‘1968’ and the politics of memory

Phil Cohen

The legacies of ’68 continue to resonate

I have recently been thinking about the term ‘left field’, in its sense of ‘something coming suddenly out of nowhere’, through a singular, disruptive act of creative innovation.[1] This seems to offer a way of thinking about the connections between ‘1968’ and the present conjuncture. It points us towards a consideration of the un/common ground from which counter-hegemonic movements and ideas emerge, and which they in turn help to create, through a process of change which is often subterranean, and consists of thousands of small, not yet connected, acts of resistance. It seems especially appropriate to apply the term to an understanding of the present conjuncture, with its radical uncertainties; and it also assists us in grasping what was at stake in ‘May 68’ and its long aftermath.

Whatever else the sixties counterculture may have represented for those who took part in it - and no movement has had its legacy more contested or hyped - it offered a fleeting glimpse of an alternative form of civil society, based on a moral economy of mutual aid, and a political vision of a world in which inequalities of class, race, gender and age had, more or less magically, disappeared. However utopian, this principle of hope has continued to inspire the quest for a more open, participatory and democratic society; and it has also led to the development of new forms of research, that attempt to challenge prevailing knowledge/power hierarchies in the academy and elsewhere, and to sustain new spaces of representation to support voice and agency amongst marginalised and minority groups.

Half a century on, commentators are again talking about a ‘youthquake’, now linked to the advent of ‘Generation Rent’ as a radical new political force. It is tempting to conflate these two moments, if only to conjure up an image of the baton

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of revolt being handed on from the class of ’68 to the class of 2018. But before we jump to such an optimistic conclusion it might be worth considering what the memory politics generated around 1968 tell us about the state of the left today.

‘1968’ and all that

We are living in a culture whose collective memory is no longer primarily conveyed through face to face story-telling: instead it is stored, retrieved and disseminated through the prosthetic devices of digital technology and social media. Whatever we remember or don’t about 1968, whether we were there and actively involved or not, our sense of this conjuncture, and what it represented, is massively mediated in a way that makes it difficult to recapture, let alone rekindle, the immediacy of the intellectual and cultural ferment, the heady, contagious excitement, of those days.

This is especially the case in these dark and dismal, not to say cynical times, when the optimism of the will so much in evidence in 1968 can so easily be made to appear as a hopelessly naive youthful idealism that inevitably foundered when it came up against the brutal realpolitik of capitalism’s onwards march towards globalisation. Especially on the left, pessimism of the intellect continues to thrive in certain quarters - a depressive position that is split off from, and counterposed to, the often manic enthusiasm of activists who believe that entrenched structures of power and inequality will somehow magically dissolve when confronted with the assertion of their ‘counter-hegemonic’ demands; and that one more push will get them to the gates of the New Jerusalem.[2]

From where we are now it is much easier to imagine the future in dystopic terms than to conjure up the spirit so famously invoked in Wordsworth’s famous panegyric to the events of 1789:

> Oh! pleasant exercise of hope and joy!
> For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood
> Upon our side, we who were strong in love!
> Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
> But to be young was very heaven! - Oh! times,
> In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
> Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
> The attraction of a country in romance!

Interestingly, though Wordsworth highlights the re-enchantment of the world that is brought about in the revolutionary moment, the poem's title is precautionary - *The French revolution as it appeared to Enthusiasts at its Commencement*: it already foreshadows the advent of Robespierre and the Jacobin Terror to come.

There has been no shortage of commentators who have adopted a similar reading of 1968, seeing it as marking the point at which capitalism goes cultural as well as global, and becomes hip.[3] In this view, the 'Youth Revolution' created a platform for disseminating the hedonistic pleasure principles of consumerism, and made possessive individualism - doing your own thing - sexy, addictive and above all *cool*. While sex and drugs and rock and roll may not exactly be the devil's work, some on the left see this aspect of '68 as promoting the dispositions of creative self-invention, with its underpinning culture of narcissism, that were exactly what was required by post-Fordism and the just-in-time production of the self.

This kind of critique has provoked a furious response from the libertarian left, who see 1960s counterculture in a very different light - as a great disseminator of popular and anti-authoritarian politics, a generational revolt against the patriarchal structures of the family and the bureaucratic structures of state. For them, 68-ers were embarking on a quest for new and more directly democratic forms of collective self-organisation, based on a moral economy of mutual aid. And, for many, it was also about an aesthetic revolt against the dead weight of elite bourgeois cultural taste, and its literary and artistic canons. Lauren Berlant, in her essay on '1968 or something', has argued for 'a refusal to learn the lessons of history, a refusal to relinquish utopian practice, a refusal of the apparently inevitable movement from tragedy to farce that has marked so much of the analysis of social movements generated post 68'.[4]

This is clearly a debate that is going to run and run, because it has a direct bearing on a wider set of issues on the left: a debate between its authoritarian and libertarian tendencies, between cool analytics and passionate commitment. My grandad, a keen member of the Independent Labour Party at the time of Red Clydeside, was rumoured to have slept between a picture of Lenin on one side of the bed and Kropotkin on the other - and never to have had a bad night's sleep. My generation have not been so lucky. The struggle to reconcile Marxism and anarchism, Machiavelli and mutual aid, direct action and party politics, utopianism and pragmatism, has been a nightmare from which many of us are still trying to awake.

'1968' and the politics of memory

In trying to understand what is at stake here we have to recognise that '1968' is an idea that can be interpreted in a number of different registers. So, '1968' stands in for a whole gamut of actions and attitudes that directly or implicitly set out to disrupt the settlement between capital and labour that was in place at that time. But, and just as importantly, it is also seen as signifying more broadly the radical cultural and political change that is initiated by a younger generation when it rises up against the old order it has inherited from its parents, in the name of some principle of hope for a better future that is incommensurate with the status quo. The paradox of '1968' is that its legacy has survived as a metaphorical statement of intent to overthrow an *ancien regime*, but it also can be seen as marking the end of the revolutionary narrative in which its project was embedded, which had begun in Europe after 1789 - or at the very least to mark its supersession. The transformative values and attitudes associated with the social movements that came into such spectacular existence in this period can thus be understood as either prefigurative or outmoded - and it is for that very reason they continue to provide a focus point for debate.

It is all too easy for those of us who were in the forefront of things in 1968 - and now find ourselves fully paid-up members of the pedagogic gerontocracy we once railed against - to set up that conjuncture and those involvements as a benchmark against which to measure subsequent moments and movements, only to find them wanting. Alternatively, we may try to detect in everything that has emerged post-'68 from left field (gay rights, the green movement, women's liberation) the traces of our own influence - in other words to deny our children and grandchildren's generation the radical innovatory spirit we claim for ourselves.

Moreover, there is a legacy politics on the left which, in the name of learning lessons from the past, practises a lazy historicism that often forecloses any consideration of the *long durée*. Thus a strong case could be made that 1968 did not start in 1965, or in 1959, but in 1945; that it emerged from left field as a long-delayed response, at first in subterranean and fragmentary form, and then suddenly coalescing into a complex narrative of social change, in response to a number of factors whose origins stretched back to the end of WW2: the traumatic aftermath of the war, the austerity regimes that presided over postwar reconstruction, the Cold War, the sublimation of class struggle in bureaucratic procedurals, the persistence of an *ancien regime* of patriarchal and neo-colonial power. And it could also be seen as a reaction against the banality of much post-war popular culture and music.

The soundtrack of my childhood and early adolescence was dominated by the likes of Max Bygraves singing 'Tulips from Amsterdam' and Petula Clark petulantly complaining that she was 'a lonely little petunia in an onion patch'.

Talking about my generation: 1968 as a coming of age story

Historical generations - that is, demographic cohorts formed around a significant event or singular conjuncture - are imagined communities which create their own invented traditions, their own shared memoryscapes, their own vectors of meaning, centring on once-upon-a-time prospects or predicaments.[5] They have a shared investment in creating occasions of commemoration as a way of re-uniting the cohort and making a pre-emptive bid for posterity. At the same time, a generation is a trajectory towards the future, a projection of an unfolding process of becoming in the world. As a result of this split temporality, generations - however present-tense membership in them may seem - never fully coincide with themselves.

Central to the construction of a generation is a shared narrative in the form of a coming of age story.[6] And 1968 was a central feature in the coming of age story of my generation, in which the personal and the political were intensely interwoven. Like generation, coming of age stories are also prospective and retrospective; they are forms of anticipatory socialisation, imagining who or what we might become, and they are platforms of collective remembrance, a way of looking back at our youth and at what might have been. In principle, coming of age stories need never come of age. They can continually be revised in the light of subsequent experiences and events. However, in practice they tend to behave like the daemons that accompany the characters in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*: they tend to lose their early plasticity and harden into fixed narrative shape as we retell them again and again over the years. But it doesn't have to be this way. The best coming of age stories are the ones which surprise their tellers as much as their listeners, and explore counter-finality as well as counter-facticity.

The 1968 coming of age story, as evidenced in the many memoirs that have been published, illustrates this point. They tend to fall into two categories, the countercultural and the more strictly political. There are those which celebrate the counterculture and emphasise the global impact on music, fashion and other creative industries. Clothes, posters, record covers and other ephemeral artefacts provide a readymade archive for curating such a viewpoint, often drawn from the personal

collections of the alternative glitterati.[7] Here the story is anchored to particular epiphanies of experience, often associated with experimentation with drugs and alternative life styles. In contrast, political memoirs focus on involvements in the student and anti-war movements and their often tense and tenuous relationship to traditional left and labour organisations. The narrative focus is on the transformative impact of specific events on ideological formation, and the subsequent development of values or ideas.[8]

Some of the more sophisticated narratives recognise that alternative life styles and politics could have both progressive and reactionary aspects - could challenge the patriarchal bio-politics of deferred gratification *and* be part of what Marcuse called the apparatus of repressive desublimation.[9] However, most of the personal accounts produced about this period emphasise the positive, liberatory aspects, whether they concentrate on the cultural or the political side of things.

The London Street Commune

What we refer to rather glibly as the '60s counterculture is a complicated affair: it is made up of many different strands and is not homogeneous either ideologically or sociologically. The 'alternative society' in Britain mirrored the stratifications of so-called straight society. It had its aristocracy, some of them the rebellious offspring of actual aristocrats or plutocrats, but most of them wealthy rock musicians and the entrepreneurs who bankrolled its projects. It had its professional middle class who ran its organisations, like BIT, Release and the underground press. And then it had its foot soldiers, the young people who flocked to its psychedelic colours and lived on the economic margins.

The student movement was of central importance within the counterculture, especially in the USA, where it was closely linked to the anti-war movement (many students were, after all, potential draftees). But, although art colleges were at the forefront of cultural and aesthetic experimentation, the university and the creative industries were not the only site of ferment. The squatting movement and what was happening in youth subcultures and on the streets created their own platforms of ideas and practices.[10]

Much of the street politics of the period has yet to be rescued from the vast condescension of the official historians of the left, many of whom were formed

strictly within the bounds of the Dissenting Academy. One of my aims in engaging with the current '1968' debate, therefore, has been to rescue for posterity the street commune movement in which I was involved.[11] It was the London Street Commune that was the main crucible of my own involvement.

Between 1968 and 1970 the London Street Commune organised a series of mass squats of young people in Central and Inner London. It was made up of a rich mix of student drop-outs, beats, hippies, Hells Angels, teenage runaways, street poets and musicians, rent boys, drug dealers, and a wild variety of people who defied easy sociological classifications, but in their various ways subscribed to a few basic tenets of an alternative society, and found semi-legit ways of eking out a living on the street. In Hardt and Negri's terms they could be considered to constitute a 'multitude' occupying the niches that existed among the tourist and luxury economy in and around the West End.[12]

The street communes hit the world headlines in 1969, when we occupied a large mansion at 144 Piccadilly, which, it was rumoured, had once belonged to the royal family. But the Marxist left and the Tory right joined forces to dismiss us a lumpen rabble. When we turned up at a conference of the Revolutionary Socialist Student Federation (RSSF) at the Roundhouse in Camden, to canvass their support for our campaign against police harassment, and in particular against the sus and obstruction laws which were used to target the black community as well as 'long hairs', we were dismissed us a mob of junkies and physically ejected, amidst cries of 'What do you produce - syringes?'.

Ironically, we got better treatment from a group of High Tory ladies whom we met in Piccadilly Circus when we were staging a sit-in at the Pronto Bar, a coffee shop we used as a hangout, but which had barred anyone with long hair. We handed out leaflets showing a bedraggled beat being refused service under the disarming slogan 'Every Englishman's Right to have a Cup of Tea'. The ladies took one look at the guy behind the counter, who happened to be a Pakistani, and decided that they had to support ancient native rights against these 'aliens in our midst'. Accordingly, brandishing their copies of the *Daily Mail*, they decided to join the sit-in, much to our embarrassed astonishment.

Traditionally the Marxist left had only considered the street as a place where barricades could be erected, and where marches and demonstrations could be organised. It had regarded people whose livelihoods or lifestyles actually depended

on the street and its economy as a threat - at best as a colourful backdrop to their actions, at worst a source of scab labour. The libertarian left, in contrast, has tended to romanticise the street as a site of authentic encounter, of social and cultural experimentation, direct action, popular riot and spontaneous assembly, even a proletarian public realm. The Situationists famously celebrated the alliance of black and white street gangs in Chicago and Detroit during and after the riots as the emergence of a new revolutionary force. One of their slogans at the time was 'For a street gang with an analysis'.[13]

Most of the young people who joined the squats were initially quite apolitical - they just wanted to be left alone to get on with their alternative life style without being continually harassed by the police. But as the movement developed and encountered the full power of the state and the corporate media, many of them became radicalised.

The key Street Commune slogan was 'We are the writing on your wall', which we sprayed on buildings all over central London. It was a performative statement of intent, which - consciously or unconsciously - evoked the fragility of purely symbolic action. No amount of graffiti on the walls of the Bank of England or Canary Wharf will ever bring that fortress of finance capital tumbling down! The chant nicely captured the spirit of generational revolt, with its barely disguised oedipal thematics that were characteristic of the mood of the time. There have been some distant echoes of this in some of the discourse around 'generation rent'.

The street commune agenda could be summed up in its one-sentence manifesto: 'From the streets to the streets through the institutions which keep us off the streets'. The statement drew heavily on ideas circulating within the libertarian left at this time. For us, the institutions in question were the family, the school, the factory and office, the corporate media, the church, and the prison and the mental hospital. The nucleated bourgeois/patriarchal family either drove its members mad or turned them into monsters - and the commune would become an alternative family. Compulsory schooling was part of the ideological state apparatus, and was largely about teaching

work discipline to future wage slaves. The factory and the office were prime sites of capitalist exploitation and bureaucratic control. The corporate media and the church were the places where the public mind was made up and dominant values inculcated. Finally, the prison and the mental hospital furnished the model for the repressive nature of all the other institutions. These institutions, taken together, represented so many equivalent ways of imprisoning minds and bodies, and so many strategies to discipline and punish. And some of them also seduced or haunted people with the phantoms of their own manufactured desires.

The long march of liberation through the institutions was supposed to either replace them entirely with alternatives - Free Schools, the Anti-University, the Laingian asylum, the Ashram; or else to dissolve these sclerotic forms of power into joyful assemblies, co-operatives and other democratic forms of collective self organisation.

In the street commune milieu, these ideas were not so much debated as enacted. For example, the notion of 'liberation', borrowed from the lexicon of the revolutionary left, was transformed into a rationale for stealing things we needed but could not afford from West End shops: food, clothes, sleeping bags. So 'liberating' some milk from a supermarket was OK, but stealing luxury goods to resell them was not, and anyone who nicked stuff off a fellow squatter was immediately barred from our company. In this way, the values of a moral economy of mutual aid were sustained, however tenuously.

So much for the theory. In reality, hanging out on the street was often cold and boring, and carried the risk of being arbitrarily arrested and beaten up by the police. So Street Communards spent a lot of time figuring out how to get off the street and into places of relative safety, if not peace and quiet. We occupied large empty and abandoned public buildings, a school, a nurses' hostel, a hotel, a children's home. And we organised a form of communal living where young people also had some privacy. Decisions were made collectively in public meetings often lasting hours. Should we ban the press from the building? Should we accept everyone who arrived at our doors, or vet them to ensure that violent anti-social nutters were kept out? Should there be a curfew after midnight so people could get some sleep, or did this amount to creeping authoritarianism? So far so familiar, but what was unusual was that the people doing this were not political activists or students, were mostly not middle-class, and were widely regarded as failures, drop-outs or delinquents.

Certainly very few had any experience of being listened to, or being treated as if their young lives mattered.

This form of politics has its own legacy. Some of the street communards went on to become community activists, especially around housing and environmental issues, and some became involved in countercultural activities of various kinds. Some resumed previous life trajectories, as factory workers, drug dealers, buskers, odd jobbers and prostitutes.

Another legacy was the change in the law to close a loophole in civil property law, and to criminalise any illegal entry into a building, which made squatting a much more dangerous business. More positively, the street communes helped transform the squatting movement into a form of do-it-yourself urbanism, often linked to wider environmental and planning issues.

At a deeper level, this way of thinking about the street and the institution as alternative centres of popular power aimed to make an exemplary break from the ossified politics of both the social-democratic and vanguard parties. It privileged direct action over representative democracy, and the urban commons over municipal socialism. The right to the city, to lay claim to its material *and* cultural resources, housing *and* public amenity, was to became an integral part of the libertarian left's programme. But in retrospect it is also possible to see that the street communes, like so many other initiatives influenced by social anarchism, were symptomatic of a more general failure on the left to engage with the key urban question around which a more embedded social movement might have mobilised - the de-industrialisation of the working-class city, and the consequent destruction or gentrification of the inner-city labourhood.[14]

Archive that, comrade!

One of the questions that arises when reflecting on key moments of the past concerns the role of the archive in disseminating political memoryscapes.[15] This question was raised concretely for me when I was approached by the MayDay Rooms, an archive devoted to documenting the history of the counterculture and radical politics in Britain since the 1960s. They wanted me to deposit my collection of material related to the Street Communes - posters, leaflets, photographs, newspaper cuttings and other ephemera. Rather than treat these materials as relics,

as ritual objects of commemoration, it seemed to me more to the point to regard them as agents provocateurs in an emergent network of possible interpretations, as clues as to what their still-to-be-figured-out significance might be.

The inevitable narrative re-framing that takes place in the act of consigning materials to an archive ensures that whatever future posterity is achieved for them cannot be reduced, or approximated, to the significance they may have for their donor. The raw remains of the past may indeed be chaotic and condemned to insignificance, but we should not delude ourselves into thinking that, by retrieving them for the archive, by cooking them into a palatable dish for contemporary consumption, they can be returned to some aboriginal meaning. The question therefore arises of how the archive contextualises the material consigned to it: does this happen through placing a deliberate interpretative frame around it, or does it occur simply as a result of its presence there?

There is also an epistemological trap in trying to establish an autobiographic pact with an archive. In summoning up and reflecting on images and texts from the past which have a direct personal reference, it is all too easy to view them in the distorting mirror of self-regard. The temptation is even greater when the remembered events evoke principles of hope that have become tenuous or unsustainable in a subsequent political conjuncture. It is not difficult today for sixties radicals like myself to feel that things have gone backwards, that everything we fought for and sometimes achieved is in danger of being swept away; that there will soon be nothing left to mark the impact they once had, except what is archived. Hence the frantic attempts at revivalism, both in Britain and the USA.[16] To at last create a legacy from which there is no turning back!

The power of the archive to exorcise the demons of the past *and* to forge putative links with the present is intrinsic to such projects. But it is a tricky operation. We have recently seen it at work in the retro-chic radicalism that has been prevalent in some of the anniversary events organised around May 68, which have sometimes provided a platform for erstwhile revolutionaries to misrecognise their hosts as the true inheritors of their own values and ideals. Such projective - and retrospective - political identifications often skip a generation; it is always easier to be generous towards one's grandparents' achievements in and against adversity, while blaming one's parents for the unfair advantage which circumstances have bestowed on them.

Yet we need to be careful about imputing to the archive a capacity to transmit

collective memory, which it may usurp, but which exists independently of it. Any significant event, whether archived or not, casts a long shadow over those who have lived through it. For example, the scenes witnessed at 144 Piccadilly, many of them undocumented, left an indelible impression on many former street communards, and have continued to shape the way they think about politics, culture and society. In the words of one of them, a factory worker and trade unionist who dropped out and went on the road and eventually became a housing and community activist: 'It was not a question of going with or against the tide of history: for a brief moment we *were* the tide'.

It is clearly important to document the quality of such experiences and the forms of solidarity associated with them. At the same time we have to acknowledge that activist cultures tend to iterate on a single polemical note, and lend themselves to tunnel visions. The real task for any living archive of the left is not to resurrect the past, to re-animate the corpse of 1968 and all that, nor to neatly pigeon-hole events and movements according to some a priori schema, but rather to capture their *singularity*, their *divergence* from the historical context in which they were embedded, to restore to them their futurity, even their counter-factuality - which is also their potential to reconfigure the present.

Such questions about the role of the archive are very much part of a present-tense debate about whether or not the left has a future.[17] Has the left the capacity to reclaim its political imagination of the future from recuperation and perversion by corporate capitalism and its imagineers? Can its memoryscapes be more - and other - than an involuntary response to the ruin of those dreams of a better world historically, bound up as it was with communism, social democracy and the labour movement? Is it possible to enunciate realistic principles of hope, which articulate popular demands for social justice, without falling back into pragmatic opportunism or utopian fantasies?

If the answer is no, then we only have a permanent nostalgia-fest to look forward to, a prolonged mourning for a world of hopefulness that we have lost. We arrive at a negative historicism in which 1968 serves as a benchmark against which all subsequent events and movements are judged and found wanting. What kind of legacy is that to pass on to future generations?

The critical futurology I am calling for, whose revisionism of the past a living left archive might support, may be the only honest way to remain faithful to the zeitgeist

of 1968. To return to the Wordsworth poem with which I began:

> We are called upon to exercise our skill
> Not in Utopia, subterranean fields
> Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where!
> But in the very world, which is the world
> Of all of us, the place where in the end
> We find our happiness, or not at all!

This text is based on a talk given to a symposium on '1968 and its legacies' at Kings College London in June 2018, and a keynote address to 'Rethinking 1968: left fields and the quest for Common sense', a conference organised by the Centre for Cultural Studies Research University of East London and the Livingmaps Network in September 2018. I would like to thank Tim Clark, Donald Nicholson Smith, Iain Boal and Dick Pountain, for conversations over the last few months about the '1968' phenomenon, which helped me clarify my argument - with the routine disclaimer that they are not responsible for the views expressed here.

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Notes

1. In the 1980s, at the high point of postmodernism, commentators took up the term (originally from baseball) as a way of promoting the originality of artists and thinkers whose work was not otherwise on the cultural map; and over time it came to have the connotation of the sudden emergence of a new and disruptive idea.

2. See Phil Cohen, 'The Centre will not hold: on changing principles of political hope' (*Soundings* 60, summer 2015) for a further discussion of the bipolar tendency in contemporary political culture, especially on the left.

3. See for example Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The new spirit of capitalism*, Verso 2007; and Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of the Cool*, University of Chicago Press 1998.

4. Lauren Berlant, '1968 or Something', *Critical Inquiry* 21 1994.

5. On generation see Ben Little and Alison Winch, 'Generation: the politics of patriarchy and social change', *Soundings* 66, summer 2017; Judith Burnett, *Generations: the time machine in theory and practice*, Routledge 2010; and Andy Bennett and Dan Woodman, *Youth Cultures, Transitions and generations*, Palgrave Macmillan 2015.

6. For a historical overview see Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: the*

bildungsroman in European Culture, Verso 1987; for a contemporary analysis see Jenny De Silva, *Coming up Short: working class adulthood in an age of uncertainty*, Oxford University Press 2015; and Roberta Trites, *Disturbing the universe: Power and repression in adolescent literature*, University of Iowa Press 2000.

7. See, for example, the anthology *1968: The Year of the Revolution: How Youth Changed the World with Music, Arts and Fashion* (2013). *'So You Say You Want a Revolution'*, a recent major exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, took a similar line. A somewhat more sanguine version of the same story can be found in Jon Savage's many writings on sixties youth culture and its aftermath. George Melly's *Revolt into Style* (1974) and Jeff Nuttall's *Bomb Culture* (1978) are entertaining if largely anecdotal accounts of the cultural politics of the British underground scene. Charles Radcliffe's two-volume memoir *Don't start me Talkin'* (2014) is an exhaustive insider account of the scene and its multiple forms of cultural and political activity. Barry Miles, who ran Indica Books, one of the seminal 'scenes' of the London underground culture, has now become its chief archivist. See, for example, his *1969* (2003).

8. See Tariq Ali, *Street Fighting Years: An Autobiography of the Sixties*, Verso 2005; Ronald Fraser, *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt*, Pantheon 1988. For a grand tour of the political hot spots and the subsequent backlash see George Katsiaficas, *The Global Imagination of 1968: Revolution and Counter Revolution*, PM Press 2018.

9. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation*, Beacon Press 1972.

10. See Alexander Vasudevan, *The Autonomous City: A History of Urban Squatting*, Verso 2017.

11. See Phil Cohen, *Reading Room only: memoir of a radical bibliophile*, Five Leaves 2013.

12. See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth*, Harvard University Press 2009; and, for its political implications, *Assembly*, Oxford University Press 2017.

13. The concept of a distinctive proletarian public realm was first articulated in the 1970s by Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge in *The Public Sphere and Experience* (reprinted 2016). They argued that a residual public structure of working-class experience resisted privatisation and was inassimilable by the corporate media, popular culture or bourgeois norms of civil society. In contrast, the French situationists' analysis of street culture as a potential site of rupture with the law of capitalist circulation drew on their method of 'psycho-geography' and applied Henri Lefebvre's urban rhythm analysis in a somewhat one-sided way.

14. For a discussion of this concept see Phil Cohen, 'Finding Uncommon Ground: working class identity politics after Labourism', *Soundings* 66, summer 2017.

15. See Phil Cohen, *Archive that Comrade: Left Legacies and the Counter Culture of Remembrance* (PM Press 2018) for an extended discussion of this point.

16. For example, in Britain we have recently seen the reprinting of the 1968 May Day Manifesto, the revival of the Anti-University, the establishment of an archive of the sometime left-leaning Greater London Council, and a fiftieth-anniversary edition of *International Times* which looks and reads almost exactly like the original version of British Hippiedom's flagship newspaper.

17. See T.J. Clark, 'For a Left without a Future', *New Left Review* 74 2012.