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Manus McGrogan, *Tout!: Gauchisme, contre-culture et presse alternative dans l'après-Mai 68*. Translated from English by Jean-Marie Guerlin. Paris: *L'Échappée*, 2018. 205 pp. Bibliography, notes, and acknowledgements. €18.00 (pb). ISBN 978-2373090383.

Review by Ron Haas, Texas State University.

*May '68 is only the beginning, continue the struggle!*[1] By the end of June 1968, the Gaullist government was firmly back in power, the majority of striking workers had returned to their jobs, and the students were preparing for their vacations as though nothing unusual had happened. Like the revolutions of 1848, May '68 was a turning point in history that didn't turn, an "électrochoc métaphysico-politique" as *Le Monde* journalist Jean-Claude Guillebaud described it, whose rippling effects spread only gradually in the decade that followed.[2] What began in March 1968 with a few dozen rabble-rousers at a university on the outskirts of Paris snowballed into a mass student-worker revolt that paralyzed the country and even created a brief vacuum of power at the center of the Fifth Republic. While relatively little changed in the short-term, the events exploded the horizon of possibility for the '68 generation, and in the years that followed, demanding the impossible did not seem unreasonable for a small but crucial element of May's participants. But May '68 was only the beginning; the real work was still to be done. Drawing lessons from the movement's sudden collapse and cooptation, this element re-doubled its efforts and sought to merge the struggle of the workers with the social and cultural energies that burst on to the scene in the student commune. The coming revolution, they believed, required a new politics, or the fusion of politics and the pursuit of happiness.

The utopian pursuit of total political-cultural revolution after May '68 is the backdrop for Manus McGrogan's history of the short-lived journalistic experiment *Tout!*, the alternative press that best captures the revolutionary spirit of the early 1970s in all of its diversity and complexity. *Tout!: Gauchisme, contre-culture et presse alternative dans l'après-Mai 68* first of all fills a crucial gap in the historiography of leftist and underground presses after May '68. More familiar publications such as *Libération*, *Actuel*, and *Hara-Kiri/Charlie Hebdo* which were directly influenced by *Tout!* have long been the subject of scholarly interest, but *Tout!* itself, McGrogan observes, has been mostly ignored (p. 11). Of broader interest to H-France's readers, students of the global sixties, and present-day activists, McGrogan's history of *Tout!* provides a window into the intense and chaotic period of revolutionary fermentation after May '68 that transformed the Left and gave rise to the modern landscape of radical and cultural politics. McGrogan's work combines a content analysis of *Tout!* with a microhistory of the journal's short existence constructed through hundreds of original interviews with the *Toutiens*—*Tout!*'s

former editors, contributors, and close associates. *Tout!* served as an institutional and intellectual meeting point for radical French and international Marxist-Leninist groups, new social movement pioneers, and counterculturalists of every stripe. Much more than a reflection of the times, McGrogan argues, *Tout!* was an aftershock (“réplique sismique”) of May ’68, a movement unto itself, and a primary vector of the revolutionary agitation: “Pendant une période aussi brève que grisante, un seul journal est ainsi capable de catalyser autour d’un projet politique et culturel explosive les énergies juveniles et tumultueuses de la France du début des années 1970” (p. 10).

The first three chapters of McGrogan’s book reconstruct the pre-history of *Tout!* through the lives of the *Toutiens*. Chapter one describes their formative experiences in the events of May ’68, emphasizing the festive, communal atmosphere they sought to recreate after the movement’s collapse. Chapters two and three trace their trajectories from the Nanterre-based group Vive le communisme (VLC) through the flourishing of Vive la révolution (VLR), the anarcho-Maoist movement that launched *Tout!* as its press affiliate in September 1970. Unlike their authoritarian-leaning counterparts, the notorious Maoists of the Proletarian Left (Gauche Prolétarienne or GP), the VLR was less interested in creating a new revolutionary party than in building a movement that would coexist with and coordinate the spontaneous action committees popping up in and around Paris. Aside from a small core of organizers that included Roland Castro and Tiennot Grumbach—both interviewed on multiple occasions by McGrogan for this book—the VLR had no real leadership or hierarchy. In simplest terms, its utopian vision for a total cultural revolution was something in between Woodstock and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China, though it was “la Chine dans nos têtes”[3] (the China of our imaginations) that mattered for these self-styled Maoists.

In their heyday in 1970 and 1971, the VLR, like the GP and a handful of other Marxist-Leninist organizations, led groups of embedded workers or *établissements* at major factories around Paris, but the VLR also engaged in a wide variety of other activities with immigrant workers, high school youths, women, and sexual minorities. Joining forces with former ’68ers from the Censier group who had participated in the student occupation of the Sorbonne and from the new experimental university at Vincennes, their “investigations” (“enquêtes” in their Maoist vocabulary) took them to the far corners of society in search of the downtrodden, disenfranchised, and marginalized. Later, Félix Guattari, who was closely associated with the critical philosophy of Vincennes though not himself an actor in the VLR, summed up the post-’68 revolutionary ethos: “Mai ’68 nous a appris à lire sur les murs et, depuis, on a commencé à déchiffrer les graffitis dans les prisons, les asiles et aujourd’hui dans les pissotières. C’est tout un ‘nouvel esprit scientifique’ qui est à refaire!”[4] This array of new ad hoc action committees had produced dozens of tracts, newsletters, and manifestoes, but no there was no publication that attempted to unify these struggles into a coherent whole.

In the summer of 1970, a large donation from the leftist sympathizer and Schlumberger family heiress Sylvina Boissonnas presented the VLR with the opportunity to create such a paper (p. 75). Roland Castro and Tiennot Grumbach invited Guy Hocquenghem, a veteran of the student commune in ’68 and early collaborator on its paper *Action*, and a small band of artists and designers to spearhead the project. From there *Tout!* took on a life of its own; it reflected core ideas and preoccupations within the VLR but did not function as its mouthpiece in any official capacity—and often ran afoul of Castro and other VLR organizers. Chapters four and five explore the inner workings of *Tout!*, its content and design, and the tensions—both creative

and destructive—that fueled the publication over ten months and sixteen issues. In keeping with the egalitarian spirit of May '68, *Tout!*'s editorial team envisioned a *France Soir* “rouge” (*France Soir* was one of the most highly-circulated dailies in the 1950s and 60s), written by everyday activists and accessible to everyone. Exact figures are hard to pin down, but with a printing of about 50,000 copies according to higher estimates and a readership of about twice that number at its peak, they weren't too far off the mark (p. 76). (By way of comparison, *Libération* had a total circulation of about 80,000 copies in 2017.)<sup>[5]</sup> The numbers, however, don't begin to tell the story of *Tout!*'s immediate impact and far-reaching influence.

When the first issue of *Tout!* hit the newsstands, it didn't look like a radical leftist press or like anything most people had ever seen. The multi-colored, large-format *quinzomadaire* (appearing every fifteen days) featured two covers and a riot of image and text throughout. Like the American Yippies they admired, and whose ideas they translated for their readers in their columns, the VLR-*Tout!* always had one foot in radical politics and one in the counterculture. Though in some ways *Tout!* belongs within France's rich tradition of leftist political satire—reprinting, for example the cartoons of renowned satirists Siné and Wolinski—the overall look and feel was surreal and psychedelic, much more like the free presses of the Diggers and the Yippies in the US than the early twentieth-century anarchist paper *Assiette au beurre* or its present-day equivalent *Charlie Hebdo*.

*Tout!*'s content was an equally radical departure from leftist tradition. Consciously distinguishing themselves from the asceticism of the GP, whose deadly serious publications like *La Cause du peuple* reflected the leadership's fixation with proletarian violence, *Tout!*'s editorial team aimed first of all to rebuild the “party” in the sense of “la fête.” That Mao's revolution served as an inspiration (among others) for the VLR, not a model or a blueprint, was further made clear in *Tout!*'s debut editorial column. The goal of the new publication, the staff explained, was to counter the “misère morale” of “métro boulot dodo loisirs télé bagnole” (subway work sleep leisure TV car) by giving voice to the wide range of bourgeois capitalism's victims.<sup>[6]</sup> May '68 had provided a faint apparition of a new civilization, and *Tout!* now aimed to unify the heterogeneous movements of resistance under that vision by providing them with a means of expression and communication. Jean-Paul Sartre had agreed to serve as *Tout!*'s titular director as a much-needed safeguard against censorship and repression (“One does not imprison Voltaire” General De Gaulle allegedly quipped regarding France's leading intellectual) but *Tout!* would not be a vehicle for the intellectuals and it would not toe any political or ideological line.

Over its brief lifespan *Tout!* stayed true to its original mission, attracting a wide range of contributors and giving voice to an array of countercultural currents and new social movements. The infamous twelfth issue alone, much of whose content was given over to the then unknown Revolutionary Homosexual Action Front (Front Homosexuel d'Action Révolutionnaire or FHAR), has been hailed by historians as the May '68 of the homosexuals.<sup>[7]</sup> This was not the first time that *Tout!* had broached the topic of homosexual liberation; the very first issue included a translation of Huey Newton's famous speech in support of the women's and homosexual liberation movements from August 1970. In the twelfth issue, however, *Tout!*'s editors didn't hide behind the revolutionary credentials of others. A couple of weeks earlier, *Nouvel Observateur* published the *Manifeste des 343*, a pro-choice manifesto signed by 343 women who confessed to having had an abortion. Signatories included novelist Christiane Rochefort and Simone de Beauvoir. In response, *Tout!* published its

own manifesto of 343 homosexuals who slept with Arabs (“Nous sommes plus de 343 salopes. Nous nous sommes fait enculer par des Arabes”) alongside the confession from Jean Genet that sleeping with Algerian men is what drew him into the Front de libération nationale (p. 125). Within a week of its publication, attendance at FHAR meetings at the Beaux-Arts de Paris swelled from about 40 to 400 and new chapters began appearing throughout France (p. 138). Banned and partially seized, the twelfth issue dedicated to the liberation of homosexuality and all sexualities resulted in charges of “outrage aux bonnes mœurs” (affront to public decency) for Sartre, a first in his long career of leftist militancy. But controversy only magnified *Tout!*'s impact. Jean le Bitoux, founder of *Gai Pied*, France's first mainstream gay magazine, recalls in an interview with McGrogan being thunderstruck after purchasing his copy as a student in Nice: “Je tombe sur le numéro 12 de *Tout!* chez le kiosquier en bas de chez moi. Et puis je lis sur la double page verte: ‘Homosexuels de tous pays, libérez-vous’... J'étais totalement foudroyé, c'est-à-dire que je ne savais pas que mon horrible bizarre sexualité pouvait avoir un discours politique. C'était un coup de foudre. Je vous jure que je ne m'en suis pas encore remis” (p. 128).

Interviews like this one bring *Tout!*'s milieu to life in McGrogan's work. Like the editors of *Tout!*, McGrogan prefers to let the *Toutiens* speak for themselves wherever possible. *Tout!*'s centrality to women's and homosexual liberation in France has been noted before—though not with the same depth of analysis. McGrogan's research, however, goes beyond what is generally known about the publication to reveal its interactions with international movements such as the Yippies, Weatherman, and the Black Panther Party (BPP) in the US and the Italian movement Lotta Continua (which provided the inspiration for the paper's title) among others. *Tout!* was also at the center of France's countercultural explosion which drew heavily from the Americans, and *Tout!*'s staff helped introduce French readers to the strange new world of psychedelic drugs, music, and art. Finally, students of France's new social movements will also find in McGrogan's history the earliest stirrings of anti-nuclearism, new urbanism, and political ecology; anti-racism, anti-discrimination, and immigrants' rights; and the anti-psychiatry and anti-prison movements.

With so many new “fronts” in the coming revolution, it's not surprising that *Tout!* eventually succumbed to internal differences and disbanded at the end of July 1971. In chapter six, McGrogan examines the tensions that finally unraveled the grand experiment. The earliest and most significant rift within the VLR-*Tout!* pitted the original workerist (*ouvriériste*) core, represented by Grumbach, against the utopian counterculturalists brought in by Guy Hocquenghem. Some of the VLR's militants, it seems, shared the more doctrinaire *gauchistes'* prejudices against the “petit-bourgeois” distractions of the counterculture. Hocquenghem's band, on the other hand, challenged the old guard's fetishization of the proletariat and work. Although the workers' struggle featured in every one of *Tout!*'s issues, it became increasingly clear over the paper's lifespan that the editors intended to decenter the factory from the revolutionary experience. If the more traditional Marxist-Leninist elements could tolerate *Tout!*'s “sex, drugs, and rock and roll,” however, the movements for women's and homosexual liberation finally brought tensions to a head. When *Tout!* published its twelfth issue, many leftist bookstores, including the Maoist bookshop in Paris, Norman Bethune, refused to carry it. Likewise, the VLR's factory militants refused to sell it at the factory gates. The conflict over the issue contributed to Castro's surprise decision to disband the VLR in April 1971. *Tout!* continued briefly, producing four more issues after a reshuffling of its staff, but its fate was already sealed.

The final issues of the paper exposed still more fault lines. The fourteenth issue of *Tout!* reprinted the “lettre de Mohamed” whose author accused white *gauchiste* women of racism on the basis that they refused to sleep with Arabs. This was the final straw for the VLR’s feminists who were already feeling snubbed by the editorial team. In the fifteenth issue, they struck back at *gauchiste* sexism with “Votre libération sexuelle n’est pas la nôtre!”, effectively signaling their departure from the VLR for the Mouvement de Libération des Femmes (MLF). *Tout!*’s staff met one more time to produce a sixteenth and final issue, but by then the paper had already run out of money, organizational support, and energy. At the same time, the struggles for women’s and homosexual liberation had by then developed into fully autonomous movements, each with their own *Tout!*-inspired newspapers. *Charlie Hebdo* had come into its own as France’s standard bearer of bad taste and leftist satire, and *Actuel* was on its way to becoming the new vehicle of the counterculture. Not long thereafter, in early 1973, Jean-Paul Sartre and the Maoist leaders of the GP founded the “new” *France Soir* “rouge”: *Libération*. Chapter seven of McGrogan’s study traces *Tout!*’s many afterlives across the spectrum of leftist and underground presses.

Roland Castro blamed *Tout!*, partially at least, for the decomposition of the VLR and, by extension, the entire milieu which devolved into a kind of *auberge espagnole* (in his words) run amok (p. 135). Similarly, for VLR factory militant Michel Chemin, the outgrowth of new social movements made *Tout!*-VLR’s demise unavoidable: “C’était un peu ridicule parce que les mouvements autonomes, c’est autonome, quoi” (p. 135). Guy Hocquenghem, scapegoated by many for having invited the chaos in the first place (perhaps with the explicit intent of breaking up the VLR some even suggested), later reflected that *Tout!* had simply fulfilled its dialectical function; after facilitating the rise of the new struggles, it no longer served any real purpose (pp. 155–6). In his conclusion, McGrogan invokes the metaphor for *Tout!* suggested by editor Jacques Barda of a centrifuge that broke of spinning (p. 184). In the final analysis, McGrogan adds, *Tout!*-VLR lacked the magnitude, the organizational stability, and maybe even the will to firmly anchor itself in either the new social movements or the struggle of the workers, let alone fuse them into a single, popular movement. As this utopian vision drifted out of reach, particularly after the twelfth issue, *Tout!* veered further into situationist themes of youth revolt, alienating many within the VLR and, moreover, losing its ability to communicate with everyday, working-class people (p. 184).

The end of VLR-*Tout!* was abrupt, and the lingering resentments of the *Toutiens* make occasional appearance in McGrogan’s interviews. Nonetheless, I wonder whether the deeper significance of *Tout!*’s story lies not with the “centrifugal” forces that scattered and diluted its energies, but—to bend Barda’s metaphor—with the “centripetal” forces it managed to sustain. At a time when leftist politics on both sides of the Atlantic seems impossibly sectarian, it is refreshing and inspiring to rediscover through McGrogan’s book a leftist milieu that was as driven to find common cause as it was to articulate difference. In the American context, the “centripetal” force in early 70s radicalism was evident, for example, in Huey Newton’s soul-searching declaration of solidarity with women and homosexuals. “Whatever your personal opinions and your insecurities about homosexuality and the various liberation movements among homosexuals and women,” Newton urged, “we should try to unite with them in a revolutionary fashion. I say ‘whatever your insecurities are’ because as we very well know, sometimes our first instinct is to want to hit a homosexual in the mouth, and want a woman to be quiet.”[8] *Tout!*-VLR offered a vision of total political-cultural revolution that pitted the multifarious *peuple* against the common enemy of bourgeois capitalism, a vast and integrated

system of political, cultural, and economic institutions, and insisted that there were no “secondary” fronts. It was a messy vision, drawing liberally from Marxist, anarchist, utopian, and avant-gardist traditions, and one that hardly lent itself to organizational stability, but it was compelling enough to help galvanize the metamorphosis of the radical left in a few short years. From one perspective, the *Tout!-VLR* experiment represents the last gasp of the Marxist-Leninist old guard as it struggled keep pace with cultural evolution after 1968. From a contemporary standpoint, *Tout!-VLR* prefigured post-Marxist conceptions of global resistance that began to take form in the 1990s. *Tout!* may have failed, as McGrogan observes, to offer a coherent political alternative, particularly after the dissolution of the VLR, but it succeeded, briefly at least, in uniting the “one no, many yeses” (to borrow a phrase from the global resistance movements) in a creative storm of revolutionary ferment.

Revolutionary moments are opportunities to change peoples’ frames of reference. The *Toutiens* embraced the challenge of bringing new ideas to youths and the swathes of working classes and accepted the risks. Asked by McGrogan what *Tout!* would have done if the workers had rejected their vision, *Tout!* editor Marc Hatzfeld responded: “Dans ce cas, nous en trouverions d’autres qui veulent le faire avec nous” (p. 82). Nearly fifty years later, France’s *gilets jaunes* face similar challenges as they struggle to build a mass movement out of widespread and spontaneous protest. In the wake of media accounts of racism and homophobia within parts of the movement, French novelist Édouard Louis, author of the acclaimed *En finir avec Eddy Bellegueule* (*The End of Eddy* in English translation), a roman à clef about growing up gay in right-wing, working-class rural France, re-affirmed his support for the *gilets jaunes*: “...s’il existe de l’homophobie ou du racisme parmi les gilets jaunes, c’est notre responsabilité de transformer ce langage.” Édouard continues: “Il y a différentes manières de dire: ‘Je souffre’: un mouvement social, c’est précisément ce moment où s’ouvre la possibilité que ceux qui souffrent ne disent plus: ‘Je souffre à cause de l’immigration et de ma voisine qui touche des aides sociales,’ mais: ‘Je souffre à cause de celles et ceux qui gouvernent. Je souffre à cause du système de classe, à cause d’Emmanuel Macron et Edouard Philippe.’ Le mouvement social, c’est un moment de subversion du langage, un moment où les vieux langages peuvent vaciller.”[9]

In hindsight, *Tout!*’s collapse seems predictable, but perhaps it’s the *Toutiens*’ idealism,chutzpah, and improbable success that need more emphasis.

## NOTES

[1] *Mai 68: Ce n’est qu’un début, continuons le combat!* was a widely used protest slogan from the May ’68 events in France. It is also the title of collection of tracts and documents published by the Mouvement du 22 mars, *Ce n’est qu’un début, continuons le combat. Cahiers libres 124* (Paris: Maspero, 1968).

[2] Jean-Claude Guillebaud, *Les années orphelines 1968-1978* (Paris: Seuil, 1978), 24.

[3] The expression comes from an interview with former Maoists: Claudie et Jacques Broyelle, Alain Geismar, Hélène Marchisio, Pierre-Jean Rémy, Alain Roux, “Enquête : la Chine dans nos têtes,” *Pouvoirs* 3 (November 1977): 7-28.

[4] Le directeur de publication, “Liminaire,” *Recherches* 12 (March 1973), p. 3.

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[5] *Alliance Pour Les Chiffres de la Presse et des Médias* (ACPM). Accessed January 10, 2019: <http://www.acpm.fr/Support/liberation>.

[6] “*Tout? Un Nouveau Journal.*” *Tout!: ce que nous voulons: tout*, 1 (September 1970): 1-2. The entire of run of *Tout!* is now available online: <http://archivesautonomies.org/spip.php?article1800&lang=fr>.

[7] See, for example, Jacques Girard, *Le Mouvement Homosexuel en France 1945-1980* (Paris: Syros, 1981), 84.

[8] Huey Newton, “The Women’s Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements,” in David Hilliard and Donald Weise eds., *The Huey P. Newton Reader* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002), pp. 157-9.

[9] Édouard Louis, “Chaque personne qui insultait un gilet jaune insultait mon père,” *Les Inrockuptible*, Dec. 4, 2018. Accessed January 10, 2019: <https://www.lesinrocks.com/2018/12/04/actualite/edouard-louis-chaque-personne-qui-insultait-un-gilet-jaune-insultait-mon-pere-111149208/>

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