

### The Six 68s of Daniel Cohn-Bendit

*Ben Mercer*

Daniel Cohn-Bendit emerged in May 1968 as a key figure in the student revolt, rapidly achieving the status of symbol and celebrity via a series of public interventions. The centrality of Cohn-Bendit to the image of 1968 has, if anything, only increased in the subsequent five decades, especially as the representation of the events narrowed to the triptych of “May, Paris, student”.<sup>1</sup> At each anniversary, alongside Cohn-Bendit the symbol, perpetually facing a policeman in playful defiance on May 6, 1968, Daniel Cohn-Bendit the individual has continued to pronounce on the meaning of the events.<sup>2</sup> Including the year itself together with its five decennial celebrations, there have thus been six 68s of Daniel Cohn-Bendit. This article analyzes the representation and significance of 1968 in the writings, interviews and public pronouncements of Cohn-Bendit over this half century.

The six 68s of the title refer not just to the event and its commemoration each decade, but their diverse thematic representations. There are at least six distinct 68s of Daniel Cohn-Bendit: a revolutionary 1968, a 1968 of individual liberation, a democratic 1968, a modernizing 1968, a global (primarily cultural) 1968 and, lastly, a negative (violent and misogynist) 1968. Others could no doubt be identified. While some of these representations are more prominent at particular moments in this history of commemoration, each is identifiable at the very beginning. However, what appeared minor in 1968 itself attains an importance in retrospect, while the most prominent features of the events at the time itself dwindle into insignificance. The purpose here is not to determine the most accurate representation, but rather to elucidate why and how the meaning of 1968 proved so malleable.<sup>3</sup> The commemorative literature includes a judgmental

---

Ben Mercer is Lecturer in the School of History at the Australian National University. He is the author of *Student Revolt in 1968: France, Italy, West Germany* (Cambridge University Press, 2019).

<sup>1</sup> Sommier, “Mai 68: Sous les pavés d’une page officielle,” 65. For a lucid overview of the history and memory of 1968, see Zancarini-Fournel. *Le Moment 68*. In English, see Gildea, “Forty Years On,” Jackson, “The Mystery of May 1968,” and Gordon, “Memories of 1968 in France.”

<sup>2</sup> On the photo, see Cohn-Bendit, *Forget 68*, 19.

<sup>3</sup> For those concerned with the events itself, Cohn-Bendit and Cohn-Bendit, *Le Gauchisme* and Cohn-Bendit, *Le Grand Bazar* are the best place to start.

strand framed in terms either of betrayal or denunciation.<sup>4</sup> Neither are particularly useful to explore the subjective meaning of the events. The focus on Daniel Cohn-Bendit is not intended to sketch a biographical trajectory of decline but, by narrowing the scale of analysis to one individual, to analyze the nature of 1968's capacity for reinvention.<sup>5</sup>

Symbolic of 68, Cohn-Bendit is, of course, hardly representative. More than any other individual in France, the events created him. Cohn-Bendit achieved his status firstly through his use of speech, whether at Nanterre, on radio, or at the Sorbonne. His symbolic importance, which grew via Georges Marchais' identification of him as the 'German anarchist' who led the 22 March Movement,<sup>6</sup> was confirmed when the government forbade him entry to France from May 21, 1968. The photo of Cohn-Bendit opposite a policeman outside the Sorbonne, reproduced as a poster by the Atelier des Beaux-Arts with the slogan 'we are all undesirables' made Cohn-Bendit the symbol of the student revolt in image, word and subjective identification. The photo, Cohn-Bendit admitted in 2008, "marked me, described me, profoundly defined me".<sup>7</sup> His early prominence, combined with his exile in the immediate aftermath of 1968, fixed the image of Cohn-Bendit, more so than any other prominent figure. Created and defined by 68, Cohn-Bendit was cursed to commemorate it.

The following analysis is thematic, but the context and chronology must be noted. Among Daniel Cohn-Bendit's many interventions, four stand out. In 1968, the German publisher Rowohlt offered a large fee for a book authored with his brother Gabriel. The result — *Leftism: A Remedy for the Senile Illness of Communism (Le Gauchisme, remède à la maladie sénile du communisme)* — was part recapitulation of events, part pastiche of radical tracts from 68. In 1975, *The Great Bazaar (Le Grand Bazaar)* offered a much more personal account of Cohn-Bendit's 68 and after, anticipating the focus on individual itineraries in the 1978 commemorations. However, Cohn-Bendit's book remained much more optimistic than many accounts at the end of the first decade, which took place in an atmosphere of ideological disillusion and anti-totalitarianism in France. In 1986, Cohn-Bendit's interviews of his fellow revolutionaries, *We Loved the Revolution So Much (Nous l'avons tant aimée, la révolution, also a television series)* measured the gap between 1968 and 1988, and echoed the twentieth anniversary's emphasis on generational rebellion. After these three key texts, Cohn-Bendit's interventions became more ephemeral, with the exception of *Forget 68* in 2008, offering a very different attitude to Nicolas Sarkozy's call to liquidate its heritage, but one that nevertheless declared 68 to be over.

### The Loudspeaker as Author

Despite his perennial presence in the immense production of memoir and commemorative literature, Daniel Cohn-Bendit never really authors a book about 1968. During the events themselves, Cohn-Bendit was interviewed multiple times, most famously by Jean-Paul Sartre.<sup>8</sup> In August of that year, he co-authored a book with his older brother Gabriel, *Le Gauchisme, remède à la maladie sénile du communisme*, originally published in German.<sup>9</sup> This pattern is

<sup>4</sup> For betrayal, see for example, Debray, *Modeste contribution* and Hocquenghem, *Lettre ouverte*. For denunciation and trials see Ross, *May 68 and its Afterlives*, 147-158.

<sup>5</sup> Bourdieu, "L'illusion biographique." There is no academic biography of Cohn-Bendit. See Lemire, *Cohn-Bendit*, Millot, *Daniel Cohn-Bendit*; Stamer, *Cohn-Bendit: Die Biographie* and Cazi, *Le Vrai Cohn-Bendit*. For a critique of Cohn-Bendit as the "useful idiot of Green capitalism," see Ariès and Leray, *Cohn-Bendit, L'imposture*.

<sup>6</sup> Georges Marchais, "Des faux révolutionnaires à démasquer," *L'Humanité*, May 3, 1968, 1.

<sup>7</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Forget 68*, 19.

<sup>8</sup> Cohn-Bendit et al., *The French Student Revolt*.

<sup>9</sup> For Gabriel Cohn-Bendit see Cohn-Bendit, *Nous sommes en marche*.

replicated over the next fifty years. Cohn-Bendit is either interviewed (*Le Grand Bazar, Forget 68*), or is the interviewer (*Nous l'avons tant aimée, la révolution*), or co-authors works (*1968: The Last Revolution That Did Not Know of the Hole in the Ozone Layer (1968: Die letzte Revolution, die noch nichts vom Ozonloch wußte)* or *1968: The Revolt (1968: Die Revolte)*).<sup>10</sup> These books are not, and do not pretend to be, detailed analytical accounts of 1968, much less authoritative accounts of the events, but are occasional, conversational pieces, interventions in a particular moment.

Cohn-Bendit's aversion to the single-authored book is part of a wider, ostentatious disengagement from the formalities of written culture. The works of 1968 are emblematic. *Le Gauchisme* begins with a "little afterword to read first" and ends with "by way of conclusion" (*en guise de conclusion*). Two decades later, the discomfort with anything as structurally formal as an introduction or conclusion still marks *Nous l'avons tant aimée, la révolution*. After forty years — hardly his inaugural interpretive outing — the co-edited volume *1968: Die Revolte* begins with "a first approach".<sup>11</sup> These interventions are thus marked by a recurrent, self-conscious rejection of any pretension to finality. To be sure, Cohn-Bendit is not afraid to make sometimes sweeping generalizations about 1968. However, they are never rooted in a fully realized analytical work, but instead most often supported by an illuminating anecdote, a snapshot said to capture a deeper reality. The longer, co-authored books work primarily by straightforward narrative and lengthy quotations rather than the development of an argument. Furthermore, in his openness to interview others or edit their memories, Cohn-Bendit is perhaps more willing than many protagonists to embrace the multiplicity of experiences of 1968. The six 68s of Cohn-Bendit follow the rhythms of speech and conversation, even of oral history, rather than writing.

This self-conscious distancing from the book reflects a deeper tension between speech and discourse. As Cohn-Bendit says of himself in *Le Grand Bazar*, "I only write rarely".<sup>12</sup> In an echo of some analyses of the 1960s, he states "the book is a class-based form of communication, while television is more democratic".<sup>13</sup> More perceptively, he notes that "I'm considered someone whose strength is to intervene in the moment. And a book is the opposite of that".<sup>14</sup> The privileging of speech over writing preferences the needs of the moment over the claim to enduring validity. Cohn-Bendit's subsequent reflections on 1968 are also interventions in the moment. Some of them are distinctly part of another context, such as his campaigns in European politics. He is explicitly interested in 1968 for its meaning in the present rather than any idea of objective historical reality.

Yet Cohn-Bendit also makes the argument that speech, in 1968, was closer to reality and experience than text or discourse.<sup>15</sup> The self-described loudspeaker of the movement notes that "in a meeting, a phrase or moment of rupture was expected much more than an entire speech. It's because of that, that there are only quotes from me, not speeches".<sup>16</sup> For Cohn-Bendit, the longer the discourse in 1968, the more erroneous and less organically connected to the protest movement. From this perspective, graffiti captured best the "spirit of May": "the shorter the speech, the closer it was to the emotion, the longer it was, the more it fell into the ruts of the past, 1917, 1871 or

<sup>10</sup> In chronological order, the key works are Cohn-Bendit and Cohn-Bendit, *Le Gauchisme*, Cohn-Bendit, *Le Grand Bazar*, Cohn-Bendit, *Nous l'avons tant aimée, la révolution*, Cohn-Bendit, *Forget 68*.

<sup>11</sup> Cohn-Bendit and Damann, *1968: Die Revolte*, 11.

<sup>12</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Le Grand Bazar*, 13.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 72. On the politics of written culture in 1968, see Mercer, "The Paperback Revolution."

<sup>14</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Le Grand Bazar*, 21.

<sup>15</sup> On speech, see De Certeau, *The Capture of Speech*.

<sup>16</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Le Grand Bazar*, 49.

1848”.<sup>17</sup> The history of the aftermath of 1968, for Cohn-Bendit, is a lengthy process whereby what was felt could finally be expressed, free of the shackles of language in which it was confined during the events.

The argument that “what we did was not in unison with what we said,” both aligns the style of Cohn-Bendit with the nature of 1968 itself and makes it difficult to contrast the language of 68 with what, later, Cohn-Bendit insists was felt.<sup>18</sup> The man of the pithy interjection, the impish intervention conforms to the event in which the shorter the speech, the truer it was to experience. This argument should not be dismissed out of hand. A difference in style and content between the graffiti and longer discourses of 1968 undoubtedly existed. Yet it also risks overstating the thematic unity of graffiti, and divides speech in 1968 into two parts, one future-oriented and one past-oriented, the latter of which can be dismissed as anachronistic. Yet it takes almost two decades for revolution to be consigned definitively to the past (as indicated in the title of *Nous l'avons tant aimée, la révolution*). As this timeline suggests, it was hardly defunct in 1968. A large number of individuals took revolution very seriously indeed, among them Cohn-Bendit. However, the dissonance between discourse and experience is important. The speed with which Cohn-Bendit identifies a gap between the written representation and the felt experience of 1968 suggests that, at least for him, the practice — the seizure — of speech, held more importance than the content. The creeping anachronism of revolutionary language only reinforced this feeling. This gulf between experience and discourse is one reason why 1968 can be so effortlessly reinvented in new language.

### 1968 from Future to Past

Historians have long traced the rise of a cultural interpretation of 1968, one which progressively elided workers and politics from the events of 1968, to emphasize instead student and gauchist cultural rebellion.<sup>19</sup> The six 68s of Cohn-Bendit broadly conform to this trajectory. They further suggest one reason for this development is the extent to which the meaning of 1968 was, from the very beginning, tied to the future. In 1968 itself, the meaning of the events was revolutionary. A crucial subjective experience for many 68ers was a feeling of history being made, or that history could be made. In *Le Gauchisme* (1968), the Cohn-Bendits wrote that “France has proven that a revolutionary change is possible in a highly industrialized capitalist society”.<sup>20</sup> In 1968, it was sufficient for such a revolution to be possible. The events refuted those who had assumed the working class had lost its revolutionary capacity. This was a future that very much evoked a past model of revolution. Nevertheless, 1968 altered the horizon of expectations, imbuing the events with a meaning that awaited realization. Subsequent memories of 1968 retained this experience of a changed horizon of expectations, while acknowledging the working class no longer appeared as revolutionary as it had at the time.

The mid-1970s provided a very different context for understanding the significance of 1968. Michelle Zancarini-Fournel has noted a rupture around 1973-4 in French memory, “when the horizon of expectations, until then that of the utopia of revolutionary hopes and a radiant future became one of economic and social crisis”.<sup>21</sup> The oil crisis of 1973, the reception of

<sup>17</sup> Cohn-Bendit, “Allemagne: la jeunesse et le passé,” 162.

<sup>18</sup> Kraushaar, “Eine Schwalbe macht noch keinen Sommer,” 190.

<sup>19</sup> See again Zancarini-Fournel, *Le moment 68*. See also Rioux, “L'événement-mémoire,” and Vergez-Chaignon, “Le tombeau d'une generation.” In English, see Reynolds. *Memories of May '68*.

<sup>20</sup> Cohn-Bendit and Cohn-Bendit, *Le Gauchisme*, 17.

<sup>21</sup> Zancarini-Fournel, *Le Moment 68*, 12.

Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* and the "common programme" of 1972 created a very different context. Cohn-Bendit, forbidden entry to France, and politically active in Frankfurt, diverged somewhat from this chronology. For him, the era was still revolutionary in 1975, writing in *Le Grand Bazar* that "it needed May 68 for us to definitively understand that we were living at the birth of a new period of the revolutionary movement ... the crisis of modern society and of revolutionary ideology".<sup>22</sup> However, workers — so central to the argument in 1968 ("the proletariat is the only force capable of changing the totality of society"<sup>23</sup>) — now take their place as just one revolutionary group: "the essential fact of the sixties for me is the emergence of a radical sensibility among young workers, immigrant workers, students, women and many others".<sup>24</sup> Although *Le Gauchisme* celebrated the connection between students and workers, women and immigrant workers had barely appeared. This diffusion of radical subjectivity marked a subtle change in the definition of revolution. May 68 still demonstrated that "everything is possible",<sup>25</sup> but is recast as a "profoundly anti-authoritarian" movement.<sup>26</sup> The meaning of the events is summed up as "May 68: liberation from constraints".<sup>27</sup>

The early 1980s marked a definitive shift in Cohn-Bendit's rhetoric, after which May is no longer revolutionary. 1968 becomes an event in the past tense, not the future. At the very beginning of the decade, Cohn-Bendit wavered between the assertion that the "the capitalist system can integrate everything,"<sup>28</sup> and that in moments of "social rupture" [such as May 1968] support for an alternative system is visible.<sup>29</sup> At the twentieth anniversary (by which time Cohn-Bendit had voted in elections and become active in the Green Party), an affirmation of the compromises and incrementalism of electoral democracy displaces the belief that "*tout est possible*". Cohn-Bendit's proclamation that "from now on, I will only speak of the present and the future," signals the disappearance of the revolutionary horizon, consigning 1968 to the past. *Nous l'avons tant aimée la révolution* (1986) runs the title of his TV series and book. The future, once inscribed with possibility, now evokes the specter of ecological catastrophe, "no longer a promise, but a threat".<sup>30</sup> The deployment of the previously absent concept of generation — the "we" of *Nous l'avons tant aimée la révolution* — facilitates this transition of 1968 from revolutionary promise to illusion, marking revolutionary activism as a moment of youthful exuberance, even if Cohn-Bendit, unlike some contemporaries, proclaimed a continuity with his 68er self.<sup>31</sup>

After the twentieth anniversary, 1968 no longer augured revolution but marked its end: "I believe that 68, it's the end of the revolutionary myth, the end of the revolution and the beginning of the liberation movements which continued in the 1970s and 1980s until today".<sup>32</sup> 1968 still heralds a future, but it is one of multiculturalism and individual liberty rather than revolution. If the foregrounding of generation allowed a first distancing with the past, the embrace of the "68 years" further allows a diffusion of 68 as a revolutionary event: as he put it in *Forget 68* (2008), "the beginning of the 68 years is, in reality and above all, a revolt for daily life, music, relations

<sup>22</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Le Grand Bazar*, 104.

<sup>23</sup> Cohn-Bendit and Cohn-Bendit, *Le Gauchisme*, 26.

<sup>24</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Le Grand Bazar*, 98.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 143-4.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, *Le Grand Bazar*, 105.

<sup>28</sup> Castoriadis and Cohn-Bendit, *De l'Ecologie à l'autonomie*, 55

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>30</sup> Cohn-Bendit and Mohr, *1968: Die letzte Revolution*, 7.

<sup>31</sup> On generation, see Zancarini-Fournel, *Le Moment 68*, 61-67.

<sup>32</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Forget 68*

between men and women, life, sexuality, liberation. It's that which made 68".<sup>33</sup> Instead of an event which opened up future horizons, 68 is now an origin myth in a story that is over. Cohn-Bendit hazards a conclusion for the first time: that "from the point of view of the conception of liberty and the autonomy of the individual, we won".<sup>34</sup> In this, he hews closely to the consensus position of political defeat, cultural victory, and surveys which showed those under thirty in 2001 understood 68 as "a demand for new liberties," characterized by the values of minority rights, sexual liberation and gender equality.<sup>35</sup>

The meaning of 1968 is increasingly and self-consciously divorced from its experience. Thus by 2008, Cohn-Bendit agreed with his interviewer's observation that 1968 is "the moment where the democratic space was accepted as the universal framework" but specifies that "it imposed itself without our knowing".<sup>36</sup> Present-day subjective identifications are projected back onto 1968, as when in 2018, Cohn-Bendit casts 1968 as the moment "when multiculturalism was born," in what was "in moral terms ... 1968's greatest event: Africans, Arabs — all the world called themselves "undesirable" German Jews".<sup>37</sup> To be sure, Cohn-Bendit identified the same moment as a major event in 1968, declaring to the BBC, "I think the most important thing that we had in France in the last days, was the demonstration in the Gare de Lyon where sixty to seventy thousand young people chant[ed] "We are all German Jews".<sup>38</sup> Yet as Daniel Gordon has noted, "those searching for the origins of differentialist multiculturalism in 1968 will be disappointed".<sup>39</sup> It is pointless to dwell on the ahistoricity of these representations. Instead, this reinvention of 68 highlights the extent to which the events of that year were felt as a rupture, a moment that marked a before and after. That identification persisted, even as the content shifted. Thus 1968 has remained a cipher for subsequent developments regardless of whether those possibilities were important or perceived at the time. Finally, as will be shown, the events were sufficiently complex and diverse that the multiple 68s of memory can all be found in the events themselves.

### The Revolutionary 68

The gradual disappearance of revolution provides an exemplary instance of Cohn-Bendit's revaluation of 1968. In the year itself, a revolution was possible, but could only be made by workers. May-June proved "the effectiveness of revolutionary methods," giving society a shock that "allowed one to envisage the possibility of revolution".<sup>40</sup> Indeed, the contribution of the events was precisely to open up the future: to launch "an experiment that will not last, but which allows a glimpse of a possibility: something which is revealed for a moment and then vanishes. But that is enough to prove that something could exist".<sup>41</sup> May 68 is understood primarily as a change in mental structures which had dismissed the idea of revolution, although Cohn-Bendit also speculates that an occupation of the ministries on the night of 24 May would have brought down the regime.<sup>42</sup> Workers held the central role in the return of revolution: the general strike

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 79

<sup>35</sup> See Rioux, "L'événement-mémoire," 14.

<sup>36</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Forget 68*, 62-3.

<sup>37</sup> Cohn-Bendit and Leggewie, "1968: Power to the Imagination."

<sup>38</sup> Jobs, "The Grand Tour of Daniel Cohn-Bendit," 235.

<sup>39</sup> Gordon, "Reaching out to Immigrants in May 68," 105.

<sup>40</sup> Cohn-Bendit and Cohn-Bendit, *Le Gauchisme*, 13.

<sup>41</sup> Cohn-Bendit et al., *The French Student Revolt*, 81

<sup>42</sup> Cohn-Bendit and Cohn-Bendit, *Le Gauchisme*, 75.

meant that the movement, “no longer solely student, [was] already largely revolutionary”.<sup>43</sup> As Cohn-Bendit later notes, this was a traditional view of revolution (albeit with no role for a revolutionary vanguard party), one which would occur once workers achieved a consciousness (*prise de conscience*) of their situation. But neither the centrality of workers nor the proof of revolution’s possibility endures.

Revolution remained important to Cohn-Bendit in the 1970s and he was active in a group Revolutionary Struggle (*Revolutionäre Kampf*) in Frankfurt. However, the meaning of revolution broadened and became more ambiguous. The traditional definition of a worker-led revolution disappears. Despite its prominence in 68, it seems to have been only shallowly held. By contrast, and in continuity with 1968, revolution remains popular and spontaneous, even if *Le Grand Bazar* (1975) contains expressions of doubt, that “it is very difficult to understand what revolution is today”.<sup>44</sup> The sense of future possibility thus persists longer than the prominence of workers. Nobody foresaw May 68, and despite hesitations Cohn-Bendit stated that “I don’t see any more why the revolution will not be possible”.<sup>45</sup> By 1981, this affirmation by double-negative is transformed into an open question: “revolution — yes or no? does it mean something or not?”<sup>46</sup> That question is answered by the past tense of *Nous l’avons tant aimée la révolution* (1986), although with the insistence that “we were not wrong in all our analyses. Simply, the facts have taught us that change is long-term, very long-term”.<sup>47</sup>

From the 1980s, Cohn-Bendit emphasized the imaginary element of revolution. The reality, he implied, is that he and contemporaries like Joschka Fischer symbolize a generation “which did not want to break with society even though they often dreamed of it”.<sup>48</sup> This distancing from revolution proceeds easily, given that even in 1968 the argument was not so much that the events were a revolution but rather proved a revolution was possible, and that early in the 1970s, the meaning of revolution was already the subject of debate. The change is further effected by shifting the gaze away from the revolutionary leadership. The majority, Cohn-Bendit emphasized, was reformist: “only a minority of those who made 68 dreamed of a revolution”.<sup>49</sup> To be sure, as Chris Reynolds has argued, the reformist currents of 1968 have all too often been ignored.<sup>50</sup> But whereas *Le Gauchisme* (1968) confidently declared that the movement did not want itself confined to the university but revolutionary,<sup>51</sup> *Forget 68* (2008) summarizes the movement’s goals as “reform in the university, liberty in society”.<sup>52</sup> The events of 1968 thus move from being significant primarily for their demonstration that revolution is possible to a moment not in the least bit revolutionary: “May 1968 had nothing revolutionary about it: only the imagination of it”.<sup>53</sup> Four decades after the events, the hardest aspect of 68 to understand is just how easily reformist demands escalated into something that felt like revolution.

---

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>44</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Le Grand Bazar*, 189.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>46</sup> Castoriadis and Cohn-Bendit, *De l'Écologie à l'autonomie*, 51.

<sup>47</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Nous l'avons tant aimée, la révolution*, 195.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>49</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Forget 68*, 58.

<sup>50</sup> Reynolds, *Memories of May '68*.

<sup>51</sup> Cohn-Bendit and Cohn-Bendit, *Le Gauchisme*, 134.

<sup>52</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Forget 68*, 26-27.

<sup>53</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Une Envie de politique*, 19.

### The 68 of Individual Liberation

The disappearance of workers and revolution progressively transforms 1968 into an event primarily of individual emancipation. While undoubtedly an aspect of 1968 as imagined in the year itself, how individual liberation is understood changes both rapidly and radically. In *Le Gauchisme* (1968), May 68 was a moment in a long-term revolutionary process. Cohn-Bendit, as a person, is almost entirely absent from the book. By the mid-1970s, 68 has become a juncture in Cohn-Bendit's own life. Unlike the first book, *Le Grand Bazar* (1975) recounted Cohn-Bendit's experiences, reported dialogue, discussed his feelings and dismissed *Le Gauchisme* as "a book on May 68 that was contrary to the way I behaved at the time".<sup>54</sup> Where *Le Gauchisme* was replete with obligatory quotations from Marx, Luxemburg and Trotsky, *Le Grand Bazar* dropped these in favor of direct reported speech. The first book offered the perspective of History. Thereafter May 68 is recounted in the first person. Having effaced his self in *Le Gauchisme*, merely the loudspeaker (*haut parleur*) of the movement, Cohn-Bendit in *Le Grand Bazar*, described how his role as leader "gave me social and emotional gratification".<sup>55</sup> As he put it bluntly, in the first book, "I did not dare to describe May how I lived it".<sup>56</sup>

Individuals are certainly not absent from *Le Gauchisme*, but primarily appear as objects of the dehumanization of capitalism. Capitalist society atomizes individuals. Lectures turn the student into a mere auditor.<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, at times the self-emancipation of individuals pushes up against the revolutionary framework. In moments of crisis, the Cohn-Bendits wrote, "the exploited transform their reality and above all themselves".<sup>58</sup> The capture of speech is presented as an important process in which people should primarily feel free to express themselves.<sup>59</sup> The book ends with the injunction "it's for you that you make the revolution, here and now".<sup>60</sup> *Le Gauchisme* is thus characterized by a latent tension between the experience of individual liberation and its place in the revolutionary epic, a tension overcome by stressing the collective nature of liberation. The important moment is the "profound feeling of collective power" when students do not simply refuse "the dictatorship of modern society but [become] a force contesting it as a whole".<sup>61</sup> In 1968, the Cohn-Bendits affirmed that "there is no solitary revolutionary action ... [it] can only be accomplished in a collective framework".<sup>62</sup> By contrast, in 1998, Cohn-Bendit claimed "the conquest of individual liberty is the foundation of a left-wing project",<sup>63</sup> while in 2008, his interviewer declared that 1968 was an assertion of the individual *against* the collective.<sup>64</sup>

What marked 1968, in other words, was the way in which self-emancipation was construed as collective, a constitutive part of social revolution. That collective dimension disappears to leave individual emancipation as the primary feature of the events. At the outset of *Le Grand Bazar* (1975), Cohn-Bendit stated that "the far Left, like the Left, has always loathed to pose itself the problem of individual identity".<sup>65</sup> The revolution and social transformation can

<sup>54</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Le Grand Bazar*, 25.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>57</sup> Cohn-Bendit and Cohn-Bendit, *Le Gauchisme*, 47.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>59</sup> See e.g. Cohn-Bendit et al., *The French Student Revolt*, 79. See again de Certeau, *The Capture of Speech*.

<sup>60</sup> Cohn-Bendit and Cohn-Bendit, *Le Gauchisme*, 270.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.

<sup>63</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Sois Jeune et Tais-toi!*, 80.

<sup>64</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Forget 68*, 66.

<sup>65</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Le Grand Bazar*, 9.

no longer be “objective” but “if it wants to be emancipatory, it must follow the intricacies of human subjectivity”.<sup>66</sup> While still defining himself as part of a revolutionary movement, it is one that “does not solely pose the traditional problems of the class struggle, but also those of individual liberation of sexuality, speech, urbanism”.<sup>67</sup> In 1968, self-emancipation took place within the revolutionary movement. By the 1970s, it had become the primary focus of revolutionary activity. Thereafter it is detached from revolution altogether.

In 1968, individuals required emancipation from capitalism. As late as 1981, Cohn-Bendit affirmed that capitalist and socialist (i.e. Soviet and East European) societies are the same in their production of uniformity, fear of difference and the individual.<sup>68</sup> By the end of the century, it is not capitalism, but the traditional morality and culture of the 1950s that constrained individuals. Whereas in 1968, the movement is sparked as “the result of revolutionary theory and practice studied by young intellectuals,”<sup>69</sup> by 2008, the origins lie in traditional morality, emblemized by the use of corporal punishment.<sup>70</sup> The revolt emerged “I wouldn’t say from private life, but in any case a movement that wanted to put first the autonomy and life choices of individuals”.<sup>71</sup> Certainly the original proposition should not be taken at face value. But the retrospective view obscures the meaning of individual emancipation in 1968. A gulf separates the slogan “to enjoy / orgasm without constraints (*pouvoir jouir sans entraves*)” articulated in 1968 and the statement three decades later that 68ers demanded “the right to pleasure” (*le droit à la jouissance*).<sup>72</sup> The former derived its meaning from within a revolutionary project:

the revolutionary process of the months of May-June only reinforces the certitude that one day we will ourselves organize our own lives. We will not do it for our children — sacrifice is counter-revolutionary and the result of a Stalinist-Judeo-Christian humanism — but finally “TO ENJOY WITHOUT CONSTRAINTS”.<sup>73</sup>

Initially conceived as central to the revolutionary project, individual emancipation escapes the revolutionary framework in retrospect, allowing it to embody the meaning of 1968.

### **The Democratic 68**

The democratic 1968 rises in inverse proportion to the revolutionary. Democracy was an important word in 1968 — particularly direct democracy and workers’ democracy. “Democratization” — of society, political action and institutions, universities and political parties — also appeared frequently. Electoral and representative democracy, however, were despised. The slogan “elections — a trap for idiots” (*élections — piège à cons*) was common. The Cohn-Bendits dismissed elections as “a magic ritual. The struggle will go on with or without elections”.<sup>74</sup> They also rejected secret ballots (except in regimes where reprisals might be made against those who vote). In a failure to conceptualize other forms of pressure and intimidation, they wrote that “between comrades — in an organization which has no means of repression —

---

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>68</sup> Castoriadis and Cohn-Bendit, *De l'Écologie à l'autonomie*, 63.

<sup>69</sup> Cohn-Bendit and Cohn-Bendit, *Le Gauchisme*, 17.

<sup>70</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Forget 68*, 12

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>72</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Une Envie de politique*, 18.

<sup>73</sup> Cohn-Bendit and Cohn-Bendit, *Le Gauchisme*, 130.

<sup>74</sup> Cohn-Bendit et al., *The French Student Revolt*, 52.

the secret ballot is an evasion, it avoids having to explain one's vote".<sup>75</sup> There were thus two visions of democracy in 1968: one positive, conceived as localized debate, the right to speak and direct democracy; the other negative, representative, electoral and secret.

What characterized 1968 itself is the perceived gulf between democratization (symbolized by the seizure of speech) and electoral democracy. That gulf narrows quickly. By *Le Grand Bazar* (1975), Cohn-Bendit described democracy as "the right to speech for everyone without any sanctions a posteriori".<sup>76</sup> The emphasis remained on democracy as the ability of everyone to express themselves and participate,<sup>77</sup> but Cohn-Bendit also cautiously embraced elections, arguing that the far-left ought to involve itself in electoral politics could its weight prove decisive, insisting that it would be "an error not to admit that there would be an unblocking of the political situation if the Union of the Left came to power".<sup>78</sup> The end goal remained revolutionary: a left-wing government would rationalize society, facilitating an anti-capitalist and anti-communist movement. Elections, however, are no longer excluded from the tools of politics.<sup>79</sup>

By the mid-1980s, a positive embrace replaced this cagey opening to electoral politics. Cohn-Bendit was by this point a member of a political party, had voted in elections and accepted the idea of participation in government.<sup>80</sup> He noted a return to the idea of democracy, and that ever fewer called themselves revolutionaries.<sup>81</sup> The elections of June 1968 are now understood to show that most people wanted to be left in peace.<sup>82</sup> By the 1990s, the cautious engagement with electoral politics has become the comment that "it's easier to be the minority than to want to win 50% at elections".<sup>83</sup> The rejection of elections was an "error".<sup>84</sup> A double discontinuity marks this topic — the embrace of electoral democracy and the diminution of direct democracy. While the seizure of speech is still celebrated, it no longer appears as the definition of democracy. Unlike individual emancipation, which can be extracted from the historical context to serve the needs of the present, for 68 to be cast as a democratic moment, it must be behind the backs of the protagonists.

### The Modernizing 1968

By the 1990s, the significance of 1968 no longer resided in what it promises to bring but what it achieved: a modernization of democracy and society. Modernization is both a substitute for revolution and a positive interpretation to combat narratives of decline and totalitarianism around 68. In a German podium discussion "May 1968: Forty Years Later and Now?", Cohn-Bendit placed the movement of 68 in the context of a "social modernization" in which "the revolt of the 68ers made possible an opening of German society" and a "modernization of democracy".<sup>85</sup> The framework of modernization marked 1968 as a success (despite negative aspects), at the cost of confining it to the past, Cohn-Bendit declaring with reference to François Furet that "68 is over".<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>75</sup> Cohn-Bendit and Cohn-Bendit, *Le Gauchisme*, 195.

<sup>76</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Le Grand Bazar*, 121.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>78</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Le Grand Bazar*, 100.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>80</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Nous l'avons tant aimée, la révolution*, 6.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>82</sup> Cohn-Bendit and Mohr, *1968: Die letzte Revolution*, 134-5.

<sup>83</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Sois Jeune et Tais-toi!*, 40.

<sup>84</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Forget 68*, 59.

<sup>85</sup> Franzmann, "Mai 1968: 40 Jahre danach - und nun?" <https://archive.org/details/Mai1968> at 1h35m and 1h37m.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, at 1h45m.

Modernization already existed as a theme in 1968, as an oppressive form of technocratic exploitation, but with an undercurrent of technological utopia. In 1968, it was Gaullism which sought to modernize capitalism.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, the premise of *Le Gauchisme* (1968) was, in part, that Gaullist technocratic modernization required greater passivity and increased social control. By challenging this, the entire system could be brought into question.<sup>88</sup> Much of the tension in 1968 derived from the contrast between two imagined futures: the emancipated, revolutionary one and the dystopia of technocratic capitalism. In the 1980s, Gaullist modernization has shed its negative characterization. Not modernization but its incompleteness caused the revolt: “Gaullism wanted to lead an industrial modernization without a cultural modernization”.<sup>89</sup> While Gaullist modernization in 1968 was understood to have created a crisis of traditional culture and values, that was not to be remedied by more modernization. In the formula of Gaullism as economic modernization minus cultural modernization,<sup>90</sup> 1968 is transformed from a revolt against capitalist modernization to a process of modernizing catch-up, the overcoming of a “morality from another age”.<sup>91</sup>

In a parallel evolution, fantasies of technologically-inspired social transformation are displaced by narratives of how technological innovation served the revolts of 68. An undercurrent of technological utopia runs through Cohn-Bendit’s revolutionary imaginings. In *Le Gauchisme* (1968), the Cohn-Bendits entertained the idea that computers could mean every aspect of production can be submitted to and decided by all workers.<sup>92</sup> They imagined a “television in the ‘service’ of a socialist society,” one in which it was “a tool of direct democracy,” where the Grenelle accords might have been broadcast live.<sup>93</sup> *Le Grand Bazar* (1975) lamented that cybernetics’ emancipatory potential was not embraced<sup>94</sup> and Cohn-Bendit pleaded that cinema become a fully integrated part of revolutionary practice.<sup>95</sup> By the early 2000s, Cohn-Bendit could still imagine the internet as a possible tool for the democratization of politics.<sup>96</sup> But technology’s most important role is retrospective rather than prospective: TV is invoked to explain the global opposition to the Vietnam war, technological innovation the spread of the music of global protest.<sup>97</sup> Instead of opening a space for a technologically facilitated emancipation, 68 is revealed to itself have been aided by the advance of modern technology. While modernization (and the crisis of traditional culture) always played a part of 1968, explaining how it could take such a prominent place in its eventual representation, modernization progressively sheds both the oppressive, dystopian and progressive, utopian inflections that marked it in the 68 years.

## The Global 1968

As the perspective of modernization suggests, culture becomes the most important element of 1968 in retrospect. Although 68 was always understood as a cultural crisis which demonstrated

---

<sup>87</sup> See, e.g. Cohn-Bendit et al., *The French Student Revolt*, 49.

<sup>88</sup> Cohn-Bendit and Cohn-Bendit, *Le Gauchisme*, 136.

<sup>89</sup> Cohn-Bendit, “Allemagne: la jeunesse et le passé,” 161.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. This is repeated in Cohn-Bendit, *Forget 68*, 10. See also Cohn-Bendit, *Sois Jeune et Tais-toi!*, 41 where the Green Party is defined as one which seeks to “modernise the Left on certain social questions.”

<sup>91</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Forget 68*, 10.

<sup>92</sup> Cohn-Bendit and Cohn-Bendit, *Le Gauchisme*, 117.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 117, 118.

<sup>94</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Le Grand Bazar*, 94.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>96</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Forget 68*, 123.

<sup>97</sup> Cohn-Bendit and Damann, *1968: Die Revolte*, 15.

“the fragility of society’s superstructures,”<sup>98</sup> that crisis becomes ever more important on its own terms. Emblematic of this process is the representation of the Amsterdam Provos. In 1968, the Cohn-Bendits dismissively note the Provos “only wished to change daily life without understanding that a partial change will only end in reformism”.<sup>99</sup> In the 1980s, although held up as a much more significant example, Cohn-Bendit noted the Provos “never threatened the dominant political and economic system”.<sup>100</sup> By 2009, however, they are acknowledged with hindsight as “the first environmental activist group of the 1960s”.<sup>101</sup> The gradual effacement of the framework of systemic change allows a re-evaluation of the importance of the cultural challenge. Whereas *Le Gauchisme* emphasized heterodox Marxism, these are joined in latter interpretations by the Beats and Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones and Jim Morrison.<sup>102</sup> From the twenty-first century, the revolt “aimed above all at the prevailing morality,”<sup>103</sup> a perspective that facilitates the verdict that “we lost politically but won socially and culturally”.<sup>104</sup>

A similar process marks the global 68 — initially merely a feature of the revolts, ultimately becoming its meaning. The global aspects of 1968 were always evident. From the very beginning, Cohn-Bendit’s narratives reference the Third World, Vietnam in particular, and multiple revolts from Berkeley to Berlin, often in a traditional vein of solidarity with anti-capitalist revolts around the world. But the role of global revolt changes in the five decades since May. In 68 itself, Cohn-Bendit asserted it was a basic error to believe revolution could start in the Third World. While international solidarity was important, “the best revolution consists in weakening the bourgeoisie in your own country”.<sup>105</sup> Vietnam mattered primarily for its ability to spark a “*prise de conscience*,” among students.<sup>106</sup> Increasingly, however, the global nature of contestation is recounted as important in itself: “One cannot reflect on the meaning of this revolt in reducing it to a single country,”<sup>107</sup> Cohn-Bendit argued in 2008, before declaring “it’s the first political event of globalization”.<sup>108</sup>

The global 68 is not simply a retrospective invention, as recent literature on the global Sixties demonstrates.<sup>109</sup> The global nature of the events was noted at the time, albeit without the same sense of epochal significance. Nonetheless, the reinterpretation of 68 as “the first movement at global level diffused in real time” captures the subjective experience of the fundamental importance of the events, the feeling that history was being made in 68. The further the events recede into the past, the more the history being made changes to remain true to that experience, as when in 2018, it became the moment that multiculturalism was born.

---

<sup>98</sup> Cohn-Bendit and Cohn-Bendit, *Le Gauchisme*, 128.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>100</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Nous l'avons tant aimée, la révolution*, 52.

<sup>101</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Que faire?*, 18-19.

<sup>102</sup> See e.g. Cohn-Bendit, *Forget 68*, 71.

<sup>103</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Forget 68*, 49.

<sup>104</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Une Envie de politique*, 19.

<sup>105</sup> Cohn-Bendit et al., *The French Student Revolt*, 56.

<sup>106</sup> Cohn-Bendit and Cohn-Bendit, *Le Gauchisme*, 31. On Vietnam, see Mohandesi, “Bringing Vietnam Home.”

<sup>107</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Forget 68*, 8.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>109</sup> See, for example, Blum, “Années 68 postcoloniales?”, Hendrickson, “From the Archives to the Streets,” and Hendrickson, “March 1968: Practicing Transnational Activism from Tunis to Paris.”

### The Negative 68

In *Le Grand Bazar* (1975) Cohn-Bendit mentioned a remark from the German magazine *Spiegel* that he was the “sun” of (Frankfurt’s) 1968, in contrast to the “bad guy” of Hans-Jürgen Krahl.<sup>110</sup> Indeed, Cohn-Bendit identifies himself with the ludic 68, the grinning symbol of rebellion against authority, emblemized in the photo “which rhymes liberty and pleasure”.<sup>111</sup> Yet a negative (if secondary) 68 lurks in the background, as Cohn-Bendit explicitly acknowledged in his injunction to “forget 68: it was wonderful. It was great. It was bonkers. It was crazy. It was sometimes silly. It was authoritarian. It had totalitarian currents”.<sup>112</sup> This sixth 68 — the negative, undemocratic, violent and misogynist one — is not one with which Cohn-Bendit identifies. Associated with the more libertarian wing of the movement, and, as he put it, saved from French micro-totalitarianisms by exile to West Germany, Cohn-Bendit more easily than some maintained a continuity with his convictions and actions in 1968. As he noted in *Le Grand Bazar*, an anarchist did not need Aleksander Solzhenitsyn’s *The Gulag Archipelago* to be convinced of the horrors of the Soviet system.<sup>113</sup>

In respect to electoral democracy, as noted above, Cohn-Bendit explicitly acknowledges the discontinuity between his 68 and later selves. The confrontation with gender is much less direct, virtually absent from *Le Gauchisme* (1968), which contained some brief comments about the patriarchy of contemporary society, but no political agenda concerning gender relations or any conception that this topic might be relevant to the behavior of revolutionaries. In 1975 Cohn-Bendit noted the silencing of women in assemblies in 68, and how a commitment to feminism stopped at the apartment door of many militants.<sup>114</sup> But thereafter the question of gender is subsumed into the narrative of successfully transformed cultural relations, effectively marginalizing the topic once again. Typical here is Cohn-Bendit’s 1986 assertion that “equality between men and women ... seems to me achieved, at least in certain milieus, even if there remains much to be done”.<sup>115</sup> By contrast, Barbara Koster (his ex-partner) argued that “men, even gauchists, try to minimize its [feminism’s] importance.”<sup>116</sup> Cohn-Bendit opts for marginalization rather than discontinuity, aided by the absence of a gendered slogan as simplistic as “*élections — piège à cons*”.

Cohn-Bendit’s confrontation with violence in 68 and its legacy is much more sustained, marked by the history of terrorism in West Germany as much as France. The role of violence is simultaneously minimized, and to the extent it remains, rejected in a clear discontinuity with the present. In 1968, even for Cohn-Bendit, violence remained part of the revolutionary repertoire. The events suggested that “for the first time there is a chance, a possibility, of a non-catastrophic revolution. I don’t say a non-violent one”.<sup>117</sup> The willingness to engage in “physical struggle against repression” marked a key feature of the movement.<sup>118</sup> The barricades in the Latin Quarter were “barriers of self-defense”.<sup>119</sup> Moments of death are related as critical incidents. Yet another side to the confrontation is simultaneously emphasized, one in which the barricades were “no

<sup>110</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Le Grand Bazar*, 20.

<sup>111</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Forget 68*, 18.

<sup>112</sup> Franzmann, “Mai 1968: 40 Jahre danach - und nun?” at 0h32m.

<sup>113</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Le Grand Bazar*, 103.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 174-5.

<sup>115</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Nous l'avons tant aimée, la révolution*, 187.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>117</sup> Cohn-Bendit et al., *The French Student Revolt*, 54.

<sup>118</sup> Cohn-Bendit and Cohn-Bendit, *Le Gauchisme*, 62.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

longer only a means for self-defense, they became the symbol of a certain liberty".<sup>120</sup> This latter evaluation remains long after positive descriptions of the will to resist subside.

In subsequent depictions, the prime feature of 1968 becomes not the willingness to confront police, but rather how little violence occurred.<sup>121</sup> The police, instead of being depicted as a generic authoritarian category are personalized in the figure of Maurice Grimaud, with whom Cohn-Bendit held a polite conversation on TV on the tenth anniversary.<sup>122</sup> Barricades, by 1975, had "not the least military significance".<sup>123</sup> Their meaning is narrowed to exclude the willingness to resist police, leaving only the symbolic power of liberation: "the collective activity which materialized by picking up the paving stones and construction [of barricades] was but a prop for the birth of new affective relations".<sup>124</sup> The turn to political violence after 1968 in West Germany provides the context for this reevaluation, and Cohn-Bendit targeted that audience when he warned in *Le Grand Bazar* against a "hypnosis" in which violence demarcates revolution from reformism.<sup>125</sup> Cohn-Bendit stated that "In the revolutionary process, there will be a time to arm oneself, but that will be at a mass level and not at the level of a specialized body," thereby marking his differences with the adherents of armed struggle without completely rejecting violence.<sup>126</sup> This heritage of violence in the revolutionary imaginary is one reason why Cohn-Bendit explicitly argued in 2018 that "we are politically responsible for what happened" (in the Red Army Faction), admitting a historical responsibility for cultivating a language of violence that others took literally,<sup>127</sup> even if, as he insists elsewhere, some thirty from the student movement landed in the RAF, in contrast to the 900,000 who threw themselves into civic action groups.<sup>128</sup> Violence (alongside democracy) ultimately proves to be the theme on which 68 most appears to be "other," unable to be rescued for the present.

There is little value in criticizing Cohn-Bendit for changing the emphasis in his story. He could hardly be expected to have done otherwise. Furthermore, it would be naïve to assume the earliest representation — subject as much as later iterations to pressures of the moment — is the most accurate. Rather, the six 68s of Daniel Cohn-Bendit demonstrate the extent to which 1968 was an event the subjective meaning of which was at first thrown in the future, then projected back into the past — a marker of the future then the precursor of present-day achievement, a caesura which only made the event more malleable in its representation. Cohn-Bendit is most interesting for his continued self-identification with the events, with some exceptions. In this, he has remained consistent to the subjective experience in 68 of simultaneously making history and of self-emancipation. Another continuity is Cohn-Bendit's ability to anticipate his audience. It was already evident in 68 that Cohn-Bendit had "an extraordinary sense of the public's reactions".<sup>129</sup> The same could be said for his subsequent interventions. Yet the injunction to "forget 68" suggests there is a limit to the continuities. The identification with the events is increasingly challenged by how much they appear to be in and of another age, their meaning in the present

---

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>121</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Forget 68*, 22-23.

<sup>122</sup> Ory, *L'Entre-deux-mai*, 14.

<sup>123</sup> Cohn-Bendit, *Le Grand Bazar*, 149.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>127</sup> Cohn-Bendit and Leggewie. "1968: Power to the Imagination."

<sup>128</sup> Franzmann, "Mai 1968: 40 Jahre danach - und nun?" at 1h35m.

<sup>129</sup> Labro et al. (eds.), *Ce n'est qu'un début*, 24.

ever more ahistorical. In some respects, Cohn-Bendit is a victim of having been twenty-three in 1968 and thus condemned to reflect on the past for more than fifty years. It took twenty years for 1968 to become past-tense in Cohn-Bendit's narrative, and four decades for the command to "forget 68". At five decades and beyond, perhaps the best and most relevant approach would be to completely embrace discontinuity and to understand 1968 as a distinct historical moment, not for its tenuously elaborated legacy several decades later, but for how it might reflect and contrast with the contemporary world in surprising and challenging ways.

### References

- Ariès, Paul, and Florence Leray. 2010. *Cohn-Bendit. L'imposture*. Paris.
- Blum, Françoise. 2018. "Années 68 postcoloniales? 'Mai' de France et d'Afrique," *French Historical Studies* 41, no. 2: 193-218.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. "L'illusion biographique," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 62-63 (juin): 69-72.
- Castoriadis, Cornelius, Daniel Cohn-Bendit et le Public de Louvain-La Neuve. 1981. *De l'Ecologie à l'autonomie*. Paris.
- Cohn-Bendit and Claus Leggewie. 2018. "1968: Power to the Imagination." *New York Review of Books*. May 10 2018. <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2018/05/10/1968-power-to-the-imagination/>
- Cohn-Bendit, Daniel and Gabriel Cohn-Bendit. 1968. *Le Gauchisme, remède à la maladie sénile du communisme*. Paris.
- Cohn-Bendit, Daniel and Rüdiger Damann, eds. 2007. *1968: Die Revolte*. Frankfurt am Main.
- Cohn-Bendit, Daniel. 1988. "Allemagne: la jeunesse et le passé." *Le Débat* 51: 161-163.
- Cohn-Bendit, Daniel, and Gaby Cohn-Bendit. 1998. "Libertaire toujours." In *Le Monde de l'Education de la culture et de la formation*. Ed. Daniel Cohn-Bendit. "Autorité." 259: 26-27.
- Cohn-Bendit, Daniel, Jean-Pierre Duteuil, Alain Geismar and Jacques Sauvageot. 1968. *The French Student Revolt: The Leaders Speak*. Ed. Hervé Bourges. Trans. R.R.Brewster. New York.
- Cohn-Bendit, Daniel. 1975. *Le Grand Bazar: Entretiens avec Michel Lévy, Jean-Marc Salmon, Maren Sell*. Paris.
- . 1998. *Une Envie de politique. Entretiens avec Lucas Delattre et Guy Herzlich*. Paris.
- . 1999. *Sois Jeune et Tais-toi!* Paris.
- . 2008. *Forget 68: Entretiens avec Stéphane Paoli et Jean Viard*. Paris.
- Cohn-Bendit, Dany and Reinhard Mohr. 1988. *1968: die letzte Revolution, die noch nichts vom Ozonloch wußte*. Berlin.
- Cohn-Bendit, Dany. 1986. *Nous l'avons tant aimée, la révolution*. Paris.
- Cohn-Bendit, Gaby. 1999. *Nous sommes en marche*. Paris.
- De Certeau, Michel. 1997. *The Capture of Speech and Other Political Writings*. Trans. Tom Conley, Minneapolis.
- Debray, Régis. 1978. *Modeste contribution aux discours et cérémonies officielles du dixième anniversaire*. Paris.
- Franzmann, Manuel. 2008. "Mai 1968: 40 Jahre danach — und nun?" June 2. <https://archive.org/details/Mai1968>

- Gildea, Robert. 2009. "Forty Years On: French Writing on 1968 in 2008," *French History* 23, no. 1: 108-119.
- Gordon, Daniel A. 2010. "Memories of 1968 in France: Reflections on the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary." In *Memories of 1968: International Perspectives*. Eds Ingo Cornils and Sarah Waters, 49-78. Oxford.
- Gordon, Daniel A. 2011. "Reaching Out to Immigrants in May 68: Specific or Universal Appeals?" In *May 68: Rethinking France's Last Revolution*. Eds Julian Jackson, Anna-Louise Milne and James S. Williams, 93-108. Basingstoke.
- Hendrickson, Burleigh. 2012. "March 1968: Practicing Transnational Activism from Tunis to Paris." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44, no. 4: 755-74.
- . 2018. "From the Archives to the Streets: Listening to the Global 1960s in the Former French Empire." *French Historical Studies* 41, no. 2: 319-342.
- Hocquenghem, Guy. 1986. *Lettre ouverte à ceux qui sont passés du col Mao au Rotary*. Paris.
- Jackson, Julian. 2010. "The Mystery of May 1968," *French Historical Studies* 33, no. 4: 625-653.
- Jobs, Richard Ivan. 2011. "The Grand Tour of Daniel Cohn-Bendit and the Europeanism of 1968." In *May 68: Rethinking France's Last Revolution*. Eds Julian Jackson, Anna-Louise Milne and James S. Williams, 231-344. Basingstoke.
- Kraushaar, Wolfgang. 1978. "Eine Schwalbe macht doch keinen Sommer: Die Reduktion der Alternativbewegung auf ihre Projekte. Eine Diskussion mit Daniel Cohn-Bendit." in *Autonomie oder Getto? Kontroversen über die Alternativbewegung, 187-209*. Frankfurt.
- Philippe Labro et al., eds. 1968. *Ce n'est qu'un début*. Paris.
- Lemire, Laurent. 1998. *Cohn-Bendit*. Paris.
- Mercer, Ben. 2011. "The Paperback Revolution: Mass-Circulation Books and the Cultural Origins of 1968 in Western Europe." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 72, no. 4: 613-636.
- Mohandesi, Salar. 2018. "Bringing Vietnam Home: The Vietnam War, Internationalism and May '68." *French Historical Studies* 41, no. 2: 219-251.
- Millot, Lorraine. 1999. *Daniel Cohn-Bendit*. Toulouse.
- Ory, Pascal. 1983. *L'Entre-deux-mai. Histoire Culturelle de la France. Mai 1968-Mai 1981*. Paris.
- Reynolds, Chris. 2011. *Memories of May '68: France's Convenient Consensus*. Cardiff.
- Rioux, Jean-Pierre. 2008. "L'événement-mémoire: Quarante ans de commémorations." *Le débat* 149: 4-19.
- Ross, Kristen. 2002. *May '68 and its Afterlives*. Chicago.
- Sommier, Isabelle. 1994. "Mai 68: Sous les pavés d'une page officielle." *Sociétés Contemporaines* 20: 63-82.
- Stamer, Sabine. 2001. *Cohn-Bendit: Die Biographie*. Hamburg.
- Vergez-Chaignon, Bénédicte. 2008. "Le tombeau d'une génération." *Le débat* 149: 52-65.
- Zancarini-Fournel, Michelle. 2008. *Le Moment 68: une histoire contestée*. Paris.