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Laurence De Cock and Mathilde Larrère, *Manifs et stations: le métro des militant-e-s*. Ivry-sur-Seine: Les Editions de l'Atelier, 2020. 205 pp. Notes and illustrations. €16.00 (pb). ISBN 9782708246195.

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It is necessary at the outset of my review of this impressive book to note that its title is potentially misleading. *Manifs et stations: le métro des militant-e-s* is neither a history of Parisian metro stations nor of activism by metro users; it is not—with the exception of the chapter on Nation and Charonne—mainly a history of demonstrations at metro stations; and only in small part is it a history of militancy by metro workers. Indeed, almost half the book is devoted to a time before the metro existed.

What this is, however, is an innovative, opinionated, and very accessible work of history from below, aiming to bring to a wider audience multiple marginalized stories of activism. The individuals highlighted are all linked with locations today associated with metro stations, whose names, however, fail to reflect these democratic histories. This is thus a deceptively slim volume with a big idea: to counter the tendency of metro stations to be named after powerful men, and instead draw attention to the people who built the city of Paris and struggled there for freedom, equality, the Republic, peace, and women's emancipation, and against racism and colonialism.

The origins of this book might be located at the conjunction of three overlapping trends. First, it is a spin-off from the famous Maitron dictionary of labour biography. *Manifs et stations* forms part of a new collection, *Celles et ceux*, by Les Editions de l'Atelier (successor to Les Editions Ouvrières), which has published the Maitron since 1964. *Manifs et stations* extensively features individuals with a Maitron entry, identified with special font for ease of cross-reference in the now freely accessible online Maitron, making an excellent starting point for further research.

Secondly, *Manifs et stations* is a response, from a diametrically opposed political viewpoint, to the actor Lorant Deutsch's best-selling *Métronome*. Seemingly ubiquitous on bookshop shelves since its publication in 2009, *Métronome* sought to recount the history of France via metro stations. Deutsch was accused by critics of presenting a deeply conservative, royalist, nationalist, and Catholic vision of French history.^[1] Laurence De Cock and Mathilde Larrère thus explicitly present their book as a riposte to Deutsch: "Osons le Maitronome plutôt que le métronome!" (p. 12).

Last but not least, this emphatically *grand public* book can be situated within a wider series of public history interventions by its authors. De Cock's academic work began with a thesis on debates about the teaching of colonial history, while Larrère is a nineteenth-century specialist, whose first monograph was on the history of the *Garde nationale*.^[2] Since then, both have established strong reputations as frequent participants in debates over the use and misuse of history in contemporary France. Alongside day jobs teaching at *lycée* and university level respectively, De Cock and Larrère unashamedly take sides--in the best tradition of *engagée* French intellectuals--in these memory wars, rejecting notions of neutrality in the writing of history. They have participated in debates in a variety of fora from Twitter to Mediapart, on which they co-hosted to five-figure audiences the history show *Les Détricoteuses*.^[3] In 2017, De Cock debated then-presidential candidate François Fillon live on France 2 TV, patiently demolishing Fillon's proposals to rewrite the school history curriculum. She is also a key figure in initiatives such as Aggiornamento his-geo, a collective of history teachers critically reflecting on the curriculum.^[4] In 2021, Larrère published the strikingly titled *Rage Against The Machisme*, which seeks to popularise the history of women's struggles, rejecting simplistic notions of "waves" in the history of feminism.^[5]

De Cock and Larrère's vision is appropriate to the topic. For much of its history, the metro was (to a greater extent than, say, the London Underground) a predominantly working-class form of transport, often disdained by wealthier Parisians. Yet its station names are disproportionately bourgeois in inspiration. The few working-class individuals to have had metro stations named after them, such as Jules Joffrin, an early deputy of the Possibilist branch of socialism who in 1882 proposed municipal boulangeries and the public ownership of gas, are interestingly brought back to life in a book which does not hold back from spelling out the class contempt with which they were treated during their lifetimes. Martin Nadaud, the builder who learned of his election to the National Assembly in 1849 whilst working on scaffolding and became a prominent opponent of Napoleon III, had a station named after him in 1906, as one of the first people to advocate a metro.

This book succeeds in highlighting popular history links even in the most haughty-seeming places. When *gilets jaunes* built barricades on the Champs-Élysées in 2018, the location was not as incongruous as it appeared. It was on Les Champs that the strike movement of May 1917--which succeeded in forcing the government to adopt the *semaine anglaise* of paid Saturdays and Sundays off work--first began. Riots took place there in 1927 in protest at the execution of the Italian-American anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti, in 1947 against the repression of Communist-led strikes, and in 1975 against the execution of ETA members in Spain. At various points *La plus belle avenue du monde* witnessed demonstrations for and against Algerian independence, the movement of May '68, and feminism.^[6]

It might be objected that De Cock and Larrère's point about marginalisation is overdone. Particularly in eastern Paris, station names quite often reflect the historical impact of the French Left. As Richard Vinen once pointed out, to travel the raised portion of line 2 from Barbès-Rochechouart to Colonel Fabien via Stalingrad and Jaurès is to be immersed in "the history and struggles of the French working class."^[7] Yet it is true that the casual visitor may be more likely to come across generals, battles, cardinals, establishment statesmen, and capitalists, from Richard-Lenoir to André Citroën.

While some of the individuals featured in *Manifs et stations* are relatively well known, such as the resister Madeleine Riffaud who, in July 1944 at the age of 19, killed a German officer on the Pont de Solférino, many more are not. Little-known experiments in autodidacticism and self-management are recovered, such as the Bibliothèque des Amis de l'Instruction, founded in the 3rd arrondissement in 1861 as one of the first free and independent libraries open to workers. Peripheral areas of Paris are amply featured, such as the 19th arrondissement's Butte-du-Chapeau-Rouge. There, in 1913, a mass open-air meeting to denounce the extension of military service to three years was addressed by Jean Jaurès, but also three women: the pacifist and feminist activist Maria Vérone, the founder of the SFIO's women's group, Louise Saumoneau, and the educator Alice Jouenne.[8]

Moreover, as De Cock and Larrère rightly stress, absurdly few metro stations are named after women. From the Montmartre-based Communard Nathalie Le Mél to "Irène," a metro driver badly beaten by police in January 2020, De Cock and Larrère are particularly adept at re-centring female histories in Paris' "great man" memorial landscape. There is much gender rebalancing: while, for example, Henri Rol-Tanguy is included in the section on Denfert-Rochereau because of his famous Resistance headquarters underneath the square, so too is his less well-known wife, Cécile Rol-Tanguy, who also worked in the HQ, one of a number of Communist women activists who played crucial roles in Resistance communications during the Liberation of Paris.

At the time of publication, just six metro stations bore the names of women. As De Cock and Larrère point out, four of the six are merely co-named with a man—Barbès-Rochechouart, Boucicaut, Chardon-Lagache, and Pierre et Marie Curie—while one, Madeleine, is named after Saint Mary Magdalene. Since the latter's closest link to the French capital is that she might, according to legend, have lived in a cave 800 kilometres away at a time when Paris barely existed, Louise Michel was thus the only Parisienne in history with a metro station to herself—outside Paris *intra-muros*, in Levallois-Perret.

Today, the situation is improving slightly, though remains ludicrously far from anything approaching parity. The book omits (perhaps because of its focus on figures from the left) the 2018 renaming of Europe station after Simone Veil. Since the book's publication, Gaîté station became Gaîté-Josephine Baker in 2021, and the latest southern extension of line 4 has led to the opening in 2022 of two metro stations in the municipality of Bagneux named after Resistance heroine Lucie Aubrac and 1960s singer Barbara, following a public consultation.[9]

Yet the peripheral location of such stations points to how extensions of the network into what used to be the *banlieue rouge* have facilitated a recent tendency towards the democratisation of transport nomenclature, alongside the construction of tramways at the margins of Paris offering plentiful opportunities for new names. As De Cock and Larrère put it, "un déséquilibre cependant comblé par les choix de dénomination de stations de tramway, plus féminisées" (p. 80). If a later volume of *Manifs et stations* were applied to non-metro forms of public transport, it might encompass, for example, the bus stop in Nanterre named after the massacre of Algerian demonstrators on 17 October 1961. Yet it seems that the further passengers travel towards the centre of Paris, the less diverse station names become.

This does not, however, neatly map onto ideological dividing lines. The accident of history that the black flag-waving anarchist Louise Michel was buried in the now wealthy town of Levallois-Perret accounts for the paradox of "une révolutionnaire chez les Balkany" (p. 79)—a reference to

the long dominance over the local politics of Levallois-Perret by the rightwing Sarkozians, and now convicted tax evaders, Patrick and Isabelle Balkany. However, given the metro theme of the book, it would have been nice to have had some explanation of how Louise Michel station came to be named. The station name dates from 1946, long before the Balkanys. Surprisingly, the town had a Communist mayor until as late as 1983.[10]

If, earlier in the book, this can appear quite a Franco-French history, more diverse histories are occasionally signposted, such as the role of the Temple quarter as a centre of workers' internationalism in the 1860s. Later, postcolonial and minority histories appear that succeed in going beyond the most obvious examples. The Communist counter-exhibition to the 1931 Colonial Exhibition is rightly credited not only to well-known French figures such as Louis Aragon but also, for example, to the Malian Pan-Africanist Tiemoko Garan Kouyaté. This works both ways, though, highlighting a number of French individuals active in solidarity with colonised peoples. Messali Hadj, for example, gets less space than his French partner, Emilie Busquant, given the soubriquet "mère du peuple algérien" for her role in, for example, writing a report about Algeria for the League of Nations used in propaganda against the Exhibition.

It is, of course, important to highlight such histories of solidarity: De Cock has recounted how her own understanding of the omnipresence of colonial memory was influenced by going from a more privileged background to teach in Nanterre, where her students' families had lived experience of 17 October 1961 and of the shantytowns.[11] Yet it might be questioned why the section on 17 October, in a book that seeks to restore names and agency to the people who made the history of Paris, names no fewer than eleven individual French people, yet no individual Algerian people (with the exception of the subsequent work of the sociologist Abdelmalek Sayad).

However, the following section on the less well-known police massacre eight years earlier on Bastille Day 1953 does name all 6 Algerian people and one French person killed that day by police at Place de la Nation: Abdallah Bacha, Larbi Daoui, Abdelkader Draris, Mouhoub Illul, Maurice Lurot, Tahar Madjène and Amar Tadjakit, just as the nine protesters killed at Charonne metro on 8 February 1962 are individually named: Jean-Pierre Bernard, Fanny Dewerpe, Daniel Féry, Anne-Claude Godeau, Edouard Lemarchand, Suzanne Martorell, Hippolyte Pina, Maurice Pochard and Raymond Wintgens. As De Cock and Larrère point out, one other victim of police brutality at Charonne, Mohamed Ait Saada, died from his wounds twenty years later, yet is absent from the Communist Party/CGT-sponsored plaque at Charonne metro. Maybe one day, they will all have metro stations named after them.

Another good example of the gender rebalancing referred to above is that, while CGT leader Henri Krasucki is mentioned in passing, his fellow Main d'oeuvre immigrée Communist Resistance youth leader, Paulette Sarcey (who also grew up in Belleville's Polish-Jewish community and survived Auschwitz) is given more space than her better-known male comrade. However, I would question how appropriate it is to refer to Sarcey only by such a heavily francized form of her husband's surname Swiczarczyk. At the time of her resistance activity, her name was Paulette Szlifke, a fact made clear in her Maitron entry, yet neither in this book nor in the official plaque put up outside her home.[12]

Some famous Parisian sites of left memory are also included, but in a way that points interestingly to less well-known histories. It was probably inevitable that *Manifs et stations* would include a May '68 section, and good that it highlights the least well-known of the key student leaders,

Jacques Sauvageot.[13] Yet the title used, “Odéon-Sorbonne-Saint-Ouen,” appropriately reflects shifts in recent historiography by linking such famed sites of the Latin Quarter with the story of Jocelyne, the worker at the Wonder factory in Saint-Ouen whose emotionally powerful refusal to return to work on 11 June 1968 was memorably captured in a clip later taken up by the director Hervé Le Roux in a 1996 film ironically only shown in the Latin Quarter.

Similarly, the book signposts that near Père Lachaise cemetery on rue des Bluets, there used to be a maternity hospital set up in 1937 by the CGT for metal workers. In the 1950s, the gynaecologist Fernand Lamaze introduced *l'accouchement sans douleur* there, a supposedly pain-free childbirth technique based on psychoprophylaxis, a combination that he had observed in the Soviet Union of relaxation, breathing exercises, and conditioned reflexes. However, De Cock and Larrère present Lamaze uncritically: his critics are depicted simply as conservatives more concerned with combatting Soviet influence than women's pain. This does not take account of critiques of Lamaze by activists such as Sheila Kitzinger, who condemned Lamaze for seeking to control women by making them feel responsible for their own pain and the success or failure of their birth. Moreover, recent work by Marilène Vuille has shown that Lamaze's methods were unoriginal, overlapping with those advocated by the English doctor Grantly Dick-Read in the 1930s and 1940s. The Soviet version of psychoprophylaxis had previously appeared in a French medical article written by Henri Zaidman, a Communist doctor who, unlike Lamaze, could read Russian. Vuille argues that accounts, published in *L'Humanité* and reproduced by subsequent historians, of a barrage of hostility against Lamaze by right-wing doctors were much exaggerated. Rather, there was a consensus among doctors of different ideological persuasions that while Lamaze's methods worked to some extent, they were not radically new and could not eliminate pain.[14]

Manifs et stations is well illustrated with a variety of powerful images and photos of potential use in teaching, such as that by the photographer Willy Ronis of the Citroën trade unionist Rose Zehner addressing fellow metal workers about the Spanish Civil War in 1938, which remained undiscovered until 1980.[15] Nevertheless, some practical criticisms might be made. The book's potential use as a guidebook is—at least for audiences not already very familiar with Parisian geography—somewhat restricted by the decision to place entries in chronological rather than geographical order. This decision is perfectly sound from a historical point of view but means that one cannot, as the illustrations of metro lines between each chapter might imply, travel directly from one entry to the next via the metro. Nor are any itineraries suggested or maps provided, although you could certainly use individual chapters as a strong basis for themed tours of individual sites. The accompanying page on the Maitron website offers links to Maitron entries, in the style of a metro map, which does not, however, correspond to the actual layout of the metro.[16] Finally, the last few pages of the book on metro workers, if frustratingly brief, point usefully to a continuous thread of militancy amongst them, almost as old as the metro itself.

NOTES

[1] For example, Guillaume Guidon, “Le Métronome de Lorant Deutsch : un exemple de pseudo-histoire,” *Cortecs* (19 June 2013). <https://cortecs.org/informations-medias/histoire-le-metronome-de-lorant-deutsch-un-exemple-de-pseudo-histoire/>.

[2] Laurence De Cock, *Dans la classe de l'homme blanc. L'enseignement du fait colonial en France des années 1980 à nos jours* (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 2018); Mathilde Larrère, *L'Urne et le fusil: La Garde nationale parisienne de 1830 à 1848* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2016).

[3] "Mathilde Larrère et *Rage against the machisme*," broadcast on France Inter (6 October 2020). <https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceinter/podcasts/par-jupiter/mathilde-larrere-et-rage-against-the-machisme-9563870>; *Les Détricateuses* ran from 2016 to 2019 and can be viewed at <https://www.mediapart.fr/studio/videos/emissions/les-detricoteuses>.

[4] "Laurence de Cock offre *Le mythe nationale* à François Fillon," clip from *Politique*, broadcast France 2 (23 March 2017). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUEE9hK61G0>; Aggiornamento's work is collected at <https://aggiornamento.hypotheses.org/>.

[5] Mathilde Larrère, *Rage against the machisme* (Bordeaux: Editions du Détour, 2020).

[6] See also Ludivine Bantigny, "*La plus belle avenue du monde*." *Une histoire sociale et politique des Champs-Élysées* (Paris: La Découverte, 2020).

[7] Richard Vinen, *France, 1934-1970* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1996), 148.

[8] Not to be confused with the better-known Parc des Buttes-Chaumont. I had been visiting Paris on research trips for twenty years before discovering, as a result of the Silhouette short film festival held there each August, the existence of the Butte-du-Chapeau-Rouge, a 1930s park on the site of nineteenth-century fortifications.

[9] Ollia Horton, "Paris metro extension honours illustrious French women," 15 January 2022. <https://www.rfi.fr/en/france/20220115-paris-metro-extention-honours-illustrious-french-women>.

[10] Philippe Subra, "La géopolitique, une ou plurielle? Place, enjeux et outils d'une géopolitique locale," *Hérodote* no. 146-147 (2012): 45-70.

[11] Jean-François Mondot, "Laurence De Cock : l'histoire n'est pas un roman," *L'Histoire* 472 (June 2020). <https://www.lhistoire.fr/portrait/laurence-de-cock%C2%A0-lhistoire-est-pas-un-roman>.

[12] Marc Giovaninetti, "SARCEY Paulette, née SZLIFKE Paula, épouse SWICZARCZYK, changé en SARCEY; dénomée Martine par les Brigades spéciales," Maitron entry (9 September 2015). <https://maitron.fr/spip.php?article175389>; Union des Juifs pour la Résistance et l'entraide, "Paris 20^{ème}: hommage à Paulette Sarcey – 3 novembre 2021," <https://ujre.fr/paris-20eme-hommage-paulette-sarcey/>.

[13] See also Daniel A. Gordon, "Tribute to Jacques Sauvageot (1943-2017)," *French History Network Blog* (November 2017). <https://frenchhistorysociety.co.uk/1574/>.

[14] Eliane Glaser, "Tell her the truth," *London Review of Books* 37 no. 11 (4 June 2015); Marilène Vuille, *Médecine, femmes et politique: histoire de doctrines et de pratiques transnationales (XXe siècle)*

(PhD thesis, University of Geneva, 2017); Marilène Vuille, “L'obstétrique sous influence : émergence de l'accouchement sans douleur en France et en Suisse dans les années 1950,” *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 64 no. 1 (2017): 116-149.

[15] This photo has also been featured in other memorialisations of recent years, such as the 2016 exhibition at Paris' Hôtel de Ville to mark eighty years since the Popular Front: see Benjamin Partridge, “The Entangled Sites of Memory: The Significance of Photography for the Contentious Movements of May 1968 and June 1936,” (PhD thesis, University of Newcastle, 2020). <https://theses.ncl.ac.uk/jspui/bitstream/10443/4925/1/Partridge%20B%202020.pdf>, Chapter 7.

[16] “Maitron Multimedia : Manifs et Stations,” 2020, <https://maitron.fr/spip.php?article224147>.

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