

5-2017

# The Emergence, Forgetting and Re-writing of May '68

Allison Dorman

*University of South Carolina*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd>



Part of the [French and Francophone Language and Literature Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Dorman, A. (2017). *The Emergence, Forgetting and Re-writing of May '68*. (Master's thesis). Retrieved from <http://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/4066>

This Open Access Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact [SCHOLARC@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:SCHOLARC@mailbox.sc.edu).

**The Emergence, Forgetting and Re-writing of May '68**

**By**

**Allison Dorman**

**Bachelor of Arts**

**College of Charleston, 2012**

**Bachelor of Science**

**College of Charleston, 2012**

---

**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements**

**For the Degree of Master of Arts in**

**French**

**College of Arts and Sciences**

**University of South Carolina**

**2017**

**Accepted by:**

**Jeff Persels, Director of Thesis**

**Yvonne Ivory, Reader**

**Cheryl L. Addy, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School**

## **Abstract**

The time period of May 1968 in France has become an important cultural moment in French history and is often present in current political debates. I propose that the critiques of French society expressed during the events of May and June 1968 were present before that time and can be seen in literature and creative expression of the time period, as in the film *Week-end*, by Jean-Luc Godard, and the play *Yes, peut-être*, by Marguerite Duras. Godard and Duras express a deep discontent with the society in which they live and their creations imagine the consequences of Western ideals taken to their limits. The forgetting and re-writing of the history of the events of May 1968 has led to a modern failure to understand these events. The elements of forgetting history and re-creating it are present in the two works studied, creating hybrid new versions of familiar Western stories. I chose these two works because of the social and political engagement of the respective authors and the critiques of French society that were far-reaching and relevant to what happened several months later. I contend that remembering history is an important task, and one which sometimes requires revisionist viewpoints. History must be viewed holistically and established based on a variety of perspectives, incorporating a variety of viewpoints.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Chapter 1 Introduction .....	1
Chapter 2 Rejection and critique of systems of power in <i>Yes, peut-être</i> .....	5
Chapter 3 Rejection and critique of systems of power in <i>Week-end</i> .....	12
Chapter 4 Forgetting and May '68; the shaping and re-writing of a dominant narrative of events .....	20
Chapter 5 Forgetting and Re-writing in <i>Yes, peut-être, Week-end</i> .....	26
Chapter 6 Conclusion.....	32
Bibliography .....	35

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The nineteen sixties were a turbulent time full of violence and war, political activism and social progress, and revolutionary scientific advances. Bellicose tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union threatened global peace. The world was confronted with the idea of the atomic bomb and mutually assured destruction. In the United States, racial, political, ethnic, and economic tensions boiled over, leading to assassinations of several prominent Americans (such as the Kennedy brothers, Martin Luther King, Jr.) and the movement for the civil rights of blacks. The Vietnam War (1955-75) produced genocide, mass casualties, and unthinkable injuries from Agent Orange, and was proving to be a monumental failure. In America and abroad, hundreds of thousands gathered to protest against bellicosity, needless violence, and killing of civilians.

In France, the sixties were no less tempestuous in some ways, though, also characterized by a prolonged economic growth spurt. The Glorious Thirty, or the three decades following World War II, brought modernity and convenience to France in the form of widespread electricity, running water and indoor toilets (*Women's* 189). In the year 1968, a global currency crisis caused rising prices in France and the rest of Europe, in part precipitating demonstrations and protests for economic, social, and political reasons across the continent. The Baby-Boom generation caused the ranks of college students to swell, pushing the Sorbonne to expand its campus to the Parisian city slum

location of Nanterre (*Memories* 38, *Sous les pavés* 26). Politically, the decolonization of former French African nations and the struggle for independence in Algeria were sources of discontent and anger. The citizens of France, tired of a dominating and seemingly permanent president, looked to renew a government “paralyzed by nationalistic obsessions,” seen as static, bureaucratic, and old-guard (Servan-Schreiber 49). De Gaulle led his country through the chaotic aftermath of World War II and later returned to resolve the Algerian crisis. His prominence in French politics had lasted some 30 years and the time had come for a new vision of France’s future. All of the conditions delineated above would later be used to explain what happened in 1968. The true nature of what followed, however, may prove more difficult to define than simple causation and effect or linear evolution.

May ’68 was the famous time of instability in France, a time of strikes, protests, political action and public critique of the social and political systems of the country. It saw a development of feminist movements and a rejection of the patriarchal, capitalist, materialist, nationalist systems in the West and in France. During these stormy weeks, France found its voice through massive public protest and country-wide strikes. The participants of May ’68 felt a deep anger against the violence and injustices of Vietnam and Algeria. Students born into capitalism and materialism rejected commodification in favor of radical ideologies such as Maoism and Leninism (*Women’s* 189). Kristin Ross explains that these events were continuously reborn in retellings, memoirs of participants, televised anniversary specials, forming a May ’68 quite different from what actually happened. A dominant narrative has shaped the national vision of these times, a vision that has simplified, reduced, and deleted important historical elements (especially

political ones) from the public memory (1). The elements of forgetting and of re-writing obscure the real May 1968: chaotic, violent, disorganized, militant (6).

The tensions in France which erupted during these few weeks existed long before the protests began. These tensions appear in the art of the late 1960s, in the works of artists of the avant-garde such as Marguerite Duras and Jean-Luc Godard. Produced shortly before the events of May 1968 (January 1967, January 1968, respectively), their artistic projections of the end result of present policies and mentalities are bleak. In their visions, the broken and inadequate systems in power directly cause the downfall of the human race. Duras imagines a desolate post-bomb world in *Yes, peut-être*, while Godard depicts a world of rampant materialism in *Week-end*. These two apocalyptic visions show the worst sides of humanity. Greed, selfishness, nationalism, bellicosity push these societies to go all the way: to nuclear war, to cannibalism, to apathy towards violence and human suffering. Godard and Duras dare to imagine, to create the worst human nightmares, a direct result of the particular actions and inactions of our race. A hopeful Duras, who experienced May '68 as a personal cause made public, was changed by the events, a change which has been observed in her work: "the unity of the Durassian oeuvre [...] seems to have been broken after May 1968" (Guers-Villate 14). This "member of the communist party for numerous years" shows "a social consciousness [...] in all of her works" (16). Trista Selous sees Duras as a feminist disappointed by the failure of protest and anarchy to change the system: "she pours scorn on Man (as opposed to Woman), a theoretical imbecile, who, as she sees it, destroyed the spontaneity of the movement of May 1968 in France" (6). Jean-Luc Godard uses the vehicle of his films to confront "contemporary concerns: the historically unrivaled production and consumption of cheap

energy; colonial politics and the wars in Algeria and Vietnam; the Americanization of French culture and growth of mass consumerism” (Odde 225). His vision of modern French society shows his profound disillusionment with the state of affairs.

Forgetting, a common thread between these two works and the events that followed, is always present: history doesn't exist in the two works, human memory is reset. The action itself of remembering the past (distant or recent) is cloudy and hazy, almost impossible. For lack of a reliable narrative of the past, the characters in these two works present their own version of events, strange, hybrid variations on history and world literature. The frequency of forgetting and re-composition, presage of the forgetting and re-telling which will dominate the memories and adaptations of May 1968, is presented as a side-effect of living in a society which prioritizes the nation-state, power, and material goods over knowledge, communication, and connections. *Yes, peut-être* and *Week-end* serve as warnings to humanity and predictors of the end results of the Western embrace of capitalism, nationalism, and patriarchy, major elements of critique in the protests of May '68.

## **Chapter 2: Rejection and critique of systems of power in *Yes, peut-être***

*Yes, peut-être* presents the aftermath of the atomic bomb, after an international conflict of a size that the human race had never seen. This specter of mutually assured destruction was always present in the 1960s. The threat of a war between countries which have such defenses would have catastrophic results for human beings across the globe. Such an event would wipe out every vestige of civilization, from infrastructure to energy sources to stores of knowledge (computers, books, manuscripts). This unthinkable tragedy is the imagined setting for Marguerite Duras' play, in a world that is struggling to re-establish itself and re-civilize after having survived the atomic bomb.

The tone of *Yes, peut-être*, like other plays by Duras, is bleak, but full of moments of hope, or attempts to understand one another, as well as moments of intense sorrow and deep disillusionment. Marini notes that "tragedy is the register of Marguerite Duras," who often writes on the role of women, the lines between sanity and madness, the tension between remembering and forgetting (27). The form of the play is fluid, without divisions into acts or scenes. The scenery and the clothes of the actors are left up to the preferences of the director. What matters is that the scenery is desolate and empty, without hope, and the clothes anonymous, identical, tattered. The play itself consists of a dialogue between two women, who question each other, who take up and drop subjects randomly, who don't have clear, logical, lucid thought. Marked by "increasing ellipsis, narrative indirection, reduction and fragmentation of character, plot and setting," the drama evokes

helplessness, despair, longing, the failure of the characters to connect to each other, to understand each other (Murphy 11). Thus, Duras establishes an empty and desolate post-apocalyptic world. Civilization as we know it no longer exists; even the idea of a city, a country, a people no longer exists. There are no distinctions between human beings, who struggle to survive and even to reproduce. The landscape of the earth is reduced to basic elements: deserts and oceans (which serve as uncrossable borders with the loss of maritime knowledge). The principal characters are two anonymous women, A and B, who have no discernable mark of personality or individuality which distinguishes them from one another. Carol Murphy sees these two characters as one: “similarity indicates a shattering of a single personality into several distinct characters” (16). The stage directions show identical emotional qualities, clothing, manners of speaking and pausing. Guers-Villate sees a “Durassian world [...] a feminine world par excellence where the main characters are always women even when they are reduced to personal pronouns” (10). This lack of names, like the lack of indications about their tastes, their qualities, their skills, their memories, their pasts, indicates fluid personalities without the concept of time, of self, or of environment.

The women are identified only with letters throughout the text of the play, not as “Femme A” and “Femme B”. Their female identities, relics of another civilization, are nonexistent. They exist as two anonymous examples of the new world disorder, not primarily as females of their species with characteristics that society deems “feminine” or even “not masculine.” In the stage directions (which are minimal) which precede the play, the women are described as “innocent, insolent, tender and happy, without bitterness, without malice, without kindness, without intelligence, without foolishness,

without references, without memory” (Duras 156). These socially acquired qualities (bitterness, malice, kindness, intelligence) are absent in human beings with limited socialization. They have barely conceived of the idea of self, and lack the attention span for comparisons, deep reflection, or sustained emotion. They are at turns insolent, puzzled, happy, curious, confused, fearful, but never for long. Their distractedness and lack of attention span make the dialogue between them absurd, and allow for a variety of topics of conversation.

The main difference between A and B is the (limited, dubious, re-told or re-created) knowledge that they possess. A initiates B into the reality of another region (from which A hails) and impresses B with her knowledge of the past (a mysterious and little known time), the best way to survive (stop thinking), and Biblical and creation stories (involving a snake-man). Human history no longer has a guardian: there is no mention of books, of education, even of a common telling of history. The Biblical stories and bits of history recited by A are hybrid mixes of truth and fiction, forgetting and remembering, re-composition and re-creation.

The only male character, called simply “l’homme/il/la guerre”, is more dead than alive, lying immobile on the floor for the majority of the play. Through the novelty of this character (who functions as decor or as object rather than as one who acts), Duras makes a stinging critique of patriarchy, nationalism, and military culture. Nothing remains of his own identity, of his tastes, of his knowledge, of his relations to others. He suffers from nightmares or hallucinations of the violence of war and, according to A, from no longer having a commander to “kick his ass” (Duras 160). He represents, for them, war itself: ridiculous, laughable, difficult to imagine or to rationalize. Man, as represented by

“l’homme,” is almost completely useless. His only usefulness is for the purposes of reproduction and even this role is questioned by the two women, who are at times disgusted, moved, murderous, or indifferent to him. The man is stupid, simple, blindly following the orders of his leader and fighting for obscure causes. He mixes up the words to random national anthems and wears various national, political, or social symbols on his clothes. The soldier’s uniform represents the forces of destruction which tore civilization apart: written on it are the words “honor”, “homeland”, “God”, and various national and political slogans. His adherence to these symbols and ideals, which no longer represent anything, becomes ridiculous. There is no-one to read the signs sewn onto his outfit, no-one who can understand the words that he sings or recites like an automaton. The semiotics of his culture have been lost to human memory. The emblematic words that once made citizens proud and roused workers to action have become jumbles of dissonant noise. The images to which people once pledged allegiance, which once gave millions feelings of solidarity, security, community, are reduced to curious drawings. The knowledge, the past, the society that came before is no more. The two women talk about the ideal of the hero and thus the cult of the individual. A says that every soldier believed himself unique, even if he was a part of an immense army, of a crowd of identical men. In this context, individualism appears completely illogical and ridiculous. A and B giggle at the curiosities of the past, of the civilization that they have never known.

The main difference between the women and the male character is knowledge: he possesses a knowledge of the language and history that precedes their time, which they mock but long for as a model for how to re-start civilization. The knowledge that the man

possesses, however, is inaccessible. He is at war with himself, as B observes, and his post-traumatic stress has rendered him almost catatonic. He can only recite fragments of military songs, salute, and twitch on the ground, unresponsive to B's attempts to connect with him. The information that still exists in some form in his brain, is completely walled-off by the trauma he has suffered. Nevertheless, he is the only real link to civilization for the two women, the only witness to and product of the society that came before.

Language evolved greatly after the catastrophe. There is no more "vous" plural or "je". Even the idea of self, of the individual, is lost. There are few ways to distinguish between human beings in the new world order (or disorder). There are some vestiges of national identity, although there seems to be little knowledge of what goes on in other places, much less understanding of other cultures (such as they might still exist). A tells B of the "desert à guerre" near "le Mexicanos" (156). B tells A that "of au plat" was eaten "en américains" long ago and that the modern museum of this cultural phenomenon is "under the palace" (161). The use of English words (as with the oft-repeated, emphatic "yes") and English accents alongside repeated French pleasantries ("Bonjour bonsoir") demonstrates the lack of an established standard for language and lack of distinction between different societies (176). When imagining the distinctions between human beings in the past, A and B recognize only the stupid and the less stupid as social classes. They agree that civilization must be begun again, since it was poorly begun the first time (180). This civilization, which has left uncertain, mysterious, useless remains, is not to be missed. B remarks that there is no model to follow and that, without any experience, it would be impossible to imagine the future. She suffers from the

knowledge that the world had a painful past and a present that is so uncertain. Through the man, the past incarnate, who visibly suffers from his bellicose nightmares, she pities those of the past, the suffering that they experienced, and reflects on her own troubles. A repeats the remedy to her: “pensez plus”.

Meanwhile, throughout the play, there is a hunger for knowledge, a desire to know more, to better understand. Susan Cohen discusses the relationship between the individual and culture in the play: “To be sure, one can not wipe the slate entirely clean, for one is born into history and language” (134). The two women have a very limited language to discuss a world of which they know little. They often encounter words which are not common to both, but fail to really understand each other when explaining these neologisms. Often, the women repeat slogans or idiomatic expressions which no longer have a context or reference to something real and tangible. These expressions exist in a vacuum and take on other meanings, such as “Black is beautiful.” Outside of the context of race and of racism, “black” is quite simply the absence of light, the name for a shadow which darkens light colors. The immense history of a difference of skin color, of the oppression of a race, of slavery, of suffering, of racism, of social and political movements to enfranchise this race, is erased. These words, at one time so imbued with cultural meaning and evocative of an evolution of conditions, are reduced to their obvious meaning, outside of the realm of culture, outside of history. The effect of such an erasure is at first comic, then terrifying. The loss of human memory and of the importance of the presence of humanity on the earth is overwhelming and almost unthinkable. Without the recording of our common past, language becomes something superficial and artificial. Similarly, the expression “d’lof au plat” (fried egg), which no longer refers to a quotidian

and banal element of civilization, has become a cultural phenomenon, an amusing tidbit for those who don't know it. There is even a museum to show off this strange vestige of an unknown past.

The refusal of the system of power in place demonstrated in this play shows the social and political critique which sprang up in May of the same year. Marguerite Duras, part of the “vanguard of women developing new, ‘feminine’ cultural forms,” hoped to express deep worries that she felt about her world (Selous 2). This “active author in French political movements” played a role in promoting her interests and the interests of women to the French public (Ricouart 4). The fact that a writer such as Marguerite Duras dared to imagine the end of our broken, destabilized, unequal world shows that such thoughts loomed large for her generation, in her milieu. Her imagining of the apocalypse as a direct result of ideals of nationalism, colonialism, and patriarchy questions the practice of such ideologies and the potential consequences of modern warfare. The military action taken by Western countries in the 1960s pushed many citizens to reflect on the political, economic, and social order of the day. Indignation over contemporary conflicts (the war for independence in Algeria, the war in Vietnam) and a discontent with the social state of affairs pushed people into the streets, outside of the office, far from the quotidian. While May '68 may have gained notoriety as a political struggle, the critiques expressed by French citizens were far-reaching and diverse, and represented an important liberation of expression and an end to complacency.

### **Chapter 3: Rejection and critique of systems of power in *Week-end***

*Week-end*, the last traditional film of the director Jean-Luc Godard, is "...a savagely caricatured depiction of the essential nature of materialistic society..." (Wood 12). The two main characters, Corinne and Roland, represent everything that is wrong with Western society. Godard attacks capitalism, nationalism, colonialism, sexism, narcissism and the cult of the individual. Man shows himself ready to fight, to cheat, to kill for superficial gains. Nothing is sacred and nothing is outside the realm of greed, selfishness, and the desire to possess. Even sexual desire is not sufficient in itself: the characters want to humiliate each other, dominate each other, manipulate each other (Farocki 88). Knowledge cannot allay these ruthless characters: everything is governed by desire, by instincts shaped by a rotten society.

The film follows a Parisian couple, Corinne and Roland, two thin, young, attractive bourgeois people, who cheat on each other blatantly, insult each other, and show no signs of affection to each other or to others. They plot to kill each other and Corinne's father (in hopes of his inheritance). The pair set off on a weekend trip to Corinne's hometown because "putting poison in his mashed potato every Saturday" isn't working (Godard 29). Their journey across a burning countryside full of dead motorists is marked by vignettes of various character types and historical characters. Along the way, they meet Saint-Just, Tom Thumb, Emily Brontë, two francophone Africans, and a group of cannibalistic hippies, among other sundry characters. The couple show a sustained and

unwavering self-interest, narcissism, materialism, and ruthlessness throughout the film.

Capitalism is the major motivator for the characters in *Week-end* and is often shown in contrast with communism, a concept seemingly little-understood by anyone. Possession and consumption are the ultimate signs of success, which should be apparent to everyone else to be valid. Accumulation of goods is continuous and without limit in the world of the film. One of the major critiques of capitalism (other than everything being a market good) is the economic disparities within class society in a system allowing the rich to get very rich and the poor to stay poor. In a scene entitled “SS/SS STRUGGLE/THE CLASS STRUGGLE”, a young bourgeois couple in a convertible has just crashed into a farmer’s tractor. The young man has died in the crash, and is shown several times, lying dead in the car. The young woman is furious and argues heatedly with the tractor driver; they insult each other continuously. She bemoans the loss of the convertible as much as she laments her lover’s death. Juliet contends that the farmer is jealous of the bourgeois’s wealth, vacations, and possessions and scorns that he doesn’t even own his tractor. The farmer retorts that despite getting little aid from the government, he makes enough money and provides a food source to a large portion of the French population. Juliet, concerned with making a legal case that her boyfriend had the right of way, appeals to Corinne and Roland, who scurry off, indifferent to their fellow bourgeois’s fate. She insists that he had the right of way because “he was young, handsome, rich - that gave him right of way over everyone, over the fat, over the...over the poor...over the old...” (Godard 32). Juliet has a complete lack of respect for age and experience, and sees youth, beauty, and wealth as ideal qualities. In her view, beauty deserves to be paid with wealth (vacations, convertibles), which is her ultimate idol.

When attempting to imagine the position of the farmer, all she can see is poverty and jealousy. She is indifferent to his *métier* and considers him a lowly, worthless nonentity. This scene demonstrates the complete lack of understanding and communication between people of different social classes. It shows a soulless, self-centered bourgeoisie that looks down on anyone of lesser means (that is, only see value in the accumulation of wealth) and discounts the contribution of individual productive members of society (who would be considered equal in both production and consumption under communism). There is also a lack of solidarity between the bourgeois characters in this scene: Corinne and Roland have no interest in supporting a fellow bourgeois in her contention with a farmer; they have no material interest in the argument and therefore are apathetic to the cause. As stated by Farocki, “It is everyone for him- or herself on the commodity market” (93).

Corinne demonstrates materialism to an extreme. She covets possessions to the point of undressing a body (of one of the many dead motorists lying on the road) to get some chic pants from a department store. She then wears the pants for the rest of the film, unconcerned that they belonged to someone who died in a car crash. Later, when she and Roland crash and the car goes up in flames after they crawl out, she is upset to lose her expensive purse. “Heeelllp!” she cries, “My Hermès bag!” (49). When she and Roland are offered whatever they want by the hijacker Joseph Balsamo, the couple reveal their shallowness. They can only imagine markers of socioeconomic status and symbols of capitalism and nationalism: “a Mercedes,” “a Saint-Laurent evening dress,” “a hotel on Miami beach,” a fleet of bomber airplanes (Godard 47). Silverman talks about Corinne’s desire, not for a thing, but to be “a blonde, -- a real one.” In this way, she turns herself into a good to be possessed, after having expressed the desire to possess various items

(95). This vision of the world as an unlimited marketplace disgusts Balsamo and makes him rescind his offer.

Colonialism is addressed in the film through the characters of two garbage men, both nationals of French colonies, one from Algeria and the other from the Congo. The two men are the only drivers that agree to drive Corinne and Roland, who have unsuccessfully flagged down several cars while hitchhiking to Oinville. While stopping for a lunch break, the Algerian and Congolese, in close-up camera shots, declaim on French colonial Africa. The two men seem to relate closely to one another, calling each other “my black brother” and “my Arab brother”, and consider their positions to be the same in relation to (that is, in opposition to) France or the West (Godard 70, 71). Their speeches are interspersed with close-ups of the non-speaker and flashbacks to various moments of the film; the speaker is never shown while expressing his point of view on colonialism. In this way, the voiceover of these declamations seems to speak for a plurality, rather than express the opinion of one man. The structure of the two speeches, which seem to belong to a single speech, left off and picked up one by the other, starts off in a general, objective tone, then becomes more and more personal, incorporating the words “we” and then “I”. This evolution from objective to subjective occurs twice before the two begin declaiming on the evolution of civilization and the establishment of class society.

The scenes of the Algerian and the Congolese, titled “World” and “The Occident” (preceded by Cid and followed by Dent), begin with a conflict between Corinne and Roland and the two men. The Parisian couple demand food from the men, who are eating sandwiches. They can only focus on their own present needs. After the Arab demands a

kiss from Corinne for a bit of sandwich and then knocks it out of her hand (in his view, only following the example of oil companies in Algeria), she cries indignantly, “Just because you’re underprivileged you don’t have to be mean!” (Godard 70). The couple look on semi-interestedly as the two men speak, outlining the effects of colonialism in Africa and the need to “arm ourselves with strength and militancy” (Godard 71). They discuss the uselessness of nonviolent, pacifist approaches (encouraged by the “imperialists”) to liberating themselves and proclaim their right to violence, a method endorsed with great success by colonists (Godard 71). They assert that they have the means and the will to commit “bloodthirsty acts of sabotage,” as well as attacks on the economic infrastructure of the West, which they plot to destroy (Godard 72). In this way, they adopt the culture and the values of their oppressors, and demonstrate that the only way to beat capitalists and nationalists/militants is to play their game. Their vision for the future is just as bloody and full of suffering as their colonial past. This point of view is just another example of the film’s rejection of history. The past is given as a justification for violence, not an example of the dangerous pitfalls humanity has experienced before. Part of the plan of attack against the colonial oppressors involves the observance of guerrilla fighting tactics by “our black brothers who are fighting for white America in Vietnam” to be used by blacks in Africa (Godard 72). In “drawing inspiration from the example set by the Vietcong,” the Arab paints a portrait of the inequality of the two sides of such a struggle (Godard 72). Although guerilla tactics were used successfully by the Vietcong against American professional soldiers, the advanced technologies of American military (including chemical weapons and aircraft warfare) eventually dominated the conflict, causing major civilian casualties and the end of American engagement in

Vietnam (Brigham). The opposition of the Vietcong (Eastern, communists, colonized people) and American soldiers (Western, colonists, capitalists) is similar to the opposition between French African colonized peoples and France. The two men equate colonialism to Nazism, defining it as “a deliberately conducted process of physical and spiritual liquidation” (Godard 70). The word “deliberate” indicates that French (and other Western) colonists made an active effort to erase African identities and obliterate African peoples. This critique comes seven years after the official independence of the majority of French African colonies (Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cote d’Ivoire, Gabon, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal) and five years after Algerian independence. Godard confronts the issue of colonialism in an un-apologetic way, critiquing Western practice and ideology and imagining the possibilities of retribution in a savage world.

The scene which follows Corinne and Roland’s wreck (and the devastating loss of Corinne’s Hermès bag) is followed by a title, reading “FROM THE FRENCH REVOLUTION TO UNR [Union pour la nouvelle république] Week-endS”. This subtle prompt suggests that France is in need of a new revolution, having reached an apotheosis of stagnation. Corinne and Roland have a banal conversation about the location of potential murder weapons while crossing a field. Interspersed with their speech is a declarative Saint-Just, in historical dress, reading aloud from a book. Like the argument of the francophone Africans later in the film, Saint-Just argues in favor of violence to achieve freedom, “the virtue which springs from vice” (Godard 49). Saint-Just mourns the corruption of society and the lack of “fairness and moderation” mandated by the social treaty (50). The contrast between his plaintive lament of humanity and the two

main characters' discussion of weapons is marked. Saint-Just sees societies built on "gold, pride and blood," illustrated by Corinne and Roland's homicidal plot to get rich (50). Saint-Just's dress recalls the French Revolution, a time of questioning the political order, of public critique of those in power, of radical protest, of violent solutions to institutional problems. Godard's thinly veiled call for revolution in this scene (at least for Corinne and Roland's society) demonstrates his dissatisfaction with modern society. The Saint-Just of the film insists on the idea of the social treaty (a phrase which is repeated at the end of his final line), an exchange between citizens and their government: security for privacy, taxes for public services. Godard seems to demonstrate that man's wicked nature prevents the social contract from creating a harmonious environment. Saint-Just praises the "restfulness and wisdom" of Nature, rejecting society as a doomed enterprise (50).

Godard presents a variety of vignettes that make significant critiques of society. He addresses colonialism, patriarchy, capitalism, and nationalism as rotten systems. His critique, however, seems to be against human nature itself. Godard's vision of France is bleak, and his characters point again and again to man's greed, apathy, ruthlessness. His two main characters, Roland and Corinne, are obsessively materialistic, sadistic, indifferent to bloodshed and death. With such examples of humanity, society can only take its systems to their limits, dominating each other, manipulating each other, functioning outside of any moral or ethical framework.

Duras's play and Godard's film, while produced at different times by very different creative thinkers, are both excellent examples of the discontent expressed by French citizens in May '68. Duras has had a career-long engagement with feminism, often creating female lead characters. Her characters are not obviously feminists, but are

constantly questioning the role of woman, as opposed to man. Her plays are frequently set in dismal, post-apocalyptic or deeply depressed environments and her heroines (or anti-heroines) are often left to sort themselves out on their own. Godard uses elements of French and Western history (Saint-Just, Tom Thumb, francophone Africans) to project a provocative vision of the future of the West, which sums up his critique of the present in France. Godard, who began making politically critical films with *Week-end*, became an outspoken critic of capitalism and consumerism. These two works take the form of theater and film, two genres often used to express political and social critique. They are both performative, accessible, and immediate in a way that literature sometimes fails to be. I chose works from different genres to illustrate the cross-genre, cross-demographic nature of the concerns expressed in France at that time.

## **Chapter 4: Forgetting and May '68; the shaping and re-writing of a dominant narrative of events**

May '68 was a cultural moment that has become important to French national identity (whether as a critique or endorsement of it) and is often discussed, lamented, and manipulated in contemporary politics (Bantigny 215). The study of May 1968 and the interest in the events that transpired in France during this time is renewed at each occasion of the anniversary of these events (Ross 1). This study is made complicated by the difficulty of qualifying exactly what happened during this time (Bantigny 215). May '68 has become a legendary event, often boiled down, simplified, and abridged (Ross 1). The popular version of events is the tale of leftist student protests, workers' strikes, and mass demonstrations in the capital. However, the reasons for these outpourings were varied and sometimes complicated, and the results, direct or indirect, cultural, economic, social, and political, are difficult to quantify, much less articulate. Even the failure or success of these movements is a tenuous concept, depending on how the movements are defined, the extent to which the movements expressed concrete goals, and the measurability of such goals.

Accounts of the events multiplied in the months and years immediately following May and June 1968. Margaret Attack describes May as a “monstrous library” with “120 books published on the events by the end of October 1968” (7). Some works published in 1968 and 1969 include: *Le réveil de la France*, *Mai 68 et la foi démocratique*, *The*

*French Student Revolt: the Leaders Speak, Mai 1968: Une répétition générale, Le mouvement de mai, The Almost Revolution.* The titles themselves give an idea of the preconceived notions already taking shape about May '68, and give indications of the hope, despair, or ridicule of the authors. Servan-Schreiber describes the role of France as a model for the rest of the Continent, a role underlined 40 years later by Chris Reynolds, who recalls the revolutions of France's past that inspired neighboring countries to follow suit ("Sous les pavés" 14). Servan-Schreiber sees development and "true democracy" as the goals of the revolution, in France and in Europe, which "can finally open itself to the second industrial revolution" (48). He proposes "a united Europe" and reinforced, but delegator role for the state in France (50, 52). Michael Seidman explains that students, workers, and citizens believed the protests and strikes would be the first chapter in a 20th century revolution rejecting capitalism and conservatism (272). André Philip published a short collection of articles from *Le monde* written in the summer of 1968, conference papers, and socialist and historical chapters in December of 1968, entitled *Mai 68 et la foi démocratique*. He concludes that the most important effect of May was that "the entirety of social structure has been questioned" (121). Philip sees centralization as a major problem and rejoices that French citizens are no longer afraid to voice criticism and push back against corporations and the government (122). Hervé Bourges's *The French Student Revolt: The Leaders Speak*, published in 1968, shows how the press has already highlighted "a few actors in this drama" who are "reluctantly famous" (3). Bourges acquiesces that these media-knighted leaders are imperfect examples of *soixante-huitards* and argues that "their revolt is revealing in itself, even if its content has not yet been articulated" (3). The articulation of the "revolt" would prove to be a difficult task.

Discourse on the events has recently turned towards a “devoir de mémoire”: remembering poorly, remembering little, or remembering nothing, but accepting the memories and retellings of some participants, the press, prominent figures as the real story (Ross 3). The reasons for this evolution of the narrative are explained by Ross:

Forgetting, just as much as remembering, is made possible by the work of various narrative configurations...To reduce a mass movement to the individual itineraries of a few so-called leaders, spokesmen, or representatives (especially if those representatives have all renounced their past errors) is an old, tried and true tactic of confiscation. Circumscribed in this way, all collective revolt is defanged; it doesn't amount to anything more than the existential anguish of individual destiny... (4).

Thus, a story of millions is placed on the heads of the few, who supposedly succeeded in managing a mass of unbridled, anonymous citizens. It is perhaps easier to understand a revolt that was centralized and organized around several charismatic leaders (who aspired to personal celebrity), than the more anarchic and disorganized reality. What history sees as a student movement was not a single group united by a single vision. The reality of the student protesters, the *soixante-huitards*, was a plurality of political and social parties, with different beliefs and different goals (Reynolds, *Memories* 42). These students were confronted with universities that had failed to modernize: overemphasizing classicism in a decade of protest and capitalist individuality and reinforcing social hierarchies with testing methods and overly formal relations between professors and students (Bourg 25). For young communists and Maoists, this antiquated system seemed stifling and useless. There were not so much leaders of these movements swarming with students, even if the press crowned some (like Daniel Cohn-Bendit) as such (Reynolds, *Memories* 42).

The narrative which depicts May '68 as a Parisian revolt of students frustrated

with Charles de Gaulle and fearing unemployment excludes the perspectives of French citizens across the country, who demonstrated for different causes and didn't have a single vision or a single goal any more than the student protesters did (Reynolds, *Memories* 38). The re-tellings of May '68 often ignore the fact that the entire country participated and made itself heard, expressing diverse critiques of the political, economic, and social system with which they were dissatisfied (38). One of the most important aspects for the participants of the crisis of May '68 was freedom of expression. After the closing of the Sorbonne (a rare and serious occasion), strikes across France, demonstrations of more than 800,000 people in the capital, French people felt a sudden spontaneity and candor which allowed them to publicly criticize the status quo (Bourg 22).

The events, not simply forgotten, have been re-told, re-written, re-thought. Through the tales of participants, memories, newspaper clippings, retrospectives, the chain of events takes on a definitive form. Collective memory has the power to define certain groups and social or political identities over time and helps to establish the identities of these groups (Reynolds, *Sous les pavés* 120). The structure of narrations of events has contributed to the establishment of a vision of these events as a failed student revolt that a worker's movement commandeered for material gain (Reynolds, *Memories* 39). Thus, a powerful moment of public criticism of the systems in power by citizens of all stripes is degraded, reduced, minimized. The dominant narrative outlines three successive stages during the month of May: the student revolt, the social revolt, and the political revolt (39). The events, however, continued after the end of the month of May and bled (reaching an apotheosis of violence) into mid-June, a fact little mentioned by the

press (39).

Historians have an important task in writing about May '68. As scholars, it is their duty to understand the events from a variety of perspectives and to avoid relying on limited accounts and narratives. The historian must also streamline a variety of events, with a variety of participants, at a variety of times and places, for a variety of reasons, into a narrative that is comprehensive and understandable, looking for causation and effect, goals and results, linear progressions defined by the linear progression of time. The telling of history is often made more human by focusing on a single or small group of participants (Ross 4). Thus, the importance of Daniel Cohn-Bendit and the student protests (Reynolds, *Memories* 42). Without these narratives, the anarchy of various leftist movements vocalizing different concerns becomes less of an “event” and more of a trend. The simplified narrative of three distinct phases of May '68 is an attempt to find motivations of participants, determine goals and proclaim success or failure, and mold the events into a logical, linear, defined progression from one state to the next. Jacques Baynac, writing in 1978, sees this time in France as a chimera:

incongruous, it is also incoherent in relation to what is real. You try to reassure yourself about such a monstrosity by proving its impossibility or by grounding it in the realm of the knowable. May flouted everything: the laws of Order, and, worse, those of Disorder. Anguish had in it an unlimited source. From this chaos came no new order. From this madness no one could find a shred of logic. And the origin of the chaos revealed in mystery because the cause itself showed itself useless to resolve the enigma. (12).

This unresolved viewpoint of the events of 1968 is deeply unsatisfying to consumers of history. In it, May 1968 becomes a frustrating outlier, random havoc, a frightening disruption to the predictable routines of society.

Julian Jackson, in an article entitled *Rethinking May '68*, presents an alternative vision of events. He presents May '68 not as a two-month protest, strike, demonstration event but rather as a prolonged period of several years, the "1968 years". This period, beginning before and ending several years after, utilized the "rhetoric, spirit and aspirations" of May '68, often to confront issues that were not addressed in May '68 (6). During these post-May years, the *Mouvement de libération des femmes* and the *Front Homosexuel d'action révolutionnaire* were established, two social groups left behind by the critique of May '68. Jackson also cites the importance of May '68 in regrouping right-wing groups in France. He states that right-leaning groups (who had previously hated the president for his policies in Algeria) rallied around de Gaulle, for "fear of social revolution" (13).

Such an wide-lens view of this period in French history seems to encompass the variety of different protesters publicly decrying different things. This spirit of open public criticism is the spirit in which Duras and Godard created their dystopian satires. The possibility to express one's beliefs, to demand that society pay attention to its components' concerns, and the need to address a plurality of different social needs are central to the spirit of May '68.

## Chapter 5: Forgetting and Re-writing in *Yes, peut-être*, *Week-end*

In two post-apocalyptic works, forgetting and re-writing of history are necessarily elements of the evolution of society. In a world permeated with violence and death, the characters are struggling to survive, without the guidebook of a stable and common history. In the post-bomb world of *Yes, peut-être*, forgetting is simply a question of lack of survivors (without extreme post-traumatic stress) with a knowledge of the world that came before. Knowledge is passed on orally, and society has not yet built institutions to educate the survivors. In *Week-end*, history is simply not relevant. Corinne and Roland are primarily motivated by their capitalist impulses, fighting to possess, master, manipulate, and control people and goods.

Marguerite Duras often weaves the themes of the conflict between memory and forgetting in her plays. Murphy discusses themes explored in Duras's work: "affirmation and negation, construction and deconstruction, memory (reconstitution of the past) and forgetfulness (loss or even lack of a verifiable past)" (14). Memory in *Yes, peut-être* is important in two ways. The lack of a human past (forgotten, destroyed, unavailable) is remarkable for the reader of Duras. The idea of no longer having a record of facts important to our species is almost unthinkable; human beings would have to begin everything again, which is what the humans in *Yes, peut-être* must do. Without a model to follow, as B notes plaintively to A: "if we don't know, we can't guess" (180). The "youth" begin to take on the supposed habits of a civilized society, such as collecting

trash and disposing of the dead. Meanwhile, there is no model for a heterosexual couple, as demonstrated by the couple of A and the man. They had two children together but she seems to have forgotten the majority of this past. She has no pity, tenderness, love, or hate for him. She seems completely indifferent to his fate, saying that it's not even worth it to kill him. Maternity has no model either. A had children but speaks coldly about the removal of the infants by the youth. The two women worry about the need for the species to reproduce but A doesn't seem affected by the loss of her own children.

Their way of speaking also indicates forgetting, immaturity, lack of social contact. Whilst asking each other about various subjects and telling each other about their own realities, they divert and return to the subject of the man. B is at times intensely interested in him, then drops the subject to learn about cultural or historical novelties, which entertain and mystify her. She examines him closely, full of curiosity, pities him heartily when she understands that he no longer has use of his faculties, wants to kill him when she thinks him dangerous or useless. B is the most human when she feels tenderness for him, when she expresses a deep empathy where she shares her pains and is filled with despair for such an existence. She is interested in knowledge, in the progress that humans are making to re-establish society, to begin the process of civilization. But this train of thought is often interrupted by diversions. Like children, A and B feel a variety of emotions one after the other, often to comedic effect, sometimes in demonstrating an extreme loneliness and despair. Like children, they pretend to understand when one of them explains something new to the other. However, they don't try too much to understand, lacking education and concrete references or models to help them understand. Words and language itself seem to exist for them in a very abstract way.

The explanations of the cultures of the past, explanations which seem not to have been experienced but rather told and re-told between survivors of the catastrophe, are convoluted versions of the truth. These “explanations”, from “d’lof au plat” to the fall of Eve, are hybrid variations on stories and the facts we know about them. Duras shows universal or commonly known elements of Western culture that her readers likely take for granted. God is mentioned in passing as “the old old warlord”, a character to play in games (168). God himself is thus charged with the violence done in his name, as its instigator. When talking about the need for society to start over (it was poorly done the first time), A tells B a version of the fall of Eve. A tells of how the first human ate something he/she shouldn’t have and fell ill. She goes on to reveal that this misguided first person ate “the snake”, which spoiled everything (180). This version of the tale puts the blame of the event, not on woman, but simply on the first person to exist. Without a patriarchal society, without assigned gender roles, without a long history of blaming woman for the world’s problems, the sex of the first sinner seems irrelevant. B, instead of decrying the first “person,” pities him/her and finds the story funny. This simplification of the biblical tale is a concentration of the original, a reduction to the basic elements of the story, with a significant twist. “The snake” itself was the source of the problem (the evil one) and the cause of the poisoning of the first person. The snake is presented as the one who caused the problem, not the person. This scenario puts the blame, not on the greedy sinner, but on the forbidden fruit itself, which was rotten.

In a last passage, after the “first possible end to the play,” A recites some supposed passages of Genesis, which B repeats. B, after some reflection, asks why they are repeating these words. A replies “for the children later” (182). Duras leaves the

choice of whether or not to include this passage in the play up to the director. Without this justification of recorded history, the play ends on a deeply pessimistic note, with A teaching B various conjugations of the verb “refuser.” With this ending, Duras gives the reader or spectator a glimmer of hope that society will reestablish itself, that all is not lost. A lays the groundwork for a future written and recorded language which can outlive the humans who create it. She hopes that the children of the future can have a better existence than she has had. Her reasoning for remembering or memorizing historical knowledge demonstrates some reflection on the idea itself of the future, which is certainly a tenuous concept in such an unstable world.

*Week-end* proposes a capitalist world that tears itself apart in constant consumption and designation of non-market items as goods. Everything is a consumable, everything is up for sale. Life and consumption happen so quickly that human beings seem to have forgotten history. There is no longer a value on education, which doesn't advance the educated to a higher social rank or help them to have more things. Everything is a primitive game of power in a post-apocalyptic world. Capitalist instincts govern this savage reality. The history invented by the characters is taken for the truth, which itself has little value. Like in Duras' work, history is fluid, uncertain, mysterious. The act of remembering history or a story, like writing, becomes an act of composition, of production. The characters are authors of their own stories, of fictions which are taken for the truth. In a certain way, time no longer matters for them (apart from clock time). The two women in *Yes, peut-être* similarly don't have any idea how old they are. There is no way to count the time, to mark the days, to differentiate the present moment from the one that preceded it. At one point, B questions whether they are actually alive or not. Her

reality is so devoid of time, of milestones, that life doesn't seem to differ much from lack of life. The two women exist thus without a concept of time, and therefore history has little importance. For Godard's characters, time is a good, something to be credited and debited like money.

History in the film *Week-end* is perverted: forgotten and re-told from different perspectives. At one point, Corinne wonders aloud, "When did civilization begin?" (42). Roland, amused and confused as to why Corinne would wonder such a thing, falsely attributes a Marxist quote to Jesus, "another commie" (42). Corinne, ever a capitalist at heart, acquiesces, "Even if it's true, who cares? We're not living in the Middle Ages...What's the time?" (42). Her flippant attitude to both history and the veracity of recitations of history displays how far the human race has fallen. Knowledge, memory, collective identity is no longer a matter of prestige and security. She asserts, without a second thought, that history is irrelevant to modern man, that although it may have had value at some point in time, it no longer holds any power. With this assertion, she negates the importance of truth. If history is irrelevant, it can be forgotten and re-arranged, and serves no more purpose than an entertaining piece of fiction. Even this role, however, is not high enough in market value to matter to Corinne. She rejects any entertainment value to focus on concrete goods that can bring her more value. What matters, to Corinne and to her husband, is time, which, as she points out while complaining about Roland's short cuts on the way to Oinville, "means money, too" (Godard 42, Farocki 94). The individual and his consumption have replaced any collective idea of society that might be gained through looking at history. Time itself is counted out in hours, not years, with text interspersed throughout the film noting the time of day (SATURDAY 3 P.M.,

SATURDAY 4 P.M., etc). The immediacy of time seen in this way is the way the characters see time, with clock time (unemotional, non-contextualized numbers) grounding the action in the present. The importance of clock time overshadows any notion of looking back, with the all-consuming urgency of the present moment.

In both works, the characters are much too concerned with the present moment to worry much about the past. This can be seen both as a criticism that humanity fails to learn from its past mistakes and an indication of the basic level of existence carried out in each work. The past in *Yes, peut-être* does not exist in a standardized, reliable, available form. It is mysterious and fragmented into many possible truths, spread by rumor and hearsay. In *Week-end*, too, the past has the potential to be multiple, created anew at each re-telling by different characters, for different ends. The commonality between them is in the retelling of the past, whether embroidered on, mis-communicated, or invented. Memory (or lack thereof) plays an important role, as in the events of May '68. The characters in *Yes, peut-être* and *Week-end* are often faced with dire situations (hijacking, cannibalism, radiation) and, doing their best just to stay alive, perhaps would have no use for history even if it were available to them.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

Both *Yes, peut-être* and *Week-end* criticize contemporary French society. They caution against taking patriarchy, nationalism, and capitalism to their extremes. They serve to make us question the extent to which we have embraced these ideologies and the legacy our society hopes to leave behind. *Yes, peut-être* further forces the reader (or spectator) to critically examine seminal texts of Western civilization, like the fall of Eve. The retelling of this biblical story, so evocative of Western (read Christian) ideologies, proposes a modern variation that radically redirects the blame away from woman. The variation from the version that we know and expect projects a world without entrenched patriarchy and rigid gender identity. Similarly, Joseph Balsamo's questioning of Corinne's real name in *Week-end* (rejecting her father's name and her husband's), makes the viewer question the extent to which patriarchy has permeated Western culture. Such broad but extremely relevant critiques of society brought forth in *Yes, peut-être* and *Week-end* were representative of the critiques expressed during May '68.

May '68, that polemical time that persists in preoccupying modern France, exists in the national memory of that country. The events of the few weeks in May and June have sparked endless production to retell, celebrate, criticize, or question what happened, who participated, and what the end results were. Although such a varied group of events can be difficult to define, streamline, and summarize, what is certain is that May '68 was a time of political and social activism, critique, and questioning. May '68 was about the

freedom to express opinions, whatever they may be. The dissatisfaction with French society can be seen in the works produced shortly before these events. The post-apocalyptic imaginings of Godard and Duras take a hatchet to what sometimes seem like immobile, monolithic systems of power. These artists reject the world in which they live as failed utopias. France, the great nation of Rousseau, Voltaire, Descartes, has failed its forefathers. These dissatisfactions were among the motivations for protesters to take to the streets in May '68, an event described by Martin Crowley (speaking about Duras) as “the practice of a shattered community based on shared refusal and collective authorship” (227).

The continual re-telling of May '68, decade after decade, has inevitably led to frequent simplification of the narrative with three distinct and linear stages: student, social, and political (“Memories” 39). This narrative neglects nation-wide strikes and various protest movements as well as the violence of June. The elements of forgetting and re-writing history are also prominent themes in *Week-end* and *Yes, peut-être*. The characters in these unstable worlds reject history as a model for human behavior, or simply lack any reliable vestige of it. In its place, they invent or retell hybrid versions of history, mixing religious and literary figures, rearranging seminal Christian texts, losing all sense of chronology. These retellings themselves are critiques: of what we hold sacred, of the paradigm that shapes our viewpoints, of the failures of ideology to correspond with reality. The dangers of forgetting the past are very real. This is evident in the various manipulations of the narratives of May '68, as in the works of fiction. Contemporary politics has managed to dilute and streamline history into its own version of events. Such a manipulation is just as powerful as the hybrid new versions of history

presented in *Week-end* and *Yes, peut-être*. The retellings of May '68 have reached an important point in their evolution. Writers such as Chris Reynolds, Kristin Ross, and Julian Jackson have in recent years written critically about the remembering of May '68 in a limited and oversimplified way. These writers emphasize the importance of collective memory for a society and encourage the reader to question the breadth of May '68, insisting on its broadness as a movement across the country and among a variety of groups. They demonstrate that remembering is an important task and re-writing an ongoing, positive effort to restore the scope of May '68 from those who would try to minimize it.

Godard and Duras's criticism of their own times was permeated with a fear of forgetting history. *Yes, peut-être* tells of a world that has lost all vestige of human conquest, civilization, social progress, and ideologies. Humanity, which was poorly done the first time, destroyed itself and was haltingly re-born. In *Week-end*, history varies depending on the speaker, who expresses his own version of events to serve his own agenda. Neither fictional society has a single, universal truth of what really happened in the past. Without any historical model, the characters in these two works are rudderless, barely surviving amidst violence and chaos. The old adage "History repeats itself" is only true if there is a unified vision and understanding of what came before. History often serves as an example or counterexample of how to live. There are no glorious tales of the past; no human achievement seems to have survived millennia of history to the present day. Both the film and the play seem to suggest that human civilization has been a continuous failure to live up to its own ideals.

## Bibliography

- Atack, Margaret. *May '68 in French Fiction and Film: Rethinking Society, Rethinking Representation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. Print.
- Bantigny, Ludivine. "Le Temps Politisé: Quelques Enjeux Politiques De La Conscience Historique En Mai-Juin 68." *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'Histoire*, no. 117, 2013, pp. 215–229., [www.jstor.org/stable/42773473](http://www.jstor.org/stable/42773473).
- Bard, Christine. *Les féministes de la deuxième vague*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires De Rennes, 2012. Print.
- Baynac, Jacques. *Mai retrouvé: contribution à l'histoire du mouvement révolutionnaire du 3 mai au 16 juin 1968*. Paris, Editions Robert Laffont, 1978. Print.
- Bensaïd, Daniel, and Henri Weber. *Mai 1968 : Une répétition générale*. Paris, F. Maspero, 1968. Print.
- Bourg, Julian. *From Revolution to Ethics: May 1968 and Contemporary French Thought*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007. Electronic.
- Bourges, Hervé, ed. *The French Student Revolt: The Leaders Speak*. New York: Hill & Wang, 1968. Print.
- Brigham, Robert K. "Battlefield Vietnam: A Brief History." *PBS*. Public Broadcasting Service, n.d. Web. 18 Mar. 2017.
- Carruggi, Noelle. Marguerite Duras, *Une expérience intérieure: "le gommage de l'être en faveur du tout"*. New York: Peter Lang, 1995. Print.
- Cohen, Susan. *Women and Discourse in the Fiction of Marguerite Duras, Love, Legends, Language*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993. Print.
- Crowley, Martin. *Duras, Writing, and the Ethical*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000. Print.
- Duchen, Claire. *Feminism in France: from May '68 to Mitterrand*. Abingdon: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986. Print.
- Duchen, Claire. *Women's Rights and Women's Lives in France, 1944-1968*. East Sussex: Psychology Press, 1994. Electronic.
- Duras, Marguerite. *Théâtre II*. Paris: Gallimard, 1968. Print.
- Farocki, Harun, Kaja Silverman. *Speaking About Godard*. New York: NYU Press, 1998. Print.
- Godard, Jean-Luc. *Week-end, a film by Jean-Luc Godard*. Film script, 1968.

- Guers-Villate, Yvonne. *Continuité/discontinuité de l'oeuvre durassienne*. Bruxelles: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1985. Print.
- Hill, Leslie. *Marguerite Duras, Apocalyptic Desires*. London: Routledge, 1993. Print.
- Hofmann, Carol. *Forgetting and Marguerite Duras*. Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1991. Print.
- Jackson, Julian, Anna-Louise Milne, and James Williams, eds. "May '68: Rethinking France's Last Revolution." *French Studies* 67.1 (2011): xviii + 436 pp. Print.
- Lebelley, Frédérique. *Duras ou le poids d'une plume*. Paris: Editions Grasset et Fasquelle, 1994. Print.
- Marini, Marcelle. *Territoires du féminin avec Marguerite Duras*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1977. Print.
- Murphy, Carol. *Alienation and Absence in the Novels of Marguerite Duras*. Lexington: French Forum Publishers, 1982. Print.
- Odde, Thomas. "The Children of Marx and Esso: Oil Companies and Cinematic Writing in 1960s Godard." *A Companion to Jean-Luc Godard*. Eds. Tom Conley, T. Jefferson Kline, Wiley-Blackwell, 2014. Print.
- Philip, André. *Mai 68 et la foi démocratique*. Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1968. Print.
- Priault, Allan, and Sanford J. Ungar. *The Almost Revolution: France, 1968*. New York: Dell Book, 1969. Print.
- Reader, Keith, and Khursheed Wadia. *The May 1968 Events in France: Reproductions and Interpretations*. New York, St. Martin's Press, 1993.
- Reynolds, Chris. *Memories of May '68: France's Convenient Consensus*. Cardiff: Wales University Press, 2011. Electronic.
- Reynolds, Chris. *Sous les pavés...The Troubles: Northern Ireland, France, and the European collective memory of 1968*. Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2014. Electronic.
- Ricouart, Janine. *Ecriture féminine et violence: une étude de Marguerite Duras*. Birmingham: Summa Publications, 1991. Print.
- Ross, Kristin. *May '68 and its Afterlives*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. Electronic.
- Seidman, Michael. *The Imaginary Revolution: Parisian Students and Workers in 1968*. New York, Berghahn Books, 2004.
- Selous, Trista. *The Other Woman, Feminism and Femininity in the works of Marguerite Duras*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. Print.
- Servan-Schreiber, Jean-Jacques. *The Spirit of May*. N.Y., McGraw-Hill Book, 1969.