4 Photography, Memory, and Women in May ’68

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Abstract
The dominant narrative configurations of May ’68 in France have rendered the figure of the “radical protesting student”—typically male—as the primary actor in the events, while women’s role has largely been erased from the “official” collective memory. The most frequently exhibited and published visual documents of the era dovetail neatly with these narratives, representing female participants either as problematic emblems or as passive, inactive, and bereft of political agency. This chapter focuses on photographs of female participants in the events that can be considered “canonical,” and asks how women have been portrayed in the visual narratives that dominated the post-1968 public discourse and whether alternative representations of them were, and maybe still are, excluded from this canon.

Keywords: women, protest movements, photography, May ’68, memory

The students’ and workers’ uprising in France during the months of May and June 1968, also known as “the events of May 68” or just “May ’68,” have generated an enduring visual legacy of photographs, documentary footage, graffiti, political cartoons, and posters that were produced collectively in the occupied École des Beaux Arts, the so-called Atelier Populaire. Most of these artefacts were kept in sparse and incomplete archives, both state and personal ones, while a smaller number were reproduced in publications, media, and commemorative exhibitions in the decades that followed the events. The process of compiling a best-of list of photographs and posters was accelerated around anniversaries, when historians, commentators, protagonists, editors, and curators used May ’68 artefacts to illustrate their accounts of the events or to organize commemorative exhibitions and

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magazine issues. As a result, particular photographs have been rendered "canonical" and, as such, they have contributed to the construction and reinforcement of the dominant narratives that have grown up around May '68.

Over the last 50 years, there have been intense debates about the nature and specific aspects of May '68, as well as its historical and political significance, which have given rise to "a certain, restricted perception" of the events and a "contested history" (Reynolds, 2007, p. 2). The interpretations of May 1968 that dominated French public discourse in the following decades attempted to manage the memory of May '68, often by a systematic elimination of its political radicalism and its societal effects. Often reduced to a "harmless" youth revolt that heralded the triumph of individualism and the emergence of neoliberalism, May '68 has been interpreted as an "ephemeral incident" with only a short-term impact (Rancière, 2019, p. 30). In his re-examination of May '68, Rancière (2019) argues that specific attention should be paid to the ways in which the events are narrated as well as to the interrelationship "between narration, time and politics" (p. 30).

Photography has played a crucial role in the ways in which the events of May '68 have been narrated, remembered, and commemorated. As "sites of memory," dominant photographic documents have often provided the basis on which historical interpretations of the events have been constructed. Memory, in this case, equates to *cultural memory*, that is "shared memories of the past" as products of "mediation, textualization and acts of communication" (Rigney, 2005, p. 14). These mediated representations of the past are the subject of selection, revision, and repression. In the case of May '68, a "battle of memories" has taken place, not as "an exchange of arguments, a discussion whose stake would be to tease out reflection on the part of the public; it is rather one voice drowning out others" (Ross, 2002, p. 154). Ross (2002) has effectively shown that the narrative strategies and spokesmen that dominated the public discourse since the 1970s and became ubiquitous in media and state commemorations promoted a revisionist rendering of the events. It is not accidental that Ross refers to spokesmen, as male participants' memoirs offered key narratives in the years that followed.

This emphasis on spokesmen opens up questions about the "absence of gender as a category of analysis in the vast majority of secondary as well as primary analyses of these events" (Evans, 2009, p. 333). As Evans (2009) reminds us,

> most national historiographies of 1968 … have pursued women's history in isolation, thereby leaving the transformative implications of gender

> analysis outside the mainstream narratives. Closer investigation reveals the power of a gendered paradigm embedded in the ethos of the movements themselves that framed the ways they told their own stories, the ways the popular media perceived them, and most subsequent historical accounts as well. (p. 333)

Equally, questions about the ways in which women, alongside other figures such as the workers, migrants, farmers, and the unemployed, have been pushed out of the representational frame have been overlooked. There are at least two reasons for this that are inherent to the medium of photography. The first concerns the photographer's own prejudices and their awareness of the political possibilities of the medium. The second relates to the ways in which such photographs have been used by subsequent institutional framings.

This chapter focuses on photographs of female participants in the events that can be considered "canonical," and asks how the role of women has been portrayed in the visual narratives that dominated the post-1968 public discourse. In order to do so, it first returns to the conditions under which the photojournalistic images of the May events were produced and then traces how specific canonical photographs of individuals prevailed in commemorative events in the decades that followed. It also asks whether alternative representations of women were, and maybe still are, excluded from this canon.

May '68 through the Lens of Photojournalists

Throughout the months of May and June 1968, the protests on the streets of Paris, the barricades, the clashes between the protesters and the police, and the occupied factories and buildings were photographed by professional photojournalists who took to the streets of Paris. The great majority of them belonged to the post-war generation of photojournalists whose photo-reporting was facilitated by the availability of portable cameras and the high demand for their images in the mainstream press and the popular illustrated magazines of the time. In a famous motto, Robert Capa, one of the founders of the influential Magnum photo agency, celebrated quick reflexes, physical strength, and proximity to the action: "if your pictures are not good enough, you are not close enough" (Hacking 2012, p. 191). The proliferation of photojournalistic agencies in the post-war era, such as Magnum and Gamma, gave affiliated photographers the freedom to cover

stories from different angles and resulted in newspapers and magazines ending up with a great number of pictures, only a fraction of which could be published (Bair, 2015, p. 231). The photographs taken on the streets of Paris, accordingly, were intended for publication in the mainstream printed media, accompanying news stories and often dramatic headlines about the protests. Most of the photojournalists who covered the events in Paris were men, with the exception of Martine Franck and Janine Niépce.[1]

While there may be some slight differences in the style of the photojournalists who documented the events, the themes that they photographed were similar: they covered the barricades in the Latin Quarter, the general assemblies at the occupied Sorbonne University, and the clashes between students and police on the Parisian streets. Zooming out in order to portray the magnitude of the protesting body was one of the common working methodologies deployed by many photojournalists documenting protest movements. The photographic recording of crowds reduced the diversity of the movement to a homogenous mass (Memou, 2013). Nevertheless, taking a closer look at the oceanic photographs of crowds, we see that women have a distinct presence, testifying to the importance of their participation in the demonstrations, occupations, and assemblies. The photographic documents also act as evidence for the unprecedented intermingling of different social classes, genders, and age groups that was a distinctive characteristic of participation in the events.

Nonetheless, in the decades that followed, the photographs of crowds did not become "canonical" photojournalistic documents of May '68. Next to overview shots of crowds, photojournalists had also zoomed in, focusing on the individual, the single participant. As Hariman and Lucaites (2007) put it, "photojournalism produces many, many images of representative individuals, and description of an individual's experience is the standard lead-in for any feature news story" (p. 90). This is a common photojournalistic practice, according to which representative individuals are chosen to stand for the collective (Hariman & Lucaites, 2007). In the case of May '68, I argue that photojournalists tended to focus on the young male protestor of student appearance, portrayed either as a leader or as a violent subject. At the same time, they represented proportionately fewer women and when

1 A partial list of photographers includes Gilles Caron, Claude Dityvon, Ellie Kagan, Guy Le Querrec, Serge Hambourg, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Philippe Vermès, Jo Schnapp, Martine Franck, Jean-Pierre Rey, André Sas, Georges Melet, Jean-Claude Gautrand, Alain Dagbert, Hervé Gloaguen, Janine Niépce, Gökşin Sipahioğlu, François Hers, Michel Piquemal, Patrice Habans, Henri Bureau, and Marc Riboud, amongst others.

they represented them, they focused on them as the leading figures carrying a flag at the head of the demonstration.

In terms of leadership, the bourgeois media tried to find an easily recognizable figure that could be presented as the student leader. As Gitlin (2003) shows, this also occurred in the representation of other movements in the 1960s where one individual was certified by the media as newsworthy and used as a stand-in for a diverse group. Gitlin rightly points out that such leaders were never entirely invented by the media: they were often already distinguished figures within the movement who were granted a celebrity status by the media. Writing about the American 1960s, Gitlin argues that "the movement elevated many leaders; the media selected for celebrity those among them who most closely matched prefabricated images of what an opposition leader should look and sound like: articulate, theatrical, bombastic, and knowing and inventive in the ways of packaging messages for their mediability" (p. 154).

Many of these characteristics can be said to be applicable to Daniel Cohn-Bendit, the "spokesperson" chosen by the media in May '68. Cohn-Bendit was a sociology student at the University of Paris' campus in Nanterre who had become known in university Marxist–anarchist political circles. His ironic attitude and spontaneity had drawn the attention of the media as early as 8 January 1968 in an incident with the minister of youth and sports, François Missoffe, during his visit to the campus of Nanterre to inspect a new swimming pool. Cohn-Bendit accused him of not having included the sexual problems of young people in his recent book on French youth. When the minister's reply implied that Cohn-Bendit take a dip in the swimming pool, the latter responded: "That's the kind of answer you would get under a fascist regime" (Reader, 1993, p. 7). The importance of the incident resides, to a large extent, in the style of confrontation, which "inaugurated Cohn-Bendit's celebrity as a verbal provocateur" (Seidman, 2004, p. 61). Photographed marching in the first row of demonstrations along with Jacques Sauvageot (vice president of UNEF) and Alain Geismar (general secretary of SNEsup) or speaking in assemblies alongside Jean-Paul Sartre, Daniel Cohn-Bendit became a favourite subject for many photojournalists.[2] Gilles Caron's photograph of Cohn-Bendit in which he, with a lively and mocking expression on his face, confronts a policeman has been widely disseminated.[3] His sarcasm,

2 UNEF was the Union Nationale des Étudiants de France [National Union of French Students], and SNEsup the Syndicat National de l' Enseignement Supérieur [National Union of Higher Education].

3 See image here: https://www.polkamagazine.com/radio-mai-68-iconique-mai-68-historique/

as captured by Caron, was seen as reflecting the movement as a whole, which became known for its rigorous critique of De Gaulle's repressive government and the values of conventional and conformist "bourgeois" society.

Cohn-Bendit's popularity within the movement reached a high point towards the end of May, when he was refused re-entry to France and solidarity demonstrations were organized on the streets of Paris (Feenberg & Freedman, 2001). Nonetheless, his celebrity status was undoubtedly at variance with the perception that students, and even workers, may have had of the movement, as an anti-hierarchical grassroots movement. The movement tended to resist strict hierarchy, official leadership, and centralized structures. It was developed and organized collectively by a variety of political groups and *comités d'action* [action committees]. The emphatically collective nature of the events was manifested in the many innovative forms of direct action mounted by its activists including sit-ins, teach-ins, consciousness-raising groups, marches on factories, and the occupation of public and private spaces, challenging "the 'normal' distribution of words and actions, spaces and times"(Rancière, 2019, p. 39).

The second dominant figure in the photojournalistic coverage of May '68 was not a named celebrity, but an anonymous student throwing stones. There are several variations of this visual theme including Gilles Caron's photograph of a demonstrator throwing a stone across an empty street while the policemen are invisible.[4] Bruno Barbey (1998) and Claude Dityvon (1988) made similar photographs, in which protestors are depicted in aggressive poses, gesturing violently, while the police are not included in the frame or appear to be inactive. It is not accidental that these photographs were picked up for reproduction in the mainstream coverage of the events, given that both left- and right-wing mainstream French press condemned the protesters' insulting language and violence. What was often left out of the television and radio coverage was the police brutality, which became the main topic of criticism in student tracts and publications (Memou, 2013). One of the most significant of the protest newspapers, *Action*, published photographs of policemen brutally beating protesters with their batons and cartoons depicting the police as violent and repressive personifications of an authoritarian state (Memou, 2013).

Alongside the depictions of leaders and of violent individuals, photojournalists also zoomed in on female individuals. While female figures were not as often represented as their male counterparts, they

4 The photograph is reproduced on the cover of one of Caron's photobooks, *Sous les pavés la plage* (1993).

were customarily represented carrying a flag or clenching their fists at the head of demonstrations. The most renowned example is Jean-Pierre Rey's photograph of the model Caroline de Bendern on the shoulders of her artist friend Jean Jacques Lebel, carrying his Vietcong flag. Taken at Place Edmond-Rostand near the Luxembourg Gardens on 13 May, Rey photographed De Bendern when she climbed on the shoulders of her friend because her feet were sore. "La jeune fille au drapeau" [the young girl with the flag] or "La Marianne de Mai 68" [Marianne of 68] as the photograph became known was published in the American *Life* Magazine on 24 May and in *Paris Match* of 15–22 June 1968. The first publication of the photograph in the two-spread dedicated to the French events in *Life* magazine is of particular interest as it presents what was happening in Paris as a youth revolt that was part of an international struggle against the old structures alongside the American anti-Vietnam movement and the Prague Spring (Anon quoted in Gunthert, 2018).

Bruno Barbey took two similar photographs, whose composition shares striking visual similarities to "La Marianne de Mai 68." Taken only three days before Rey's image, the first photograph is a close-up image of an anti-Gaullist demonstration. In the first row, as the caption reminds us, we see Jacques Sauvageot, vice president of UNEF and Alain Geismar, general secretary of SNEup, who had emerged as the most well-known leaders of the movement by 7 May. In the middle of the composition, we see a woman sitting on the shoulders of a male protester holding a monochromatic flag, presumably red. An array of similar flags occupy the upper space of the photograph, which captures what is seemingly a rather male-dominated protest. Barbey's second photograph is a close up of a demonstration in support of General de Gaulle on the 30 May 1968. It depicts two women sitting on the shoulders of the men in the demonstration's front row holding the latest issue of the newspaper *France-Soir* with the headlines: "I stay," "I keep Pompidou." It was taken on 30 May, when one million people marched in support of General de Gaulle.

"La Marianne de Mai 68," and, to a certain extent, the women in Barbey's photographs, are portrayed in the familiar and stylized mode of French 19th-century Romantic painter Eugène Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* (Gunthert, 2018). Frequently noticed by journalists, this visual similarity cannot be accidental. As Hariman and Lucaites (2007) assert, iconic photojournalistic images often share visual aspects with celebrated middlebrow paintings and draw upon artistic conventions recognized by a wider public, regardless of the audience's (non-)familiarity with the visual arts. Painted to commemorate the July Revolution of 1830, Delacroix's

allegory of *Liberty* is personified as a young, rebellious woman who recalls the Revolution of 1789 and the idea of popular sovereignty. Delacroix's painting has been recognized beyond French society as a universal image of revolt for freedom. Caroline's posture, gesture, and performance for the camera (which was a result of her awareness of being photographed), as well as Rey's composition and framing of her improvisational performance, recreates Delacroix's familiar visual patterns. According to Leblanc (2009), the version of Rey's photograph that has been most widely circulated was a version of his initial print that was cropped in order to achieve the pictorial reference to the well-known painting.[5] In addition, Leblanc and Versavel (2018) argue that the cultural significance of the photograph grew in the decades that followed, and that it was especially prominent in commemorations on the 20th anniversary.

Photographs of Women and Their Afterlives

The public commemorative reconstructions of May '68 have re-used the photographs of recognizable individuals, including the photographs of women leading the protests. Kristin Ross (2002), giving particular attention to commemorative television programmes, documentary footage, and magazines, has demonstrated the ways in which the subsequent representations or "afterlives" of the events have shaped and reshaped our understanding of them. The role that photography plays in the construction of these subsequent interpretations has been only partially examined, and the visual representation of gender in particular has remained largely unaddressed (Leblanc & Versavel, 2018). This may reflect the fact that photography has traditionally been bound together with history in an epistemological hierarchy whereby photography is reduced to the mere illustration of historical texts. In this hierarchy, the narrative potential of photography is overlooked. In addition, the interest in gender and memory in the historiography of 1968 is a relatively recent phenomenon, which has not yet included questions of visual representation (Colvin & Karcher, 2020; Evans, 2009).

In the decades that followed 1968, women's memories of their involvement in the events were not foregrounded. While women participated in large numbers, a gendered-hierarchical discursive norm persisted within the

5 The digitized version of Rey's reportage as part of the 2008 initiative of CODHOS (Collectif des centres de documentation en histoire ouvrière et sociale) includes wide shots that depict many more participants.

cultural memory of the movements (Colvin & Karcher, 2020). As Evans (2009) observes:

> closer investigation reveals the power of a gendered paradigm embedded in the ethos of the movements themselves that framed the ways they told their own stories, the ways the popular media perceived them, and most subsequent historical accounts as well. The drama of fathers and sons, filled with military metaphor and sometimes-violent conflict, "made sense" to participants and observers alike. (p. 333)

In France, the same male voices were allowed to interpret the events and the trajectories of the lives of these men were "projected retrospectively back onto May, where the seeds, at least, for their current transformation can, amazingly, now be found" (Ross, 2002, p. 157). By the time of the 20th anniversary, the same few, by now famous, individuals (among whom Cohn-Bendit) became "the official memory functionaries and custodians" of '68 history on television (Ross, 2002, pp. 154–155). On the basis of their activism, they were granted the authority to "represent," "interpret," "deny," and "repudiate" the events (Ross, 2002, pp. 154–155). Their point of view and interests coincided "with the interests and opinions of the government elites and corporations that own the media" (pp. 154–155).

Such individual narratives were consistent with dominant, political narratives since the 1970s, which have denounced the emancipatory potential and revolutionary aspirations of the 1968 movement, often reducing it to a "harmless" youth revolt that heralded the triumph of individualism and the emergence of neoliberalism. Emerging in the mid-1970s, the ideas of the so-called "nouveaux philosophes" were central to this debate. Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut (1985) claimed that the events of '68 pre-empted the rise of contemporary individualism, and Gilles Lipovetsky (1983) claimed that "the '68 spirit" contributed decisively to precipitating narcissistic individualism's actualization as the dominant form of contemporary subjectivity. Ross (2002) argues that by the second anniversary, "the absence of analysis of '68 culture, language, or history" was complete and the movement and its collective forms had been diluted within the individual stories of particular individuals (p. 191).

Visual documents foregrounding the role of individuals were carefully chosen from the large visual legacy to enhance such interpretations. "La Marianne de Mai 68" is an exemplary case. The photograph resurfaced on the 10th anniversary, in various iterations, including Poivre d'Avror's *Mai 68–Mai 78* book cover and the covers of *Nouvel Observateur* and *Paris*

Figure 4.1: Paris Match n°1511 du 12 mai 1978. British Library Item: LOU.F234E. Photo: Antigoni Memou.

Match (published 29 April 1978 and 12 May 1978, respectively). Interestingly, in *Paris Match*, "La Marianne de Mai 68" was published next to Barbey's photograph of the pro-Gaullist demonstration (Figure 4.1). Particular emphasis should be given to the fact that, alongside "La Marianne," *Paris Match* reproduced the photograph of the pro-Gaullist demonstration and not the student anti-Gaullist one. The undifferentiated close-up photographs of the collective body in a pro- and anti-Gaullist protest—in Rey's and Barbey's photographs respectively—project a generalized image of May '68 as a youth uprising, eliminating the ideological differences at play. As a result, in the subsequent decades, the image of the pro-Gaullist demonstration was used widely and came to stand for an event—the students' and workers' uprising—that it does not actually represent. For example, on the 40th anniversary of 1968, the photograph was used in a leaflet advertising a series of commemorative events on May 1968 in London (Hayward Gallery, 2008). On the 50th anniversary, it was featured on the Facebook page that advertised a roundtable discussion about the legacy of May 1968 at the Beaubourg museum in Paris. The fact that a photograph of a pro-Gaullist protest has been used during these commemorations to stand for the students' and workers' uprising indicates that these public acts of *remembering* the events in fact entail the danger of *forgetting* central parts of them.

On the 20th anniversary, some biographical details of Caroline de Bendern, the woman on Jean-Pierre Rey's photograph, were "revealed" in *L' Express*. "Marianne" was a model of English aristocratic descent. Due to her involvement in 1968, her rich grandfather had disinherited her.[6] This information was used to frame the image in a new way: the revolt of 1968 could be attributed to the ephemeral and spontaneous qualities of youth, who later in life regretted (or even quite literally paid for) their involvement with the movement. In 1988, Rey's "La Marianne" appeared again on the cover of *Paris Match* alongside the headline: "We were 20 years old, the stars of today will remember."[7] The past tense on the cover echoes Daniel Cohn-Bendit's book title: *Nous l' avons tant aimée, la révolution* [the revolution, we loved it so much] published in 1986. They both referred to the 20-year-olds of the past and to the events of May as a symptom of their youth, which has now been done with and abandoned.

By the 20th anniversary, photographs such as "La Marianne" had become part of a larger constellation of images and discursive formations which foregrounded the perception of the events as a youth revolt. Some sociological accounts had reached the same conclusions. Sociologist Alain Touraine's writings interpreted the events as a "youth revolt" and as a "pure expression of socio-hormonal frustration, a biological convulsion" (1971, pp. 27–28). He argued that '68 marked a new type of conflict, "a new social movement," which emerged from the values and forms of action created by "postindustrial" society. According to Touraine (1971), the new societal groups participating in this conflict (i.e. students) revealed the diminishing role of the working class as the central actor in what had become a struggle against technocracy and not against capitalism (pp. 27–28).

Shaped by the anniversary commemorations of the events, the public memory of May '68 celebrated the role of "renowned protagonists" often visually represented in monumental and epic forms. "La Marianne" is such a monumental form. Being yet another representative of this generation, whose involvement with the movement has been regretted, repudiated, or just left behind. The cultural memory of '68 is formulated through the repetition of the same stories, the same narratives and ultimately, the same photographs of women circulated in a wide range of different media and formats, from TV commemorations to printed images in magazines. It is through this "repetition in different media" rather than "isolated acts of

6 For more on the framing of 'La Marianne de Mai 68' in *Paris Match* and *L' Express* on the 20th anniversary, see Leblanc (2009).

7 See the 1988 issue on http://imagesociale.fr/6887

remembrance" that the cultural memory of May '68 has been constructed (Rigney, 2005, p. 35).

Within this repetitive cycle, specific historic information was lost, and photographs were often used as mere illustrations. In its multiple reproductions, "La Marianne" has lost its historical anchorage. The day it was taken, 13 May, was one of the most important moments for the movement, when students and workers demonstrated together in Paris, in a march led by both student leaders and trade unions. The general strike triggered 450 demonstrations in various French cities and towns, especially those with large working-class populations (Vigna, 2011). Following this successful event, workers called for the continuation of the strike, initially at the Sud-Aviation factory at Bouguenais on the outskirts of Nantes, followed by the Renault factories and the Lockheed plant in Beauvais (Vigna, 2011). This wave of strikes spread to factories throughout the country and culminated in a general strike involving workers in public transport, petrol stations, farmers, artists, doctors, and mass media workers, affecting both the private and the public sectors (Artières & Zancarini-Fournel, 2018). The duration of the strike and its geographical diffusion (across the country), as well as the wide range of direct actions taken by the strikers were unprecedented (Vigna, 2011, pp. 48–50). The crisis swiftly developed into a broad-based and widespread political action, centred on a critique of authoritarian and hierarchical societal structures and engaging diverse social groups that included students, unskilled and semi-skilled workers, the professional classes, and the unemployed. Appearing on *Paris Match*'s cover (and several other publications) without this historical context, the photograph's meaning is greatly and effectively reduced. This narrative boils the May events down to a youth revolt, a celebration of the individual, and reduces the involvement of women in the events to emblematic figures.

The dominant narrative of May 1968 obscures the extent of a movement that combined various societal groups, including women, whose role in the events was more important than has hitherto been recognized (Evans, 2009). On the one hand, the absence of gender as a distinct category in 1968 is partly responsible for that. As Ross (2002) argues,

> women activists in the Comités d' Action, in the streets, or in the factories tended to self-identify as any number of things, as workers, as members of different groupuscules or political tendencies, as German Jews, as the 'pègre,' as activists or citizens—rather than as women per se. (p. 155)

While gender difference seems to not have been consciously experienced during the events, the events shaped the emergent feminist movement in

France and influenced their action repertoire, including "provocative forms, spontaneous gatherings, and scepticism of traditional forms of organisation and institutionalisation" (Greenwald, 2018, p. 108). On the other hand, various other collective bodies, such as workers (French and foreigners) and their unions, professionals, farmers, anti-colonialist militants, and the unemployed (both male and female) have been excluded from these dominant accounts and analyses, which placed particular emphasis on the individual figure.

The exceptional alliance of these groups throughout May and June produced a moment of political solidarity with no equivalent in any other European country. The large, open, anti-hierarchical assemblies at the occupied university, in which everyone had the opportunity to talk, soon attracted workers and farmers. This led to a displacement, according to which the various societal groups (of students, workers, and farmers) broke away from the locations assigned to them by the state and the police. Workers joined meetings at the Sorbonne; students walked to factories to talk to workers; farmers, workers, and students met in local action committees and neighbourhood assemblies. These were "political experiments in *de*classification, in disrupting the national 'givenness' of places" (Ross, 2002, p. 25). In this way, the different social groups were not focused solely on the interests of their own group; they opened themselves up to the interests, demands and struggles of each other. The government attempted to break up these groups in order to deal with each one individually, and more effectively—and it partially succeeded. The government's strategy was helped by the trade unions' resolution to prevent dialogue between workers and students and to control the general strike, which was manifested in attempts to keep workers away from the street protests, and within the confines of the occupied factories.

This unprecedented alliance that "the major unions had considered practically impossible" and that "the Communist Party had declared theoretically absurd" and that "the government had never imagined" (Feenberg & Freedman, 2001, p. 25) was not celebrated equally in the subsequent narrative configurations of the events of May '68, which often failed to capture the multiplicity of the actors involved, and reduced the events both geographically (to Paris) and temporally (to the month of May).[8] The figure of the—typically male—"radical protesting student" and the emblematic representations of female participants tend to dominate, pushing other main actors in the events and collective bodies out of the representational frame.

8 For the temporal and geographical reductions of May, see: Ross 2002, pp. 8–10; Reynolds, 2007, p. 4–6; Jackson, 2011, pp. 3–9; Reader, 1993, pp. 249–252.

Returning to Barbey's and Rey's canonical images allows us not only to unravel the multiple uses of these images across media and the processes of their canonization, but also to take a fresh look at the parts of the visual legacy of May '68 that have been actively suppressed or simply forgotten. Photographs of women marching along their male counterparts and participating in the anti-hierarchical assemblies were part of many photo reportages of the time, but they are not the ones that enjoyed a prominent afterlife. There are exceptions such as Janine Niépce's photograph of women occupying the Galeries Lafayette.[9] There was also Gökşin Sipahioğlu's reportage showing a woman in a miniskirt looking sarcastically at the policemen surrounding her in the middle of the barricades.[10] Finally, one can look to the anonymous woman in the documentary film *La Reprise du travail aux usines Wonder*, who appears to be vehemently rejecting the Grenelle Accords, as did many of her male co-workers (Abidor, 2018).

Rethinking the relationship between gender, the memory of '68, and visual representation also requires us to speak about the "untaken" photographs of May '68 (Azoulay, 2019, pp. 370–371). For example, we simply have no visual documents of the women who played a leading role in the neighbourhoods' comités d'action. These comités d'action, which pre-dated 1968, grew rapidly in number in 1968 and operated in a highly localized way, covering specific neighbourhoods, schools, universities, and factories. Women in the neighbourhood, sometimes with no prior experience in political organization, created these autonomous spaces, which practiced solidarity with the students and striking workers. This democratic self-organization can be seen as one of the most important political innovations of May 1968, standing in sharp contrast to the standard top-down organizational methods of political parties and trade unions. According to Azoulay (2019), the untaken photograph "can take many forms: a verbal description, a testimony, a drawing or a photograph of a re-enactment of the unphotographed event, based on its description by one of the participants in the event" (p. 317). In the case of May '68, women's testimonies would be necessary to re-enact the unphotographed comités d'action and all other women driven contributions to the action repertoire.

Remembering these vital aspects of the movement would lead to a rewriting of May '68 history from the perspective of women. Walter Benjamin (1999), in his famous theses "On the Concept of History," has written about

9 Janine Niépce, Événements de mai-juin 68. Grève, occupation des Galeries Lafayette, / Événements de mai-juin 68. Grève, occupation des Galeries Lafayette – Janine Niépce.

10 For the picture, see: https://fotojournalismus.tumblr.com/post/119607964588/paris-may-1968-photos-by-g%C3%B6k%C5%9Fin-sipahio%C4%9Flu

the danger of the image of the past becoming a tool of the ruling classes. History is a form of official memory, according to Benjamin, and as such is infected by forgetting because of its emphasis on the deeds of great men, which are often represented in epic form and leave anonymous people out of history. The visual legacy of May '68 has been endangered in such a way, often reduced to the revolt of the young, male protester of student appearance or to the emblematic image of the female figure, leaving other societal groups and collective bodies out of the photographic frame. Restoring these collective bodies into the historical and visual record of '68 would mean refusing to "give up on its potential" (Walker, 2020, p. 6) as a source of inspiration for contemporary left politics and as a possibility for new, collective, radical bodies of opposition to the contemporary, multi-faceted global crisis, including the ongoing ecological crisis and resurgent nationalist-populist and far-right political parties.

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