by also neatly dovetailing with Marcellin et al's domestic agenda of paranoia about international subversion. Keenan's findings add an extra irony to this: the implication is that it would appear in this case that French internal policies were actually being subverted, not by individual foreign activists, but by a foreign power. Either way though, Keenan's research is important in nuancing the traditional picture of a supposedly implacably anti-American Gaullist foreign policy, and of France as a haven for Americans on the run from their own government; rather, De Gaulle was playing a kind of double game of being selectively anti- or pro-American according to convenience, and the relative balance of forces at any given time (one is reminded of Emmanuel Macron's ambiguous relationship with Donald Trump).

Of the six articles, while important new empirical findings are present in all, the one that seems most groundbreaking in terms of potentially opening up whole new methodological ways of seeing 1968, and the most theoretically sophisticated, is Ludvine Bantigny and Boris Gobille's "L'expérience du sensible. Protagonisme et antagonisme en mai-juin 1968." Reflecting a wider recent turn to the history of emotions in the work of Bantigny and other historians,¹² they identify emotions as a gap in existing work on '68 and pertinently suggest a reason for this. Namely that ever since May, the classic Western opposition between reason and emotion has

¹¹ Gordon, *Immigrants and Intellectuals*, p. 85.

¹² For example, Alain Corbin, Jean-Jacques Courtine and Georges Vigarello, eds, *Histoire des émotions*, 3 vols (Paris: Seuil, 2016-2017).

been reproduced in the way some of '68's best known critics, notably Raymond Aron with his notion of a psychodrama, have used a kind of cod crowd psychology as a way of dismissing the whole movement as irrational. This is a good point, for it is quite frequent in doing primary research on some other aspect of May to come across references to joy, fear, disgust and so on, but use them in order to prove a point about some other issue one is researching, without necessarily thinking about emotions as a causal factor in their own right. Perhaps this is indeed because as historians of '68 we have been so keen to document the serious, rational and sober side to the movement, as a corrective to earlier excessive attention to playfulness, that we have overlooked how, as Bantigny and Gobille argue, emotions structured the dynamics of the movement in important ways.

Nevertheless, as they acknowledge, the history of emotions is quite hard to do methodologically, and it is interesting that they achieve this not through what might seem the more obvious way of doing so, through oral history, but rather via contemporary archives and film footage, in ways that succeed in recapturing some of the depths of emotion experienced at the time. Going beyond more frequently used notions of "agency," Bantigny and Gobille borrow the notion of "protagonism" from the work of Haim Burstin on the French Revolution to analyze a rather subversive process whereby hitherto unpoliticized and anonymous individuals started to see that their experiences could become politically sayable and energized, arguing that 1968 saw a "crisis of sensibility" as well as a "sensibility of crisis." We see the joy of May in both its more widely publicized aspects (smiling Nanterre students singing the *Internationale* at their Sorbonne disciplinary tribunal) and its less so ones (Flins workers singing and feeling a sense of exploding with joy on seeing previously un-unionized colleagues starting a strike committee). A more fully developed sense of this imagination of the possible then emerges from a group meeting at the Censier university annexe called *Nous sommes en marche*, whose name has a certain irony to it today (perhaps the current occupant of the Elysée might fulfill his professed desire to commemorate the anniversary of 1968, by awarding medals to surviving members of this particular *groupuscule*?).

Equally though, the "propulsive energy" of anger at police brutality is also acknowledged. The emphasis on the killing of Gilles Tautin on 10 June as the peak of this is appropriate; it might be correlated with Robert Gildea's findings that this was a turning point in terms of appearing to justify to those far leftists later involved in violence the justice of their cause¹³ (Tautin's death played a role in leftist martyrology perhaps analogous to that of that of Benno Ohnesorg in Berlin on 2 June 1967). Bantigny and Gobille also express well the contrast between the fear of Communism whipped up by De Gaulle, and the actual language of the PCF and CGT which, as they allude to, tended to use reassuring terms like *sang-froid*, *fermeté* and *calme*. Then as June's decline of the mass movement is reached, betrayal and mourning start to become the operative terms for those wishing to pursue the movement.

An aspect of this history of fear that could be pursued further in future research is how fear intersected with rumour. In Bantigny and Gobille's article fear is analyzed more in terms of the state's fear of the movement, but what about the impact of fear, and rumor, on those civilians whose participation in the events was limited? In my research on immigrant workers, I found Spanish and Portuguese workers fearing towards the end of May about the consequences of the movement, at a time when false rumors circulated in Portugal of trainloads of corpses in France. Yet since I also found some evidence that immigrants' fears were not

¹³ Robert Gildea, "Mai 68 Then and Now," guest lecture, Edge Hill University, February 2011.

entirely out of the ordinary in terms of what French people were fearing via rumor,¹⁴ it is to be hoped that historians investigate this further in future.

If perhaps more descriptive and less contextualized than some of the other pieces, Tony Come's "L'Institut de l'environnement: descendant du Bauhaus ou dernier bastion de mai 68?" nevertheless adds something to the transnational turn in '68 studies by opening up a rather forgotten slice of the international history of higher education: the decline and closure of the radical German design school Hochschule für Gestaltung and its intriguing transfer to Paris in the shape of the Institut de l'environnement founded in 1969. Mention of Ulm and May '68 normally makes one think of Louis Althusser and his acolytes at the Ecole normale supérieure in Paris' rue d'Ulm, but here was a German institute actually from Ulm that could trace its origins back to the famous Bauhaus. When the Hochschule für Gestaltung faced closure in the context of higher education reorganization in West Germany, and set on Paris as a possible refuge, inevitably echoes were perceived of more sinister episodes in twentieth-century history (the school had been founded by Inge Scholl, sister of the famous German Resistance martyrs Sophie and Hans Scholl). Here I would have liked to know more about the German context. Was the 1968 closure of the Hochschule für Gestaltung really comparable to the 1925 exodus of the Bauhaus from Weimar to Dessau, as some slogans of the time suggested? Since the 1925 move was largely a political decision by a rightwing local authority who viewed the Bauhaus as subversive, it would be useful to see more evidence as to whether or not a comparable motive, as opposed to simple cost-cutting, was in play in 1968. Given Come's account of the interest of French cultural bureaucrats around 1965 in attracting the school to France, it might also be questioned how subversive it actually was: a classic case of artists and architects liking to think of themselves as more radical than their social position might place them? The political conflicts within the institution described here following the 1969 move to France (basically, Communist-inclined teaching staff versus *gauchiste*-supporting students) do not seem out of the ordinary for the French higher education system after May. There is, though, a very useful discussion of the changing meanings of the term "environment" and an intriguing reference to criticism of urban redevelopment schemes in Belleville.

Finally, Sandrine Sanos's "Being in Parentheses: Memory, Sex and Jewishness in Diane Kury's Visions of May '68" is innovative in highlighting two films so completely neglected by the critical canon of representations of '68, Diane Kurys' *Diabolo menthe* (1977) and *Cocktail Molotov* (1980), that I have to confess that I had never heard of them before, in spite of the fact that the former was apparently viewed by more French cinemagoers on its release than any film that year except *Star Wars*. Sanos' article thereby advances understanding of memorialization of '68 because the standard criticism of weaker films about '68 – and there are certainly plenty of those – is that they are too much about personal relationships and not enough about politics. By contrast, Sanos invites us to consider whether this argument implies too narrow a conception of what "the political" actually is. She suggests that Kurys' two films do introduce some overtly political events, but by placing them on the relative margins of the protagonists' lives, make implicitly political statements about how they intersect creatively with themes such as female autonomy and sexual awakening.

One of the things that piqued my interest about *Diabolo menthe* from the account here is that most of it is set in 1963 – a year hardly prominent in the historiography of twentieth-century France compared to the high political dramas of either 1961 or 1962 (represented in *Diabolo menthe* by Charonne) or 1968. If 1963 is remembered at all, it is for the Franco-German Treaty,

¹⁴ Gordon, *Immigrants and Intellectuals*, pp. 66-70.

or perhaps the *Salut les copains!* concert, neither of which were, on the face of it, directly connected to '68. I had always been a little skeptical of the view, as put forward by for example Jean-François Sirinelli, of early/mid-1960s youth culture as a precursor to May '68,¹⁵ because this view usually involves both an unhelpful conflation of French and Anglo-American pop culture and an overestimation of how radical or challenging any of it was. But Sanos' article succeeded in making 1963 sound more interesting given mentions of the anti-nuclear peace movement (something generally neglected in accounts of French protest compared to Germany or Britain), and of a differently gendered view of teenage activism. Physical confrontations between far left and far right are a familiar part of the buildup to May, but such battles are usually depicted as macho affairs in which famous men cut their political teeth (think Pierre Goldman on the Left, or Patrick Devedjian and co. on the Right).¹⁶ By contrast, Kurys depicts young women also fighting over politics on the steps of school, rebutting contemporary adults' view that "politics is not a girl's business."

Then particularly given the road-movie, away-from-Paris, theme of Kurys' *Cocktail Molotov*, I was reminded of a much later work of '68 memorialisation, Olivier Assayas' *Après mai*. It made me think: what is it about the latter that apparently allows it to pass the test of being sufficiently political, whilst still having plenty of the coming-of-age personal stuff?¹⁷ Is it perhaps merely because Assayas is seen as a serious male *auteur*? There certainly seems to have been an element of "mansplaining" in the dismissal by the two *soixante-huitard* Alains, Krivine and Geismar, of *Cocktail Molotov* as "rose-tinted" or "indulgent," especially when Krivine compared it to the nineteenth-century children's stories of the Comtesse de Ségur. Sanos also perceptively suggests that another element of the film that made it unacceptable to Krivine/Geismar's bog-standard leftist reading is that the heroine leaves France for an Israeli kibbutz. This detail makes sense in the wider context of Jewish history in postwar France: a minority of radicals on the post-68 far left could be ostentatiously pro-Palestinian as part of their ultra-radical revolt against the status quo precisely because a kind of soft-left Zionism was so much a taken-for-granted part of the world in which they had grown up: the kibbutz trip remained a standard trope of Jewish youth narratives of the Sixties, and it would be inaccurate to suppose that everyone instantly became pro-Palestinian as soon as the Six-Day War happened.¹⁸

In their very different ways, taken together these articles suggest that in 2018 we have what might be called an emergent post-revisionist historiography of '68. Historians of the long '68 are not afraid to return to what Michelle Zancarini-Fournel dubbed its "epicenter,"¹⁹ the heady days of May-June 1968 – or indeed to the historical actors, protesting young radicals, who have indelibly defined its image. But they have succeeded in contextualizing them within a much broader, richer and subtler set of social and geographical contexts, in a way that at its best

¹⁵ Jean-François Sirinelli, *Mai 68: L'évènement Janus* (Paris: Fayard, 2008).

¹⁶ Pierre Goldman, *Souvenirs obscurs d'un juif polonais né en France* (Paris: Points, 2005 [first published 1975]); and Frédéric Charpier, *Génération Occident* (Paris: Seuil, 2005).

¹⁷ Daniel A. Gordon, "Olivier Assayas' *Après mai*," *Fiction and Film for French Historians*, 5:2 (October 2014), <http://h-france.net/fffh/maybe-missed/olivier-assayas-apres-mai/>.

¹⁸ See Yaïr Auron, *Les juifs d'extrême gauche en mai 68* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1998). Even Pierre Goldman—no one's idea of a moderate – declared a sneaking admiration for Moshe Dayan in 1967: *Souvenirs obscurs*, pp. 64-65.

¹⁹ Michelle Zancarini-Fournel, 'L'épicentre', in Artières and Zancarini-Fournel, 68, pp. 209-269.

transcends old mythologies and hierarchies. In a spirit of mutual tolerance for each other's historical endeavours, there is no going back to the narrowly partisan celebratory or denunciatory accounts of yesteryear. The study of '68 still has a future, but a certain maturity has been reached. '68 historiography, like its historians themselves, is now middle aged.

H-France Salon

Volume 10 (2018), Issue 3, #3

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