The voice of the immigrant worker and the rise and fall of France's long 1968

Michel de Certeau, writing the aftermath of May 1968, argued that 'Last May, speech was taken [*on a pris la parole*] the way, in 1789, the Bastille was taken'.[1] Echoing De Certeau, Kristen Ross has described May as a 'flight from social determinations, with displacements that took people outside of their location in society, with a disjunction, that is, between political subjectivity and the social group.'[2] Yet if one follows de Certeau's phrase to the next line, one finds the subject and space which this speech has been reclaimed by and within. What had been stormed by the '*travailleurs étudiants* [student-workers]' and '*ouvriers* [manual workers]' was command over the means of communication which had previously imprisoned them within their old subaltern roles.[3] 'Emerging from who knows where, suddenly filling the streets and the factories, circulating among us, becoming ours but no longer as the muffled noise of our solitude, voices that had never been heard began to change us.'[4] In the following decade, those on the left most imprinted by their 1968 experience sought to find, nurture, and to channel this insurgent collective voice into a project of total social transformation. The immigrant worker and their unskilled and semi-skilled workmates would become the subjects *par excellence* of this imagined rupture. By attempting to relate to this multinational, gendered, racialised and culturally diverse sector of the working class, the proliferating revolutionary organisations which grew out of the libertarian and anti-hierarchical culture of May's student and intellectual milieu attempted to create spaces where they could capture this group's right to speak.[5] Disruptive new understandings of class solidarity broke from the confines of the nation state and its working-class citizenry. By focussing on the importance of the immigrant worker's imagined voice for the French New Left, this chapter shows the fundamental importance of new conceptions of solidarity in sustaining a moment of revolutionary hope.

This chapter argues that this insurgent worker's voice described by De Certeau had an important, though overlooked, articulation. The defining collective subject of the 'long 1968s' revolutionary *prise de parole* was not an abstract *ouvrier* but a worker of a certain type: the 'O.S.' (*Ouvrier Specialisé*). With resonances with the concept of the *operaio massa* (mass worker) in Italy, the O.S. were confined to the most monotonous, alienating, segmented, and dangerous tasks on the factory production line. These 'semi-skilled' workers were recruited by industrialists predominantly from former French colonies, Europe's Mediterranean hinterlands, and France's own rural or peripheral population.[6] An inclusive category of class rather than 'race' provided the French New Left with a language to imagine the amalgam of culturally diverse national groups as a collective subject. Xavier Vigna has noted that 'the O.S. symbolised another industrial working class: combative of course, but above all composed of young people, women, and immigrants.'[7] Laure Pitti has shown the convergence of experiences between the conditions of young workers and the immigrant O.S., even as their representation in historical memory since 1968 has radically diverged.[8] Indeed three of the main subjects of the 'new social movements', which Alain Touraine defined outside the world of work, were over-represented amongst the O.S.. Though immigrant workers have been central to the development of 'Fordism' in the twentieth century and the spread of the production line (*la chaîne*) in the global car industry, they have

appeared less prominently in narratives of labour and working-class protest during the long 1970s.[9]

The scholarly turn away from labour history after the mid 1970s and framing of May 1968 as a primarily cultural and intellectual revolt has underplayed the central role of immigrant workers. This chapter argues that the immigrant worker is neither secondary to the 'long 1968', nor were immigrants confined 'to the margins' in its aftermath.[10] For those to the left of the PCF during 1968, the immigrant O.S. replaced the skilled metal worker as the archetype working class political subject.[11] Without legal, social, or cultural ties to the nation state, immigrant workers were seen as autonomous of the corporatist, reformist, or 'revisionist' positions seen to hold back the native working class from its revolutionary potential. The French New Left sought to offer solidarity to these workers not only due to their marginalisation and experience of racism, but because their structural position within the labour process and the global division of labour was perceived to be industrial capitalism's weak link. The alienation of the O.S. from their work on the production line and their inability to upskill generated expectations on the French far-left that they could overturn the whole capitalist factory-labour system without the need for electoral victories or trade union mediation. A rebellion in French factories was hoped to undermine 'imperialism' and the conditions that had produced the poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment propelling migrants from their countries of origin. Such workplace struggles over categorisation, conditions, speed-ups, and dignity in the early 1970s would in turn generate wider political, intellectual, and journalistic interest outside the radical left.[12]

French leftist activists relating to immigrant workers and their struggles was not new. Solidarity actions by thousands of French sympathisers of the FLN (*Front de libération nationale*) and the Algerian cause had earned them the title of '*les Porteurs de valises*'.[13] The kinds of actions and imaginaries of the post-1968 generation were, however, distinct, even if there were clear overlaps in personnel, imaginaries, and repertoires. Nor was the French left the only one to centre immigrant workers. At a pan-European conference in Zurich, the Italian group Potere Operaio argued that the "mass worker" – the Italian equivalent of the O.S. – had become almost totally synonymous with the immigrant worker.[14] The effort to relate to the immigrant workers in their respective countries allowed such groups across the industrialised core in Western Europe to think globally while acting locally.

The Union des jeunesses communistes marxistes-léninistes (UJCml) (later Gauche prolétarienne (GP)), Vive la Révolution, Révolution!, Ligue Communiste, and other far-left groups through the 'long 1968' understood the O.S. immigrant worker to be an exemplary revolutionary subject. Making up a multinational workforce without formal citizenship rights (such as right to vote in French national elections – or even until the early 1970s – in trade union elections), they were portrayed as emblematic both of an 'epoch of imperialism' as well as the increasing globalisation and centralisation of capital. As one Moroccan immigrant worker and GP activist called Mokhtar put it: 'if there is no participation of the immigrant industrial workers (*ouvriers immigrés*) in the revolution in France, there will be something but there will never be a revolution… never the workers in power.'[15] The *ouvrièrisme*

[workerism] of groups like the GP was founded not on the "traditional" working class composed of older, qualified French worker-citizens but of the newly gendered, racialised, and young sections of the "new" working class. Though never counting more than a few thousand activists and with a highly amorphous membership structure, the GP became prominent in French national life during the early 1970s for its adept use of well-publicised actions and super-star intellectual supporters. Amongst its members, sympathisers, or close collaborators stood many of those who would define French intellectual and cultural life over the following decades: Benny Lévy, Alain Geismar, Serge July, Olivier Rolin, Gérard Miller, Jean-Claude Milner, Marin Karmitz, André Glucksmann, Robert Linhart, Christain Jambet, Michel Le Bris as well as Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Jacques Rancière, and Jean-Luc Godard. Despite its prominence and the lasting impact its sympathisers had on French society, the GP has elicited very little serious archival or historical work.

Immigrants into workers

Given the political focus by the 1968 left on the industrial working class, the weight of O.S. within French industry was of political as well as an economic or sociological significance. Immigrant workers made up 6.3% of the French workforce in 1968 (1.25 million) and around 20% of all industrial workers.[16] This increased through the 1960s until the mid-1970s. Between 1962 and 1974 foreign workers made up around 80% of the total increase in male workers in France.[17] In 1954 the O.S. made up 28% of the industrial workforce; this rose to 37% in 1975 to equal the number of qualified workers for the first time.[18] Moreover the vast majority of immigrant workers in France were concentrated in manual industry: 68.5% in semi-skilled (O.S.) or unskilled posts (36.6% for the former and 31.6% for the latter).[19] Certain national groups were invariably over-represented as O.S. and unskilled workers: Portuguese, 70%; Tunisians, 70.3%; Moroccans, 81.4%; Algerians, 87.2%. Previous waves of European populations like Spaniards, Italians, and Poles were less likely to be unskilled and semi-skilled, having progressed up the skill hierarchy as new arrivals replaced them at the bottom. In the Lyon metal industry, the division between French and immigrant workers was matched onto division of skill and status: 17% of French employees were managers or technicians, 6% were other non-manual, 59% were skilled manual workers, while only 18% were unskilled or semi-skilled (O.S.). Meanwhile North African workers made up 0.15% of the non-manual, 5.7% of the skilled, and 94% of the O.S. or unskilled while Italian migrants made 1% of the non-manual, 33% of the skilled workers, and 66% of the O.S. or unskilled.[20] The vast majority of immigrant workers in France worked either as O.S. or as unskilled labourers, while only a tiny proportion rose into higher grades.

Even though immigrant workers made up a sizable part of the industrial working class during the largest general strike in European history, their image in 1968 and in subsequent years has often been expunged or downplayed (even if elements of the left at the time had foregrounded their actions). At Renault Billancourt in 1971 – the factory that was said to "give France a cold every time it sneezed" – 69.1% of the workers were O.S. while 40.1% of these were North African (95% of Algerian workers at the most symbolic factory in France were O.S.).[21] At the

gates of the Renault-Flins factory which saw fierce battles between workers, students, and the police in June 1968, the role of student activists was overemphasised in news reports at the expense of immigrant workers who were (misleadingly) described as playing little role in the strikes and fleeing from the disorders (sometimes back to their country of origin).[22] Given that the demands won by the general strike of May-June 1968 did not foreground specific demands of the O.S. (with the CGT union taking specific interest in the early 1970s), the revolutionary potential of this worker-category would only be drawn to popular attention from 1971 with the strikes by 'these new unskilled workers' at Renault Le Mans and then at Penarroya in Lyon in February-March 1972, and then in Renault-Billancourt in March-April 1973.[23] The *gauchiste* left had, however, been long predicting these forms of 'worker insubordination' which was still largely conceived within the bounds of the factory.[24] A document by the *gauchiste*-linked Renault Billancourt 'Immigrant Group' for an international conference on the auto-industry activists involving participants from Italy, Britain, Germany, Switzerland, and France in April 1973 reported that the O.S. was 'the driving force behind the wage-struggle movement for greater social wealth… it is in the large car factories that most of the advanced objectives and forms of struggle have been developed, to be then generalized by the whole working class.'[25]

The struggles of the O.S. attracted many leading Hexagon-based left intellectuals like Jean-Paul Sartre, Michel Foucault, André Gorz, and Manuel Castells to take an active interest in their conditions.[26] A mimeographed document by Michel Bosquet (the alias for André Gorz) was circulated by militants and other sympathisers of the group *Vive la Revolution!* in the state-of-the-art Renault car-factory in Flins. In his piece – originally written in *Le Nouvel Observateur* – Gorz describes how Fordist productive relations had created a segment of the working class totally alienated from the work process.[27] Gorz argued for the absolute centrality of the O.S. in the unmaking of the classical working class subject, and decentred the 'new working class' of technical and white collar workers theorised during the 1960s.[28] Unlike the traditional skilled craft worker which was historically better organised, provided the PCF with its most solid base in the factories, and could more easily barter its *savoir-faire*, the O.S. appeared a spectre heralding the emancipation *from* capitalist labour rather than an emancipation *within* it.

If the new system of scientific production of the Fordist era, replete with the infinite fragmentation of tasks is to function, Gorz argued, then it is not the skilled and secure (and often French-national) 'true workers' which allows it to function.[29] The latter still held on to their '*culture ouvrière*', their class consciousness, their command over skill, and even autonomy over their bodily movements. The policing of tasks had been invented consciously to reduce the worker of any space for initiative, invention, or ruse like reclaiming a handful of seconds to smoke a cigarette or stretch their muscles.[30] Capital has done this, Gorz argues, 'not because the workers are idiots, but because they are clever. As far as the workers are given a margin of control, they will use it against those that exploit them.' Having been alienated from the production process by capital restructuring, demands of the traditional labour movement and political parties for *autogestion* rang hollow.[31] Such national and electoral demands was argued to matter little to those with no previous experience of the disciplining of industrial society and what E.P. Thompson termed 'factory time' – many had

been peasants and farmers before making the trip to Europe and hoping to return.[32] To make the O.S., Gorz continues, capital goes to find their workers in the countryside, in the colonies and semi-colonies, as well as those rejected and labelled "un-adapted" by the national school system. In other words, from those people who have the least experience of 'scientific production' – the '*non-ouvriers*' – and least roots in any strong workers' culture and from those whose lives until that point least resemble the rhythms and disciplines of the factory.

Workers' voice

This was a worker-subjectivity that was readily apparent to Gauche Prolétarienne activist Robert Linhart in the Citröen Choissy plant in Paris. As a former ENS Ulm student of Louis Althusser, leading militant in the UJCml (and later GP), and born clandestinely in Nice in 1944 to Polish Jewish parents who had emigrated in the 1930s, Linhart was one of the two to three thousand young French intellectuals and students who left their studies to work in the factories as part of a movement called *établissement*.[33] Working at Citroën's Choisy plant in the 15th Arrondissement from autumn 1968 (given a marginally higher category than O.S. on account of his French nationality), he found his co-workers were unlike the working class he had imagined.

A recurring theme of Linhart's memoir *L'Établi* is the workers' voice. The exploitation of the factory and the prison-like '*foyers*' in which immigrants lived (often supervised by former colonial officials, CRS, or army veterans) provided barriers to their *prise de parole* on the model of De Certeau. Conversing on the production line was almost impossible due to the noise and prying foremen, company interpreters, or the *syndicat jaune*, and was compounded for many by lack of confidence in speaking the French language. As Linhart notes:

> 'In the outside world "*établissement*" appears spectacular, the papers make it into quite a legend. Seen from the factory, it's not very important in the long run. Everyone who works here has a complex individual story, often more fascinating and more embroiled than that of the student who has temporarily turned worker. The bourgeoisie always imagine they have a monopoly on personal histories. How ridiculous! They have a monopoly on speaking in public, that's all…The others live their stories with intensity, but in silence.'[34]

De Certeau's *prise de parole* meant more than slogans scrawled on the walls of the Sorbonne. It meant creating space (through political organisation) where these workers could speak. As fellow GP militant (and future founder-editor of *Libération*) Serge July wrote in *Le Monde*, 'we want to destroy the dividing machine between those who "work" and those who "think"'.[35] Wrenching the monopoly of the bourgeoisie over speaking in public and giving it to immigrant workers was a prerequisite for Linhart and the GP. A somewhat antinomical political formation, the GP combined both a Maoism of the Cultural Revolution and spontaneist and libertarian elements common to the radicalised student and intellectual milieu of France's 1968.[36] Though less doctrinaire than more orthodox Maoist currents, the GP shared their Third-Worldism and overwhelming emphasis on the industrial working class. Jean-Paul Sartre would

go on to be the nominal editor of the group's newspaper *La Cause du peuple* during a government crackdown. The paper was conceived explicitly as a publication of a new type where 'the masses would inform the masses.'[37] What appealed to Sartre – as well as other sympathisers (or members) like Simon de Beauvoir, Michel Foucault, Jacques Ranciere, Gilles Deleuze, Jean-Luc Godard, and Maurice Clavel – was the group's 'anti-authoritarian revolutionary praxis' and call to relate in new and direct ways with the marginalised subjects like immigrant workers.

The voice that the GP sought to foreground was seen by Sartre to be unmediated by existing party or organisation, expressed spontaneously through what he labelled in *Critique of Dialectical Reason* the 'fused-group'. Sartre praised *La Cause du peuple* in the introduction to the 1972 book *Les Maos en France* because

> 'For the most part the articles came from workers and country people, who described in their own writing or to interviewers their strikes, their acts of sabotage, their occupation of the lands of absentee landlords. They spoke not in the language of one party but in the language of the people, and the violence that came to light came from the people…Its articles – brutal, unrefined, simplistic, but true – resounded with the voice of the people, and that is just what its bourgeois readers could not tolerate. They learned that the masses violently rejected slavery, in other words, the exploitative society in general. The bourgeois could not listen to this voice. They could put up with the revisionists [i.e. the PCF] talking to *them about* the masses, but not the masses talking *among themselves* without caring whether or not the bourgeois were listening.'[38]

The insurgent voices of immigrant workers were often foregrounded in GP publications – invariably with invective against the system and traditional institutions of the left and labour movement (an issue some have criticised in subsequent years).[39] In one issue of the Renault-Flins Marxist-Leninist newspaper *L'Unité Ouvriere* from 1969, 'A maoist from the body-section [*tolerie*]' spoke from the first person:

> 'I am an immigrant worker and I sweat like you for Renault. When I came to France, I was told: "Freedom, equality, fraternity". What in fact I was given here: "racism, informers [*petit chefs mouchards*], hellish production line speeds". Already, I am doing the work of two workers and what's more I have the bosses [*chefs*] on my back all day. When an immigrant worker revolts, the "Cocq" [the name of a supervisor] tells him: "If you are not happy, go back to your country". There's no right to revolt if you are a worker and moreover an immigrant.
>
> Lecocq we are not your slaves, and if you continue, the immigrant workers will wait for you at your door! We'll make the snitches [*mouchards*] tremble, (Bernard, the team leader, for example), those who give us warnings when we go to eat too early, those who shout at us when we want to take a short break to catch our breath. We don't accept having to work ourselves to death for nothing. Last Saturday when you

> gave us crumbs of a pay-slip we stopped working. The next time, bosses [*patrons*], it will be worse for you than in May 68!'[40]

For 1968-era *gauchiste*s of many tendencies this 'brutal, unrefined, simplistic, but true' voice was not being represented by parties like the PCF or Parti Socialiste (PS) or even the trade unions. 'We don't hide the fact that we are resolutely opposed to the trade unions' began a 1972 supplement to La *Cause du peuple.*[41] As Donald Reid has noted, '*Gauchistes* touted immigrant workers combatively as an alternative to the apparent conservatism of French workers and their PCF and CGT representatives.'[42] Sartre, like the GP, saw in the spontaneous rebellions outside the unions (realised through *comités de lutte*), the sabotage of production, and direct confrontation with factory supervisors and police, as bringing the predictions of Fanon home to France. No traditional political organisation was understood to be able to recuperate such actions.

A multinational workforce meant a high diversity of spoken languages within even a single work-group. Such diversity was a boon for management seeking to avoid workplace disruption. The process of translation and the communication across linguistic barriers was a prerequisite to any political activity. For worker militants like the *établis* there was a need to co-ordinate struggles, write leaflets, and spread news from within and outside the factory to their workmates to break their mutual isolation. This required the translation of one language to the other, finding common ground that could sustain collective activity. Robert Linhart helped organise a strike with his workmates against the small lengthening of the work-day in late 1969 in an effort of Citroën to win back some of the workers' gains of 1968.[43] Linhart describes in intimate detail the tensions about whether the machines would stop at the time agreed for the unofficial stoppage (outside the framework of the unions), and how the silence of the machines opened up a brief dream of an alternative production model. Flyers deposited in the *Gauche prolétarienne* archives show their reproduction in Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, and Serbo-Croat for the occasion. One was titled '*On n'est pas des esclaves*'.[44]

Like Linhart, the *établis* had followed Mao's suggestion to uproot from the universities, schools, and small jobs and 'establish' themselves amongst the people.[45] As a number of their memoirs make clear, to "organise the working class" meant creating spaces where the voice of the working class could be heard. The relationship of individual *établis* with their co-workers, however, was restricted to geographically and temporally restricted spaces defined by the organisation of the factory itself. Nicolas Dubost – *établi* with the *Revolution!* group (a split from the Trotskyist *Ligue communiste*) and the CFDT trade union – describes in his memoir *Flins Sans Fin* how militants would only have an hour each day to politically agitate with the workers at the Renault-Flins factory where he worked. This would be confined to the changing of shifts on the forecourt outside the factory's central gate through which all workers passed in intervals at 1:30pm and 2:05-2:30pm. Dubost describes the workers' initial incomprehension of the agitation outside the gates by the *Base ouvrière* between 1969 and 1971 (which had only brought a sound-system, some posters, and some sketches). The GP however, then started a 'more effective agitation' which was both '"spectacle" and direct democracy':

> ‘A sound-system, that’s it; a militant from outside the factory starts with a few words, information from the outside or from the inside the factory, then he gives it over to a worker militant or sympathiser of the *comité de lutte*, who speaks of his workshop, and each take their turn to speak “into the mike”. Finally, “each”, I exaggerate, but they are many who are generous enough to call to their co-workers. Group discussions, hustle and bustle, *prise de parole*, above all in the evenings where something has happened inside the factory.[46]

This practice was copied by Dubost with his CFDT union section.[47] Meetings were addressed by a maghrébin colleague in Arabic, another in Portuguese, another in sarakolé for the west Africans. Creating this kind of space for a radical *prise de parole* – especially for immigrant workers – held more importance than political propaganda for Dubost. It implied a politics of release, an overcoming of fear, and a rebellion against the strictures of the assembly line endured inside the plant. As Dubost argued:

> ‘The power-knowledge of speech is far more fascinating than the pen which writes leaflets or posters; a microphone is quite terrifying. When one works in a factory where the right to speak is systematically suppressed, lacking in use for the work itself, then there is a panic behind the microphone. *Encore plus*. However, there is a really strong *need* to speak, but it rests jammed, like a ball that capital places in the throat.’[48]

Dubost found that this was a problem for *établis* like himself. Particularly at ease behind the microphone and able to write leaflets and pamphlets swiftly, whenever he finished speaking and attempted to pass the microphone to a colleague, ‘direct democracy finished. No-one wanted to take it.’ Those who knew how to speak refused: ‘“it will only be repeating things” or “you do it so well”’. ‘Too well’, Dubost adds. A theme of Dubost’s memoir is the crumbling of the idealistic *Image d’Épinal* of the working class as he feels his colleagues are increasingly relying on him as a figure of meditation. Dubost had broken with his studies and future career of university teaching for the factory in order to watch the workers liberate themselves and not, in his eyes, to have their liberation done for them.

The importance of the wager on the voice of the oppressed in the imaginaries of the 1968 left is affirmed by the silence that followed. Having been one of the leading figures of May ’68 – the charismatic leader of the UJC (ml) – Robert Linhart was one of the most marked. In a personal and collective memoir of both her father and the children of the ’68 revolutionaries, Virginie Linhart – Robert’s daughter – sought to explain her father’s silence after the spring of 1981. Just before the election of Francois Mitterrand’s government, her father had attempted suicide by drug overdose when she was just 14, after which he became mute, unable to talk either of the past or the future. Virginie asked him to speak of his past. ‘It’s me…the king of silence,’ he replies.

- Yes, it’s you the king of silence, the prince of obscurity. But you aren’t dead, and for twenty years now I have seen only your silence, so I want to understand. Because it is a part of my life as well…

- It's our secret, *ma petite fille*...
- What's our secret?
- That you know everything, and that I speak no-more'[49]

Yet far from explaining her father's silence as a medical condition, Virginie Linhart sees it as a conscious political choice. The year of his silence is critical. 1981 marked three years since Linhart had given up on active politics, three months after his close friend and former teacher Louis Althusser had been confined to a mental asylum after murdering his wife Hélène, a month before many of his former comrades would ride the electoral wave into the Mitterand government, and the critical year in the ongoing restructuring of the French working class. Linhart became mute at the moment where he felt the collective voice he had searched for had been extinguished, opening up a brave and unrecognisable new world:

> 'That's why my father killed himself. There was no confrontation possible with those who continue to speak, to live in the present, to expose themselves politically in the media or through literature. They don't exist in the same problematic. They followed their route. My father had to turn off so as not to divide his life between being behind the scene and the psychiatric hospital. In his condition, he has shown a profound wisdom. In his personal isolation, he has been the perfect master of his own destiny…Now, I understand why my father has chosen to stay silent.'[50]

The story of Robert Linhart is also the story of 1968 and the unmaking of its revolutionary imaginaries. The *prise de parole* which De Certeau saw as the defining element of May was, in Linhart's case, reduced to silence as the constituent elements which nourished commitment to – and expectation of – a new world unravelled. This vision, shared by a number of revolutionary currents across Western Europe and the world, re-born in 1968, was indelibly linked to the insurgent voice of the young, semi-skilled, immigrant worker at the heart of the era's industrial production. Their alienation from the productive process and their dehumanisation was hoped to open the way for a politics which would seek to abolish rather than valorise the worker as the motor of capitalist production. Without the perceived conservatism and corporatism of the legitimised status allotted to the skilled citizen-worker or the same ties to the ideological strictures of the national polity, the immigrant O.S. was imagined to have the most to win and least to lose in radical and total transformation. The O.S. were seen to have little stake in piecemeal electoral reform and sectional demands. With a 'double absence' – in the words of Abdelmalek Sayad – from both France as well as their countries of birth, the 1968 Left hoped this multinational and socially displaced working class would remind French workers of their own, temporarily forgotten, revolutionary traditions.[51]

The struggles of a multi-national working class made up of immigrants, women, and the young had allowed left activists in France to briefly conceive the prospects of global revolution starting from the confines of the factory walls. Yet this imaginary was not to last, nor did it result in the hoped-for revolutionary rupture. As the machines fell silent in the factories in which the O.S. worked and industrial restructuring erased the jobs the immigrant workers were brought to France to serve, Linhart's wager on their collective voice ended with his own. That

silence has had an indelible effect on France's political imaginaries since. Nonetheless, during the 1980s publications like *Sans frontière* (1979-1986) and movements like the 1983 March for Equality and Against Racism show that the eclipse of the French left's concern for the worker's voice also marked the opening of new era of immigrant activism.

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[1] M. de Certeau, *The Capture of Speech and Other Political Writings* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 11.
[2] K. Ross, *May '68 and It's Afterlives* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003), pp. 2-3.
[3] The 1997 English language version of this piece translates this wrongly as 'wage-earners' instead of the industrial-manual worker term *ouvrier* implied by the French. See M. de Certeau, *La prise de parole: et autres écrits politiques* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1994), p. 40.
[4] De Certeau, *The Capture of Speech*, p. 11.
[5] For one of the few engagements with the role of immigrant workers in 1968 and after see D. Gordon, *Immigrants & Intellectuals – May '68 & The Rise of Anti-Racism in France* (Pontypool: Merlin Press, 2012).
[6] For important articulation of the radical potential of the O.S. see the account by B. Coriat, *L'Atelier et le Chronomètre* (Paris: Christian Bourgeois, 1979).
[7] X. Vigna, *L'espoir et l'effroi. Luttes d'écriture et luttes de classes en France au XXe siècle* (Paris: La Découverte, 2016), p. 142.
[8] This was not helped by the Gaullist attempt to paint the May events as being driven by immigrant workers. For further discussion of this dynamic see L. Pitti, '«Travailleurs de France, voilà notre nom»: les mobilisations des ouvriers étrangers dans les usines et les foyers durant les années 1970 »', in Ahmed Boubeker and Abdellali Hajjat (eds), *Histoire politique des immigrations (post)coloniales : France, 1920-2008* (Paris, Editions Amsterdam, 2008), pp. 95-111.
[9] B. J. Silver, *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization since 1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 46.
[10] R. Wolin, *Wind from the East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 87; M. Seidman, *The Imaginary Revolution* (Oxford: Berghan Books), p. 174; Y. Gastaut. *L'immigration et la opinion publique sous la Ve Republique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2000), pp. 37-51. For overlooking or downplaying the role of immigrant workers in the long 1968 during the fiftieth anniversary see N. Ramdani, 'A French revolution that pushed immigrants to the margins', *Guardian* (28 April 2018) < https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/may/08/france-may-1968-racial-legacy-empire-50-anniversary >; D. Palumbo-Liu, 'France must move beyond May 1968 and tackle the racial legacy of empire', *Guardian* (8 May 2018) < https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/may/08/france-may-1968-racial-legacy-empire-50-anniversary >.
[11] P. Saunier, *L'ouvriérisme universitaire: du sublime à l'ouvrier-masse* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993).
[12] For two studies *Le Monde* and *L'Humanité* journalists see J-P. Dumont, *La Fin des OS?* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1973) and M-R. Pineau, *Les OS* (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1973). For a searing description of this process in action, see Robert Linhart's description of a skilled worker colleague in Citroën's Javal factory in 1969 seeing his work process "rationalised" by a factory technician. R. Linhart, *L'Établi* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1981), pp. 161-178.
[13] For background to this period see D. Reid, 'The Politics of Immigrant Workers in Twentieth-Century France', in C. Guerin-Gonzales and C. Strikwerda, *The Politics of*

Immigrant Workers: Labor Activism and Migration in the World Economy since 1830 (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1998).
[14] Potere Operaio*, Per una internazionale delle avanguardie rivoluzionarie* [*Convegno internazionale a cura di Potere operaio*]: *Zurigo, novembre 1970* (Florence: Clusf, 1971).
[15]*Les Nouveau Partisans: Histoire de la Gauche Prolétarienne par des militants de base* (Paris: Al Dante, 2015).
[16] S. Castles and G. Kosack, *Immigrant Workers and Class Structure in Western Europe* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 61, 115.
[17] F. Briot and G. Verbunt, *Immigrés dans la crise* (Paris: Éditions ouvrières, 1981), p. 20.
[18] L. Thévenot, 'Les catégories sociales en 1975: l'extension du salariat', *Économie et statistiques* no 91, July-August 1977, pp. 3-31.
[19] Castles and Kosack, *Immigrant Workers*, p. 80.
[20] Castles and Kosack, *Immigrant Workers*, pp. 81.
[21] L. Pitti, 'Les luttes centrales des O.S. immigrés', *Plein droit*, 63/4 (2004), pp. 43-47. See also J. Fremontier, *La Forteresse ouvrière: Renault* (Paris: Fayard, 1971).
[22] Gastaut, 'Le rôle des immigrés'.
[23] 'A l'origine du conflit Renault : l'« O.S. », nouveau manœuvre', *Le Monde* (25 May 1971).
[24] X. Vigna*, L'insubordination ouvrière dans les années 68. Essai d'histoire politique des usines* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007).
[25] La contemporaine, Paris, F delta res 0576/5/2/2/4.
[26] J-P. Sartre, *Sartre in the Seventies: Interviews and Essays* (London: André Deutsch, 1978); Gordon, *Immigrants and* Intellectuals, pp. 120-128; A. Gorz and P. Gavi, 'La bataille d'Ivry', *Les Temps modernes*, 26 (March 1970), pp. 1398-1414; M. Castells, 'Immigrant Workers and Class Struggles in Advanced Capitalism: The Western European Experience', *Politics and Society*, 5 (1975), pp. 33-66.
[27]A. Gorz, 'L'usine-bagne', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 384 (20 March 1972). An abridged English translation of this piece was published in the *New Left Review*. See A. Gorz, 'The "Prison Factory"', *New Left Review*, 73 (May-June 1972). The mimeograph document can be found in La contemporaine, Paris, F delta res 0612/1/3.
[28] The most classic example being S. Mallet's *La Nouvelle classe ouvrière* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1973).
[29] La contemporaine, Paris, F delta res 0612/1/3.
[30] James Scott would later call this form of resistance the 'weapons of the weak'. See J. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak : Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).
[31] A new approach to socialist strategy was needed, which Gorz developed in his work particularly from the mid 1970s.
[32] See J. Berger and J. Mohr, *A Seventh Man* (London: Verso, 2010) for discussion of the affective experience of the migrant from agriculture to the industrial city of northern Europe.
[33] The best general overviews can be seen in *Les Temps Modernes: Ouvriers volontaires, les années 68 : l'«établissement» en usine,* 684 (2016); M. Dressen, *De l'amphi à l'établi: les étudiants maoïstes à l'usine, 1967-1989* (Paris: Belin, 2000), p. 11; V. Linhart, *Volontaires pour l'usine vies d'établis (1967-1977)* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2010); D. Reid, 'Etablissement: Working in the Factory to Make Revolution in France', *Radical History* Review, 88 (2004).
[34] Linhart, *The Assembly Line*, 76.
[35] S. July, 'Pour la cause du peuple', *Le Monde* (11 April 1970).

[36] For background see F. Hourmant, *Les Années Mao en France. Avant, pendant et après Mai 68* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2018); C. Bourseiller, *Les maoïstes : la folle histoire des gardes rouges français* (Paris: Edité par Plon, 1996). For the GP's precursors see P. Buton, 'Inventing a Memory on the Extreme Left : The Example of the Maoists after 1968', in J. Jackson, A-L. Milne, and J. S. Williams (eds), *May 68. Rethinking France's Last Revolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); A. Belden Fields, *Trotskyism and Maoism: Theory and Practice in France and the United States* (New York: Autonomedia, 1988).
[37] J-P. Sartre, *Sartre in the Seventies - Interviews and Essays* (London: André Deutsch, 1978), p. 165.
[38] Sartre, *Sartre in the Seventies*, pp. 165-166.
[39] The *gauchiste* stress on the radical and autonomous power of immigrant workers, unable to be controlled or recuperated by traditional labour movement institutions like the PCF and CGT, has been criticised as paving the way for political isolation of immigrants. See O. Brachet, 'Pourquoi Lyon fait-il parter de ses immigrés', *Les Temps modernes*, 40 (1984), pp. 1687-88.
[40] 'Renault-Flins: L'Unité ouvrière', journal des marxistes léninistes prolétariens de Renault-Flins', 1 and 4 (June and October 1969). La contemporaine, Paris, F delta res 0612/1/1.
[41] *La Cause du peuple/J'Accuse*, 20 (15 January 1972).
[42] D. Reid, 'The Politics of Immigrant Workers in Twentieth-Century France'.
[43] Linhart, *The Assembly Line*, pp. 85-106.
[44] 'Groupe Communiste Maoïste de Citroën', La contemporaine, Paris, F delta res 0576/5/2/1.
[45] Dressen, *De l'amphi à l'établi*, p. 11.
[46] N. Dubost, *Flins san fin* (Paris: La Découverte, 1979), pp. 112-113. See also N. Dubost , 'Neuf ans et demi d'usine : aucun regret ?', *Les Temps Modernes*, 684-685 (2015), pp. 246-53.
[47] For further discussion on the changes within the CFDT during the 1970s see F. Georgi, '«Le monde change, changeons notre syndicalisme » La crise vue par la CFDT (1973-1988)', *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 4/84 (2004), pp. 93-105.
[48] Dubost, *Flins san fin,* pp. 112-113.
[49] V. Linhart, *Le jour où mon père s'est tu* (Paris: Points, 2010), 12. [Author's translation].
[50] Linhart, *Le jour où mon père s'est tu*, p. 166.
[51] A. Sayad, *La double absence: des illusions de l'émigré aux souffrances de l'immigré* (Paris: Points, 2014).

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