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Jocelyn Evans and Gilles Ivaldi, *The 2017 French Presidential Elections: A Political Reformation?* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. xvi + 282pp. Figures, tables, notes, and index. £101.00 (hb). ISBN 978-3-319-68326-3; £80.50 (eb). ISBN 978-3-319-68327-0.

Review by Paul Smith, University of Nottingham.

Gazing back through the pall of smoke created by the tear gas grenades at the *énième* act of the *gilets jaunes* protest movement and as he launches the *grand débat national*, it seems like an age since the presidential (and legislative) elections of 2017 brought the improbable Emmanuel Macron and his En Marche movement to power in France. But if the *gilets jaunes* teaches us only one thing, it is that the political upheaval signaled in 2017 is far from over. If, as we were reliably informed in late November 2018, 75 percent of the French approved, in one way or another, of the *gilets jaunes* that's because three-quarters of the electorate did not choose Macron in the first round of the presidential election. The underlying causes of the one are enmeshed in the other.

Jocelyn Evans and Gilles Ivaldi, both separately and together, have already established their reputations as two of the foremost commentators on contemporary French politics. Their study of the 2012 election(s), *The Inevitable Alternation is incontournable*.^[1] And thus it is again with *A Political Reformation?*, a book that maps with great dexterity an election in which, let's be honest, nothing that we expected to happen actually did. Marine Le Pen did not win the first round and she did not get close to 40 percent in the second. *Le peuple de droite* chose a candidate who, had he been elected, would probably have provoked a backlash to make the *gilets jaunes* look like a Sunday school outing. The *peuple de gauche* followed suit, causing the PS to virtually disappear as its candidate almost dipped below the 5 percent bar. (On the other hand, Jean-Luc Mélenchon did shout louder than anyone else, which everyone had predicted.)

Like its predecessor, *A Political Reformation?* works in two ways: both as a coherent single narrative of the (eye-wateringly) long election of 2017 and also as a series of thematic stand-alone chapters. That it does so is a tribute to the authors' skill. Those of us teaching French politics to undergraduate students at all levels and in various different contexts (modern Languages, comparative politics...) will find it fundamental, as will specialists in the field. For the latter, it stands as a worthy partner to Pascal Perrineau's edited volume *Le Vote disruptif*.^[2]

The book's chapter headings speak pretty much for themselves. The introduction sets the election in a wider context that even readers with no real knowledge or particular hankering for French politics should find easy enough to absorb. The batting order thereafter goes thus: the 2017 presidential election: continuity and change; the presidential primaries and polarization of

mainstream party politics; party strategy and cooperation; campaign events and political change; forecasting and polling; parties and voters in the policy space: the presidential first round; challenges of the blocked polity: the Macron/Le Pen presidential run-off; the 2017 legislative elections: manufacturing a majority; and finally the wider conclusions. And if their wider conclusions are not exactly prophetic of what has come to pass, Evans and Ivaldi do point to some of the underlying problems that have exploded into the open in the course of the autumn and winter of 2018-2019.

The text throughout is amply supported by tables and figures. In particular, Evans and Ivaldi go to great pains to explain their methods and interpretations to readers not *au fait* with the (sometimes arcane) ways of political science. This reviewer, for one, will have no hesitation in recommending the work to first year undergraduates in modern languages. There is no reason they would not understand the analysis and the availability of the work as an electronic resource or of the various chapters online make it doubly useful, as do the references that point to further reading.

An area the authors are less concerned with is the prosopological side. If you like your politics to include detail of the personal antagonisms between would-be candidates—I am thinking here not just of the personality of each candidate or of the various primaries but also the fallout from *Penelopegate*, when so many figures of the right hesitated to step in against the sheer bloody-mindedness of François Fillon. If you are after that side of affairs, then you would be better directed either to the Perrineau volume mentioned above, or to Raymond Kuhn and Sheila Perry's special number of *Nottingham French Studies*, "The 2017 French presidential election and the media: *une campagne inédite*." [3]

There are also a couple of points of order. On page 33, Georges Pompidou is described as "former Minister of the Economy." He never was and this sells *Pompom* rather short. Also, there is some slippage on Table 8.1 (p. 179) which means that headings don't quite line-up—and that might confuse an unwary undergraduate. But otherwise this is an essential book for anyone teaching French politics today—all the more so since textbooks in the broader field have become thin on the ground. It is certainly a must have for university libraries. *Incontournable, donc*.

NOTES

[1] Jocelyn Evans and Gilles Ivaldi, *The 2012 French Presidential Elections: the Inevitable Alternation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013).

[2] Pascal Perrineau, ed., *Le Vote disruptif. Les élections présidentielle et législatives de 2017* (Paris, Presses Sciences-Po, 2017).

[3] Raymond Kuhn and Sheila Perry, eds., "The 2017 French Presidential Election and the Media : *Une campagne inédite?*" *Nottingham French Studies*, 57.2 (2018).

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