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*LE TEMPS DES COPAINS: YOUTH AND THE MAKING OF MODERN FRANCE IN THE  
ERA OF DECOLONIZATION, 1958-1968*

by

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B.A. University of Central Florida, 2012

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
in the Department of History  
in the College of Arts and Humanities  
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the popular *yé-yé* phenomenon and its role in articulating a vision of modern France in the aftermath of decolonization. *Yé-yé*, a teen-oriented and music-based popular culture that flourished from roughly 1962-1966, was in a unique position to define what it meant to be young in 1960s France. I argue that the *yé-yé* popular culture, through its definition of youth, provided an important cultural channel through which to articulate a modern French identity after the Algerian War (1954-1962). Using a combination of advertisements, articles, and sanitized depictions of teenage pop singers, the *yé-yé* popular culture constructed an idealized vision of adolescence that coupled a technologically-savvy and consumer-oriented outlook with a distinctly conservative, apolitical, and inclusive social stance. It reflected France's reorientation toward a particular technological and consumer modernity while simultaneously serving to obscure France's recent colonial past and the dubious legacy of imperialism.

To contextualize *yé-yé*, this thesis begins by examining the *blousons noirs* (black jackets) and the societal anxieties that surrounded them in the early Fifth Republic (1958-1962). By tracking the abrupt shift from the *blousons noirs* to *yé-yé* in predominant media representations of youth, this thesis provides a unique vantage point with which to interpret dominant discourses of the Gaullist Fifth Republic and its attempt to reinvent France into a modernized and decolonized consumer republic. As the work suggests, it was not a coincidence that the optimistic *yé-yé* youth, unburdened by the tribulations of France's recent past, appeared in full force within months following the recognition of Algerian independence in 1962.

*To friends and family, who make all this worthwhile*

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I would also like to thank my committee members, Richard Crepeau and Deepa Nair. Both have contributed to my research in their own ways and I know my project is improved as a result of their feedback.

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The friends and colleagues who have accompanied me through the graduate program were always there when I needed them. They provided many moments of levity during our time together, and they had impressive patience for both my moments of self-doubt and for my occasional grumbling. Whenever asked, they always offered their time. Ella Gibson was my constant history conference companion; as we worked on our own respective projects, we presented research together at conferences in Florida, Massachusetts, and Oregon. Kristian Steele and Meghan Vance spent a lot of time reviewing earlier drafts. Ian Marsh helped me in the always monotonous task of copy-editing. Naturally, he deserves blame for any remaining typos or formatting errors. Kevin Mercer and Daniel Velásquez were always supportive and offered well-timed words of encouragement.

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## INTRODUCTION

On June 22, 1963, the commercial radio station Europe 1 invited young people from all over France to partake in a free outdoor concert held in the nation's capital, Paris. The event celebrated the one-year anniversary of the popular teen-oriented music magazine, *Salut les copains*. The magazine's founders, Daniel Filipacchi and Frank Ténot, hoped for a turnout of 30,000 attendees. Instead, exceeding even their wildest expectations, some 150,000 young people crammed into the Place de la Nation, overflowing into adjoining streets. They came from all over, from nearby Parisian neighborhoods to far away provinces. Some of the fans, eagerly seeking a better view of the stage, climbed trees and scaled streetlamps in the square. The entertainment for the evening included France's most popular young musical performers, including Sylvie Vartan, Frank Alamo, Richard Anthony, and the Chats Sauvages. Headlining, of course, was the ever-popular *idole des jeunes*, Johnny Hallyday. The "Night of the Nation," as it was later called, quickly acquired mythic status; it was, up to that point, the largest concert in the history of popular music.<sup>1</sup>

Writing subsequently in the daily newspaper *Le Monde*, the sociologist and public intellectual Edgar Morin offered an analysis of what manifested on that summer evening. For Morin, the concert displayed the emergence of a new *classe d'âge* defined by a common set of sensibilities, a distinct parlance, a collective worldview, and, perhaps most importantly, a shared sense of youth. What unified these teenagers, he noted, was a pervasive popular culture that had

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Barsamian and François Jouffra, *L'âge d'or du Yéyé: Le rock, le twist, et la variété française des années 60* (Paris: Éditions Ramsay, 1984), 141-142; David L. Loseley, *Popular Music in Contemporary France: Authenticity, Politics, Debate* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 29.

already supplied them with a potent mixture of “myths, heroes, and models.”<sup>2</sup> Drawing from the common vocal refrain “yeah, yeah” heard in many American songs from the period (of which the phonetic spelling in French was “yé, yé”), he termed the nascent phenomenon *yé-yé*. Morin argued that this popular culture, made possible by the rise of mass culture and mass communications, had created a “new adolescent class” that had implications for French society at large.<sup>3</sup>

This thesis focuses on the *yé-yé* phenomenon that gained widespread popularity in 1960s France. As Morin made clear, “youth” figured prominently as a discursive category in the mass media and among influential social scientists, educators, politicians, and social commentators. Given its ubiquity during the period, the *yé-yé* popular culture was in a unique position to define what it meant to be young in 1960s France. It was not the only discursive portrait of youth during the mid-1960s, but it was arguably the most visible. I argue that the *yé-yé* phenomenon, in its definition of adolescence, provided an important cultural channel through which to imagine and articulate a modern French identity in the Gaullist Fifth Republic. Through its marrying of a certain technological and consumer modernity with an apolitical and traditional social outlook, the idealized *yé-yé* teenager announced the arrival of a unified, prosperous, and forward-looking modern France unburdened by its recent past.

This was in stark contrast to an earlier representation of youth, the *blousons noirs* (black jackets), which, when discussed in the media, evoked fears of working-class juvenile delinquency and “Americanization.” The wholesome *yé-yé* youth, as defined in the media, was

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<sup>2</sup> Edgar Morin, “Salut les copains: Une nouvelle classe d’âge,” *Le Monde*, July 6, 1963, 11. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the original French are by the author.

<sup>3</sup> Edgar Morin, “Salut les copains: Le ‘yé-yé,’” *Le Monde*, July 7-8, 1963, 12.

created in part to assuage societal fears of the earlier *blousons noirs*. To track the abrupt shift from *blousons noirs* to *yé-yé* therefore offers a unique point of focus with which to chart France's changing attitude regarding modernization and American-style mass consumerism in the wake of the Algerian War (1954-1962).

It is my contention that these discursive portraits of youth, the *blousons noirs* and the *yé-yé*, can be read, and that, to do so is to shed light on the major anxieties and aspirations that defined a particular moment in French history.<sup>4</sup> My main goals are twofold. First, I provide a much-needed historical contextualization of the *yé-yé* popular culture, from its origins in the era of the *blousons noirs* to its eventual end amid the student protests of May 1968, grounding its significance in larger changes during the period. Second, I aim to use *yé-yé* as a heretofore unlikely lens to investigate the way France navigated changing socio-cultural values and identity during modernization, decolonization, and the Cold War. By using this lens, I am able to interpret dominant discourses of the Gaullist Fifth Republic and to assess how many influential voices imagined France's reinvention into a decolonized consumer republic.

But what was *yé-yé*? It was foremost a popular culture, one made possible by the advent of mass society in the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> As a popular culture, *yé-yé* primarily entailed music

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<sup>4</sup> As my approach to this topic makes clear, I treat both the *blousons noirs* and *yé-yé* as phenomena that existed primarily in discourse. That is not to suggest that there were no teenagers who fit the description of the typical *blousons noirs* or *copains* of *yé-yé*. It was nevertheless the mass media that remained throughout the period the primary influence in defining youth. The question of how *actual* young people received (and possibly resisted or modified) this image is equally worthy of research. I do not possess the sources to permit me to address how teenagers responded to the media discourse that sought to speak on their behalf. As such, my focus remains on the dominant representations of youth deployed by advertisers, journalists, the music industry, and others.

<sup>5</sup> Mass society entailed the rise of mass communications (made possible by the rapid expansion of radio, film, print media, advertisements, and eventually television), mass culture (made possible by mass production and standardization), and mass consumption (implying the widespread availability of commodities and the general ability of the population to purchase them). On popular culture, see Raymond F. Betts with Lyz Bly, *A History of Popular Culture: More of Everything, Faster and Brighter*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013); on French popular culture, see Hugh Dauncey, ed., *French Popular Culture: An Introduction* (London: Arnold, 2003).

and music-related print media. It included innumerable musical performers, some enduring and many forgettable, who released new records at a dizzying pace. Its sounds and imagery were found on radio, television, and film. It spurred the creation of numerous periodicals and publications. At its height, *yé-yé* drew the attention of fashion designers and provided a marketing edge for a seemingly infinite number of commodities, from bubblegum and hairspray to turntables and automobiles. Its main propagators were savvy commercial interests, including record companies and publishing houses, and its most influential voices were journalists, advertisers, and, most importantly, the young singers. It was different from other prominent popular culture from the period – such as comic strips like *Astérix* or New Wave films like *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (*The 400 Blows*), for instance – in that it endeavored to be all-encompassing, to speak on behalf of young people.<sup>6</sup>

By critically analyzing the *yé-yé* phenomenon, this thesis hopes to contribute to the larger historiography on France’s postwar “modernization,” a term that is admittedly vague, even problematic, but which nevertheless provides a common framework through which to understand change in the decades following World War II.<sup>7</sup> The roots of this modernization lay in the wartime experience of Nazi occupation and Vichy collaborationism; as the narrative goes, postwar leaders, desiring to look to the future rather than contemplate the recent past, rejected the political and economic institutions that had so clearly failed to protect France in its time of need and instead made deliberate efforts to transform the nation along economic, technological,

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<sup>6</sup> On *Astérix*, see Penelope E. Brown, *A Critical History of French Children’s Literature: Volume Two, 1830-Present* (New York: Routledge, 2008); on New Wave cinema, see Richard Neupert, *A History of the French New Wave Cinema*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> For a critique of the term “modernization” as a framework for analysis, see Dean C. Tipps, “Modernization Theory and the Comparative Study of Societies: A Critical Perspective,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 15, no. 2 (Mar., 1973): 199-226.

political, and socio-cultural lines. A large body of literature points to the myriad changes in France from the 1940s to the 1960s.<sup>8</sup> Some works, adopting the language of postwar technocrats, use modernization to interpret change during the period.<sup>9</sup> Others address the topic more subtly, considering the process of postwar reinvention while leaving modernization in the background.<sup>10</sup> Taken together these works point to a postwar France that took deliberate and relatively swift actions to transform itself on economic and material levels and, perhaps simultaneously or as a consequence, on social and cultural levels as well.

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<sup>8</sup> Or, perhaps more precisely, the period from 1946 to 1975, what economist Jean Fourastié deemed the *trente glorieuses* (the “Thirty Glorious Years”). He dubbed it such because of the near 30-year span of unceasing and unprecedented economic growth during the period. Fourastié’s now-seminal 1979 publication, which inspected the drivers of economic growth and social change during the period (demographic growth, industrial and corporate investment, rising wages, and changing habits of consumption and leisure, among others), has since provided a familiar, if potentially problematic, periodization for subsequent scholars. See Jean Fourastié, *Les trente glorieuses ou la révolution invisible de 1946 à 1975* (Paris: Fayard, 1979). Historians have recently begun to critically reconsider the period in numerous ways. For a recent critique of this periodization, see Rémy Pawin, “Retour sur les ‘Trente Glorieuses’ et la périodisation du second XX<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Revue d’Histoire Moderne & Contemporaine* 60, no. 1 (Jan-Mar 2013): 155-175. For a look at the negative, oft-neglected aspects of France’s postwar economic growth, see Céline Pessis, Sezin Topçu, and Christophe Bonneuil, eds., *Une autre histoire des « Trente Glorieuses »: Modernisation, contestations, et pollutions dans la France d’après-guerre* (Paris: Découverte, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Gabrielle Hecht points to the role of nuclear technology in reorienting national identity. See Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity after World War II* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998). Rosemary Wakeman examines the reinvention of Toulouse, from a decrepit provincial city into a modernized technological hub during the postwar period. See Rosemary Wakeman, *Modernizing the Provincial City: Toulouse, 1945-1975* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). For Steven Zdatny, modernization was felt through changing perceptions of cleanliness. See Steven Zdatny, “The French Hygiene Offensive of the 1950s: A Critical Moment in the History of Manners,” *Journal of Modern History* 84, no. 4 (December 2012): 897-932. Rebecca Pulju, meanwhile, provides a much needed analysis of women’s role, as consumers for the nation, in French modernization. See Rebecca J. Pulju, *Women and Mass Consumer Society in Postwar France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Others frame French modernization in the context of Americanization and Franco-American relations. See for instance Christopher Endy, *Cold War Holidays: American Tourism in France* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); and Brian Angus McKenzie, *Remaking France: Americanization, Public Diplomacy, and the Marshall Plan* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> The works that consider postwar French culture and intellectualism affirm the same societal impetus for change that color works on France’s various modernizing processes. Herman Lebovics for instance considers how President de Gaulle’s Minister of Culture, André Malraux, deployed France’s artistic legacy as a means to assert international prestige and foster national unity. See Herman Lebovics, *Mona Lisa’s Escort: André Malraux and the Reinvention of French Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999). Tamara Chaplin considers how in the postwar period, France, by televising its public philosophers, coupled its humanistic and intellectual traditions with its new modernizing tendencies to assert a new national identity. See Tamara Chaplin, *Turning on the Mind: French Philosophers on Television* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

One topic, however, remains conspicuously absent from the general narrative of France's modernization: the Algerian War. Much of the work on modernization tends to downplay or ignore the central importance of decolonization and the Algerian War in understanding postwar France in general and the early Fifth Republic in particular. This remains true despite the conflict's indelible impact on the era, including most obviously the suspect origins of the Fifth Republic in 1958. By contrast, I aim to integrate, to the extent possible, the war and its consequences into my interpretation of France's process of reinvention along technocratic, corporate, and consumerist lines. In this attempt, Kristin Ross' 1995 monograph *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies* looms large on my interpretation. Using an eclectic assortment of literary, film, intellectual, and periodical sources, Ross argues that between roughly 1955 and 1965, France underwent a cultural shift as a consequence of the twin processes of decolonization and modernization.<sup>11</sup> It was at that specific historical juncture, she maintains, that an "interior colonialism" on the level of the everyday replaced the colonial project of old. In other words, precisely at the moment France relinquished imperial control over subject peoples, a system of advanced consumer capitalism imposed its control over the rhythms and practices of daily life. Treating "French modernization *as* an event," Ross explores the process by which the logic of modernization integrated into everyday life and gave new meaning to the automobile, hygienic products, and the middle-class family unit.<sup>12</sup> Reading her work raises the question: was a similar cultural logic regarding modernization reflected elsewhere? Influenced by Ross' approach, my

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<sup>11</sup> Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge: MA: MIT Press, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

research aims to assess the extent to which teen-oriented popular culture signaled the rationalization of a France transformed by economic and socio-cultural modernization.

Interestingly, it was, according to Ross, the process of modernization that made it possible to envision a neat and orderly separation between metropolitan France and its former empire once colonialism “came to an abrupt end, cleanly, in 1962.”<sup>13</sup> By tracking the sudden national interest in hygiene in the 1950s, Ross argues that it provided a metaphorical means to both “cleanse” and “purify” the nation following the Vichy collaborationism of World War II. She also finds that the same discourses of cleanliness – which encouraged household efficiency and strove to erase all stains – simultaneously operated to justify the systematized use of torture tactics in Algeria by erasing “the moral sense of trace (the mark of guilt, of wrongdoing).”<sup>14</sup> Through a provocative discursive analysis, Ross provides a framework to understand how the process of modernization served to erase, or at least subordinate, France’s colonial past. Building on this conclusion, albeit in a different domain, I consider how *yé-yé*, very much a product of France’s mass consumer modernity, contributed to a modernized France “cleansed” of its imperial legacy.

Additionally, over the past two decades, the topic of “youth” has become increasingly commonplace in the historiography of modern France and Europe. Social historians have turned their attention to youth organizations and student protest.<sup>15</sup> Others have considered the advent of

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>15</sup> Some relevant examples of this approach include Martin Klimke, Jacco Pekelder, and Joachim Scharloth, eds., *Between Prague Spring and French May: Opposition and Revolt in Europe, 1960-1980* (New York: Berghahn, 2011); Gerd Rainer-Horn, *The Spirit of '68: Rebellion in Western Europe and North America, 1956-1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); and, most recently, Robert Gildea, James Mark, Anette Warring, eds., *Europe's 1968: Voice of Revolt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).



“youth culture,” often in a transnational or comparative setting.<sup>16</sup> These works provide much-needed agency to young people in the interpretation of socio-cultural and political change during the postwar era. More relevant to my research, historians have also begun to probe the socially-constructed category of youth, whether in media representations or in societal discourse. These historians use the topic of “youth” as a means through which to investigate change during the postwar period and as a lens onto the many preoccupations, anxieties, and aspirations of the era.<sup>17</sup> Susan Weiner, in her 2001 work *Enfants Terribles*, considers prominent media representations of young girls in postwar France and how they corresponded to a society seeking to define its national identity in the aftermath of World War II and amid national and international change.<sup>18</sup> More recently, Richard Ivan Jobs, in the 2007 work *Riding the New Wave*, examines how postwar French society used the category of youth to envision national renewal during the Fourth Republic.<sup>19</sup>

While the topics of youth and youth culture have become increasingly attractive areas of study, critical analyses of the *yé-yé* popular culture and its representation of youth, the *copain*, remain limited. Several French music journalists provide thorough accounts of the musical

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<sup>16</sup> See Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c. 1958-1974* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); and, more recently, the edited collection Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried, eds., *Between Marx and Coca-Cola: Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960-1980* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006).

<sup>17</sup> Numerous scholars have taken this approach in recent studies. See, for instance, Lindsay Sarah Krasnoff, “Goals and Dreams: The Quest to Create Elite Youth Athletes in France, 1958-92” (Phd diss., City University of New York, 2009); Gilian Glaes, “Gender and the French Ski Industry, 1946-1960,” in *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History* 37 (2009); and Sharon Elise Cline, “*Féminité à la Française: Femininity, Social Change, and French National Identity, 1945-1970*” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Susan Weiner, *Enfants Terribles: Youth and Femininity in the Mass Media in France, 1945-1968* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

<sup>19</sup> Richard Ivan Jobs, *Riding the New Wave: Youth and the Rejuvenation of France after the Second World War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

phenomenon.<sup>20</sup> Within the French academy, historians, more focused on detailing the experience of *actual* young people from the period, tend to treat *yé-yé* as one of many factors that shaped the adolescent experience in the 1960s.<sup>21</sup> Scholars like David Looseley analyze *yé-yé* to consider how Anglo-American musical styles gained cultural legitimacy within French popular music.<sup>22</sup> Chris Tinker has written much about *yé-yé*, but his focus remains largely confined to the most popular publication of the era, *Salut les copains*.<sup>23</sup> Jonathyne Briggs, using a musicological approach, places *yé-yé* into a changing landscape of French popular music that he argues served to provide fleeting social solidarities in an otherwise changing and fragmenting postwar society.<sup>24</sup> Providing a much-needed gender analysis of the popular culture, his more recent work considers how the female singers of *yé-yé* addressed prevailing gender and sexual norms through their music and appearance.<sup>25</sup>

Unlike scholars like Looseley, who deemed *yé-yé* both “vacuous and embarrassingly inauthentic” as well as a “colonised music that eternally misses the point,” my interest is not to

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<sup>20</sup> See Barsamian and Jouffra, *L'âge d'or du Yéyé*; for a more general treatment, see Frédéric Quinonero, *Les années 60: Rêves et Révolutions* (Paris: Carpentier, 2009).

<sup>21</sup> See Anne-Marie Sohn, *Age tendre et tête de bois: Histoire des jeunes des années 1960* (Paris: Hachette, 2001); and Jean-François Sirinelli, *Les baby-boomers: Une génération, 1945-1969* (Paris: Fayard, 2003).

<sup>22</sup> Looseley, *Popular Music in Contemporary France*.

<sup>23</sup> His research provides a discursive analysis of the magazine *Salut les copains* to shed light on the way it shaped the meaning of adolescence in 1960s and 1970s France, as well as how it influenced social norms. See Chris Tinker, “Shaping Youth in *Salut les copains*,” *Modern and Contemporary France* 15, no. 3 (August 2007): 293-308; and Chris Tinker, *Mixed Messages: Youth Magazine Discourse and Sociocultural Shifts in Salut les copains (1962-1976)* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010).

<sup>24</sup> Jonathyne Briggs, “*Anarchie en France: Hypermodernity and French Popular Music, 1958-1981*” (PhD diss., Emory University, 2006). A more recent work, published too recently to be used in this thesis, is Jonathyne Briggs, *Sounds French: Globalization, Cultural Communities, and Pop Music in France, 1958-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>25</sup> In the article, Briggs argues that the “long sexual revolution” had a distinctly gendered dimension and that, unlike male performers who were able to use music to question and alter sexual norms, female performers needed to uphold conservative social mores. See Jonathyne Briggs, “Sex and the Girl’s Single: French Popular Music and the Long Sexual Revolution of the 1960s,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 21, no 3 (September 2012): 523-547.

track the path American-influenced popular music took to cultural authenticity in France.<sup>26</sup> It is true that *yé-yé* never received the critical praise of other genres and it remained, both during its span and after, the fodder of serious music critics. Acknowledging this, however, does little to explain *why* the popular culture was able to reach such popularity and resonate with so many. My research strives to assess the *yé-yé*'s significance beyond its musical contributions, seeing it as a cultural phenomenon attuned to its unique historical moment. Building on Kristen Ross' research, this thesis suggests that the timing of *yé-yé*'s swift ascent, coming in the months following the end of the Algerian War, was not coincidental. The idealized *yé-yé* youth symbolized a generation, born after the Second World War and too young to be culpable for the atrocities committed during the Algerian War, untarnished by the recent past. It provided, as a vital signifier of youth, a convenient vessel with which to project the hopes and aspirations of a reinvented nation.

My research relies on a number of primary sources drawn from the mass media of the period. They come from, to use Herrick Chapman's phrase, the usual "alchemists of national identity": journalists, writers, filmmakers, advertisers, celebrities, social scientists, educators, politicians, and other vocal social commentators.<sup>27</sup> I have relied on some sources more heavily than others, depending on their availability. Mass-print magazines meant for teenagers, like the popular *Salut les copains*, form the backbone of my research, though they are supplemented and corroborated to the extent possible by a number of other sources including books, government pamphlets, films, newspapers, women's and entertainment magazines, television programs,

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<sup>26</sup> Looseley, *Popular Music in Contemporary France*, 30.

<sup>27</sup> Chapman used this apt descriptor in a historiographical essay. See Herrick Chapman, "Modernity and National Identity in Postwar France," *French Historical Studies* 22, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 302.

photographs, speeches, song lyrics, and album covers. In the popular teen-oriented magazines of the era, a startling number of articles, editorials, questionnaires, advertisements, and advice columns defined what it meant to be young in 1960s France.

At the same time, famous teenage singers, or “teen idols” as they were called, who often served as the focus of the magazines, offered a mythic (and highly mediated) depiction of adolescence that encouraged emulation. Throughout this study, these stars’ attitudes, opinions, and actions, as well as their representation in the media, provide much of the evidence for my argument. Guided by a recent work on stardom in postwar France, I operate on the belief that “the ‘stars’ of a given historical period or moment capture their era for us in a range of ways: that the preoccupations, values, conflicts, and contradictions of a particular culture ... are vividly expressed through its celebrities.”<sup>28</sup> Admittedly, the voices captured here, whether journalists or teenage singers, did not necessarily reflect the whole of France. They were nevertheless in the privileged position to offer their interpretation of the country’s system of values, its cultural priorities and imperatives, and its identity. In doing so, they provided a particular vision that both constructed and reflected larger societal desires prevalent in the Gaullist Fifth Republic.

This thesis captures France at a significant moment in history, one shaped by wars of decolonization, concerted social and economic change, and an international political climate tempered by the Cold War and America’s dominant position in the West. At the forefront was the Algerian War, which, since 1954, had embroiled France in a bloody fight to quell Algerian

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<sup>28</sup> John Gaffney and Diana Holmes, “Introduction” in John Gaffney and Diana Holmes, eds., *Stardom in Postwar France* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 1.

nationalism and preserve the centerpiece of its colonial empire.<sup>29</sup> It was a “dirty war,” one that saw the French army’s widespread use of torture and terror tactics, exposing the moral bankruptcy of France’s fabled Civilizing Mission. At the same time, it was a “war without a name,” to use John Talbott’s phrase, as an entire cloud of obfuscation formed to deny the French public a clear portrait of the war.<sup>30</sup> A number of euphemisms – alternating between the Algerian “problem,” the Algerian “dispute,” or, most commonly, the Algerian “events” – emerged to define the conflict; in official propaganda, meanwhile, the soldiers’ mission was not one of warfare, but rather “pacification.”<sup>31</sup> In the final years of the bitter conflict, violence and terrorism became increasingly common on both sides of the Mediterranean. Within months of the war’s conclusion in 1962, some 900,000 European settlers, fearing retribution, fled the newly independent Algeria, most settling in France, a “homeland” they had never known. Meanwhile, for a generation of young recruits, over two million in all, the conflict, which implicated them in acts of torture and abuse, signaled the loss of both youth and innocence.<sup>32</sup>

By 1958, the political situation had deteriorated to the extent that the feeble Fourth Republic (1946-1958) had lost support of Algeria’s white settler population. It had also lost authority over the French military, which threatened to topple the government and install a leader

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<sup>29</sup> More than a centerpiece, it was, legally at least, an official part of metropolitan France. Algeria became a French colony in 1830. Unlike most colonies, it was governed as part of France, divided into three administrative *départements*, and answerable to the French Ministry of the Interior. Additionally, it was set apart from many other French colonial possessions by its sizeable European settler population – roughly a million at the outbreak of war in 1954. For a general overview of French Algeria, see Benjamin Stora, *Algeria, 1830-2000: A Short History*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

<sup>30</sup> John Talbott, *The War Without a Name: France in Algeria, 1954-1962* (New York: Knopf, 1980).

<sup>31</sup> Philip Dine, "A la recherche du soldat perdu: Myth, Metaphor, and Memory in the French Cinema of the Algerian War," in Valerie Holman and Debra Kelly, eds., *France at War in the Twentieth Century: Propaganda, Myth, and Metaphor* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000), 144-145.

<sup>32</sup> On the loss of innocence, see the chapter “Implication: Faire la guerre,” in Ludivine Bantigny, *Le plus bel âge? Jeunes et jeunesse en France de l’aube des « Trente Glorieuses » à la guerre d’Algérie* (Paris: Fayard, 2007), 342-379.

of its choosing rather than suffer another humiliating loss (following World War II, the Indochina War, and the Suez Crisis) at the hands of irresolute politicians. A divided France, under threat of military coup and possible civil war, turned to the hero of World War II, Charles de Gaulle, who, in the moment of crisis, appeared to be the lone figure capable of appeasing both the populace and the military, while also bringing resolution to the Algerian War.<sup>33</sup> His return spelled the death knell of the Fourth Republic, and, with it, the founding of the Fifth Republic. The tone of government underwent an important change in this shift from the Fourth to the Fifth Republics; if the National Assembly and its numerous, fractious party rivalries dominated political life in the Fourth Republic, the early Fifth Republic's focus centered on the powerful executive branch. When coupled with resounding electoral success for the Gaullists in the National Assembly, this new political dynamic allowed de Gaulle and his paternalistic brand of conservatism to dominate political (and social) discourse for the better part of a decade.<sup>34</sup>

As the country confronted the loss of its empire, many vocal critics claimed that France faced a veritable “colonization” of its own thanks to the influx of American cultural products, business investment, and tourists (to say nothing of the United States' political and military influence at the height of the Cold War). It exacerbated existing fears about France's loss of prestige and its declining influence on the world stage.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> For a general history of the Fourth Republic, see Jean-Pierre Rioux, *The Fourth Republic, 1944-1958*, trans. Godfrey Rodgers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>34</sup> For a basic overview, see Serge Bernstein, *The Republic of de Gaulle, 1958-1969*, trans. Peter Morris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>35</sup> On the complex meaning of Americanization in postwar France, see Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); and Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*.

Chapter one, by focusing on the era of the *blousons noirs*, seeks to frame societal concern about juvenile delinquency in relation to a larger historical context. During the early Fifth Republic, from roughly 1958 to 1962, the *blousons noirs* captured the attention of both popular and academic writers. A pejorative term from the start, it conjured images, often drawn from American teen cinema, of young troublemakers outfitted in black leather jackets and blue jeans. Observers routinely attached a working-class label to the *blousons noirs*. In one sense, “working class” referred to the marginalized socio-economic background of the young delinquents. More often than not, though, the label was purely perceptual, whereby “working-class culture” suggested something subversive, foreign, and perennially at odds with the dominant culture, particularly as it applied to the perceived corruption of middle-class youths. I argue that the sudden spike in national concern over juvenile delinquency must be historicized. As the chapter demonstrates, discussion about the working-class *blousons noirs*, as part of a larger debate about juvenile delinquency, frequently corresponded to societal ambivalence about a changing nation beset by the Algerian War, modernization, and Americanization.

By the mid-1960s, with the collapse of the French Empire, the Gaullist state searched for new means to express national identity and to recoup national self-esteem. Industrial and technological modernization, which France’s political and technocratic elite had pursued since the end of World War II, took on new importance, becoming a key element in the reassertion and re-articulation of French prestige.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, the rise of American-style mass

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<sup>36</sup> Modernization is a recurrent theme throughout this thesis. This research does not mean to suggest that, following the collapse of empire, modernization somehow supplanted colonialism. This thesis does suggest that the idea of a modernized France, as a source of both national self-confidence and international influence, assumed new *symbolic importance* toward the end of empire, particularly as it coincided with the need to prepare the nation for increased European economic integration. Modernization was a process that occurred simultaneous to the wars of decolonization and started at the end of World War II (some historians would suggest even earlier). An umbrella

consumerism no longer provoked insecurity. Instead, when coupled with de Gaulle's brand of nationalism, it became a measure of the ever-increasing living standard of French citizens and of the economic vitality of the new French Republic. The "modern" France of the mid-1960s thus projected the image of a unified, forward-looking, and confident nation. The recent past, whether the near civil war of World War II or the Algerian quagmire, was forgotten.

Together, chapters two and three consider the ways in which the *yé-yé* popular culture contributed to the society-wide acceptance of a particular definition of "modern" France. Chapter two explores how the popular culture advanced an image of adolescence that corresponded to the broad national imperatives of modernization. In doing so, it shed the supposedly working-class connotations of the *blousons noirs* by placing *yé-yé* squarely within the value system of the newly urban, educated, and technocratic middle class of the era. The chapter also considers how the popular culture served to envision a new France fully disentangled from its colonial legacy. Chapter three examines the way that the *yé-yé* popular culture integrated an ideology of mass

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term, it applied to any number of phenomena, including financial and business reform, the directed growth of industrial and technological sectors, the improvement of infrastructure and transportation networks, and the implementation of both Fordist production and Taylorist managerial strategies. It also spelled an expansion of higher and technical education, the growth of mass consumer society (evidenced in new advertising models, new modes of distribution, like supermarkets, and new commodities), and increased urbanization. At the state level, it meant proactive interventionist policies (*dirigisme*) and far-reaching economic planning meant to expedite economic growth and improve the economic competitiveness of French business. Economic planners like Jean Monnet spearheaded the modernization drive, and during the Fourth and early Fifth Republics, technocrats and specialists of all stripes wielded tremendous influence in matters of state policy-making. As a source of prestige, French technological projects, like nuclear energy (and the atomic bomb) and the Concorde supersonic jetliner, provided potent symbols. Some works on the modernization of French business, industry, and finance, particularly as they relate to international change, include Michael Loriaux, *France after Hegemony: International Change and Financial Reform* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991); and Marie-Laure Djelic, *Exporting the American Model: The Postwar Transformation of European Business* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). For a longer view, see Richard F. Kuisel, *Capitalism and the State in Modern France: Renovation and Economic Management in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). Some suggest that modernization was only made possible by an existing foundation laid gradually over the preceding century. See, for instance, Michael Stephen Smith, *The Emergence of Modern Business Enterprise in France, 1800-1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).



consumerism into the fabric of everyday life.<sup>37</sup> Looking at two practical (and gendered) examples – the automobile and ready-to-wear fashion – the chapter studies how both consumer commodities became central to the definition of modern adolescence and how notions of taste, success, happiness, and, ultimately, national identity were reoriented in the process.

As chapters two and three suggest, the *yé-yé* popular culture articulated a vision of youth that was unifying, conservative, and stable. In many ways, though, its image of stability masked a rapidly changing society. Particularly among a generation of postwar youths, rising affluence and increasing independence led to a liberalization of attitudes towards sexuality. Chapter four considers the construction of femininity in the *yé-yé* phenomenon. As the chapter argues, against the backdrop of an emergent sexual revolution, the *yé-yé* popular culture attempted to manage changing attitudes and social mores by affirming the primacy of a femininity grounded in the traditional framework of marriage, motherhood, and domesticity.

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<sup>37</sup> For clarification, it is necessary to differentiate “consumer society” from “mass consumer society.” The former is generally understood to have emerged in the West during the latter half of the nineteenth century. It implied a society where commodities and consumer goods were available on an unprecedented level but nevertheless remained the preserve of a *bourgeoisie* whose consumption habits served as a means of distinction from lower classes. Consumer society was directly related to increased productive capabilities made possible by the Industrial Revolution, though many of the core features remained in their infancy. By contrast, mass consumer society implied an even higher diversity of goods and, with it, a democratization of consumption where commodities were, at least in theory, available to all. Mass consumer society was made possible by the increased sophistication of mass production (Fordism and Taylorism, as well as greatly improved means of distribution) and marketing. Certainly, France was no stranger to consumerism; it was at the forefront of changing consumer habits in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The twentieth century shift towards mass consumer society in Europe has frequently been viewed within the context of Americanization, particularly in the period after World War II. On the role of “consumer society” in France during the nineteenth century as it applied to bourgeois identity formation, see Rosalind H. Williams, *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Lisa Tiersten, *Marianne in the Market: Envisioning Consumer Society in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); and Michael P. Miller, *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981). For the 20<sup>th</sup> century move towards a more “democratic” or “American” form of consumption see Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America’s Advance through 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005); and Harm G. Schröter, *Americanization of the European Economy: A Compact Survey of American Economic Influence in Europe since the 1880s* (Norwell, MA: Springer, 2005). For a critical consideration of the two systems in a larger debate about the study of consumption, see Frank Trentmann, “Beyond Consumerism: New Historical Perspectives on Consumption,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, no. 3 (Jul., 2004): 373-401.

Finally, the epilogue tracks the demise of the once-popular *yé-yé* phenomenon in the late 1960s. It explains why the *copain* construct of youth that once resonated no longer matched the attitudes and aspirations of French youth. Each of the chapters, in one way or another, addresses what many *wanted* France to be or to become. In most cases, they represented societal aspiration over reality. They nevertheless tell us something about how influential voices within French society sought to define both youth and nation in 1960s France.

## CHAPTER 1: DEFINING TEENAGE CONSUMPTION IN THE ERA OF THE *BLOUSONS NOIRS*, 1958-1962

On a cool evening in late February 1961, a strange spectacle began to materialize on the outskirts of Paris. Along the outer limits of the Fifteenth Arrondissement, roughly five thousand teenagers gathered, waiting impatiently for the night to commence. For onlookers, the sight was disconcerting: a horde of young people, the majority of which were males, outfitted in questionable attire and looking ominous. Many of the young men wore blue jeans, leather jackets, and ruffled caps – the attire linked to the *blousons noirs* in the preceding years. Their site of congregation was the Palais des Sports, a fitting location for the event. The venue, a futuristic structure built the year prior, offered an ideal setting for a phenomenon without precedent: the first rock and roll festival on French soil. Rowdy teenagers flooded the stadium, intent on hearing some of the most celebrated names in French rock and roll play loud and raucous music. The list of performers included, among others, Frankie Jordan, the Chaussettes Noires, and Johnny Hallyday. The festival proved fertile ground for controversy. By the end of the evening, a number of brawls ensued and approximately fifty stadium chairs were ripped from the floor. At one point during the concert, the police needed to intervene to bolster stadium security. When it was all said and done, a handful of teenagers ended up in the hospital as a result of the unruly crowd.<sup>1</sup>

Michèle Manceaux, a journalist for the weekly news magazine *L'Express*, covered the concert. Her article recounted the evening in lurid detail. She spoke for many who remained ambivalent about the uncertain trends attracting French youth and who worried about the

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<sup>1</sup> Christian Victor and Julien Regoli, *Vingt ans de rock français* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1978), 24.

implications for France's future. Upon witnessing the incomprehensible music and the inexplicable rituals of the audience, she wondered "what savage tribe could celebrate a cult as pagan, as vacuous" as the spectacle that befell the Palais des Sports.<sup>2</sup> "Nevertheless," she concluded despite her disbelief, "this is really Paris, and *this* is French youth."<sup>3</sup> In the following weeks, dismayed readers wrote to *L'Express* to voice their disapproval of Manceaux's assessment of French youth. Many took issue with Manceaux's conclusion that the apparent debauchery of the evening reflected the "true" youth of France. As one reader wrote:

No, madam, this is not Paris and still less the French youth, it is the underbelly of the French youth and one must not confuse the two. The true French youth – one doesn't find them at the Palais des Sports shouting and swaying, intentionally dressed in an idiotic and extravagant way (without knowing why). No ... one finds the true French youth in schools, workshops, factories, colleges, and also ... in Algeria.<sup>4</sup>

The reader's impassioned letter, in its effort to disassociate the image of France's youth from supposed unsavory elements in attendance at the Palais des Sports, echoed a larger societal preoccupation in the early years of the French Fifth Republic.

The rise of rock and roll in France occurred at an important junction in the nation's history. Political change, marked most obviously by the founding of the Fifth Republic in 1958, accompanied the dramatic, and often difficult, processes of modernization and decolonization. As the country attempted to navigate these transformations, it faced the ever-present economic, cultural, and political influence of the United States within the Cold War. In the early Fifth Republic, anxieties about uncertain social and cultural change, voiced by a diversity of

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<sup>2</sup> Michèle Manceaux, "Le grand gala," *L'Express*, March 2, 1961, 27.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 27. Emphasis added.

<sup>4</sup> J.-C. Burot, "La vraie jeunesse française," *L'Express*, March 16, 1961, 2.

commentators, were often channeled into discussions about the *blousons noirs* as part of a larger dialogue regarding juvenile delinquency. In particular, social commentators – both academic and popular writers – used the *blousons noirs* as a vehicle to question the societal impact of France’s thrust towards modernization and its simultaneous war in Algeria. At the same time, the image of the *blousons noirs* – working-class gangs of teenagers who consumed American popular culture – provided fodder for critics to lament the cultural and economic influence of the United States and to fret France’s drift toward American-style mass consumer society.

#### The *Blousons Noirs* and Juvenile Delinquency in the Early Fifth Republic

By the end of the 1950s, the French public was swept up in an intense, if ultimately short-lived, furor over the *blousons noirs*. Over a span of nearly 10 years, from roughly 1957 to 1965, writers of all persuasions devoted countless pages to them in everything from entertainment magazines to social-scientific studies.<sup>5</sup> During the period, brooding teenage males could be spotted loitering around Paris cinemas, cafés, and metro stations. In the public imagination, they were working-class gangs of young men (joined by the occasional wayward adolescent female) outfitted in blue jeans, boots, leather jackets, t-shirts, and slick pompadour hairstyles. The summer of 1959 marked the height of the controversy over the *blousons noirs*. The media declared it the “summer of the *blousons noirs*” following an uptick of public disturbances and hooliganism in which Paris police apprehended over five hundred adolescents for a variety of

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<sup>5</sup> Police reports and newspapers began to make reference to teenage gangs in France as early as 1957. Over the next several years, the fixation on the *blousons noirs* reached its height. By 1965, mention of them had practically ceased and, even then, the public’s interest had already begun to wane several years prior. See Françoise Tétard, “Le phénomène “blousons noirs” en France fin des années 1950-début des années 1960,” in Fabienne Gambrelle and Michel Trebitsch, eds., *Revolte et société: Actes du IV<sup>e</sup> Colloque d’histoire au présent, Mai 1988* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1989), 296.

minor offenses. The climax came on July 22, 1959, when two rival gangs clashed in the Square Saint-Lambert in the Fifteenth Arrondissement of the French capital. Beyond ruining the square's topiary and seating, the scuffle caused little serious damage. It nevertheless culminated in twenty-seven arrests and an official response from the Paris Prefect of Police, Maurice Papon.<sup>6</sup>

The mass media played a pivotal role in exaggerating and sensationalizing fears about the teenage gang culture sweeping across France. Newspapers and magazines promptly seized opportunities to inflate veritable, if nevertheless minor, instances of hooliganism into larger alarm about the *blousons noirs*. Some journalists went so far as to persuade adolescents outfitted in leather jackets to stage mock scuffles for the benefit of newspaper photographs. In other instances, news journals, faced with the legal dilemma of showcasing pictures of minors in print media, simply pulled images from American films like *Rebel without a Cause* to supplement their stories about teenage delinquent gangs.<sup>7</sup> These measures served to distort and exaggerate facts in order to create perceptions of juvenile delinquency among French youth. Nevertheless, a slew of works by public intellectuals and social scientists appeared simultaneously. Echoing similar concern, if under the guise of scientific and educational expertise, these publications lent the debate over the *blousons noirs* an air of much-needed credibility.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Rosemary Wakeman, *The Heroic City: Paris, 1945-1958* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 265-266; Emile Copfermann, *La génération des blousons noirs: Problèmes de la jeunesse française* (Paris: Découverte, 2003; originally published in 1962), 23.

<sup>7</sup> Ludivine Bantigny, *Le plus bel âge? Jeunes et jeunesse en France de l'aube des « Trente Glorieuses » à la guerre d'Algérie* (Paris: Fayard, 2007), 126-127.

<sup>8</sup> This is hardly surprising though, as expert knowledge had long played an important role in conceptualizing juvenile delinquency as a social ill. On this, see Aurore François and David Niget, "Fabricating Risk...Sketching the History of Expert Power," in Aurore François, Veerle Massin, and David Niget, eds., *Expertise and Juvenile Violence: 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium: Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 2011), 9-18.

France's fixation on juvenile delinquency in the 1950s mirrored, and in many ways was informed by, similar trends in other industrialized nations.<sup>9</sup> Despite the heightened interest, though, the issue of juvenile delinquency was hardly new. As Sarah Fishman notes, from the early nineteenth century onward, France developed an evolving juvenile justice system and legal framework for minors that corresponded to changing understandings of childhood, crime, degeneracy, and recuperation.<sup>10</sup> In the immediate postwar period, the same impulses that guided earlier efforts colored initiatives to reeducate so-called degenerate youths. Fears about the deleterious effects of World War II and the German occupation of France motivated reform of the juvenile justice system that prioritized rehabilitation over punishment in the face of rising instances of youth criminality.<sup>11</sup> From the early nineteenth century to the postwar period, juvenile delinquency and the future of France's youth was a recurring problem, one that had particular resonance during times of perceived crisis and change.

In the public imagination, cities had long been the sites of most cases of juvenile delinquency and adolescent criminality.<sup>12</sup> The perception in the late 1950s was no different, as

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<sup>9</sup> In the United States, for instance, observers grappled with the perceived dilemmas of juvenile delinquency earlier in the 1950s. Many Americans debated the suspect influence of postwar mass culture, on display in films, television shows, and comic books, on their nation's youth. Meanwhile, as in France, commentators in both East and West Germany observed an apparent rise in juvenile delinquency marked by inner-city teenage riots and the spread of "working class" fashions derived from American teen cinema. On debates about juvenile delinquency in 1950s America, see James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). For the two Germanys, see Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 76-84.

<sup>10</sup> For an overview of the evolution of the juvenile justice system and juvenile delinquency, see the chapter "From Child Criminals to Juvenile Delinquents, 1810-1939," in Sarah Fishman, *The Battle for Children: World War II, Youth Crime, and Juvenile Justice in Twentieth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 11-44.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Ivan Jobs, *Riding the New Wave: Youth and the Rejuvenation of France after the Second World War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 141-148.

<sup>12</sup> See Louis Chevalier, *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes in Paris during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Frank Jellinek (New York: H. Fertig, 1973).

the *blousons noirs* were conceived primarily as an urban phenomenon. At the same time, it was cities where the societal effects of the Algerian War were most visible. The burst of anxiety over the *blousons noirs* coincided with the height of war-related violence in Paris and elsewhere. While violence had long been an instrument of colonial rule, metropolitan France had been largely spared the instances of brutality employed in territories abroad. Even with the Algerian War, raging since 1954, the mainland remained mostly unscathed. This situation changed from 1958 onward, as bloody clashes between French forces and Algerian nationalists spilled over into France's largest cities.<sup>13</sup> The climax of violence came on October 17, 1961, when police officers brutally dispersed a peaceful public demonstration of Algerians, killing scores of demonstrators. The police murdered an estimated two hundred persons, many in the heart of Paris, on the night of the demonstration and in the days following.<sup>14</sup>

Additionally, as the war crawled toward an eventual denouement, French cities became hotspots for terrorist acts carried out by the Organisation de l'armée secrète (OAS), a fascist paramilitary group comprised of disgruntled military leaders, colonists, and far-right politicians intent on preserving, through all means necessary, French Algeria. The group, formed in 1961,

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<sup>13</sup> Following a period of mounting police violence towards Algerians settled in France, the leading Algerian nationalist movement, the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), responded with a series of counterattacks, including the bombing of petrochemical plants and the killing of police in the nation's capital. The Paris Police, led by Chief Maurice Papon, who had honed his harsh tactics during an earlier term as Prefect of the Algerian department Constantine, responded with swift reprisals, including raids, extrajudicial internment, and torture, which targeted the entire Algerian population in the city's environs. The FLN answered the rising instances of torture and disappearances by further attacking police; between August and October 1961, eleven officers were killed. The Paris police, including riot police and other auxiliary forces, exhibited their vehement anger in the aftermath on the evening of October 17, 1961. On the rise of Algerian War-related violence in the metropole, see Jean-Luc Einaudi, "Crime: Colonial Violence in the Metropole (1954-1961)," in Pascal Blanchard, Sandrine Lemaire, Nicolas Bancel, and Dominic Thomas, eds., *Colonial Culture in France since the Revolution*, trans. Alexis Pernsteiner (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 380-387.

<sup>14</sup> On this event, see Jim House and Neil MacMaster, *Paris 1961: Algerians, State Terror, and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).



directed attacks and assassination attempts toward anyone perceived to be supportive of Algerian independence. The OAS targeted public figures like the intellectual Jean-Paul Sartre and de Gaulle's Minister of Culture, André Malraux. Even the French President was the subject of repeated assassination attempts. As French relinquishment of Algeria became increasingly likely, the organization dialed up its attacks. Its choice instruments of terror were plastic explosives; over the span of two weeks in late January 1962, the OAS carried out forty-eight bombings in Paris alone.<sup>15</sup>

Few public voices wanted to acknowledge the effects of this highly visible, war-related violence on France's youth. Possibly fearful of the strict censorship in effect during the conflict, there remained a conspicuous silence on the potential relationship between the "dirty war" and juvenile delinquency.<sup>16</sup> Writing after the conflict in 1962, Emile Copfermann, an influential social commentator interested in matters of youth development, made the impact clear. He recognized that the *blousons noirs*, who possessed "nothing very original" by way of attire and origin, were nevertheless exposed to a climate markedly different from their counterparts in other Western countries. He proceeded to describe a youth colored by "seven years of the Algerian War, murders, [and] daily assassinations."<sup>17</sup> Later in his analysis, Copfermann pondered the

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<sup>15</sup> Martin Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 309-310; Martin A. Lee, *The Beast Reawakens: Fascism's Resurgence from Hitler's Spymasters to Today's Neo-Nazi Groups and Right-Wing Extremists* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 145-147.

<sup>16</sup> During the war the government enacted censorship of the media, passed under emergency legislation, which made newspapers and other sources susceptible to seizure if they made unfavorable reference to the conflict. Within popular culture, the state-censored songs like Boris Vians' 1954 "Le Déserteur" and films like Jean-Luc Godard's 1959 *Le Petit Soldat* because they made unfavorable reference to the conflict. Most famous was the clumsy banning of Henri Alleg's 1958 work *La Question*, which shed light on the French army's use of torture, after it had been in bookstores for six weeks and had already sold some 60,000 copies. Robert Gildea, *France since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 25-29.

<sup>17</sup> Copfermann, *La génération des blousons noirs*, 33.

effect of the conflict on returning soldiers. He feared that it had corrupted a generation of youths. “The riots of the *blousons noirs* posed the question of juvenile delinquency,” he wrote, concluding that these “cases of disobedience called attention to the reality of the war five years after the opening of hostilities.”<sup>18</sup> The war, he found, had led to a “deterioration of the ethical climate” and a “deprivation of morals” among a generation of young combatants. Copfermann, in his reflection on the war, remained an outlier, as few specialists proved willing to prompt reflection on the conflict’s toll on French youth.

France’s cities, ravaged by war-related violence and terrorism, also lent a striking visibility to the concerted, if often uneven, national efforts to modernize. In this respect, nothing symbolized the country’s technocratic modernizing aspirations better than the project of urban construction that brought new, if not always improved, changes to cities and urban areas. The *blousons noirs*, and the topic of juvenile delinquency in general, quickly became entangled in this larger process of reconstruction. As Rosemary Wakeman notes, the imagery of young hooligans occupying Parisian streets became a symbol of a larger breakdown of urban space amid France’s effort to swiftly urbanize.<sup>19</sup> The reconstitution of urban space referred in particular to the sweeping construction of publicly-funded housing complexes, many of which were the rent-controlled apartments known as *Habitations à Loyer Modéré* (HLM). Leaving 1 in 20 buildings destroyed and a fifth of all buildings damaged, World War II provided the initial impetus for reconstruction. Over the course of the 1950s, economic change, accompanied by urbanization, prompted a further housing drive.<sup>20</sup> At the beginning of the Second World War,

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>19</sup> Wakeman, *The Heroic City*, 260-270.

<sup>20</sup> Nicole Rudolph, “‘Who Should be the Author of a Dwelling?’ Architects versus Housewives in 1950s France,” *Gender and History* 21, no. 3 (November 2009): 541-543.

France represented the most rural nation in Europe, with almost half of its population living in small communes and a fourth of its workforce employed in agriculture. With the development of new industries and, with them, new employment opportunities, French families increasingly left rural villages in search of work in urban areas. At its height in the 1960s, this “rural exodus” drove some 100,000 workers per year from the soil to the cities.<sup>21</sup>

In an effort to accommodate the housing crisis and the migratory patterns accompanying economic growth, the French state implemented a number of plans and programs aimed at the construction of ample and affordable urban housing.<sup>22</sup> Despite a slow start, the basic goal was successful; between public and private efforts, there were some 300,000 new housing units produced per year by the early 1960s. The final result, however, was often a question of quantity at the expense of quality, leading to the creation of the *grands ensembles* – large, imposing blocks of concrete apartment buildings situated on the outer limits of French cities. Many of the units were often drab, offering their inhabitants few comforts. Compounding the problem, the apartments, often built along the outskirts of urban areas, regularly lacked sufficient access to parks, shopping centers, and other spaces for leisure and recreation. Poor transportation options made searching for and commuting to work equally frustrating.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Henri Mendras and Alistair Cole, *Social Change in Modern France: Towards a Cultural Anthropology of the Fifth Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 15-16.

<sup>22</sup> Some recent works on postwar housing include Nicole Rudolph, “At Home in Postwar France: The Design and Construction of Domestic Space, 1945-1975 (PhD diss., New York University, 2005); Thibault Tellier, *Le temps des HLM 1945-1975: La saga urbaine des Trente Glorieuses* (Paris: Autrement, 2007); Kenny Cupers, “In Search of the User: The Experiment of Modern Urbanism in Postwar France, 1955-1975 (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2010); and W. Brian Newsome, *French Urban Planning 1940-1968: The Construction and Deconstruction of an Authoritarian System* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009).

<sup>23</sup> Newsome, *French Urban Planning 1940-1968*, 83-112; Rudolph, ““Who Should be the Author of a Dwelling?,”” 548.

These vast complexes became linked to juvenile delinquency in the early Fifth Republic, as the image of bored and restless *blousons noirs* loitering outside of barren apartment buildings became a useful metaphor for the dreary existence associated with the *grands ensembles*. At the time, a class of experts on the subject readily confirmed that the social atmosphere created by these structures fueled the formation of teenage gangs. Located in the Paris suburb of Vaucresson, the Centre de Formation et de Recherche de l'Education Surveillée, a research facility borne out of the social-scientific and technocratic impulses of the 1950s, affected a massive study on the topic of gang formation in the summer of 1960. The center found that, more than any other single factor (including scholastic and professional milieus), the quality of the neighborhood contributed to the creation of youth gangs. The researchers noted that the HLM housing complexes provided the most favorable conditions for juvenile delinquency. The reasons were numerous. They pointed to the high population density, the cramped living conditions, and the lack of recreational areas, noting that gang-related juvenile delinquency was highest among adolescents “for which the street is the only source of relaxation.”<sup>24</sup>

The perceived association between the *grands ensembles* and the *blousons noirs* was not limited to researchers. The links also permeated into popular culture. A 1960 film captured the public perception on the issue. Directed by Marcel Carné, an aging filmmaker in the twilight of his career, *Terrain Vague (Wasteland)* focused on a fictional gang of teenage miscreants who punctuated their boredom with a combination of petty theft and hooliganism. The film's opening scene commenced in the somber corridors of a judicial court for minors. A reluctant judge,

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<sup>24</sup> Centre de Formation et de Recherche de l'Education Surveillée, *La délinquance des jeunes en groupe: Contribution à l'étude de la société adolescente* (Vaucresson: Editions Cujas, 1963), 25-33, quote on page 33. Hereafter abbreviated as CFRES.

seated before one repeat offender, sentenced the delinquent teen to time in a juvenile detention center, one final chance, the judge warned, before the youth reached adulthood. As the opening credits rolled across the screen, the viewer was met with atmospheric and eerie shots of vast housing complexes – huge, uniform rectangles outlined in the night sky, illuminated only by a random sprinkling of apartment lights. The scene lingered, showing the delinquent’s dejected mother ascending the countless flights of stairs, her steps echoing in the cavernous stairwell. The scene offered a not-so-subtle critique of the “modern” housing units – the sense of alienation and monotony they engendered – blotted across the French landscape in Paris and elsewhere.<sup>25</sup>

The plot of *Terrain Vague* centered on the budding romantic relationship between Dan (short for Danièle), a boyish female leader of a local gang, and Lucky, a member of the group of young delinquents. Both fled the gang after its focus shifted from small-scale shoplifting to organized robbery. In the process, Lucky’s departure sabotaged the planned heist, thus drawing the gang’s ire and forcing the two into hiding in order to evade their former peers. In searching for the couple, the gang began to hassle one of the youngest gang members, Babar, who lived in the same HLM as Dan and thus represented the sole lifeline to finding the fleeing pair. Babar, who was ultimately an innocent and innocuous adolescent only searching for camaraderie, faced mounting harassment as the gang members became impatient in their search. As the film concluded, Babar, unable to handle the gang’s torment, committed suicide, complicating the young couple’s plans to escape and underscoring the gravity of the situation. Throughout the film, the delinquent teens found themselves confined to their isolated quarter on the margins of Paris, shown as a barren terrain devoid of landscaping. The composition of the gang was divided

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<sup>25</sup> *Terrain Vague*, DVD, directed by Marcel Carné (1960; Paris: René Chateau Vidéo, 2009).

between teens with true criminal aspirations and otherwise harmless youths who joined the gang in an effort to escape the monotony of their living situation. The social commentary was clear. Carné suggested that the circumstances created by the *grands ensembles*, a central tenet of France's postwar modernization efforts, had a corrupting influence on French youth, inciting symptoms of juvenile delinquency.<sup>26</sup>

The film underscored a popular perception about the links between juvenile delinquency and the *grands ensembles*. Alongside the critique of the HLM resided another narrative woven throughout Carné's film. The petty thefts committed by the adolescent gang in *Terrain Vague* often amounted to little more than shoplifting of cheap goods, as the teens began to accumulate a collection of inexpensive consumer products. As Carné made clear, their thefts were not meant to supplement basic needs, but were instead exchanged for cash in a scheme to obtain spending money meant to abet their search for entertainment. The gang's actions spoke to a more widespread societal concern – the question of teenage consumption in a newfound mass society.

#### Mass Culture, Americanization, and the Question of Juvenile Delinquency

What especially troubled observers in the late 1950s was how some of the most apparent symptoms of juvenile delinquency seemed to be borne out of the emergent age of affluence reshaping France and other Western European countries. While the dilemma of juvenile delinquency was certainly not new, conventional wisdom had always linked it to the most marginalized segments of society. By contrast, in the early Fifth Republic instances of teenage crime were credited to all social classes amid a rising tide of juvenile delinquency, despite that

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

the standard of living and material prosperity were ostensibly higher than ever. This paradoxical phenomenon raised questions about the side effects of an emergent mass culture on impressionable youth precisely at a time when many debated the merits of France's drift toward an American-style society of consumption. Questions of juvenile delinquency thus became deeply implicated in larger anxieties about a changing nation. For commentators, the *blousons noirs* became a cautionary tale about the dangers of adopting a lifestyle built on mass consumerism.

The rise of mass consumer society was a key feature of what economist Jean Fourastié deemed the “Trente Glorieuses” (the “Thirty Glorious Years”), a period of unprecedented economic growth.<sup>27</sup> Underway by the early 1950s and in full force by 1954, mass consumerism had a tremendous influence in shaping the composition of the everyday. It had ramifications across all aspects of French life, from business models and advertising strategies to grocery shopping and transportation. It altered perceptions of leisure and entertainment as well as work.<sup>28</sup> Mass consumerism shaped patterns of social organization and generally raised living standards across the French populace, while also serving to expose economic inequality and class-based divisions.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See his seminal work, Jean Fourastié, *Les trentes glorieuses ou la révolution invisible de 1946 à 1975* (Paris: Fayard, 1979).

<sup>28</sup> For an insightful look at how American-style consumer and business practices wove their way into the societies of France and other European nations, see Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005).

<sup>29</sup> For instance, in 1951 there was only one car for every seventeen persons in France; by 1958 that number had swollen to one out of every seven. By the end of the decade, the French increasingly turned to mass consumption to satisfy their needs for leisure and entertainment. The sales of radios, television sets, records, sporting equipment, and other related items soared by some 250% during the decade. Jean-Pierre Rioux, *The Fourth Republic, 1944-1958*, trans. Godfrey Rodgers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 370-374.

Despite a broad base of support for consumerist aspirations, there remained a societal ambivalence about the effect of American-style mass culture and mass consumption on “traditional” French culture.<sup>30</sup> “Americanization,” offered a fluid term that cut across the political spectrum with which to lament the supposed impact of America, real or imagined, in all domains of French society. Whether discussing the expanded economic and political role of the United States in the postwar world order or simply making reference to “American” inventions like supermarkets or blue jeans, commentators applied the term with equal gusto. The concept galvanized many in France, from the left-leaning intellectual circles of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir to the shopkeeper populism of Pierre Poujade, and found articulation across a vast plane of cultural expression.<sup>31</sup> Even as many embraced the promise and potential of technocratic modernization and mass consumption, the changes they imposed on the organization of everyday life appeared striking enough to prompt reflection, and occasionally strong criticism.

Using youth as its point of entry, a 1959 article in the weekly news magazine *L'Express* echoed larger social concerns about the coming of American-style mass consumer society in France. Glancing across the Atlantic, the magazine inspected consumption trends among

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<sup>30</sup> An important text on this topic is Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). For a consideration of this topic in a Europe-wide context, see Richard Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture Since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

<sup>31</sup> An iconic example of ambivalence towards American-style consumer modernity are the 1950s films by Jacques Tati. His amusing portrayal of a bumbling but affable Luddite ill-suited to the supposed virtues of a technological society were on display in two successful films from the 1950s, *Les vacances de M. Hulot* (1953) and *Mon Oncle* (1958). See *M. Hulot's Holiday*, DVD, directed by Jacques Tati (1953; New York: Criterion, 2004); and *Mon Oncle*, DVD, directed by Jacques Tati (1958; New York: Criterion, 2004). For information on Sartre, de Beauvoir, and Poujade, see Kuisel, *Seducing the French*, 50-51; Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 289, 487.



American teenagers. The United States, the article made clear, offered a glimpse into an uncertain future: “Those Americans have already put into practice what the French are only just beginning to have doubts about.”<sup>32</sup> For *L'Express*, some of the habits proved dubious at best. It found that American teens regularly spent hours per week watching television or talking on the telephone, frequented cinemas, bought records and clothing, and worshipped rock and roll. This world of consumption was a testament, the article noted, to the growing economic clout of teenagers, an influence that spelled a slackening of parental authority. All of the developments covered had a particular resonance because they appeared to be a sign of things to come. “The readings of this survey are very instructive for us,” the article noted, because “what’s happening in the United States, in economic and commercial matters, only precedes what is going to pop up here soon.” Confirming the inevitability of these tendencies reaching France, in an unqualified but nevertheless potent statement, the article asserted that “specialists” considered French teenagers to be “the most Americanized in Europe.”<sup>33</sup>

But despite the concern revealed in *L'Express*, American mass culture and consumer products had *already* begun to infiltrate France in the preceding years. While cultural exports like Coca-Cola appeared intermittently in France as early as World War I, nothing in the postwar period symbolized the intrusion of American popular culture more than Hollywood film.<sup>34</sup> To put the sheer magnitude in perspective, by the late 1950s there were roughly 500 American films released in Europe per year, compared to only about 450 films created by all of Europe

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<sup>32</sup> “Dix-sept millions de clients,” *L'Express*, February 19, 1959, 16.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Kuisel, “Coca-Cola and the Cold War: The French Face Americanization, 1948-1953,” *French Historical Studies* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 100-101.

collectively. While the European masses generally appreciated American film, young people in particular found the style and imagery particularly alluring.<sup>35</sup> The 1953 film *The Wild One*, directed by László Benedek and starring Marlon Brando as the rebellious leader of an outlaw motorcycle gang, offered French teenagers a glimpse of American popular culture when it was released as *L'Équipée sauvage* in 1954. The 1955 film *Rebel without a Cause* swiftly followed *The Wild One*. Directed by Nicholas Ray and starring the charismatic James Dean, the film, released in France in 1956 as *La Fureur de vivre*, crafted a portrait of juvenile delinquency couched within suburban America. Attracting teens and worrying adults in equal measure, both films offered a romantic and stylish representation of youthful revolt draped in leather jackets, slick hair, and blue jeans.<sup>36</sup>

Though seductive to French teenagers, these films proved easy targets for French social commentators who viewed them as tasteless and subversive American cultural exports that contributed to (or even caused) juvenile delinquency. In particular, Marlon Brando and James Dean, both exuding a defiant cool eagerly emulated by teens in France and elsewhere, personified the invasive and suspect influence of postwar America. In his 1960 work *Jeunesse en danger*, Henri Joubrel, who was at the time a high-ranking figure in the French scouting movement, noted regrettably that “violence seems to be becoming the trend” among French teens.<sup>37</sup> “These adolescents,” he found, “slumped against the walls like the cowboys in the

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<sup>35</sup> Judt, *Postwar*, 351-352.

<sup>36</sup> Later American films, like the 1955 film *Blackboard Jungle* (released in France later that year as *Graine de violence*) or the 1961 film adaptation of *West Side Story* (released in France in 1962), served a similar function, whether intentionally or not. For an examination of the emergence of teen-oriented American film genres, see Thomas Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2002).

<sup>37</sup> Henri Joubrel, *Jeunesse en danger* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1960), 11.

westerns” were capable of abrupt ferocity. He found that “an irresistible urge” brought teenage boys “to imitate Marlon Brando in *The Wild One* or James Dean from *Rebel without a Cause*.”<sup>38</sup> Similarly, the educator and writer Antonin Bondat, in his 1962 work *Jeunesse et famille à l’heure de l’atome*, feared that American idols, emblematic of mass culture, encouraged an atmosphere of conformity. Just as a million young girls blindly copied the ever-changing hairstyles of Brigitte Bardot, he wrote, “the jacket of James Dean” is passed onto future generations in “the aisles of the cinema,” becoming “the harness of a disoriented youth.”<sup>39</sup> Other commentators, pointing to James Dean and others with regularity, drew equally hyperbolic conclusions about the dangers of an emergent system built around consumerism and mass culture.<sup>40</sup>

Even the expert class had reservations about the influence of what Bondat called the “imbecilic cult of the idol.”<sup>41</sup> In 1959, Philippe Parrot and Monique Gueneau, a pair of collaborating social scientists working under the leadership of Georges Hahn, a respected and well-published psychologist, assessed the influence of idols of teen cinema. In their work *Les Gangs d’adolescents*, the duo declared:

We have signaled that the delinquents find the source for their criminal techniques in comics and films. The press and the cinema supply nothing except recipes: they act in a very psychological way in giving to the young people the possibilities of identification that the young cannot find in the family: their heroes are going to be Eddie Constantine, James Dean, Marlon

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>39</sup> Antonin Bondat, *Jeunesse et famille à l’heure de l’atome* (Paris: Plon, 1962), 126.

<sup>40</sup> See, for instance, Copfermann, *La génération des blousons noirs*, 31. Copfermann could recount in lurid detail an incident concerning two teenage girls who jumped to their deaths from a building rooftop in an effort to “join James Dean,” an act he described as “two apprentices consecrating their leisure to the cult of the star.”

<sup>41</sup> Bondat, *Jeunesse et famille*, 126.

Brando, and Brigitte Bardot. The manner of dressing and the haircuts copy these stars.<sup>42</sup>

As these critiques attest, the influence of American popular culture, personified by Marlon Brando and James Dean, was one debated by commentators of many stripes. All were convinced that, on some level, American popular culture and the mass consumerism it celebrated had a suspect influence on impressionable French youth.

What appeared especially startling was how instances of juvenile delinquency, instigated by popular culture and crass habits of consumerism imported from the United States, readily permeated class boundaries and social groups. This phenomenon, it seemed to many, was a new and unprecedented facet, one that defied a conventional wisdom that linked juvenile delinquency to “asocial” degenerates otherwise segregated from the larger social body. Parrot and Geuneau, in their 1959 study of teenage gangs, pointed to the US, where “juvenile delinquency has taken the most spectacular importance,” to demonstrate the new contours of the problem. Examples of juvenile, inner-city crime in New York City and elsewhere offered vivid examples to underscore their point. Anticipating the class and race-based assumptions of their audience, however, the researchers insisted that readers should not assume that the criminal offenses emanated from actors of “proletarian and sub-proletarian milieus,” adding that they found an ever-increasing number of “bourgeois youth gangs.” “The gang phenomenon has thus become a general phenomenon that affects all social strata,” they concluded.<sup>43</sup> Emile Copfermann drew similar conclusions in his 1962 reflection on the *blousons noirs*. He averred that if prior World War II,

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<sup>42</sup> Monique Gueneau and Philippe Parrot, *Les Gangs d'Adolescents. Psycho-sociologie de la délinquance juvénile: de l'observation à la thérapeutique* (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), 213.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

juvenile delinquency had primarily affected “working-class milieus,” it had “gravely extended” in the postwar period to include “bourgeois families” as well.<sup>44</sup> With delinquency and hooliganism extending to middle-class teenagers, attention turned to the youth-oriented mass culture, availed by rising prosperity, and its influence in shaping the *blousons noirs*.

### French Rock and Roll and the Legacy of the *Blousons Noirs*

The rise of rock and roll reinforced the association between teenage consumption and delinquency. It encouraged many of the same debates about the influence of mass culture that films like *Rebel without a Cause* provoked several years prior. The images of teenage consumption, crafted in the media, were inextricably linked to the supposed savagery of the musical genre. It played into the same fears about Americanization, as well as a general anxiety about the consequences of a culture built on mass consumerism, only here the danger spoke French. The growth of indigenous rock and roll represented a new threat from within and served as an apparent measure of France’s Americanization.

Rock and roll’s ascent was slower and later in France than in most other Western European countries. There had been rumblings during the 1950s. In 1956, for instance, Bill Haley and the Comets’ “Rock around the Clock” became a bestseller and the Frenchman Henri Salvador, performing under the alias Henry Cording, released four satirical, but nevertheless successful, rock and roll songs.<sup>45</sup> Others, like Gilbert Bécaud, whose energetic live performances

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<sup>44</sup> Copfermann, *La génération des blousons noirs*, 35.

<sup>45</sup> These early songs, including “Rock and Roll-Mops” and “Va t’faire cuire un œuf, man!” (“Go fry an egg, man!”) were written by two luminaries of French jazz named Boris Vian and Michel Legrand. Vian, despite professing a general dislike of the musical genre, continued to compose rock and roll songs into the late 1950s, as (half-satirical) musical acts like Pep Rock et ses Rocking Boys, les Rock Failair’s, and Moustache et ses Moustachus recorded and released his compositions to small success. See Victor and Regoli, *Vingt ans de rock français*, 11-12

earned him the name “Monsieur 100,000 volts,” attained success in this early period of French rock and roll.<sup>46</sup> Building on this modest foundation, by the early 1960s France had produced a steady ensemble of rock and roll stars. The first to achieve success was Richard Anthony, who began releasing singles from late-1958 onward. The Egyptian-born singer who nevertheless performed in French scored his biggest hits adapting popular American songs by artists like Bobby Darin, the Everly Brothers, and the Coasters.<sup>47</sup> Soon came musical acts with vaguely ominous-sounding names like the Chaussettes Noires (the Black Socks) and the Chats Sauvages (the Wild Cats). Undoubtedly, the most popular of all though was a young artist performing under the stage name Johnny Hallyday. With boyish good looks, a distinct if unexceptional vocal ability, and a physical presence derivative of Elvis Presley, the young performer quickly became the face of French rock and roll. He released his first disc in March of 1960 with the record label Vogue.<sup>48</sup> Within a year he was performing to sellout crowds in some of France’s most prestigious performing halls, including the Olympia in Paris.

The rise of rock and roll in France was inseparable from the simultaneous appearance of a mass consumer society. The raucous sounds of electric guitars emanating from jukeboxes, record players, and transistor radios became a potent symbol of an emergent mass culture in France. It signaled the arrival of the teenage consumer, as adolescents readily forfeited their newly acquired spending money in exchange for records, clothing, radios, and cinema tickets.<sup>49</sup> The consumer revolution was swift, availing the dissemination of rock and roll. In 1958, for

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<sup>46</sup> Jacques Barsamian and François Jouffra, *L’âge d’or du Yéyé: Le rock, le twist, et la variété française des années 60* (Paris: Éditions Ramsay, 1984), 15-16.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-32.

<sup>48</sup> Frédéric Quinonero, *Les années 60: Rêves et Révolutions* (Paris: Carpentier, 2009), 19.

<sup>49</sup> Rosemary Wakeman, “European Mass Culture in the Media Age,” in Rosemary Wakeman, ed., *Themes in Modern European History since 1945* (London: Routledge, 2003), 143.

instance, there were only 260,000 transistor radios in the Hexagon. Within three short years, that number had grown eight-fold to over 2.2 million.<sup>50</sup> Studies from the period found that a growing number of teenagers owned an assortment of consumer products, including record players and musical instruments. A lucky few even owned their own automobiles. Meanwhile, some of the leading teenage musical performers sold records by the millions. For those adolescents unable to buy their own records, some 20,000 jukeboxes were scattered throughout France availing teens of the latest hits songs.<sup>51</sup> These symbols, and the ubiquitous sounds and sights they provided, announced the flourishing of a society of consumption.

However, the arrival of a truly mass culture, built on consumer capitalism, was not without its critics. Vocal commentators decried its banal nature, standardizing tendencies, and propensity to fetishize particular idols and celebrities. The very same qualities that offered a class-crossing democratization of culture also represented an attack on traditional notions of high culture and taste. Rock and roll, with its supposedly unintelligent lyrics and simplistic musical arrangements, became a soft target for commentators decrying the effects of the mass production of culture.

The links between French rock and roll and the larger issue of Americanization were accentuated by some of most visible rock stars from the era. It was customary, for instance, for early performers to adopt American-sounding names. Claude Moine, the lead singer of the Chaussettes Noires, performed under the name Eddy Mitchell. The Chats Sauvages front man,

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<sup>50</sup> Jean-François Sirinelli, *Les baby-boomers: Une génération, 1945-1969* (Paris: Fayard, 2003), 144.

<sup>51</sup> Of adolescents between the ages of 16 and 24, 40% owned their own personal transistor radios. Twenty-seven percent owned their own record players, one out of ten owned their own musical instrument (of which the vast majority sold were guitars), and some 5% owned their own vehicles. These statistics are found in Jacques Marny, *La chanson et ses vedettes: Des troubadours aux beatles* (Paris: Centurion, 1965), 15-16, 23.

Hervé Forneri, operated as Dick Rivers. Most famously, the young Frenchman Jean-Philippe Smet went on to become the famed Johnny Hallyday. In fact, Hallyday, perhaps more than any other performer, cultivated ties to America; in the early period of his career, his record company marketed him as being born in America and being bilingual in both English and French (neither of which was true).<sup>52</sup> The tactic may have helped authenticate Hallyday to a generation of French teenagers infatuated with American popular culture. For older generations, however, Americanized performers like Hallyday and his peers lent credence to the notion that France was being recast as a modernized society of mass culture akin to the United States.

Commentators feared that mass culture, of which rock and roll was emblematic, created an atmosphere of conformity, one that discouraged independent thinking and individuality. For Roger Holeindre, a far-right political activist and Algerian War veteran, the coming of rock and roll reflected a larger struggle whereby a weakened France, shorn of its empire, succumbed to the temptations of American-style mass consumerism. Holeindre understood why rock and roll and the Twist resonated with young people, but he feared that it was symptomatic of a generation of youths rendered uninspired and unproductive by a vapid popular culture. While it is normal for young people to sing and dance, he wrote, “it is nevertheless abnormal that their horizon stops there” and while Johnny Hallyday might be the “idol” of French youth, “it is unthinkable that beyond this young singer, there is nothing else.”<sup>53</sup> He questioned the wild haircuts, the hardened visages, and the shouting. Above all, he wondered, “why these American names?” Emile Copfermann, meanwhile, pondered the multiple ways that the “amusement industry”

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<sup>52</sup> Chris Tinker, “Rock and Roll Stardom: Johnny Hallyday,” in *Stardom in Postwar France*, ed. John Gaffney and Diana Holmes (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 71-72.

<sup>53</sup> Roger Holeindre, *Honneur ou Décadence* (Paris: Fuseau, 1965), 184.



shaped an image of youth and encouraged the masses to follow. He found that the tenets of mass culture promoted instant gratification and a lack of intellectual engagement. Pointing to rock and roll as an example, he believed that young people embraced it because it could be consumed and enjoyed immediately and without thought.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, Henri Joubrel observed a growing tendency for young people, content to do nothing productive with their free time, to loiter in the streets like “sheep huddled together before the storm” listening to their “narcotic,” rock and roll.<sup>55</sup> For these various critics, rock and roll embodied a mediocrity bestowed by American-style mass culture that sapped the individualism of an entire generation.

Rock and roll also exacerbated existing fears about juvenile delinquency. The controversy linked to the nascent musical genre quickly became woven into the existing discourse on the *blousons noirs*. From its inception, rock and roll conjured images of teenage hooliganism. Over a span of two years, observers had linked the musical style to teen-related disturbances in over five hundred cities across three continents.<sup>56</sup> In France, 1961 marked the emergence of rock and roll festivals. The Palais des Sports in Paris provided the setting for these spectacles. Like the festival held in February of 1961, the concerts often featured any combination of scandals. Some teenage attendees brawled in the crowd. Others destroyed and dismantled stadium seating. On occasion, police needed to intervene to bolster security. In some instances, concertgoers even hurled objects at the musical performers.<sup>57</sup> These antics, covered in

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<sup>54</sup> Copfermann, *La génération des blousons noirs*, 96.

<sup>55</sup> Joubrel, *Jeunesse en danger*, 82.

<sup>56</sup> This is a figure referenced in Jean-Charles Lagrée, *Les jeunes chantent leurs cultures* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1982), 15-16.

<sup>57</sup> Victor and Regoli, *Vingt ans de rock français*, 24-25.

the press, harkened the same type of delinquent acts ascribed earlier to the *blousons noirs* and lent the impression that rock and roll attracted, even incited, violent behavior.

The image procured by early French rock and roll stars only enhanced this perception. Some of the most recognizable figures of French rock donned the familiar leather, blue jeans, and greased hairdos in an effort to seize some of the same cool defiance exuded by American idols like James Dean and Elvis Presley. Vince Taylor, more than any other singer, typified this trend. For many, Taylor embodied the most ominous aspects of rock and roll. He wore black leather from head to toe, the solid dark mass interrupted only by an ostentatious chain draped over his unbuttoned shirt; his hair, as dark as the leather he wore, greased into an elaborate coiffeur. Taylor, a British-born rocker who sang in English, earned a reputation for his frenetic live performances filled with provocative twists and gyrations.<sup>58</sup> Outfitted in garb strikingly similar to those of the *blousons noirs* while serving frenzied and riotous live performances, stars like Taylor helped cement the links between rock and roll and teenage delinquency.

This conflation of rock and roll with the ominous imagery of the *blousons noirs* was mocked in a 1960 song by Gilbert Bécaud, a performer who only several years prior had captured the attention of French teenagers before being displaced by the meteoric rise of singers like Hallyday. His song “Age Tendre et Tête de Bois” (“Tender-aged and Stubborn”) aimed to mock the apparent changes to youth-oriented music in France.<sup>59</sup> Sung in a sardonic tone, the lyrics described a sordid relationship between two delinquent teens who spent their time together

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<sup>58</sup> Emblematic of this is Taylor’s 1962 performance on the television program *Age tendre et tête de bois*. See Vince Taylor, “What I Say,” April 28, 1962, *Age tendre et tête de bois*, Institut National de l’Audiovisuel, Adobe Flash video file, 4:09, <http://www.ina.fr/video/I00007894/vince-taylor-what-i-say-video.html> (accessed March 25, 2014).

<sup>59</sup> Quinonero, *Les années 60*, 24-25.

in the streets at night. Bécaud joked in the lyric that, with the girl wearing pants and a jacket, onlookers would think they saw two males together. The second verse made clear that these delinquents represented prime examples of Americanized French youth. The two characters described in the song spent all of their days going to the cinema, drinking Coca-Cola, and lurking around jukeboxes. In an effectively sarcastic way, Bécaud managed to craft the image of two delinquent teens seduced by the allure of leisure and consumption.<sup>60</sup> They were caricatures of Americanized “others,” an image that, however exaggerated, reflected popular perceptions about young rock and roll fans.

The half-joking barbs levied in song lyrics were hardly a stretch though. Serious studies from the era corroborated what Bécaud and others only assumed. The Centre de Formation et de Recherche de l’Education Surveillée observed that recreational sites, including cinemas, cafés, and arcades, often served to foster and incubate the formation of juvenile gangs. One Paris police captain found that the cafés and bars featuring jukeboxes attracted, above all else, adolescents who enjoy the “thundering atmosphere of modern music,” a setting that facilitated the creation of youth gangs and served to “foment asocial acts.”<sup>61</sup> The concern over teenagers congregating in cafés and elsewhere was part of a larger interest in understanding the growth of adolescent leisure as an integral part of the emergent age of affluence and its accompanying society of consumption. During the late 1950s, the economic affluence and prosperity trickled down to many teenagers in the form of disposable income. The period also witnessed a sweeping

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<sup>60</sup> See Bécaud’s 1961 performance of the song on the eponymous television show, *Age tendre et tête de bois*. Gilbert Bécaud, “Age tendre et tête de bois,” November 21, 1961, *Age tendre et tête de bois*, Institut National de l’Audiovisuel, Adobe Flash video file, 2:47, <http://www.ina.fr/video/I06213479/gilbert-becaud-age-tendre-et-tete-de-bois-video.html> (accessed April 16, 2014).

<sup>61</sup> Quoted in the CFRES, *La délinquance des jeunes en groupe*, 37.

expansion of secondary and university education. As a result, adolescents remained students longer and, though they possessed some money of their own, were freed of much of the responsibilities to work and contribute to the family income, resulting in a growth of leisure as a significant part of teenage life. While the French state actively promoted sporting activities and youth cultural centers to occupy and educate young people, the growth of idle leisure seemed a likely cause for gang formation and delinquent behavior. Indeed, in direct contrast to youth idealized by the French state, the imagery of delinquent teenagers loitering in cinemas and cafés offered evidence to the supposed dangers of leisure time spent consuming mass culture.<sup>62</sup>

It was, to observers at least, a new and unprecedented trend spreading across France. Not limited to the working-class quarters of large cities, the mass culture-fueled juvenile delinquency threatened to reach even the quietest of villages. Jean Cau, an award-winning journalist for the weekly news magazine *L'Express* wrote a 1961 article titled “Return to My Village.” In the piece, the author recounted a recent return to his natal village, a sleepy commune situated to the north of Paris, and his surprise upon witnessing a number of palpable changes. The village, he wrote, was filled with ominous teens who lined the main thoroughfares in foreboding hordes. Inquiring to his nephew about the recent phenomenon, the adolescent informed him that the idyllic commune was now “full of blousons noirs.”<sup>63</sup> Who were these young troublemakers? When asking his nephew about the teenagers in question, Cau was shocked to learn their origins. One was the son of a butcher, the others were the offspring of low-level bureaucrats. They were

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<sup>62</sup> To this point, the CFRES, citing a 1959 study on the *blousons noirs* by the Paris Prefect of Police, found that some 80% of the juvenile delinquents surveyed participated in no sporting activities. Evidence like this seemed to strengthen the perception that, while active youth generally avoided criminal activities, those ideal youths seeking entertainment and pleasure through mass culture (in cinemas, arcades, and cafés) seemed vulnerable to juvenile delinquency. CFRES, *La délinquance des jeunes en groupe*, 41.

<sup>63</sup> Jean Cau, “Retour à mon village,” *L'Express*, July 6, 1961, 9.

from respectable families, he discovered, remarking that there was “not a single assassin among the fathers of these young terrors.”<sup>64</sup>

They defied the working-class, urban stereotype that had previously been affixed to the image of juvenile delinquency. Yet there they stood, lined along the streets with dyed and slicked hair, blue jeans, and opened shirts. Later in the article, Cau pointed to an upcoming Johnny Hallyday concert, an obvious culprit for the manifestation of *blousons noirs* in his petite childhood commune. “This national calamity named Johnny Hallyday,” the author wrote, had disembarked in the village, Persan, as part of his 1961 tour. Cau recounted Hallyday’s search for the director of the municipal theater. Hallyday, he wrote, asked how many police would be available for the upcoming concert, warning that young people had destroyed venues on each stop of his tour. According to Cau, the theater director replied, “Ho, ho! Here isn’t everywhere. It’s calm here; the young people are calm; nothing happens here.” Sure enough, when Cau asked about the concert, his nephew confirmed that, true to Hallyday’s warning, the young people had proceeded to cause an uproarious commotion.<sup>65</sup>

The veracity of Cau’s account cannot be verified. Even if he took journalistic liberties, though, the point remains the same. Cau spoke for many in his consternation towards the youthful trends built on a foundation of mass culture and consumption. A thought near the end of his piece was telling. “Today, young people neither whistle nor sing. They shout,” he wrote. “At what? At the death of all the gods (father, France, family, church, etc.)” in front of the idols who have captured France’s adolescence.<sup>66</sup> For Cau, like many others, the *blousons noirs* represented

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 9.

an unseemly harbinger of a changing France. During the period, from roughly 1958 to 1962, the image of teenage consumption and mass culture became synonymous with the *blousons noirs*, as influential voices speculated about the role of film and music in instigating adolescent hooliganism. Even as other aspects of mass consumer society had already woven their way into the fabric of French society, the areas that related to teenagers, such as rock and roll, remained objects of controversy. The *blousons noirs*, imagined as Americanized, working-class “others,” became a not-so-subtle way to question tangible aspects of France’s modernizing process. The *blousons noirs* became enmeshed in debates about everything from HLM apartment complexes to American popular culture. It was not until 1962 that the image of teenage consumerism began to be divorced from the *blousons noirs* and juvenile delinquency. Only once an assortment of commercial forces built an image of youth in contrast to the *blousons noirs* did youth-oriented mass culture gain widespread acceptance. It was through this process that youth consumerism became a rationalized and sanitized part of modern France.

## CHAPTER 2: ENVISIONING MODERN FRANCE IN THE *TEMPS DES COPAINS*, 1962-1966

In late 1962, a new song, titled “Le Temps de l’Amour” (“The Age of Love”) could be heard emanating from transistor radios and jukeboxes all over France. As a reverb-laden guitar echoed over a dancing bass line and a driving drum beat, breathy, atmospheric vocals launched into the song’s first verse: “It’s the age of love, the age of *copains* and adventure.”<sup>1</sup> The singer was Françoise Hardy, a soft-spoken eighteen year old from Paris’ Ninth Arrondissement. The song, which sang about the pleasures and pains of teenage romance, typified a new style of popular music, one that bore a resemblance to rock and roll but which notably lacked the music’s edge and controversy. Hardy likewise represented a stark departure from earlier rock and roll performers. The genre of which Hardy was a part, eventually termed *yé-yé*, gained widespread popularity, providing for a fleeting moment the vibrant sights and sounds of an era. It announced the arrival of teenage consumption on a grand scale and projected the image of a confident and forward-looking France buoyed by its youthful exuberance.

Coming immediately on the heels of France’s bloody flight from empire, the “time of *copains*” signaled a reorientation of “modern” France. During its relatively short lifespan, *yé-yé* offered the dominant discursive image of youth during the era, the *copain*. By virtue of its sheer ubiquity, the *copain* helped shape normative values of the ideal French teenager and, by extension, modern France. This idealized portrait of adolescence upheld the image of the white, *bourgeois* student as the universal teen experience. At the same time, the mass media, which ultimately constructed the idealized *copains*, demonstrated an embrace of France’s increasingly

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<sup>1</sup> Françoise Hardy, “Le Temps de l’Amour,” *Le Temps de l’Amour*, Disques Vogue V.45-1074, 1962, Single.

technocratic society of mass consumerism and technological progress, all while straddling an apolitical stance well-suited to the social and political tone set by Charles de Gaulle and his fellow Gaullists in the early Fifth Republic. Altogether, the discursive image of the *copain*, so prominent in the popular culture of *yé-yé*, offered a vision for French youth that was forward-looking and worry-free. This particular construct, as the chapter suggests, proved well-timed to its unique historical context and ultimately helped articulate a vision of modern France removed from its colonial past.

### The Rise of *Yé-Yé*

*Les années yé-yé* lasted for the better part of the 1960s. The core elements were in place by 1961, and the phenomenon's height was in the years 1963-1964 before the arrival of competing British music and other French genres diminished its popularity.<sup>2</sup> The rise of *yé-yé* was made possible by the expansion of the mass media in the period following the Second World War, by the rise of a system of mass consumer capitalism, and the emergence of a vast market of commodities created specifically for teenagers. The importance of this context cannot be overstated. These components allowed for the carving out of a unique space for teenagers and, with it, the construction of an identifiable image of *yé-yé* youth. Popular music formed the basis for this expansion and provided the means to organize a sizeable portion France's youth into a distinct category. In particular, the personal transistor radio and, to a lesser extent, the record player provided the requisite means to forge an outlet for teens based on popular music made specifically for them. These two products symbolized the teenage consumer revolution. As

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<sup>2</sup> Jean-François Sirinelli, "Les années 1960: première manière," in Jean-Pierre Rioux and Jean-François Sirinelli, eds., *Histoire culturelle de la France, tome 4: Le temps de masses* (Paris: Seuil, 1998), 261-262.



Anne-Marie Sohn writes, the portable transistor radio became the signifier of youthful independence. By the mid-1960s the price had lowered to the point that they were affordable objects to all social classes. In 1961 some 40% of young people already owned one, a number that rose to 46% by 1966. With similar popularity, 42% of adolescents between 15-20 years old owned their own turntable by 1966.<sup>3</sup>

It is therefore unsurprising that the first signal of a vibrant, music-oriented popular culture for teenagers came in the autumn of 1959 with the launch of the radio program *Salut les copains* on the commercial station Europe 1.<sup>4</sup> The idea for the program came from Daniel Filipacchi and Frank Ténot, two radio hosts with backgrounds in jazz who recognized an opportunity to create a product for the growing population of French teenagers.<sup>5</sup> Their program offered the latest in American and eventually British and French popular music. Initially broadcast only once per week, the success of the program quickly made *Salut les copains* a daily fixture, airing at five o'clock in the afternoon just in time to catch teenagers returning home from school. This brainchild of Filipacchi and Ténot was responsible, perhaps more than any other source, for creating the momentum for *yé-yé* by directing young people *en masse* toward the

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<sup>3</sup> Anne-Marie Sohn, *Age tendre et tête de bois: Histoire des jeunes des années 1960* (Paris: Hachette, 2001), 67-68.

<sup>4</sup> Europe 1 was one of France's peripheral radio stations. The *périphériques* stations were commercial radio stations that broadcast music and other content to French listeners from transmitters located outside France's borders. By establishing transmitters in places like Luxembourg, the German Saarland, and Monaco, these commercial stations, which included Europe 1, Radio Monte-Carlo, and Radio Luxembourg, among others, were able to skirt around France's state monopoly on radio established in the aftermath of World War II. Despite the presence of state-controlled radio within France's borders, these stations nevertheless had the tacit approval of the French government; over time, many of the stations were allowed to set up their main studios in Paris, orchestrating their programming from the French capital. For more on the emergence of the peripheral radio stations, see Geoff Hare, "Popular Music on French Radio and Television," in Hugh Dauncey and Steve Cannon, eds., *Popular Music in France from Chanson to Techno: Culture, Identity and Society* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003), 57-76.

<sup>5</sup> David L. Looseley, *Popular Music in Contemporary France: Authenticity, Politics, Debate* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 28.

popular music genre. Its influence was immense, largely because of the central role of the radio in the lives of teenagers. An Institut Français d'Opinion Publique (IFOP) study in 1966 found that 62% of adolescents between 15 and 20 years old listened to the radio daily; 81% listened at least several times per week. When asked about their favorite programs, of which many were listed, one in three chose *Salut les copains*.<sup>6</sup> Within a few short years, numerous emulators had programs on competing stations.

The overwhelming success of the radio program *Salut les copains* prompted its creators to venture into print media. The two had already tried their hand at a monthly jazz magazine and recognized a similar opportunity to launch a publication for France's growing youth. The eponymously-titled magazine hit newsstands in July 1962, with an initial print run of 50,000 copies selling out almost immediately. By December of that year, the magazine was already selling some 600,000 copies per month; at the one year mark the number had surpassed a million.<sup>7</sup> But the numbers alone do not adequately reflect the sheer magnitude of *Salut les copains*. An IFOP poll from September 1963 found that one out of every two young people between the ages of 15 and 20 read the magazine.<sup>8</sup> "Who hasn't seen school children, heading to class, ostentatiously brandishing an issue of *SLC*," remarked one observer in 1965. Confirming its ubiquity, he affirmed that "no city ... [or] social class has escaped it."<sup>9</sup>

The popularity of *Salut les copains* opened the floodgates and set the standard formula for the genre: a healthy mixture of editorials, breezy quizzes and advice columns, token

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<sup>6</sup> Christian Delporte, "Au miroir des medias," in Jean-Pierre Rioux and Jean-François Sirinelli, eds., *La culture de masse en France: De la Belle Epoque à aujourd'hui* (Paris: Fayard, 2002), 335.

<sup>7</sup> Michel Winock, *Chronique des années soixante* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), 99.

<sup>8</sup> Jean-François Sirinelli, *Les baby-boomers: Une génération 1945-1969* (Paris: Fayard, 2003), 158.

<sup>9</sup> Jacques Marny, *Les adolescents d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: Centurion, 1965), 115.

reportage of new music, and tantalizing coverage of the celebrity teen idols. In its wake came countless imitators: *Bonjour les amis* in late 1962, *Age tendre et tête de bois* in early 1963, *Twenty* in spring 1964, and *Formidable* in spring 1965, to name a few.<sup>10</sup> In late 1964, Filipacchi and his media group bought the rival *Age tendre et tête de bois*, converting it into a magazine meant for teenage girls. Titled *Mademoiselle âge tendre*, the publication expressed more interest in the fashions, romances, and hairstyles of the teen idols than their music. The success of *yé-yé* even prompted unlikely organizations like the French Communist Party to venture into popular music-oriented magazines.<sup>11</sup>

The rise of *yé-yé* also announced a shift in popular music, one that consciously sought to strip rock and roll of its controversy and instead replace it with a musical form that appeared safe for youth consumption. *Yé-yé* aimed to retain the energy and youthful exuberance that made rock and roll popular while providing a sanitized alternative. This transformation came in part from an evolution in the music industry. Recognizing the potential for profit in the teenage market, from 1961 onward major record companies began to send out talent scouts in search of young performers who could be transformed into the next chart-topper. These company talent agents, wielding tremendous influence, often selected stage names, assembled groups, and managed the

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<sup>10</sup> Despite its success, though, *Salut les copains* could not claim to be the first popular music magazine to hit the market. That distinction is reserved for *Disco Revue*, a small-scale and low budget publication founded by the 19-year-old Jean-Claude Berthon in September 1961 and dedicated to covering the latest musical trends and, perhaps more importantly, the “idols” who performed them.

<sup>11</sup> The magazine, *Nous les garçons et les filles*, was launched in 1963 following the success of *Salut les copains* and other magazines. Supported by the *Parti communiste français*, it was the only magazine to be explicitly backed by a political party. Trying to straddle a line between catering to the entertainment tastes of its readership while also providing coverage of political and social issues, the magazine failed to find a sizeable audience. Though its initial circulation reached 300,000, by 1966 the number had fallen to 80,000. Because of the magazine’s unique status among the *presse des jeunes*, it is not included among my source base. For more on *Nous les garçons et les filles*, see Mat Pires, “The Popular Music Press,” in *Popular Music in France from Chanson to Techno*, 77-96.

contracts of their young clients, all in the name of maximizing commercial profits.<sup>12</sup> Alongside the music industry, the youth-oriented mass media also played a central role in taming rock and roll. With the radio program *Salut les copains* for instance, Michel Brillié, one of the program's on-air hosts during period, recollected that "there was nothing provocative" about the program, adding that "parents liked it" because "it was not dangerous" for their children.<sup>13</sup> This perception was likewise confirmed at the time by Filipacchi who maintained that "the important thing [about the radio program] has been to demonstrate, to those who seemed to ignore it, that youth isn't a weakness and that teenagers are not necessarily simpletons or hysterics."<sup>14</sup> These efforts to tame rock and roll was accompanied by changing consumer tastes. By 1961 rock and roll had been mostly eclipsed by the international dance craze the Twist followed by the rise of a more generalized and commercially-based pop music featuring upbeat instrumentation coupled with lyrics about teenage romances and other similarly banal topics.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, the new pop stars that rose to stardom during *yé-yé* had a distinctly tamer, more respectable appearance than their earlier rock and roll counterparts.<sup>16</sup> The arrival of female singers, something that was conspicuously absent in the early years of rock and roll, signified this shift. The first was Sylvie Vartan, a coquettish blond whose career launched with a 1961 duet with the already-established Frankie Jordan. By 1962 she was a household name,

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<sup>12</sup> Christian Victor and Julien Regoli, *Vingt ans de rock français* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1978), 26.

<sup>13</sup> Michel Brillié, interview by author, Paris, France, January 30, 2014.

<sup>14</sup> *Salut les copains*, July-August 1962, 3.

<sup>15</sup> While the term "pop music" applies to popular music in general, it also denotes a musical category distinct from other genres, like rock and roll. See "Pop Music," in Simon Frith, *Taking Popular Music Seriously: Selected Essays* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 167-182. On the rise of the Twist in France, see Jacques Barsamian and François Jouffra, *L'âge d'or du Yéyé: Le rock, le twist, et la variété française des années 60* (Paris: Ramsay, 1984), 69-73.

<sup>16</sup> Eric Drott, *Music and the Elusive Revolution: Cultural Politics and Political Culture in France, 1968-1981* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 104.

setting trends in both clothing and hairstyle. Both Françoise Hardy and Sheila followed. Hardy, who became a star following the success of her 1962 single “Tous Les Garçons Et Les Filles” (“All the Boys and Girls”), cultivated a persona that was both cerebral and demure. Sheila, born Anny Chancel, by contrast possessed a girl-next door wholesome appeal aided by songs like “La Première Surprise Partie” (“The First Surprise Party”). Debuting in late 1962, she attained stardom by the following year. A number of new male pop stars gained fame too. There was Claude François, whose 1962 song “Belles! Belles! Belles!” made him an immediate star, followed by other similarly innocuous acts like Frank Alamo.<sup>17</sup> The more established stars like Johnny Hallyday likewise altered their appearance to reflect a more suitable image.<sup>18</sup>

When *yé-yé* was at its peak, these young idols briefly displaced the more respected stars of *la chanson française* like Georges Brassens and Jacques Brel as the most popular acts in France.<sup>19</sup> A poll from September 1963 listed Johnny Hallyday as France’s most popular male singer, tied with the crooner Charles Aznavour and only slightly ahead of Claude François. With regard to female singers, Sheila, Françoise Hardy, and Sylvie Vartan were named the top three performers in France respectively, far surpassing older acts like Edith Piaf and Juliette Gréco.<sup>20</sup> But these pop stars were not simply celebrities. Instead, they were teen “idols,” a category wholly separate from the more traditional markers of stardom, one that suggested a level of familiarity and intimacy normally absent from the celebrity-fan relationship. What the term indicated was that the popular singers were generally not much older than their fans with whom

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<sup>17</sup> Looseley, *Popular Music in Contemporary France*, 27.

<sup>18</sup> On Johnny Hallyday’s media transformation, see Chris Tinker, “Rock and Roll Stardom: Johnny Hallyday,” in John Gaffney and Diana Holmes, eds., *Stardom in Postwar France* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 67-93.

<sup>19</sup> Sirinelli, “Les années 1960: première manière,” 262.

<sup>20</sup> George H. Gallup, ed., *The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, France: 1939, 1944-1975*, vol. 1 (New York: Random House, 1976), 394.

they supposedly shared the same interests, tastes, and experiences. This was evidenced in the way that fans and the mass media alike referred to these idols by their first name, creating the appearance that *yé-yé* represented a genuine community. “The *yé-yé* idol is no longer some faraway divinity,” wrote Jacques Marny in 1965, but rather “more like the big brother or big sister who has succeeded.”<sup>21</sup> The supposed intimacy between audiences and singers was perpetuated in the mass media as magazines and television programs offered unceasing snapshots into the personal lives of the idols. Though undoubtedly mediated to preserve the sanitized image of the teen idols, the mass media provided detailed accounts of their vacations, romantic relationships, consumer preferences, and interests.<sup>22</sup> And though their every move was intimately followed and dissected by the media, these idols never wore the celebrity label. Instead, they were treated as *typical* teenagers with familiar, relatable backgrounds.

The rise of *yé-yé* as a popular culture brought with it the image of the *copain*. The term “copain” is perhaps best translated in English as either “buddy” or “pal,” a decidedly less formal counterpart to the word “ami,” or “friend.” It became an expression, used ad nauseam, to refer to the participants of *yé-yé*, both the musical performers as well as their fans. Used casually between teenagers, the word simultaneously found its way into a bevy of commercial products, from song lyrics and album titles to magazines and advertisements.<sup>23</sup> Marketers needed only to

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<sup>21</sup> Marny, *Les adolescents d'aujourd'hui*, 68.

<sup>22</sup> To cite only a few examples, see the article in which Johnny Hallyday discussed his love for then-fiancé Sylvie Vartan, “Johnny: Pourquoi j’aime Sylvie,” *Mademoiselle âge tendre*, March 1965, 40-43, 98; also see a news clip ostensibly meant to provide an update on a supposedly-ailing Sheila, but which served more as a promotion for her newest record, “Des nouvelles de Sheila: une visite dans sa retraite de l’Oise,” June 24, 1964, *Les Actualités Françaises*, Institut National de l’Audiovisuel, Adobe Flash video file, <http://www.ina.fr/video/AFE85010315/des-nouvelles-de-sheila-une-visite-dans-sa-retraite-de-l-oise-video.html> (Accessed July 20, 2014).

<sup>23</sup> A few examples include Sylvie Vartan’s song 1962 “Tous Mes Copains,” Sheila’s 1964 song “Vous Les Copains, Je Ne Vous Oublierai Jamais (Do Wah Diddy),” and Johnny Hallyday’s 1961 album *Salut Les Copains*. See Sylvie Vartan, “Tous Mes Copains,” *Sylvie Vartan*, RCA Victor 76.602 S, 1962, EP; Sheila, “Vous Les

use the word “copain” to announce the youthful appeal of their product.<sup>24</sup> Its usage became so widespread that, as one commentator noted, a person could not listen to the radio or open a newspaper without “hearing talk about ‘*copains*’ or ‘yé-yé.’” The word was thus “no longer a term of camaraderie used between boys” but instead had “fully become a category of young people.”<sup>25</sup> At the same time, the discursive image of the *copain* became a paragon of adolescent *bourgeois* normativity, providing the dominant media representation of French teenagers in the early-to-mid 1960s. As portrayed, the *copains* were carefree teenagers who found pleasure through innocuous leisure and consumption. They were also the model middle-class students whose apolitical stance and forward-looking disposition made them well-suited to the national imperatives of modernization.

The legitimization of the *copain* came in part from its clear contrast to the earlier *blousons noirs*, as observers readily affirmed the wholesome characteristics of yé-yé youth. “The first thing that astonishes, it is their politeness” wrote Michel Cournot for *L’Express* following an April 1963 concert at the Olympia in Paris.<sup>26</sup> Describing a crowded concert hall of some two thousand teenagers waiting for the show to begin, he witnessed no unrest amongst the attendees, only teens sitting patiently “speaking in hushed voices with their sister[s], their friend[s], their classmates.”<sup>27</sup> A January 1963 article in the weekly entertainment magazine *Télé 7 jours* confirmed the same: “Except for the hairstyle ... the teenagers have nothing in common with the

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Copains, Je Ne Vous Oublierai Jamais (Do Wah Diddy),” *Ecoute Ce Disque*, Philips 434 954 BE, 1964, EP; and Johnny Hallyday, *Salut Les Copains!*, Philips B 77.374 L, 1961, LP.

<sup>24</sup> Susan Weiner, *Enfants Terribles: Youth and Femininity in the Mass Media in France, 1945-1968* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 149.

<sup>25</sup> J. M. Deramat, *Pourquoi tous ces copains?* (Paris: Librairie Charpentier, 1964), 5.

<sup>26</sup> Michel Cournot, “Entre copains,” *L’Express*, April 11, 1963, 22.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

*blousons noirs*.” Unlike the *blousons noirs*, “their worldview isn’t hopeless” and “their appearance is well-groomed.” Additionally, the article noted, the *copains* were thoughtful contributors to society. “The teenagers don’t drink alcohol. The majority work. Some of them still go to school. Others already have a career.”<sup>28</sup> The tone and perception of journalists had changed markedly from only a few years prior.

In the pages of the *presse des jeunes* (youth press), commentators likewise came to the defense of the *copains*, contrasting for their readership (who would have been almost exclusively teenagers) the wholesome *yé-yé* with their earlier counterparts, the *blousons noirs*.<sup>29</sup> In the first issue of *Age tendre et tête de bois*, for instance, the editor Jean-Patrick Maury introduced his magazine in an opening editorial that delineated a space for the new youth of *yé-yé*. Seeking to adopt some of the edgy language of earlier rock and roll, he affirmed to his readership that “it is our lust for life that protects us from being bourgeois.” “But,” he added, “our parents don’t worry, [because] we hate the *blousons noirs*, the broken chairs, and the shouting.”<sup>30</sup> Adding this caveat, the editor was no doubt mindful of the need to assuage apprehensive parents while reminding readers that *yé-yé* was *not* analogous with earlier rock and roll trends. Instead, as the passage illustrates, it co-opted the notion of youthful exuberance while stripping it of all potential controversy. By 1966, any lingering comparisons to the *blousons noirs* were simply dismissed as inconsequential. André Arnaud, in his regular *Salut les copains* column “Copains flashes,” acknowledged that if the *blousons noirs* had caused dread among sociologists and

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<sup>28</sup> The *Télé 7 jours* article dated January 26, 1963 is quoted in Yves-Marie Cloître, *Johnny Hallyday: les idoles et les jeunes* (Paris: Casterman, 1964), 97.

<sup>29</sup> See for instance Jean Bonis, “Désolé, messieurs les journalistes les « yé-yé » se portent bien!, *Bonjour les amis*, March 1964, 24.

<sup>30</sup> Jean-Patrick Maury, “La bataille d’âge tendre,” *Age tendre et tête de bois*, January 1963, 4.



moralists in the previous decade, “today these famous *blousons noirs* are married, have children, [and] earn a living.”<sup>31</sup>

Not only was *yé-yé* stripped of the suspect elements of the *blousons noirs* and rock and roll, it also managed to shed the blatant accusations of Americanization that had plagued the earlier instances of teenage popular culture in France. Despite the fact that the music of *yé-yé* was still largely derivative of American musical genres (indeed, many of the best-selling hits were adaptations of American songs), the phenomenon proved able to add enough Gallic flair to make it seem appropriately “French.” This perception was evidenced in a publication from 1966:

The expression “*yé-yé*” cannot be applied to anybody except the “French idols” and to the French “*copains*.” There is, in effect, no relationship between the traits of a French “idol,” like Johnny Hallyday ... and that of a foreign “idol,” like John Lennon (the Beatle-writer) ... There is no relationship ... between the petite-bourgeois spirit of Claude François’ songs ... and the slightly special spirit (long live drugs, long live sex) of the songs of the Rolling Stones ... The *yé-yé* are French and proud of being so.<sup>32</sup>

At the same time, whereas earlier stars, including Johnny Hallyday, Dick Rivers, and Eddy Mitchell, adopted American sounding stage names – some even going so far as to invent backstories linking them to America – by 1962 many of the new musical acts affirmed their French credentials. Suddenly, the likes of Françoise Hardy, Claude François, Michèle Torr, and France Gall added an unmistakably French identity to the musical genre, even if some new stars, like Sheila and Frank Alamo, continued to employ vaguely American sounding names. At least one reader writing to *Salut les copains* was pleased about this development. Thinking of Claude

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<sup>31</sup> André Arnaud, “Copains flashes,” *Salut les copains*, December 1966, 23.

<sup>32</sup> Francis Girod, *Manuel de la pensée yé-yé* (Paris: Julliard, 1966), 9.

François, Marie-Claire Monjeau wrote that “finally, a French singer ... whose first move hasn’t been to Americanize his name!”<sup>33</sup>

### Inclusion and Exclusion in a Modernized France

The sheer popularity of *yé-yé* allowed the image of the *copain* to become a visible signifier of French adolescence in the mid-1960s. Though there were teenagers who fit the description, the *copain* (and *copine*) was primarily a discursive construct, willed into existence through an unending assortment of carefully-crafted magazine articles, advertisements, television programs, and other visual representations. It was an ideal, constantly being created and recreated in media discourse. The *copain* was “universalist” in its conception and aspiration, meaning that it aimed to represent and reflect the category of youth, not any one particular social strata. Despite these ambitions, “youth,” as defined in the *yé-yé* media, became the privileged position of France’s white, urban, and increasingly technocratic middle class. It described adolescence in terms that bode well for the modernizing aspirations of the Gaullist state and for a French nation in search of a new national identity. Its forward-looking optimism contributed to and reflected the larger societal desire to forget France’s colonial past. In the process, it masked ongoing social disparities and tensions that few were willing to address.

Since the end of World War II, the language of “modernization” had given many in France – technocrats, politicians, businessmen, consumers, and artists – common purpose, providing a means to articulate a desire for deliberate change, for newness. With fresh memories of the defeat in 1940 and the subsequent occupation-collaboration, the institutions and policies of

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<sup>33</sup> “Cher Daniel,” *Salut les copains*, February 1963, 74.

the interwar years irrevocably discredited, the concept appealed to a large portion of the population who believed that France needed to be remade and transformed.<sup>34</sup> With the advent of the Fifth Republic in 1958, the goal of modernization took on new imperatives. For the new president Charles de Gaulle, it became a means to restore French *grandeur* and to announce the return of France's international influence and prestige, particularly with the fate of empire uncertain. De Gaulle's preoccupation with France's economic, industrial, and social modernization was made clear in a speech given on June 14, 1960. Eloquent and impassioned, the speech explained the need to "transform our old France into a new country" by making it "marry its century" [*épouser son temps*]. With the rise of decolonization, change had become the country's "great national ambition." The choice was clear: ascend to the "rank of a great industrial state" or "resign ourselves to decline."<sup>35</sup>

A cornerstone of France's modernization efforts, and the one that most directly involved teenagers, was the expansion and reconstitution of education. As a key to the country's transformation, de Gaulle cited the need to improve national education to a level that "corresponds to modern times."<sup>36</sup> Education, and the creation of an educated workforce capable of managing a modernized economy, therefore became a central focus of state efforts in the early Fifth Republic. Education's portion of the state budget doubled between 1956 and 1965. Additionally, the government enacted a number of reforms. In 1959, the school-leaving age was

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<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, as Philip Nord asserts, the language of postwar renewal and modernization obscured the fact that many of the leading technocrats and planners of the Fourth Republic had active roles in both the late Third Republic and the wartime Vichy government. See Philip Nord, *France's New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

<sup>35</sup> Charles de Gaulle, "Discours du 14 juin 1960," Institut National de l'Audiovisuel, <http://fresques.ina.fr/de-gaulle/fiche-media/Gaule00060/discours-du-14-juin-1960.html> (accessed February 25, 2015).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

raised from age 14 to 16.<sup>37</sup> The following year, the Ministry of Education merged technical training, previously its own segregated division, into the general framework of secondary and higher education.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, the student population ballooned. In a 1964 speech, de Gaulle's Prime Minister Georges Pompidou touted the growth of France's student population: from 5 million students in 1939 to almost 9 million in 1964, from 440,000 (1939) to 1.8 million (1964) in secondary education, and from 70,000 students (1939) to 510,000 (1964) receiving technical education.<sup>39</sup>

The expansion of education, and the corresponding prolonging of adolescence, had a palpable effect on the perception of youth. As Jean-François Sirinelli argues, the education system underwent more change over a ten year span between the 1950s and 1960s than it had in the preceding half-century.<sup>40</sup> As a result, school, not work, became the primary focal point of modern adolescence. *Yé-yé* reflected this new student ideal. Claudine Coppin, for instance, found fleeting success with a 1963 single called "Le Twist du Bac" ("The *Baccalauréat* Twist").<sup>41</sup> Sheila's first single, titled "L'Ecole est Finie" ("School Has Finished"), recounted the burgeoning love of two teenagers – one seventeen, the other eighteen – who had completed their schooling.<sup>42</sup> In interviews and in media representations, the teen idols of *yé-yé* frequently referenced their school experiences. The most obvious was Sylvie Vartan who, early in her career, became known as the "schoolgirl of rock" [the "*collégienne du rock*"]. In 1962, the

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<sup>37</sup> Robert Gildea, *France since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 133-134.

<sup>38</sup> Charles R. Day, *Schools and Work: Technical and Vocational Education in France since the Third Republic* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001),

<sup>39</sup> These figures, quoted as part of Pompidou's speech, come from Sirinelli, *Les baby-boomers*, 58.

<sup>40</sup> Jean-François Sirinelli, *Les baby-boomers*, 59.

<sup>41</sup> Claudine Coppin, "Le Twist du Bac," *Saint-Trop' Express*, Barclay 70535, 1963, EP.

<sup>42</sup> See Sheila, "L'Ecole Est Finie," *L'Ecole Est Finie*, Philips 432.866 BE, 1963, EP.

television show *L'Avenir est à vous*, depicting the seventeen-year-old singer in a scholastic setting, interviewed Vartan's teachers and fellow students who deemed her at once both a "studious student" and a "modern girl."<sup>43</sup>

For all the optimism though, aspiration often outpaced results for much of the 1960s. The existing education system, despite its egalitarian aims, had long served to harden class divisions in French society. Starting with the creation of universal primary education following passage of the Ferry Laws in 1881, public education aimed to democratize opportunity for all French youth through a system of compulsory, secular schooling. In reality though, the education system often served to perpetuate the existing class structure in French society. Since the nineteenth century, secondary education (*lycée*) provided the demarcation line between the bourgeoisie and the lower classes (the peasantry and the working class). Generally speaking, working-class youths, needing to enter the workforce, tended to leave school at an earlier age, while their middle-class peers, with an eye towards the prestigious *baccalauréat* and eventual university admission, continued to pursue education.<sup>44</sup> Studies from the early Fifth Republic continued to find a major gulf between social classes within the higher rungs of education.<sup>45</sup> The pursued reforms,

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<sup>43</sup> In France, students attended *collège* between the ages of 11 and 14. Vartan, by the time of her singing fame, would have been of age to attend the secondary-school *lycée*. The term *collégienne* would have referred to her student identity and general youthfulness. See "La collégienne du rock," February 5, 1962, *L'avenir est à vous*, Institut National de l'Audiovisuel, Adobe Flash video file, <http://www.ina.fr/video/CPF08006168/la-collegienne-du-rock-video.html> (accessed February 28, 2015).

<sup>44</sup> Henri Mendras and Alistair Cole, *Social Change in Modern France: Towards a Cultural Anthropology of the Fifth Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 91-92.

<sup>45</sup> A 1961 study by Jacques Duquesne, in conjunction with the IFOP, found that whereas only 11% of students from agricultural or working-class backgrounds could claim to have received at least a secondary education, 38% of children whose parents work in liberal professions or occupy managerial positions had received a secondary education. The disparity climbed even higher with regards to university education: only 2% of adolescents from working-class or agricultural origin could claim university schooling compared to 38% from the latter social group. See Jacques Duquesne and the Institut Français d'Opinion Publique, *Les 16-24 ans. D'après une enquête de l'Institut Français d'Opinion Publique*, 2<sup>e</sup> édition (Paris: Le Centurion, 1963), 16.

designed to modernize the education system, nevertheless struggled to keep up with a growing population and a growing societal appetite for education.

And, despite these shortcomings, the French populace *had* acquired an insatiable appetite for education by the 1960s. A flurry of advertisements in the teen-oriented media, reflecting a modernizing France, steered teenagers toward emergent technological industries. Numerous schools and training institutes advertised correspondence courses for new career fields, from management to technical specialization. “Assure your future,” encouraged one advertisement in *Salut les copains*, inviting readers to familiarize themselves with the field of electronics – the “key to the modern world” – through self-taught home courses in either radio or television. The advertisement, by Eurélec (the European Institute of Electronics), promised that customers of their mail-order courses would become “veritable specialist[s]” in advanced career fields well-suited for “the year 2000.”<sup>46</sup> A similar advertisement by the Centre International d’Etudes par Correspondance invited teens to pursue a variety of their courses by mail, which included electronics, aviation, industrial chemistry, and refrigeration, ensuring that they provided the tools for prosperity and happiness.<sup>47</sup> In one issue of *Salut les copains* from 1966 four different companies pushed their own packaged correspondence courses. There was the Ecole Universelle offering a “range of modern courses,” for instance, or the Ecole Technique Moyenne et Supérieure, which promised that its students would become technicians in “fields of the future” that were both “lucrative and without unemployment.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Eurélec, “Assurez votre avenir!,” *Salut les copains*, September 1962, 3.

<sup>47</sup> Centre International d’Etudes par Correspondance, “Demain, les belle situations seront pour vous ... ou pour les copains,” *Salut les copains*, February 1963, 64.

<sup>48</sup> Ecole Universelle, “L’Ecole Universelle par correspondance lance pour vous une gamme de cours modernes,” *Salut les copains*, January 1966, 4; Ecole Technique Moyenne et Supérieure “Situation assure,” *Salut les copains*, January 1966, 11.

Magazine editors, like advertisers, understood that their audience would be part of this new generation of students looking to the future for careers afforded by France's modernization efforts. *Salut les copains*, for instance, ran a regular article titled "The Career that I've Chosen" with the intent of providing its audience a snapshot of the (gendered) professional and technical career fields awaiting them. In the articles, young people explained their professions. For males, there was Jean-Yves, who detailed his career as a photographer for a monthly magazine; Christian, who worked as a printer for *Salut les copains*; Claude, who worked as a studio technician; and Jean-Marc who worked as a rocket technician in France's inchoate space program.<sup>49</sup> When asked whether programs existed to learn such skills, Jean-Marc replied that he had gone to a technical college "like everyone or almost everyone."<sup>50</sup> For females, careers in hospitality, retail, and cosmetics beckoned, as did assistant-level jobs: there was Françoise who shared her career as a beautician; Roberte the flight attendant; Marie-Paule, who was a window dresser; and Marie-France the secretary, among others.<sup>51</sup> Even as the series highlighted other careers, mixing the exceptional (racecar driver, writer, ski instructor) with the unglamorous (taxicab driver), most of the coverage catered to the fields that were shaping France's consumerist and modernized economy. Collectively, they reflected a France that was increasingly corporate and could boast expanded outlets for media, technology, consumption, and leisure.

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<sup>49</sup> "Le métier que j'ai choisi," *Salut les copains*, December 1962, 42-45; "Le métier que j'ai choisi: Christian typographe," *Salut les copains*, April 1963, 56-59; "Le métier que j'ai choisi," *Salut les copains*, February 1963, 26-29; "J'ai choisi l'astronautique," *Salut les copains*, April 1966, 90-91, 121, 123, 125, 127.

<sup>50</sup> "J'ai choisi l'astronautique," *Salut les copains*, April 1966, 123.

<sup>51</sup> "Le métier que j'ai choisi," *Salut les copains*, January 1963, 24-27; "Le métier que j'ai choisi: Françoise esthéticienne," *Salut les copains*, March 1963, 22-25; "Le métier que j'ai choisi: Marie-Paule, étalagiste," *Salut les copains*, November 1964, 60-61; "Le métier que j'ai choisi: Marie-France, secrétaire," *Salut les copains*, November 1963, 28-29, 89.

Technical and industrial modernization, buttressed by a growing population of educated students, was deemed essential to France's transformation. Also on the Gaullist agenda was the fostering of an atmosphere of national unity through apolitical nationalism.<sup>52</sup> Since the French Revolution, France had been wracked by deep political, social, and ideological cleavages that intermittently reared their heads, often with violent consequences. This divide was on full display during the Revolutions of 1789, 1830, and 1848; the Paris Commune; the Dreyfus Affair; the fratricide of the Second World War; and, most recently, during the height of the Algerian War.<sup>53</sup> De Gaulle, always sensitive to these divisions and their effect on French *grandeur*, hoped to quell, or at least minimize, them. The emphasis on national unity was felt in everything from the 1958 Fifth Republic constitution to de Gaulle's grandiose speeches and even governmental cultural policy.<sup>54</sup> Couched within the language of national unity was also the promise of social and political stability, something that had proven elusive during the preceding half century. Taken together, a "modern" France in the Gaullist imagination entailed a technologically- and economically-advanced nation propelled forward by a population united in a shared goal. With

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<sup>52</sup> On de Gaulle's interest in national unity, see Daniel J. Mahoney, *De Gaulle: Statesmanship, Grandeur, and Modern Democracy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996).

<sup>53</sup> Concerning the long history of ideological divisions within French society, see Jack Hayward, *Fragmented France: Two Centuries of Disputed Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Robert Gildea, *Children of the Revolution: The French, 1799-1914* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010). For a longer view, see two works by Charles Tilly: the chapter "France" in Charles Tilly, *Contention and Democracy in Europe, 1650-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 95-132; and the older work Charles Tilly, *The Contentious French* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1986).

<sup>54</sup> On the constitutional emphasis on national unity, see Michel Debré, "The Constitution of 1958, Its Raison D'être and How It Evolved" in William G. Andrews and Stanley Hoffman, eds., *The Impact of the Fifth Republic on France* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981). Debré was the chief author of the constitution and he also shared many of the ideals and goals of de Gaulle. With regards to de Gaulle's potent speeches and press conferences, the text of many of his leading speeches from the period is covered in the collection Charles de Gaulle, *Major Addresses, Statements, and Press Conferences of General Charles de Gaulle, May 19, 1958 – January 31, 1964* (New York: French Embassy Press and Information Division, 1964). The role of culture in the Gaullist vision of national unity is covered in Herman, Lebovics, *Mona Lisa's Escort: André Malraux and the Reinvention of French Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); and also Chris Tinker "'One State, One Television, One Public': The Variety Show in 1960s France," *Media History* 14, no. 2 (2008): 223-237.



the end of the Algerian War in 1962, this vision took center stage and, given the Gaullists' solid governing majorities, dominated national discourse for a good portion of the decade.

In general, the stars of *yé-yé* showed deference to the dominant political order of the early Fifth Republic. In a 1963 interview in *Salut les copains*, Claude François acknowledged that he did not have political opinions but followed by saying “I believe I am a Gaullist, by conformity.”<sup>55</sup> Others embraced the status quo more tacitly. Dick Rivers, for instance, in a 1964 interview with *Salut les copains* confirmed that he had a dislike for socialism and believed he would not enjoy living in a socialist country, a sentiment no doubt shared by de Gaulle and his fellow conservatives.<sup>56</sup> Additionally, the major focal points of de Gaulle's nationalistic foreign policy – an insistence on French independence coupled with antagonism towards the U.S.-led North Atlantic Treaty Alliance – also found support in *yé-yé*.<sup>57</sup> André Arnaud, for instance, in the January 1965 print of his monthly column “Copains flashes,” offered a sympathetic and thorough interpretation of de Gaulle's foreign policy for his teenage readership.<sup>58</sup> He explained France's desire for independence following the humiliations of World War II and the reconstruction period. He also pointed to the arrogant attitude of the U.S. in pushing its dictates on postwar Europe, adding that “the strongest want to become richer and richer, even to the detriment of its friends.”<sup>59</sup> In a less sophisticated analysis, Johnny Hallyday likewise denounced U.S. foreign

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<sup>55</sup> “40 questions à Claude François,” *Salut les copains*, November 1963, 31.

<sup>56</sup> “40 questions à Dick Rivers,” *Salut les copains*, February 1964, 37.

<sup>57</sup> On de Gaulle's foreign policy of *grandeur*, see Philip G. Cerny, *The Politics of Grandeur: Ideological Aspects of de Gaulle's Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Sebastian Reyn, *Atlantis Lost: The American Experience with De Gaulle, 1958-1969* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010); and Maurice Vaïsse, *La Grandeur: politique étrangère du général de Gaulle 1958-1969* (Paris: Fayard, 1998).

<sup>58</sup> André Arnaud, “Copains flashes,” *Salut les copains*, January 1965, 10-12.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

policy in Vietnam, adding that he was “altogether in agreement” with the foreign policy of de Gaulle’s government.<sup>60</sup>

Ultimately though, what made the *copain* well-suited to the era were not its affinities to Gaullism but, to the contrary, its complete absence of political undertones. For social stability meant not affiliation with the ruling party, but rather a general reorientation of civic engagement, from vehement protest and striking to educational and cultural engagement coupled with passive consumption. Unlike much of the popular music that would follow later in the decade, the music and idols of *yé-yé* offered song lyrics and imagery that upheld an inoffensive, middle-class ideal.<sup>61</sup> In general, the journalists and popular music stars of *yé-yé* often avoided discussion of politics. They were more likely to put forth a generic civic-minded ideal. In an early 1966 issue of *Formidable*, for instance, a picture of Johnny Hallyday and Sylvie Vartan casting their ballots was the centerpiece of a brief discussion of the 1965 presidential election.<sup>62</sup> Elsewhere, teen idols simply dismissed politics, noting their lack of interest.<sup>63</sup> Even in their lack of interest, though, the *yé-yé* stars showed deference to the existing political order. All told, from its inception to its general decline, no major teen idols or mainstream magazines within *yé-yé* offered criticism of de Gaulle and his influence on France.

However, the same qualities that allowed the *copains* to project a confident, forward-looking nation also served to distance France from its recent colonial past. The end of the

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<sup>60</sup> “40 questions à Johnny,” *Salut les copains*, May 1965, 137.

<sup>61</sup> Winock, *Chronique des années soixante*, 101-102.

<sup>62</sup> “Actualités Formidable,” *Formidable*, January 1966, 4.

<sup>63</sup> In various interviews with *Salut les copains*, both Sheila and Françoise Hardy expressed a general disinterest in politics. See “40 questions à Sheila,” *Salut les copains*, March 1964, 50-51, 116-117; and “40 questions à Françoise Hardy,” *Salut les copains*, December 1964, 86-89, 133.

Algerian War in 1962 marked a conclusion to what was a reluctant and often bloody retreat from empire. Rather than reflect on the recent past, French society seemed content to enjoy the fruits of the present, material prosperity and sustained economic growth.<sup>64</sup> According to Todd Shepard, following the war many in France began to reinterpret decolonization not as a sign of France's inevitable decline but as a marker of progress in what was an unavoidable stage of history.<sup>65</sup> Interpreting decolonization as unavoidable, even necessary, allowed the prevailing historical narrative to define France's former imperialism as little more than an "unfortunate colonial detour," thereby forgetting the central importance the empire in general and Algeria in particular had had to France's identity.<sup>66</sup>

Within this historical context the selective remembering found in the *yé-yé* mass media unwittingly lent credence to the belief that France and its colonies had been two separate histories all along and that the end of empire had little bearing on the French Republic. Daniel Filipacchi, in the first issue of *Salut les copains*, reflected romantically on the date in 1959 when his eponymously-named radio program launched and the young people "in all of France, Belgium, and Switzerland" finally gained "their" own radio program.<sup>67</sup> What he failed to mention, was that the program was also tremendously important to young French soldiers serving across the Mediterranean during the brutal Algerian War. During the 8-year conflict (1954-1962) over two million draftees served 27-month periods fighting to quell the tide of Algerian nationalism. Equipped with transistor radios – an object that proved an inexpensive and

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<sup>64</sup> Benjamin Stora, *La gangrène et l'oubli: La mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie* (Paris: Découverte, 1991), 211-214.

<sup>65</sup> On this, see Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France*.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>67</sup> *Salut les copains*, July-August 1962, 3.

popular parting gift for parents to buy their drafted sons – many soldiers spent their idle time listening to music transmitted from the metropole. The image of young people, each with their own portable radio pressed to their ears and tuned to their favorite stations, was a common sight in both metropolitan France and in the barracks across Algeria.<sup>68</sup> In neglecting this aspect of *Salut les copains*' lineage, Filipacchi's selective recollection, looking more to the future than to the past, was emblematic of many in France who were keen to forget France's colonial past in favor of a promising future. To recall the prime importance his program carried, from 1959 onward, for the conscripts fighting to preserve French Algeria would complicate the narrative of France's blossoming consumer society and economic miracle within the context of European economic integration.

Increased attention to French conscripts stationed in West Germany likewise served to erase memories of the Algerian War and the French military's dubious role in it. Over the course of the 1960s, soldiers became recast as agents of peace, not war (or, more euphemistically, as was described during the Algerian conflict, "pacification"). Articles written during the period, like one in the July 1964 issue of *Salut les copains*, could boast that it was young French soldiers spearheading the nation's rapprochement with West Germany. André Arnaud, writing for the magazine, found that French soldiers were "hosted more and more often" by German families.<sup>69</sup> He immediately extolled all of the ways the young conscripts strengthened national ties: in Berlin, some 350 young French soldiers regularly checked up on local German youngsters and their parents; in Freiburg, sixty local families regularly welcomed into their homes those soldiers

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<sup>68</sup> Weiner, *Enfants Terribles*, 139, 144-145, 153-156.

<sup>69</sup> André Arnaud, "Copains Flashes," *Salut les copains*, July 1964, 19.

who could not return to France during holidays; in Neustadt, young French soldiers and their German peers went out together on weekends; and in Kehl, a group of young artillerymen availed themselves to the local hospital to provide much-needed blood transfusions.<sup>70</sup> The soldiers' newfound role as rehabilitators of Franco-German relations within the context of European integration and the Cold War provided a welcome distraction from their prior role as defenders of the French Empire.

In the mid-1960s, at a time when Algerian War veterans could not receive formal recognition for their wartime service, the male teen idols of *yé-yé*, almost uniformly serving in West Germany, bolstered the new perception of the French army.<sup>71</sup> Since the Revolution, obligatory military service was understood as an integral part of republican citizenship. When their terms arrived, teen idols like Eddy Mitchell and Danyel Gérard garnered media attention, though none were covered so closely and with as much enthusiasm as Johnny Hallyday. Stationed with the Forty-third Infantry Regiment in the small city of Offenburg some 160 miles south of the West German capital Bonn, Hallyday began his service on May 8, 1964.<sup>72</sup> The media relished the opportunity to highlight the singer looking prim in his military fatigues and serving the Republic honorably. The July 1964 issue of *Salut les copains* featured a lengthy photo spread of Hallyday in uniform.<sup>73</sup> Later in the year, the women's magazine *Marie-Claire* provided similar coverage. It featured a number of photos of Hallyday interacting, in uniform,

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>71</sup> For instance, the Fédération Nationale des Anciens Combattants d'Algérie (National Federation of Veterans of the Algerian War), established in 1958, could not obtain veterans' cards for its members until 1974. See Stora, *La gangrène et l'oubli*, 266-268; and Robert Gildea, *France since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 33.

<sup>72</sup> Chris Tinker, "Rock and Roll Stardom: Johnny Hallyday," in John Gaffney and Diana Holmes, eds., *Stardom in Postwar France* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 87-88.

<sup>73</sup> "Notre Marsouin d'Offenburg," *Salut les copains*, July 1964, 64-71.

with locals in recreational activities, from table tennis to bumper cars. “[F]or his comrades and young Germans, he’s just a soldier like the others,” the magazine wrote, adding that the youngest of Germans “find him admirable.”<sup>74</sup> In his own semi-regular article featured in *Salut les copains*, Hallyday boasted about his good behavior.<sup>75</sup> Later in the year, the news program *Sept jours du monde* offered for television viewers a lengthy segment on the young singer’s daily routine.<sup>76</sup> During his service, he was not allowed to tour or perform live. He was permitted to record new music, however, on the condition that any publicity, such as the album cover of his 1964 record *Le Pénitencier*, feature him in his army uniform.<sup>77</sup> Like other teen idols, Hallyday’s stint in Offenburg was a boon for the French Army. He became an informal spokesman for the army, actively demonstrating an apparent civic-mindedness and a selfless and patriotic duty to the nation.

In metropolitan France, the *yé-yé* popular culture, by suggesting a tacit racial homogeneity, also lent the impression of a France fully disentangled from its former empire and its colonial subjects of color. The question of race in France had long been a complex issue. Since the French Revolution, republican ideology upheld color-blindness as a crucial element of national identity; that “Frenchness,” unlike the German *volk*, was determined through a shared adherence to republican values, not race or ethnicity. However, France’s experience with imperialism during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries racialized the meaning of

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<sup>74</sup> “Johnny Hallyday: Un petit jeune home bien sage,” *Marie-Claire*, September 1964, 16-17.

<sup>75</sup> Johnny Hallyday, “Le lettre de Johnny,” *Salut les copains*, August 1964, 58-59.

<sup>76</sup> “La journée du soldat Smet,” September 25, 1964, *Sept jours du monde*, Institut National de l’Audiovisuel, Adobe Flash video file, <http://www.ina.fr/video/CAF88035200/la-journee-du-soldat-smet-video.html> (accessed March 1, 2015).

<sup>77</sup> Tinker, “Rock and Roll Stardom: Johnny Hallyday,” 88. See also, Johnny Hallyday, “Le Pénitencier,” *Le Pénitencier*, Philips 434.955 BE, 1964, EP.

national identity. As Tyler Stovall argues, by consequence of its empire, “the fact that most of the citizens were white and most of the subjects black and brown meant that the very nature of Frenchness was conditioned by race,” thereby laying a foundation for “French identity as white identity.”<sup>78</sup>

The *yé-yé* popular culture emphasized this implicit assumption at a time when other important cultural signifiers, like the popular comic *Astérix*, unwittingly spoke to France’s supposed racial homogeneity.<sup>79</sup> The idealized *copain* – personified by teen idols and portrayed in advertisements – was almost uniformly white. This lent subtle credence to the Gaullist notion of a unified nation prosperous and newly decolonized. However, it served to mask France’s increasingly diverse racial complexion and, in the process, marginalize a growing immigrant population, many of whom hailed from France’s former colonies. As early as World War I, immigrants, usually from within the French Empire, were actively courted to fulfill various labor needs and to compensate for tepid population growth. Among subjects from the empire, Arab Algerians in particular constituted a major portion of colonial migration. In the decades surrounding the Algerian War, a large influx of Algerian immigrants entered into metropolitan France. Though official estimates fluctuated greatly, there were around 300,000 Algerian

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<sup>78</sup> Tyler Stovall, “National Identity and Shifting Imperial Frontiers: Whiteness and the Exclusion of Colonial Labor after World War I,” *Representations* 84, no. 1 (November 2003): 54.

<sup>79</sup> The case of *Astérix* was interesting. Created in 1959, the comic followed the exploits of two ancient *Gaulois* named Astérix and Obélix. By making its two protagonists hail from ancient Gaul the comic suggested, in light-hearted fashion, a mythic and unadulterated French past. As other historians assert, during the 1960s and 1970s, the comic actually critiqued, if subtly, instances of racial injustice and discrimination towards immigrants in France. At the same time though, the comic, in its use of humor, relied on familiar racist stereotypes and a discourse of racial difference. On this, see Henri-Simon Blanc-Hoàng, “Antiquity and *Bandes Dessinées*: Schizophrenic Nationalism between Atlanticism and Marxism,” in Annessa Ann Babic, ed., *Comics as History, Comics as Literature: Roles of the Comic Book in Scholarship, Society, and Entertainment* (Lanham, MD: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2014), 18-19.

immigrants living in France before the Algerian War, the vast majority of whom were working, single males.<sup>80</sup> For a number of reasons, they commonly settled in enclaves on the periphery of French cities, often in shantytowns and other equally squalid conditions. As a result, they often went unseen, rendered invisible by their geographic and social marginalization.<sup>81</sup> The irony was that it was the population of ethnic immigrants, mostly from former colonies, who occupied many of the low-level and laborious industrial jobs that helped propel France's economic growth, despite the fact that they were often omitted from the national portrait of a prosperous, decolonized France.<sup>82</sup>

Despite the diverse complexion of France's population, particularly given the role of immigration from former colonies, racial and ethnic minorities were seldom represented in the *yé-yé* popular culture. Few performers of color achieved stardom in the world of *yé-yé* and those that did found only fleeting success. The handful of performers all hailed from France's former colonies. There was Les Surfs, a six-person musical group comprised of a family of four brothers and two sisters. Coming from Madagascar, they recorded French-language versions of American hits in a style similar to girl-group pop in the United States.<sup>83</sup> Another star who achieved short-lived commercial success was Tiny Yong, a Vietnamese-born singer whose only major hit was the single "Tais-Toi, Petite Folle" ("Hush Yourself, Crazy Little Girl").<sup>84</sup> When she was

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<sup>80</sup> Amelia H. Lyons, *The Civilizing Mission in the Metropole: Algerian Families and the French Welfare State during Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 69.

<sup>81</sup> Pascal Blanchard, Éric Deroo, Driss El Yazami, Pierre Fournié, and Gilles Manceron, "North Africans Settle in the Metropole (1946-1961)," in Pascal Blanchard, Sandrine Lemaire, Nicolas Bancel, and Dominic Thomas, eds., *Colonial Culture in France since the Revolution*, trans. Alexis Pernsteiner (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 372-373.

<sup>82</sup> Benjamin Stora, *Ils venaient d'Algérie: L'immigration algérienne en France, 1912-1992* (Paris: Fayard, 1992), 143-149.

<sup>83</sup> Victor and Regoli, *Vingt ans de rock français*, 63.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.



portrayed in the media, articles commonly emphasized her “exotic” Asian qualities in a way that purposefully differentiated her from the more familiar *copains* like Sheila or Claude François. One article in *Age tendre et tête de bois*, suggestively titled “Yellow Peril,” introduced Yong alongside another, ultimately less successful Vietnamese performer named Bach Yen. Calling the girls “two kimonos in the country of blue jeans,” the accompanying photo spread showed the stars in ostensibly authentic Asian clothing and posing nearby, among other things, a statue of Buddha and a decorative vase depicting oriental imagery.<sup>85</sup> These staged photos contrasted the actual text of the article, which described Yong as “the more Western of the two” singers, a girl who regularly frequented the Latin Quarter of Paris and “always dresses like a European.”<sup>86</sup> Despite fitting the same criteria as contemporary, white pop stars (sharing the same interests, musical tastes, and fashion sensibilities), the magazine nevertheless made a special point to accentuate her “otherness.”

The governing assumption of racial difference that underlay the *yé-yé* mass media and its representations of youth was part of a larger articulation of adolescence in the early Fifth Republic. In general, the ideal *copain* was defined in the mass media as white, middle class, and urban; a subscriber to France’s program of modernization in all its dimensions. For one, the prototypical *copain* was a student. Education was a centerpiece of the modernization efforts championed by France’s political and technocratic elite of the era. The *yé-yé* popular culture, in assuming the student ideal, both reflected and rationalized France’s postwar project of technological and industrial advancement. At the same time, the *copain* assumed an apolitical and vaguely nationalistic stance, one that echoed, if faintly, the rhetoric of unity and inclusivity

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<sup>85</sup> “Bach Yen et Tiny Yong: péril jaune,” *Age tendre et tête de bois*, July 1963, 36-37.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

that dominated Gaullist political discourse of the period. Its “universal” definition of youth was nevertheless highly selective. It served to render invisible groups that did not fit comfortably into its vision of modern France. In asserting the primacy of the middle-class student ideal, *yé-yé* masked the ongoing disparities of the French education system, particularly for teens of agricultural or working class backgrounds. Additionally, the idealized *copain*, as represented in the media, was almost uniformly white. In the immediate aftermath of France’s withdrawal from empire, the *copain* lent the appearance of racial and ethnic homogeneity within the Hexagon at the expense of the vast populations that until only recently made up the subjects of the French Empire and that represented a large immigrant population in France. Altogether, the *copain*, in its definition of youth, articulated an idealized vision of a modernized and unified France detached from its colonial past, one that nevertheless downplayed ongoing social inequalities.

### CHAPTER 3: YOUTH AND CONSUMPTION DURING *LES ANNÉES YÉ-YÉ*, 1962-1966

In a May 1964 issue of *Life*, American readers were introduced to France's three most famous young female singers, Sylvie Vartan, Françoise Hardy, and Sheila. The magazine described them in terms its audience could understand: "What the Beatles are to England, the singing Yé-Yé girls are to France."<sup>1</sup> Like the Beatles, these young French singers were products of America's influence on European popular culture; their tastes, appearances, and the musical style in which they performed were all indebted (either directly or indirectly) to American precedents. By 1964, the cultural currents that had drifted across the Atlantic were projected back on the United States. The context in which French singers like Vartan and Hardy were understood by American audiences was not music, but fashion. The *Life* article suggested as much, with its coverage focused on the three singers' clothing choices, keeping information about their musical careers to a minimum. The article eagerly mentioned that the three singers are "so popular that Yé-Yé clothes and Yé-Yé hairdos are sprouting all over France," assuring its readers that "young Americans who want to look like them will find they already have, or can soon buy, most of the ingredients."<sup>2</sup> Significantly, while these young singers became the latest paragons of a long-vaunted Paris fashion, they did so through the wearing of relatively inexpensive and mass-produced ready-to-wear clothing.

For readers across the Atlantic, these young singers were the embodiment of a remade France, one fully transformed into a society of mass consumerism. *Yé-yé*, perhaps more than any other force in the mid-1960s, defined what it meant to be young in France, and it did so in direct

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<sup>1</sup> "Hooray for the Yé-Yé Girls," *Life*, May 29, 1964, 39.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

relation to the emergent system of mass consumption. The very idea of youth became interwoven with an all-encompassing consumer culture. Certainly, a number of scholarly works have already detailed the postwar “economic miracle” that gave rise to a particular type of advanced consumer capitalism in France (and Western Europe as a whole). This chapter examines the way the *copains* of *yé-yé* reflected that change, stripping the exceptional newness of many aspects of the consumer society to instead present them as ordinary, fully-integrated, and *expected* parts of everyday life. Rather than focus on consumer society in the abstract, this chapter examines the *copains*’ relationship to two specific commodities: the personal vehicle (the automobile and the motor scooter) and ready-to-wear clothing. Though many other consumer durables would have sufficed, the car and ready-made clothing provide, each in their own way, practical examples of how France navigated the coming of mass consumer society.

The rise of *yé-yé* coincided with a broad rationalization of mass consumerism in France.<sup>3</sup> The 1960s marked the decade when the full implications of a society of “mass” (mass consumerism, mass culture, mass media, etc.) entered into national consciousness, finding expression in fiction, social scientific studies, and among the polemics of public intellectuals.<sup>4</sup> At

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<sup>3</sup> Refer to footnote 37 in the introduction for a discussion of the essential differences between “mass consumer society” and “consumer society.”

<sup>4</sup> Works of fiction served to highlight the national fascination with mass consumerism and the irresistible urge to acquire “things.” See for instance Georges Perec, *Les choses: Une histoire des années soixante* (Paris: Julliard, 1965); and Christiane Rochefort, *Les petits enfants du siècle* (Paris: Grasset, 1961). The social scientists Edgar Morin and Lawrence Wylie each produced anthropological studies about the transformation of everyday life in rural French villages in the postwar period. Both studies were struck by the change in attitudes and desires caused by the arrival of mass consumerism. See Lawrence William Wylie, *Village in the Vaucluse*, Third Ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974); and Edgar Morin, *The Red and the White: Report from a French Village* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970). Public intellectuals were among the most outspoken about the apparent changes to French life. See Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life, Volume II: Foundations for a Sociology of the Everyday*, trans. John Moore (London: Verso, 2002; originally published in 1961); Guy Debord, *La société du spectacle* (Paris: Gaillimard, 1967); and Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, trans. James Benedict (London: Verso, 2005; originally published in 1967).

the state level, with the advent of the Fifth Republic in 1958 and the return of Charles de Gaulle, the efforts at economic modernization begun under the Fourth Republic (1946-1958) continued with vigor and an increased political importance. The notion of economic and industrial modernization fit squarely into the larger Gaullist quest to restore French *grandeur*.<sup>5</sup> De Gaulle envisioned, as part of his effort to restore French prestige and international influence, a strong and modernized economy, particularly with the end of France's empire looming. Alongside a strong economy, the material well-being and standard of living of French citizens also became a metric for French *grandeur*. Leading Gaullists like Michel Debré wrote about the role of material comforts in the larger project of France's renewal and de Gaulle himself liked to boast that "never before has the average standard of living of the French people been so high."<sup>6</sup>

The newfound significance of consumption trickled all the way down to French adolescents. Nowhere was this more evident than in a 1965 government publication, the optimistically-titled *France and the Rising Generation*. The document, published in English by the French Embassy in New York, offered American audiences an idealized view of France's youth. Though its representation of French teenagers was highly selective, it was nevertheless telling what criteria the government decided to tout. On the first pages, the reader was bombarded by a flurry of figures venerating the population growth provided by France's baby boom generation and, with it, the young generation's growing economic clout in a world of consumption:

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<sup>5</sup> Julian Jackson, *Charles de Gaulle* (London: Haus, 2003), 117-119.

<sup>6</sup> See Michel Debré, *Au service de la nation: Essai d'un programme politique* (Paris: Stock, 1963); and "Address by President Charles de Gaulle on the Economy, Atomic Force, European Policy, Algeria Broadcast over French Radio and Television on February 5, 1962," in Charles de Gaulle, *Major Addresses, Statements, and Press Conferences of General Charles de Gaulle, May 19, 1958 – January 31, 1964* (New York: French Embassy Press and Information Division, 1964), 159.

Today France has a youth market with independent buying power. For instance, the 15 to 20 age group accounts for four million consumers and spends close to \$1 billion each year: 58% of this group is already working and is free to spend its extra money as it sees fit; 43% of France's students supplement their allowances by working part-time. It is now quite common to give children allowances, and they have more freedom to use them as they please.

... They buy clothing, sporting goods, musical instruments, books and newspapers, radios and records. Many want to own their own motorscooters or cars, which they consider a sign of independence; about 8% of all young men and 7% of all young women own cars by age 20.<sup>7</sup>

These consumer desires, the document insisted, helped ensure the continued success of France:

This postwar generation is already a factor in the transformation which will give France a new face by 1985. Realistic, anxious to better its living standards, interested in modern technology, concerned with personal, family, and occupational success, today's French youth follows close behind a generation of young adults who are already playing a greater part in the country's economic and social life than their predecessors did at the same age. These two generations - the one now entering the labor force and the other already part of it - are those that will shape the France of 1985.<sup>8</sup>

What made these proclamations all the more significant was how starkly they contrasted a similar publication produced six years earlier, a 1959 book called *The Young Face of France*.<sup>9</sup>

Like *France and the Rising Generation*, the governmentally-produced book immediately extolled the country's revitalized birthrate while enumerating a number of adolescent accomplishments that would assuredly bring success to France. However, unlike its predecessor, which made adolescent consumption its *first* point of emphasis, the document contained no mention of consumerism or teenager's economic contribution to the nation.

The changing perception between 1959 and 1965 of teenage consumption underscored the rapidity with which mass consumerism and mass culture inserted themselves into the

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<sup>7</sup> Ambassade de France, *France and the Rising Generation* (New York: Service de Presse et d'Information, 1965), 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Centre de Diffusion Française, *The Young Face of France* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1959).

everyday lives of French people during the period. Within the context of state-led modernization efforts following World War II, mass consumption occupied an increasingly important place as a driver of the French economy. Consumption had long been a gendered endeavor.<sup>10</sup> In the postwar setting, women in particular found a new civic role as consumers for the good of both their families and the nation.<sup>11</sup> Though their roles were never nearly as well-defined, teenage boys and girls too became vital pieces in France's consumer economy. Due to its sheer popularity, *yé-yé* was essential to this changing role of teenage consumption and it is perhaps not coincidental that the French government began putting a positive spin on youth consumerism in 1965, right at a time when the phenomenon had reached its apogee.

### The Automobile

In its representation of youth, the *yé-yé* popular culture reserved a special place for the automobile (or, as was often the case, motor scooters). The car's presence in advertisements, magazine articles, and elsewhere presumed its importance to the modern adolescent experience and, as such, reflected in vivid, symbolic terms the extent of France's consumer revolution. It was during the 1950s and 1960s that the automobile arguably served as *the* symbol of France's postwar modernization efforts: the automobile industry was instrumental in the reinvention of the

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<sup>10</sup> Leora Auslander argues that, while both women and men consumed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they did so for different means. For *bourgeois* women, the act of consumption was done on behalf of their family and in order to signify their class association. Men, meanwhile, consumed by collecting, an act deemed masculine because it was seen as productive and ensured the establishment of some type of lasting legacy, and also through dandyism, an act with less social support because of its perceived undermining of masculine tendencies. Consumption had, from the start, a clear gendered division and concepts of masculinity and femininity were articulated and channeled through the purchasing of commodities. See Leora Auslander, "The Gendering of Consumer Practices in Nineteenth-Century France," in Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough, eds., *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 79-112.

<sup>11</sup> On this argument, see Rebecca J. Pulju, *Women and Mass Consumer Society in Postwar France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

French economy, the car itself became a major component in the reconfiguration of France's social and urban landscapes, and it became the ultimate prize in an ever-expanding consumer society. Both physically and metaphorically, the car was a key driver in France's postwar transformation; its eventual omnipresence embodied the spirit of France's transition from a rural, largely agricultural, and empire-oriented nation to one that was urbanized, decolonized, and fully shaped by the defining cues of late capitalism.<sup>12</sup>

With the spectacular growth of personal automobile ownership in the 1950s and 1960s, it is easy to forget that France actually emerged as an early leader in the international automobile industry thanks to the pioneering efforts of figures like Armand Peugeot, the Renault brothers, and Edouard and André Michelin, among others. During the automobile's infancy in the 1890s, France was the foremost producer of automobiles; only in 1906 did the United States surpass it in total quantity produced, and even then the country remained the largest exporter of vehicles in the world until World War I and remained the largest producer of automobiles in Europe until the 1930s.<sup>13</sup> In the 1920s, French automakers began incorporating various Fordist strategies to varying degrees of success in an effort to increase production. During the decade, the industry became consolidated, with the "Big Three" – Peugeot, Renault, and Citroën – occupying 63% of the domestic market share.<sup>14</sup> The economic depression of the 1930s eroded France's dominant

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<sup>12</sup> On this argument, see Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> James M. Laux, "Heroic Days in the French Automobile Industry," *The French Review* 37, no. 3 (Jan., 1964): 350, 352-354.

<sup>14</sup> In particular, André Citroën, the founder of Citroën, enthusiastically imported American methods of production and management. He implemented assembly lines in his plants and pursued ambitious marketing campaigns. Other manufacturers followed, though their implementation of similar techniques were patchy and inconsistent. Jean-Pierre Bardou, Jean-Jacques Chanaron, Patrick Fridenson, and James M. Laux, *The Automobile Revolution: The Impact of an Industry*, trans. James M. Laux (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 101-104. [Originally published in French as *La Révolution automobile*, 1977].



position on the continent, as both British and German automotive output surpassed it along the course of the decade.<sup>15</sup>

It was only in the postwar period that French automakers truly embraced practices of mass production. In the process, they contributed to the revitalization of France's economy. Alongside other important industrial sectors, the auto industry offered persuasive evidence of the "economic miracle" reshaping the Hexagon. It was a key sector in which the French government intervened with state-led planning efforts in the immediate years following the liberation and the subsequent end of World War II.<sup>16</sup> In the Fifth Republic, the Gaullist state deemed it a priority to prepare the French economy for heightened international competition and trade, particularly with the process of European economic integration underway. The solution was the creation of large, French-owned corporations capable of competing on an international level. The auto industry was at the forefront of these governmentally-endorsed efforts to consolidate French enterprises

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<sup>15</sup> While French auto-making greatly outpaced British and German efforts in the 1920s and earlier, by the 1930s automakers in the two latter countries began successfully producing "people's cars" – small, low-cost, and largely uniform offerings that were within the financial reach of the larger populace. In Britain, for instance, the appearance of the Morris Minor (1929) as well as the Model Y, produced by Ford's British subsidiary. In Germany, a good example was the Ford Köln, a German remake of its British counterpart. The most obvious example, if in aspiration if not actuality, was the founding of the Volkswagen plant and, at Hitler's insistence, the production of an affordable vehicle for the masses; though Volkswagen switched to wartime production before it could commence mass production of consumer automobiles, original plans intended for the plant to begin producing 150,000 low-cost autos in 1940, reaching 1.5 million annually by 1942. By contrast, France's major automakers, while nevertheless strengthening their market share in France during the period, refrained from producing similarly inspired low-cost "people's cars" and, as a result, suffered from a weakened demand from the domestic consumer market. *Ibid.*, 139-147.

<sup>16</sup> For example, in 1945 the government announced the so-called "Pons Plan," named for its creator Paul-Marie Pons. The plan was far-reaching, responding to the immediate needs of reconstruction and the rebuilding of the French economy. The plan organized the various French automakers, both big and small, around a limited number of vehicle designs and classes, including consumer automobiles, heavy duty commercial vehicles, and service vehicles, in order to assign manufacturers to the various needs of the economy. Each automaker was expected to produce only certain types of vehicles with the intent of avoiding unnecessary overlap or production. At the outset, Pons envisioned that by 1950 the industry would produce over 1.6 million vehicles, of which some 60.6% would be cars, 36.4% would be commercial trucks, and 3% would be service vehicles. Jean-Louis Loubet, *Histoire de l'automobile française* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), 213-215.

through calculated corporate mergers meant to increase competitiveness. As a result, by the early 1970s only four companies – Renault, Citroën, Peugeot, and Simca – controlled France’s auto production.<sup>17</sup>

More than an economic boon, the personal vehicle also carried symbolic importance, particularly for France’s new technocratic, salaried middle class. It became, as Jean-Pierre Rioux suggests, an “instantly recognizable symbol of material well-being, one whose appeal was universal,” and which served to enhance both work and leisure.<sup>18</sup> For a growing crop of middle-class cadres, the personal automobile, alongside suburbanized homes, household appliances, and other consumer products, became a visible component of the new middle class identity.<sup>19</sup> Advertisements in popular magazines like *L’Express* solidified the relationship between the car and *bourgeois* consumption. Likewise, popular *yé-yé* magazines, whose readership encompassed France’s urban middle-class youth, advertisements consciously linked the automobile to *bourgeois* notions of individualism and success. Depictions of vehicles in motion became metaphors for freedom, as advertisements suggested that automobile ownership and happiness were inextricably linked. In a 1966 issue of *Salut les copains*, an advertisement by Honda declared that its line of sporty mopeds were “for those who win.”<sup>20</sup> The accompanying photo of a

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<sup>17</sup> Serge Bernstein, *The Republic of de Gaulle, 1958-1969*, trans. Peter Morris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 108-109.

<sup>18</sup> Jean-Pierre Rioux, *The Fourth Republic, 1944-1958*, trans. Godfrey Rodgers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 324.

<sup>19</sup> Defined not by their ownership of the means of production but by their intermediary, managerial positions between owners and workers in an increasingly corporate context, this new middle class, referred to as cadres, was made up predominantly of salaried employees and functionaries who occupied mid-level positions in various French firms. They were distinctly removed from the independent shopkeepers and petite bourgeoisie of earlier eras. The seminal work on the cadres is Luc Botanski, *The Making of a Class: Cadres in French Society*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 140-141.

<sup>20</sup> “Honda: Pour ceux qui gagnent,” *Salut les copains*, April 1966, 17.

smartly dressed young man with a pretty girl riding on the back left no doubt about the criteria for victory. Another in *Salut les copains*, this time for the Peugeot BB3 Sport moped, announced simply “comme ça!” (“just like that!”), its illustration appropriately conveying the message of success and happiness built around middle class consumption.<sup>21</sup> The various advertisements served to solidify the automobile’s link to the modern middle class identity.

Though actual ownership was limited among teenagers, the automobile’s frequent coverage in *yé-yé* magazines made it clear that the *copains* were expected to think about automobiles and the day when they would eventually acquire one. To point to one example, an article in the May 1964 issue of *Twenty* offered readers a helpful guide to buying affordably-priced used cars.<sup>22</sup> The magazine *Formidable*, meanwhile, reserved a prominent space for automobiles in its “news” section; its inaugural issue in October 1965 spotlighted the new Citroën DS 21.<sup>23</sup> In ever-increasing frequency, advertisements similarly affirmed the importance of the automobile to modern life.<sup>24</sup> They consciously played upon the apparent youthfulness of certain automobiles in an effort to appeal to their teenage readership. One promoted the new Ford Cortina Lotus, a “speed demon,” and its budget-friendly counterpart, the Ford Anglia, concluding that “finally, an automobile of youth, for young people.”<sup>25</sup> A similar advertisement for the Renault R4 featured the pop star Sheila standing joyously at the open door of the car,

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<sup>21</sup> “Peugeot BB3 Sport,” *Salut les copains*, April 1963, 82.

<sup>22</sup> “La Coté des Voitures Twenty,” *Twenty*, May 1964, 116-117.

<sup>23</sup> “Formidable actualités: Les événements du mois,” *Formidable*, October 1965, 6.

<sup>24</sup> From the 1950s and 1960s, France’s major automakers expanded their advertising campaigns with the hope of stimulating growth in the automotive sector. In particular, they targeted print media; as late as 1979, the combined automakers still devoted 79% of advertising budgets to print media. This statistic comes from Patrick Fridenson, “French Automobile Marketing, 1890-1979,” in Akio Okochi and Koichi Shimokawa, eds., *Development of Mass Marketing: The Automobile and Retailing Industries* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1981), 143.

<sup>25</sup> “La Ford Cortina Lotus: Le Démon de la Vitesse,” *Salut les copains*, July 1963, 6.

calling it “love at first sight between two *copines*.”<sup>26</sup> “What I like in the R4,” Sheila confessed, “is its youth.”<sup>27</sup> The reality though, despite the appetite for automobiles among young people, was that a car was out of reach for many teenagers, due to both the cost and the required age of eighteen before being eligible to obtain a driver’s license. A more viable option was the moped or motorized scooter, and advertisers used the same language of happiness to encourage their integration into daily life. An advertisement by the moped producer Motobécane for instance depicted a girl, hair in the wind and smile uncontained, alongside a promise that “she is happy, her life is easier” with their product, the Mobylette.<sup>28</sup> Even if advertisements, in their promise of happiness and success at the wheel of a car, offered transparent marketing ploys, they nevertheless insisted upon with stunning regularity the centrality of the automobile to the modern adolescent experience. The automobile’s saturation of media had its desired effect: by 1966, as one survey found, one out of every two French teens dreamed of owning their own car.<sup>29</sup>

The automobile’s presence went beyond advertisements though. Entering into cultural expressions, it became mythologized by intellectuals and in literature and film. It was imagined not simply as a means for transportation but as a venerable mobile extension of the domestic sphere, its cabin enshrined with the same sense of intimacy and privacy as the home.<sup>30</sup> This mythology was extended to and reinforced by the teen idols of *yé-yé*. In the first issue of *Age tendre et tête de bois*, an article highlighted how stardom had affected Johnny Hallyday, the

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<sup>26</sup> “... jolie petite Sheila ... jolie petite R4, coup de foudre entre deux copines!,” *Salut les copains*, May 1963, 19.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>28</sup> “Elle est heureuse, sa vie est plus facile avec Mobylette,” *Salut les copains*, May 1965, 21.

<sup>29</sup> Anne-Marie Sohn, *Age tendre et tête de bois: Histoire des jeunes des années 1960* (Paris: Hachette, 2001), 68.

<sup>30</sup> David Inglis, “Auto Couture: Thinking the Car in Post-War France,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 21, no 4-5 (2004): 211-212.

preeminent star of the era.<sup>31</sup> The performer was beset with sadness, the article noted, finding that celebrity had deprived him of privacy, undermined his closest friendships, and imposed on him unfair public expectations. Finding that he could not even walk outside alone in privacy anymore, the singer turned to his automobile, a sleek Jaguar. “He enters into his car, his unique kingdom where others can’t enter” the article read, “and in this steel cage, where he paradoxically rediscovers his liberty, he forgets [his problems] at 190 [kilometers] per hour.”<sup>32</sup>

The car likewise came to signify a vital means for relaxation in a society of growing leisure. The combination of rising affluence and generous state-secured paid vacations led to an increased appetite for mass vacationing and mass tourism in the 1960s. Rising automobile ownership, supplemented by the vast improvement of France’s highway network, meant that French families took to the road with increased regularity to satisfy their vacationing needs.<sup>33</sup> In the process, the car acquired a certain romantic quality. As Ellen Furlough writes, “both vacations and cars could signify mythic escape, personal autonomy, and displacement in time and space.”<sup>34</sup> It made sense, then, that when in mid-1965 the entertainment magazine *Paris Match* caught up with the newlywed celebrity couple of Johnny Hallyday and Sylvie Vartan amid their honeymoon, the car factored prominently into the image of tranquil escapism crafted by the magazine. The article opened with a large, colorful photo of the couple seated comfortably in an open-top convertible. Hallyday, sitting behind the wheel, looked on casually, his arm perched on the driver’s side door. His wife, Vartan, gazed off into the sky, as the scene’s

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<sup>31</sup> “Johnny est malheureux,” *Age tendre et tête de bois*, January 1963, 13.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>33</sup> A 1963 poll for instance found that, of those who had traveled in the last year, 60% of them traveled by automobile. George H. Gallup, ed., *The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls: France, 1939, 1944-1975*, vol. 1 (New York: Random House, 1976), 365.

<sup>34</sup> Ellen Furlough, “Making Mass Vacations: Tourism and Consumer Culture in France, 1930s to 1970s,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40, no. 2 (April, 1998): 263.

backdrop trailed off onto the image of a sunbaked city ensconced in palm trees and vineyards. The bucolic setting represented a symbolic reprieve from the rigors of modern life. The irony, of course, was that it was the car, the ultimate symbol of modernity, which made this retreat possible. The journalists noted that, despite the couple's efforts to find solitude, "a reporter is always there to photograph the petite MG that they had rented." "Often" the article continued, the couple "roams the roads in search of isolated beaches."<sup>35</sup> The discussion of their travels and their search for solitude invariably revolved around the automobile and the open road, two touchstones of the modern consumer tourist fantasy.

For all its popularity though, the automobile also served as a stark reminder of France's uneasy search for an acceptable mass consumerist identity distinct from but nevertheless in the shadow of the postwar American hegemon. In popular culture from the era, the conspicuously-placed American-made automobile served as a symbol, a subtle reminder of the near-hegemonic role of the United States in spreading cultural products and business practices in the postwar period.<sup>36</sup> The car signified, for good or for bad, a vision of American consumer modernity; a product that represented the fast-paced, materialistic society that, in the French imagination, defined America. Cultural references during the period retained a marked ambivalence about US's apparent influence on postwar France. From Françoise Sagan's 1954 bestselling novel *Bonjour tristesse* to Jean-Luc Godard's 1960 New Wave masterpiece *A bout de souffle* (*Breathless*), American-made automobiles provided convenient plot devices, alternating between

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<sup>35</sup> François Luizet and J.-P. Biot, "Le grand bonheur qu'elle avait voulu cacher," *Paris-Match*, April 24, 1965, 94-95.

<sup>36</sup> For an analysis of the American automobile as purveyor of US cultural hegemony in postwar French culture, see Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, 40-54.

objects of desire and tragedy.<sup>37</sup> In popular music, the lyrics of provocative singer Serge Gainsbourg's 1968 song "Ford Mustang" featured a litany of references to pop culture and consumer products (Coca Cola, Kool cigarettes, and Zippo lighters) as well as a sprinkling of spoken English words, an apparent recognition America's cultural omnipresence in postwar France.<sup>38</sup>

Within the context of the *yé-yé* popular culture, America likewise provided a familiar point of reference. The young pop stars of *yé-yé* often brandished their large American-made cars as a symbol of their success. Unlike other voices in French society, however, these *yé-yé* singers made no effort to provide social commentary on the apparent "Americanization" of France. Instead, as representatives of a postwar baby-boom generation coming of age in an affluent society of consumption, *yé-yé* pop stars appropriated the connotations of the American auto, themselves becoming symbols of France's mass consumer transformation. For the teenage pop stars, harbingers of a buoyant consumer modernity, the car served as a venerable extension of their public identity. Richard Anthony, the singer of "J'entends Siffler le Train" ("I Hear the Train Whistling"), for instance, was regularly pictured with his "enormous American car," as he was in a 1962 special issue of *Disco revue internationale*.<sup>39</sup> An article in the May 1963 issue of *Age tendre et tête de bois*, finding that "all the boys already have their car," offered a colorful spread of famous teen idols like Danny Boy and Vince Taylor flaunting their vehicles.<sup>40</sup> One star

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<sup>37</sup> See Françoise Sagan, *Bonjour Tristesse*, trans. Irene Ash (New York: Harper Collins, 2008); and *Breathless*, DVD, directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1960; New York: Criterion, 2007).

<sup>38</sup> See Serge Gainsbourg, "Ford Mustang," *Initials B.B.*, Philips 844 784 BY, 1968, LP. For a larger discussion of Serge Gainsbourg's lyrical subject matter in relation to Americanization, see Chris Tinker, "Serge Gainsbourg and *Le Défi américain*," *Modern & Contemporary France* 10, no. 2 (2002): 187-196.

<sup>39</sup> "Richard Anthony," *Disco revue internationale*, Numéro Hors-série, August-October, 1962, 28-29.

<sup>40</sup> "Leur Salon de l'auto," *Age tendre et tête de bois*, May 1963, 30.

was shown leaping jubilantly from his Ford Thunderbird convertible, another sitting comfortably in his large Buick. Not to be outdone, Claude François was captured bounding above his open top Thunderbird convertible, the caption below reading “la belle Américaine.” The montage of car photos echoed similar articles in other magazines from the era,<sup>41</sup> underscoring the significant role of the automobile, in this case American, as both a desired commodity and an extension of the teen idol’s identity.<sup>42</sup>

### Ready-to-Wear Fashion

Just as the transformation in automobility announced the arrival of a mass consumer modernity in France, so too did changing fashion sensibilities. Over the course of a decade, from the 1950s to the 1960s, a major shift occurred in French fashion. Though Paris emerged from war battered, the likes of Christian Dior and his “New Look,” introduced in 1947, firmly reestablished France’s credentials as the world leader of elite fashion. By the late 1950s, though, tastes began to shift from the *haute couture* of old to new lines of ready-made, mass-produced clothing. Rising consumer demand led to an increased appetite for clothing that was both affordable and fashionable. By the 1960s, *prêt-à-porter* (ready-to-wear) became a significant force in dictating fashion sensibilities. Young people had a vital role to play in this shift: as they gained an increasingly prominent role as consumers in the French economy, they began exerting

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<sup>41</sup> *Salut les copains* ran a similar article that likewise highlighted the personal automotive preferences of the stars of *yé-yé*. See “Quelle est leur voiture?,” *Salut les copains*, April 1964, 58-71.

<sup>42</sup> However, the well-placed American auto in the youth press generally lacked the social commentary evidenced elsewhere. Instead, it reflected the enduring cultural influence of the United States among a postwar generation, including teen idols barely older than their fans, who grew up conditioned by images and sounds produced across the Atlantic. From movies, music and comic books to blue jeans and t-shirts, the United States had an influential role in created a consumer market specifically for adolescents. As a result, a generation of postwar French youth shared a familiar childhood at least partly shaped by the likes of James Dean, Elvis Presley, and similar American cultural icons. As a result, and before the Vietnam War undermined the image of the United States, American culture carried a certain prestige among France’s postwar generation. This point is made in Jean-François Sirinelli, *Les baby-boomers: Une génération 1945-1969* (Paris: Fayard, 2003), 189-194.



pressure on designers and retailers to produce fashions that were new, fresh, and modern. Designers and department stores alike proved quick to appease them, introducing chic ready-to-wear clothing lines that captured the youthful spirit of an emergent baby-boom generation. The leading stars of *yé-yé* served as beacons of the shift from the ritzy attire of *haute couture* to trendy ready-made clothing ensembles. Through it all, the Parisian fashion industry had to readjust to changing tastes and the democratization of fashion, all while attempting to preserve its illustrious status as the world's leader of fashion.

Paris had long fancied itself as the global center of fashion, particularly women's fashion. The city became renowned for its *haute couture*, an industry of high fashion that produced custom-fitted, luxurious clothing for the wealthy elite. *Haute couture*, broadly speaking, referred to the highly recognizable fashion houses that garnered not only national attention, but international attention too. In the twentieth century, for instance, Coco Chanel dominated fashion during the interwar years while the likes of Christian Dior and Pierre Cardin shaped tastes and sensibilities after World War II.<sup>43</sup> Although the industry often served as a symbol of French national identity, it took on special resonance in the immediate decades following the Second World War. The fashion houses conjured notions of quality, sophistication, tradition, and taste while simultaneously acting as emblems of France. For a French nation in search of reinvention in the wake of war, high fashion provided a way to assert identity on the international stage. In other words, as some have argued, if France proved unable to exercise military or diplomatic influence in the bipolar, rigid Cold War paradigm, it could at least be a leading cultural influence

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<sup>43</sup> For a general history, see Valerie Steele, *Paris Fashion: A Cultural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

in the world.<sup>44</sup> This partly explains the government's bolstering of the *Haute Couture* industry in the postwar period – particularly the largest fashion houses – which included not only financial support but also sponsorship of major fashion events as well as the procurement of essential raw materials that were otherwise in short supply.<sup>45</sup>

At the other end of the spectrum rested *confection*, an industry that created mass-produced, inexpensive clothing that did not require personalized measurements. Made possible by the industrial revolution, *confection*, or ready-made clothing, became increasingly prevalent during the nineteenth century. While it conquered the market for men's clothing by the turn of the twentieth century, its incursion into women's clothing proved slower by comparison.<sup>46</sup> Part of the industry's problem was perceptual in that it was associated with poor quality and equally poor taste. If *haute couture* represented the sophistication of artisanal quality, *confection* embodied the apparent shortcomings of a society of mass production and consumption. The reputation of women's ready-to-wear clothing began improving in the interwar years, thanks to a gradual improvement of prefabricated goods, though it still lagged far behind *couture*. In this way, the assumptions about *confection* – that genuine artistic quality was incompatible with

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<sup>44</sup> On this argument, see Beth M. Campbell, "High Fashion and the Reconstruction of Postwar France, 1945-1960" (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 1998). For an examination of French efforts to exert cultural influence beyond the realm of fashion, see Herman Lebovics, *Mona Lisa's Escort: André Malraux and the Reinvention of French Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

<sup>45</sup> Among other things, the state provided subsidies, relieved tax burdens, and helped secure materials (textiles, but also other things like work space, lighting, and heating). It also created regulations for the industry that led to its consolidation, pushing to the forefront the most successful of fashion houses (often to the detriment of the smaller designers). Sharon Elise Cline, "*Feminité à la Française: Femininity, Social Change and French National Identity: 1945-1970*" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2008), 162-163.

<sup>46</sup> The increase in men's ready-to-wear was staggering. Already in 1860, half of all men's clothing was pre-produced clothing and by 1904, a full two-thirds of men in France wore ready-made clothing. Nancy L. Green, *Ready-to-Wear and Ready-to-Work: A Century of Industry and Immigrants in Paris and New York* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 78.

modes of mass production and consumption – were indicative of France’s larger ambivalence about the gradual rise of mass consumer society.

The 1950s was a pivotal moment in the French fashion industry. It was during this decade that ready-to-wear fashion made significant gains at the expense of *haute couture*. On some level, the fashion houses of *haute couture* faced something of an identity crisis as they tried to keep pace with not only the high production of ready-to-wear, but also changing consumer tastes. To be sure, in the world of fashion *haute couture* reigned supreme for a good part of the decade; the introduction of Christian Dior’s “New Look” in 1947 – slim cinched waistlines, longer skirt lengths, softened shoulders, and with it the accentuation of the female silhouette, a look that was simultaneously refreshing and nostalgic – set the new trend for women’s fashion and reestablished Paris’ reputation as the center of global fashion.<sup>47</sup> However, rising purchasing power among a growing and insatiable demographic of middle-class consumers brought with it a greater demand for accessible fashion. Their desire for stylish yet affordable clothing led to a democratization of fashion; no longer was fashion the preserve of the wealthy few, a marker of distinction, but instead an object of mass consumption, a commodity supposedly available to all.

What role did young people play in this transition? As teenagers acquired disposable income, they began to exert pressure on the consumer market, shaping tastes in the process. Over the course of ten years, between 1953 and 1963-1964, teenagers’ expenditures on clothing grew at a phenomenal rate (131% for girls, 103% for boys).<sup>48</sup> A 1963 survey by the Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques found that, for the first time in history, the 15-20 year

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<sup>47</sup> Pierre Jouin, *Une liberté toute neuve ... Culture de masse et esthétique nouvelle dans la France des années 50* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1995), 124-126; Stanley Karnow, *Paris in the Fifties* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999), 267.

<sup>48</sup> Sohn, *Age tendre et tête de bois*, 71.

old age group spent far more on clothing than any other age category. Importantly, young people had little appetite for the *haute couture* of days past. What at one time seemed refined and sophisticated had become elitist and ill-suited for the demands of the modern life.<sup>49</sup> Their taste in fashion was not only built in opposition to older generations, but was cosmopolitan in its nature. The mini-skirt, after all, probably *the* single most iconic fashion symbol of the 1960s baby-boomer generation, had its origins in London, not Paris.<sup>50</sup>

Both fashion retailers and designers recognized the changing tide of fashion and quickly sought to accommodate the tastes of young people. The line between *haute couture* and ready-made clothing began to blur, as a new type of ready-made fashion, *prêt-à-porter*, began adopting the same ethos of quality long linked to high fashion. During the 1950s, the major Paris department stores began an aggressive push to rebrand themselves. The Galeries Lafayette, for instance, teamed with esteemed ready-to-wear designers like Michèle Rosier and Emmanuelle Khanh to produce its own unique fashion lines independent of the *couture* houses. Both Galeries Lafayette and Printemps, vying for young consumers, introduced departments devoted exclusively to teenage girls, eagerly advertising these new additions to their respective stores.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, some of the major fashion designers of the 1960s, including Yves Saint Laurent and André Courrèges introduced relatively affordable, ready-made clothing lines meant to capture the youthful spirit of the times. Saint Laurent himself acknowledged that “the young lead very different lives from the lives of women who wear *couture* fashion. Not all of the young

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<sup>49</sup> Dominique Veillon and Patrick Fridenson, “Introduction,” in Dominique Veillon and Michèle Ruffat, eds., *La mode des sixties: L’entrée dans la modernité* (Paris: Autrement, 2007), 7.

<sup>50</sup> Steele, *Paris Fashion*, 277.

<sup>51</sup> Florence Brachet-Champsaur, “Un Grand Magasin à la Pointe de la Mode: Les Galeries Lafayette,” in *La mode des sixties: L’entrée dans la modernité*, ed. Dominique Veillon and Michèle Ruffat (Paris: Autrement, 2007), 180-181, 185.

would want couture even if they could afford the price.” He concluded that “Couturiers, haute couture, *la mode* – they’re all terms that are out-dated.”<sup>52</sup>

The popular stars of *yé-yé* helped drive the shift toward ready-to-wear, as the phenomenon’s leading female singers proved capable fashion tastemakers. In setting trends for adolescent style, they pushed ready-to-wear fashion to the forefront while providing a vibrant image of a consumerist France. Brigitte Bardot, who had famously remarked that *couture* was for grandmothers, had already made ready-made clothing a key component to her look.<sup>53</sup> Building on Bardot’s precedent, the various *yé-yé* girls brought the connection between youth and ready-to-wear to new heights. Each star – Sylvie Vartan, Françoise Hardy, Sheila, Gillian Hills, Michèle Torr, and others – had their own distinct though readily-copied look, which allowed teenage girls to imitate the idol of their choosing. Their fashion tastes were on full display on record sleeves and in photos and magazines.<sup>54</sup> *Yé-yé* magazines popular among teenage girls helped stoke the desire for clothing through unceasing coverage and analysis of the latest tastes and trends. For instance, the magazine *Mademoiselle âge tendre* routinely featured prominent sections on fashion, all of the ready-to-wear variety, encouraging teenage consumers to adopt the latest styles.

The April 1965 issue was a prime example. In one article the magazine spotlighted Françoise Hardy, sharing “the six outfits from her wardrobe that she likes to wear the most.”<sup>55</sup> Over the next several pages, a series of photos showed the young singer posed in a number of

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<sup>52</sup> Quoted in Steele, *Paris Fashion*, 278.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

<sup>54</sup> Sohn, *Age tendre et tête de bois*, 72.

<sup>55</sup> “Jumping Françoise: Les six tenues favorites de Françoise Hardy,” *Mademoiselle âge tendre*, April 1965, 100.

affected positions. The outfits on display encompassed everything from airy springtime wears and stylish sleeping gowns to a space-age plastic dress. Her wardrobe apparently even contained a full “Beatles ensemble,” from the iconic collarless grey suit to the Italian boots.<sup>56</sup> In the same issue, Michèle Torr served as the model for a spread of attires deemed “le style garçon,” which included stylish pairings of jeans and pants alongside casual pullovers, button-up shirts, and tank-tops. Alongside the clothing, readers were encouraged to visit major Parisian department stores like Printemps and the Galeries Lafayette to purchase affordable copies of their own.<sup>57</sup> In the following month’s issue, *Mademoiselle âge tendre* introduced an article that offered a full outfit, modeled by one of the popular singers, which girls could procure themselves. The inaugural article introduced a casual-looking Gillian Hills in a skirt and flowery blouse. Conscious of their aim to encourage the purchase of clothing, the editors indicated that the carefully-chosen outfit was “at a price specially studied to agree with the greatest number of girls.”<sup>58</sup>

The significance of *prêt-à-porter* came from the fact that it made ready-made clothing a legitimate fashion alternative that, if not gaining parity, at least rivaled the products of the *haute couture* industry. A couple of key factors helped elevate ready-to-wear. For one, women’s magazines played a vital role. Starting in the 1950s, they recast the image of ready-made clothing in an effort to shake the reputation of poor quality that had plagued *confection*. Magazines like *Elle* coupled the language of sophistication previously linked to *haute couture* with an emphasis on ready-made’s practical qualities that were well-attuned to the demands of

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 101-103.

<sup>57</sup> “Michèle Torr: “Le ‘style garçon,’” *Mademoiselle âge tendre*, April 1965, 90-91.

<sup>58</sup> “Le Chouchou de Mademoiselle âge tendre,” *Mademoiselle âge tendre*, May 1965, 26-27.

modern life. Even the invented term *prêt-à-porter* – a literal translation of “ready-to-wear” – was deployed by marketers and periodicals with the intent of differentiating newer ready-made clothing products from their poorly-received predecessors.<sup>59</sup> Teen idols like Françoise Hardy and Sylvie Vartan regularly found themselves on the cover and in featured articles. Vartan for instance, in a February 1964 issue of *Elle*, embodied the modern girl in need of modern clothing. She modeled three sleek raincoats. “Leading a very active life, Sylvie searches for chic things, [which are] easy to put on and that ‘hold up’ [tiennent le coup],” the magazine wrote.<sup>60</sup> Hardy, meanwhile, made the cover of a December 1963 issue of *Elle*. In the issue, she modeled three stylish ready-to-wear outfits. Her influence was clear: “thanks to Françoise,” the article read, “beauty is possibly going to have new dimensions.”<sup>61</sup> As designer ready-made clothes, the attire worn by the pop stars was often no doubt more expensive than something off the rack of a department store, but they were still far cheaper than their custom-measured predecessors and nevertheless represented a sharp departure from earlier fashion sensibilities.

Secondly, the improved image of ready-to-wear clothing came through the rise of boutiques. Boutiques, different than both large department stores and exclusive fashion houses, offered a new way to distribute ready-made clothing. As an outgrowth of a society increasingly based around consumption and leisure, they went hand-in-hand with the rise of youth-oriented, mass-produced clothing. Three boutiques opened in 1954 along the Left Bank of Paris, each launching their own *prêt-à-porter* lines. By the 1960s boutiques were a full-fledged

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<sup>59</sup> Alexis Romano, “*Elle* and the Development of *Stylisme* in 1960s Paris,” *Costume* 46, no. 1 (2012): 76-77.

<sup>60</sup> “Chansons sous la pluie,” *Elle*, February 28, 1964, 42.

<sup>61</sup> Claude Berthod, “Françoise ‘interprete’ trois personnages,” *Elle*, December 13, 1963, 90.

phenomenon, with some of the most renowned outlets of the decade including Hit Parade, JNS3, Knap, Penthouse, La Machinerie, and Dorothée Bis.<sup>62</sup> Even the leading teen idols of *yé-yé* partook. The young singer Sheila, whose giddy persona belied her keen business acumen, cashed in on the craze, opening the “Boutique Sheila” along the Rue des Jeûneurs in Paris’ Second Arrondissement.<sup>63</sup> The boutiques employed a number of novel strategies to create the optimal atmosphere for the sale of clothing. Their in-store decorations, carefully-selected background music, window displays, and floorplans were all devised to pique consumer interest, lure in passersby shoppers, and encourage spending. They conscientiously hired teenage girls, who could speak the requisite parlance, in an effort to attract a similar, like-minded clientele. They also swapped out their products on a seasonal basis to encourage immediate spending and repeated visits. Importantly, though, the boutiques typically maintained small commercial spaces that differentiated them from vast supermarkets and department stores while giving their clothing an air of exclusivity and sophistication.<sup>64</sup>

While the *yé-yé* girls helped legitimize ready-to-wear in France, the way they were perceived abroad, particularly in the United States, offered further evidence about how the nature of French fashion had changed. The U.S. and Parisian fashion had a long and checkered history. Wealthy Americans were among the foreign elite who routinely bought the latest from Paris’ fashion houses, and they played a particularly important role in reviving the industry after World War II when demand for luxury clothing was dampened elsewhere. At the same time, though,

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<sup>62</sup> Gérald Chevalier, “La boutique des années 1960: Un nouvel espace pour un nouveau mode de consommation” in *La mode des sixties: L’entrée dans la modernité*, ed. Dominique Veillon and Michèle Ruffat (Paris: Autrement, 2007), 193-195.

<sup>63</sup> Gisèle Charbonnier and Manuel Litran, “Maman et Papa Sheila,” *Marie-Claire*, October 12, 1964, 10.

<sup>64</sup> Chevalier, “La boutique des années 1960,” 197.



New York had begun to rival Paris as a leader in fashion design, particularly in the domain of mass-produced ready-to-wear clothing. The postwar shift toward ready-to-wear in France, it could be argued, was partly a response to mounting pressure exerted from across the Atlantic.<sup>65</sup> Despite America's influence on postwar fashion, though, France still retained a privileged position in the American imagination, even in spite of the general shift away from traditional *haute couture*.

This was evident in coverage from the period where, for American observers, the *yé-yé* girls, outfitted in the latest *prêt-à-porter*, remained the personification of chic Paris fashion. As the *Life* article introduced earlier in the chapter made clear, American audiences understood the *copines* of *yé-yé* not for their music but for their embodiment of trendy French fashion. The *New York Times*, for instance, examined Sylvie Vartan and her rising fashion influence. "In Paris, what Sylvie wears the young crowd gets," the article wrote, indicating that her clothing ensembles had "been seen in Rome, Zurich and Athens – and not always on teenagers."<sup>66</sup> The American fashion magazine *Vogue*, meanwhile, had a particular affinity for Vartan's counterpart, Françoise Hardy. She was, as the magazine declared in an August 1963 issue, the "New girl in fashion."<sup>67</sup> Her soft good looks and mysterious charm, to say nothing of her burgeoning fame, made her an ideal model for the latest and greatest fashions. The following year, in another issue of *Vogue*, she modeled the latest inventions of one of France's *prêt-à-porter* luminaries, Emmanuelle Khanh,<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Green, *Ready-to-Wear and Ready-to-Work*, 100-102.

<sup>66</sup> "Singer Sets Clothes Tempo: What Sylvie Wears, Young of Paris Get," *New York Times*, March 30, 1965.

<sup>67</sup> "Fashion: New Girl in Fashion," *Vogue*, August 1, 1963, 58-59.

<sup>68</sup> "Françoise Hardy and Emmanuelle Khanh," *Vogue*, August 1, 1964, 53.

The *yé-yé* girls helped ensure the heightened popularity of ready-made fashion in France. Represented abroad, the singers proved able to preserve the fabled allure of Parisian fashion, but they did so in a way compatible with the new realities of France's mass consumer society. In this way, the *yé-yé* phenomenon served to highlight and celebrate the transformation of everyday life caused by the arrival of an advanced system of consumer capitalism. Just as the meaning of fashion changed during this crucial period in the 1960s, the car too took on heightened importance to the workings and rhythms of daily life, a fact made clear in the discourses perpetuated by the *yé-yé* media. As Kristin Ross argues, "France's cultural and physical assimilation of the car and the new geography it had created" was, on some level, an indicator that French society had accepted the "state-sponsored march into modernization" and all its implications.<sup>69</sup> On another level, the popularity of *yé-yé* reflected a similar societal coming-to-terms with a France transformed by a culture of consumption and its constituent elements.

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<sup>69</sup> Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, 70.

## CHAPTER 4: MARRIAGE AND FAMILY IN THE YÉ-YÉ PHENOMENON, 1962-1966

On any other day, the sleepy commune of Loconville would have gone on unnoticed and undisturbed by the rest of France. Numbering fewer than two hundred people, the small village nestled in the Picardy region north of Paris was unaccustomed to fanfare.<sup>1</sup> But on April 12, 1965 all eyes were on it. On that day, Johnny Hallyday, France's resident king of rock and roll, and his fiancée Sylvie Vartan, the darling of yé-yé, wed in the commune's quaint medieval church. The wedding brought a fairy-tale like ending to a courtship that had started several years prior. Their mutual expressions of fidelity and love, affirmed by their insistence on marital union, provided a model for budding teenage relationships everywhere. The day marked the culmination of a relationship that had been followed closely by the media from the start. *Les Actualités françaises* deemed it the "event of the week."<sup>2</sup> *Paris Match*, an entertainment and news magazine, featured an angelic-looking Vartan on the cover cloaked in a pristine white veil.<sup>3</sup> Various youth magazines promised their readers a bevy of exclusive photos and insider accounts of the big day.<sup>4</sup> The event even garnered mention in international newspapers like the *New York Times*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Population numbers come from the Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales' digital history database of population and regional change in France since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. See "Loconville," in "Des villages de Cassini aux communes d'aujourd'hui: Territoires et Population, deux siècles d'évolution," Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales, [http://cassini.ehess.fr/cassini/fr/html/fiche.php?select\\_resultat=19790](http://cassini.ehess.fr/cassini/fr/html/fiche.php?select_resultat=19790) (accessed September 26, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> "Le mariage des copains: Sylvie Vartan devient Madame Smet," April 14, 1965, *Les Actualités Françaises*, Institut National de l'Audiovisuel, Adobe Flash video file, 0:57, <http://www.ina.fr/video/AFE86000243/le-mariage-des-copains-sylvie-vartan-devient-madame-smet-video.html> (accessed October 24, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> *Paris Match*, April 24, 1965.

<sup>4</sup> *Salut les copains*, for instance, offered a special 176-page issue of which photos of the wedding day were the main focus. Its counterpart, *Mademoiselle âge tendre*, promised an exclusive interview about the day with Sylvie Vartan's supposed best friend. See *Salut les copains*, May 1965; and *Mademoiselle âge tendre*, June 1965.

<sup>5</sup> "2 French 'Pop' Singers Wed," *New York Times*, April, 13, 1965, 32.

As the above episode recounts, between roughly 1962 and 1966, the leading symbols of *yé-yé* readily affirmed a commitment to the gendered, heteronormative vision of sexual relationships borne out of the legacy of World War II and the emergent Cold War culture of conformity, conservatism, and containment. In spite of an emergent sexual revolution underway at the time, the *yé-yé* popular culture, with regards to questions of sexuality at least, represented a last gasp of a dominant postwar worldview that had already begun to erode by the mid-1960s. This affirmation of the prevailing social and sexual order would appear at odds with the sexual revolution underway at the time and of which youth and young people played so vital a part. As earlier chapters attested, *yé-yé* served as an agent of change, offering a rational vision of youth in a rapidly changing French Republic. At the same time, while providing a forward-looking vision of a decolonized and consumerist France, the *yé-yé* popular culture also served as a point of continuity and stability through its expression of dominant social and gender norms that had reigned supreme since the end of Second World War.

To speak of the postwar sexual revolution is to speak of the liberalization of both state policies and social attitudes concerning matters ranging from reproductive rights, homosexuality, and sexuality outside the context of marriage. It was a phenomenon that appeared across various Western nations (though at different paces and degrees of success) and had real implications, affecting political and social rights as well as informing notions of gender and identity. In recent years, historians have begun to emphasize the gradual nature of the sexual revolution that took place in the West from the late 1950s to the early 1970s. Deeming it the “long sexual revolution,” they deemphasize the significance of any single event or moment in favor of a longer view that recognizes a slow and steady process of change. Within this context, the attitudes and actions of young people, buttressed by their heightened access to consumer

products, leisure, and education, are seen as key drivers of this “revolution.” Arthur Marwick, for instance, identifies the beginnings of a “long sexual revolution” already evident, if subtly, in the late 1950s, writing that “the new assertiveness and innovativeness of youth” towards the end of the decade was an integral part of a complex system of changing social and sexual values.<sup>6</sup> The editors of the work *Between Marx and Coca-Cola* likewise see sexual liberation as a key component in the development of postwar “youth culture,” crediting young people for expanding the paradigm of acceptable social and sexual relationships in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>7</sup> Looking at France in particular, Michael Siedman identified a number of pivotal events during the late 1950s and early 1960s, including the slackening of university cohabitation policies, which helped change social views and mores regarding sexuality.<sup>8</sup> Anne-Marie Sohn, meanwhile, saw the rise of flirtation among 1960s teenagers, a byproduct of increased adolescent economic independence and leisure, as a necessary step towards the greater prominence of sexual expression and acceptance after 1968.<sup>9</sup>

The common thread in all of these works is their shared focus on the actions and attitudes of the era’s young people, identifying them as key drivers behind the sexual revolution. A

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<sup>6</sup> It is during this period, he writes, that the conventional sexual and familial relationships throughout the United States and Western Europe underwent striking changes. See Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c. 1958-1974* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 381-382.

<sup>7</sup> In particular, they see the rise of cohabitating, unmarried young couples during the 1970s as an essential social factor in changing social attitudes regarding sexuality. See Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried, “Introduction: Youth, Consumption, and Politics in the Age of Radical Change,” in *Between Marx and Coca-Cola: Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960-1980*, ed. Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006), 1-35.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Siedman, “The Pre-May 1968 Sexual Revolution,” *Contemporary French Civilization* 25, no. 1 (2001): 20-41.

<sup>9</sup> Sohn notes that the growing role of flirtation between the sexes in the early 1960s as a contributor to the gradual acceptance of sexuality outside of the framework of marriage. See Anne-Marie Sohn, *Age tendre et tête de bois: Histoire des jeunes des années 1960* (Paris: Hachette, 2001).

common tendency is to present the history of the sexual revolution in a linear fashion, a narrative of steady gains. To frame the subject in this way, though, is to obscure the numerous instances of resistance, both overt and subtle, to the liberalization of laws and social mores. The historian Dagmar Herzog reminds us that “to tell only a narrative of gradual progress would be to misunderstand how profoundly complicated sexual politics of the twentieth century in Europe actually were.”<sup>10</sup> Using this observation as a starting point, I want to place the *yé-yé* phenomenon in its historical context, recognizing that it served to perpetuate a dominant culture of conservatism regarding both sexuality and gender, and that, in doing so, counteracted nascent expressions of sexuality found in popular literature and film from the preceding decade.

Several scholars have already begun to question *yé-yé*'s conservative outlook in relation to changing attitudes about sexuality. Chris Tinker, in his case study of the magazine *Salut les copains*, argues that the popular culture tacitly endorsed a model of heteronormative relationships and with it a clear and unambiguous division of gender roles.<sup>11</sup> Not until the early 1970s, he writes, did the magazine begin “to recognize alternatives to the male-female relationships and the middle-class marriage model.”<sup>12</sup> Jonathyne Briggs, meanwhile, offers a careful analysis of how popular music performed by young women during the period generally served to reinforce conventional gender norms and conservative views on sexuality, even if by the mid-1960s these performers found subtle ways to “address sexual inequality [between men

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<sup>10</sup> Herzog identifies several key areas in which to complicate the notion of progress within European sexuality. One is the frequent instances of backlash that threatened to undermine or undo the liberalizations attained. A second area is to address the problems or injustices embedded in the fight for certain rights or changes. Third, Herzog points to the ambiguities and ambivalences inherent in sexuality. See Dagmar Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe: A Twentieth Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1.

<sup>11</sup> Chris Tinker, *Mixed Messages: Youth Magazine Discourse and Sociocultural Shifts in Salut les copains (1962-1976)* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

and women] and their own sexuality – albeit still often in indirect ways.”<sup>13</sup> Along these lines, I aim to demonstrate how the *yé-yé* popular culture did little, if anything, to disrupt popular perceptions of marriage, family, and gender. Despite a historiography that privileges the role of teenage popular culture as driver in the easing of social and sexual norms, the evidence presented here serves to offer a more complex image.

### The Marriage Ideal

As late as the mid-1960s, marriage still held a near-hegemonic place with regards to representation in the popular media. The average age of marriage had fallen precipitously since the end of World War II, reaching an apex in the 1960s before gradually creeping upwards again from the 1970s onward.<sup>14</sup> The phenomenon proved so conspicuous that it drew the attention of journalists, like Madeleine Franck who, writing for *Elle* in 1963, penned several articles that examining the trend of young marriages. Looking on skeptically, she surveyed a number of young adults and the challenging decisions faced when deciding to marry young.<sup>15</sup> For its part, by contrast, the French state saw the marriage trends as an area of national strength. It could brag, as it did in a 1959 governmental publication, that one out of four Frenchmen aged 24 years or less were married, a number that had grown from only one out of twelve in 1900. As the government saw it, the prevalence of marriage meant that the postwar generation, which was “freer, more eager for life” than its forebears, felt confident in a newly stable and prosperous

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<sup>13</sup> Jonathyne Briggs, “Sex and the Girl’s Single: French Popular Music and the Long Sexual Revolution of the 1960s,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 21, no 3 (September 2012): 527.

<sup>14</sup> Claire Duchon, *Women’s Rights and Women’s Lives in France, 1944-1968* (London: Routledge, 1994), 97.

<sup>15</sup> See for example Madeleine Franck, “Les couples qui se marient jeunes,” *Elle*, March 1, 1963, 122-125, 172-173; and Madeleine Franck, “Les mariés en blue-jeans,” *Elle*, March 8, 1963, 130-133, 169, 171, 175.

France.<sup>16</sup> It also meant that these young people were ready to contribute to their country's future from a safe and secure marital foundation.

As the topic of young marriage gained attention elsewhere, the *yé-yé* popular culture announced its own preoccupation with marriage. Songs, advertisements, and magazine articles readily stressed the institution's importance and its centrality to French society. In spite of the gradual societal change in attitudes regarding social and sexual relationships, the leading magazines and performers of *yé-yé* tenaciously clung to the marriage ideal as the principal, if not the only, form of social organization between the sexes. In particular, teenage girls proved the primary recipients of this emphasis on the marriage ideal. Advertisements targeted them; one, for a Parisian wedding dress boutique, encouraged female readers to "realize the marriage of [their] dreams."<sup>17</sup> Elsewhere, advice columns, purporting to educate, encouraged readers to think about nuptials. The March 1965 issue of *Mademoiselle âge tendre*, for instance, prompted its teenage audience to ask parents about marriage; "what conditions do I have to fulfill to be able to marry" was the suggested wording.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, journalists eagerly discussed the topic with the stars of *yé-yé*. In particular, interviewers often questioned female performers about their thoughts on the matter. Speaking with Michèle Torr in a 1965 issue of *Salut les copains*, for instance, an interviewer asked if the singer ever thought about marriage. In her response, Torr tried to navigate her own preferences, the realities of her profession, and societal expectations by responding that "yes," she thought about it, but that she wanted to delay it until "the latest

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<sup>16</sup> Centre de Diffusion Française, *The Young Face of France* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1959), 61.

<sup>17</sup> *Mademoiselle*, no. 4, 1964.

<sup>18</sup> "20 Questions à poser à vos parents," *Mademoiselle âge tendre*, March 1965, 76.



possible” age – “upwards of thirty years old, maybe” – given that being a famed singer made having a successful relationship difficult.<sup>19</sup> As Torr’s testimony attested, the societal expectation of marriage meant that, even in exceptional circumstances, it was not a question of if, but when.

Even popular songs confirmed the prevailing logic of marriage. In 1964, at the height of her popularity, Sheila released *Sheila 6<sup>e</sup> disque*, an extended-play record containing the song “Un jour, je me marierai” (“One day, I will marry”). As the lyrics went:

Like all the girls  
I hope that one day I will encounter it  
Oh yeah!  
Like all the girls  
I too dream that one day I will marry  
Oh yeah!

Because soon he will come  
The one who will say to me “for life, the two of us are united”  
They often say “don’t be in too much of a hurry,  
because to marry you have all the time”  
Me, I agree but I believe that now  
I can think about it from time to time

Because me, yes  
I already see happy ones all around me  
All my *copains*, all those that I really love  
Two small boys will come to the church  
To hold the long gown that I will wear<sup>20</sup>

Interestingly enough, the song was an adaptation of the US singer Brenda Lee’s 1964 single “The Waiting Game.”<sup>21</sup> But whereas Lee’s version sung vaguely about the teenage wait for true love, Sheila’s variant featured rewritten lyrics focusing specifically on the act of marriage. Just

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<sup>19</sup> 30 questions à Michèle Torr,” *Salut les copains*, March 1965, 121.

<sup>20</sup> Sheila, “Un Jour, Je Me Marierai,” *Sheila 6<sup>e</sup> Disque*, Philips 434 913 BE, 1964, EP.

<sup>21</sup> Brenda Lee, “The Waiting Game,” *The Waiting Game*, Decca 31599, 1964, Single.

as significant was the fact that the song came not from some obscure performer along the fringes of *yé-yé*, but from one of the genre's most prominent stars.

Though seemingly at odds with a society of increasing permissiveness and tolerance to other forms of sexual relationship, the privileged status of marriage found in the *yé-yé* media and among its performers mirrored international trends borne out of the postwar era. In the two decades following World War II, people married in greater numbers and at younger ages than at any time in recent memory. Not limited to France, similar phenomena were noted in the United States, Britain, and Canada. But it was not just marriage that thrived, it was a particular *kind* of marriage. Stephanie Coontz reminds us that, in all these countries, there was a striking “cultural consensus” concerning the universality of marriage and the primacy of the “traditional,” male breadwinner-led family unit.<sup>22</sup> During the period, alternatives to this model were seldom considered. The irony, of course, was that though it was labeled a traditional and age-old model, this particular conception of marriage was quite unique to its time. In Western Europe, the unwavering faith in this narrow view of marriage and family represented a search for stability in the wake of the greatest bout of genocide and destruction the continent had even seen.<sup>23</sup> The onset of the Cold War and the general state of anxiety it produced also contributed to the marriage ideal. In the US at least, as Elaine Tyler May argues, the self-contained nuclear family

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<sup>22</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Viking, 2005), 229.

<sup>23</sup> On marriage and the search for “normality” in Europe following World War II, see Dagmar Herzog, “Desperately Seeking Normality: Sex and Marriage in the Wake of War” and Pat Thane, “Family Life and ‘Normality’ in Postwar British Culture” in Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann, eds., *Life After Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History during the 1940s and 1950s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 161-210.

buttressed by marriage and domesticity offered safe harbor in an otherwise uncertain world.<sup>24</sup> In France, marriage provided a similar refuge to the anxieties of modern life.

### Envisioning the Ideal Mother and Housewife

This societal search for stability in the two decades following World War II, expressed through a heightened recourse to marriage, lent itself to idealized notions of domesticity, ones that had implications concerning women's roles both inside and outside the home. In this context, marriage was practically inseparable from the larger notion of family; the former was tacitly understood as the necessary requisite for the latter. Taken together, the concepts of marriage and family evoked starkly defined and hardened gender roles, neatly delineated between husband and wife. An entire regulatory discourse operated across mediums to ensure the maintenance of these two opposing roles. For women, questions about family pointed directly to their roles as mothers. The renewed societal appetite for domestic comfort, buoyed by France's expanding consumer economy, meanwhile heightened links between women as housewives and homemakers. These two socially-defined roles, mother and housewife, were not mutually exclusive and instead often served to reinforce one another. As such, the complimentary tandem provided two dominant feminine ideals during the period. What made these idealized feminine representations so powerful was their apparent naturalness. For its part, the *yé-yé* popular culture contributed to this perception; journalists framed the gendered notion of marriage with an easy, self-satisfying logic while the popular young stars did their best to play the part of the ideal spouse.

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<sup>24</sup> On this argument, see Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

The convergence of mother and housewife was on full display in a 1965 article of *Mademoiselle âge tendre*, which posed a question to its female readership: “Marriage, is it right for you?”<sup>25</sup> By answering the twenty questions that followed, the reader would apparently be able to conclude whether marriage suited them or not. Many of the questions subtly suggested a particular vision of marriage: “Are you touched by a crying baby?” “Do you like to do the shopping for your mother?” “When your mother is ill, can you fill in for her around the house?” “When your mother has friends come over, do you enjoy making the dinner courses?”<sup>26</sup> Questions of this tone and nature left readers with little variety in what constituted the woman’s contribution to marriage. While positioning itself as an objective survey between two legitimate alternatives, its conclusion clearly revealed preference for one over the other. When readers flipped to the back page to discover if, based on their responses, marriage suited them, they were given their answer. If they answered “yes” to a majority of the questions, they were indeed fit for marriage. “You know to do what is necessary when it is necessary; you are understanding, helpful, maternal.” For those who answer in the negative, ill-suited for marriage, they were evidently dynamic and independent. “But,” it continued, “have those close to you ever made it clear to you that you have been a bit self-centered?”<sup>27</sup> Framed in this way, the questionnaire offered the appearance of neutrality while subtly exerting a form of prescriptive social policing that left little room for deviation.

While the questionnaire spoke to women’s roles as both mothers and housewives, it is nevertheless telling that the very first question, out of twenty, alluded to motherhood. It reflected

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<sup>25</sup> “Le mariage est-il fait pour vous?, ” *Mademoiselle âge tendre*, May 1965, 82-83, 108.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

a prevailing thought that tied women's civic and political roles within society to their biological capacity to reproduce. Since the nineteenth century, a number of political, religious, and medical discourses intersected to avow women's foremost place as mothers, portraying them as a moralizing force within society, responsible for imparting upon future generations prescribed social, civic, and religious values.<sup>28</sup> Alongside popular thought, an entire legal and political framework, starting with the Napoleonic Civil Code in 1804, emerged to limit women's participation in public life, therefore lending credence to the belief that women's "natural" role was as mothers within the domestic sphere.<sup>29</sup> As such, long before women gained the right to vote, their contribution to the nation came through the creation of new (hopefully more populous) generations.

The strong linkage between women and motherhood stemmed partly from national fears about tepid population growth and low fertility rates. Once the most populous nation in Europe, France's natality slowed in the second half of the nineteenth century; by the early twentieth century its population count had been surpassed by hostile neighboring countries. The

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<sup>28</sup> Both *bourgeois* social thinkers and republican political commentators (who were often of the same ilk) saw mothers as the first and most influential educators, imparting their children with proper moral and social values as well as requisite republican ideals. The Catholic Church similarly viewed mothers as essential agents in transmitting religious belief to their children. Nineteenth-century medical practitioners meanwhile, seeking to understand the sexual difference between men and women, defined "woman" medically in relation to her capacity to reproduce. See James F. McMillan, *France and Women 1789-1914: Gender, Society and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>29</sup> The Napoleonic Civil Code codified female subordination. Article 213 of the code, for instance, decreed that women had to obey their husbands. Article 1124, stated that, in the eyes of the law, women were deemed minors, falling under the legal guardianship of men, beginning with their fathers and followed by their eventual husbands. It formed the basis for subsequent laws that continued to define women's rights in relation to their husbands. Over time, the laws were modified and women acquired more rights, though in a piecemeal fashion. Still, well into the postwar period, a husband continued to have control over his wife's assets and property, he had the ability to contest her right to employment if he deemed it against the best interests of the family, and he possessed legal control over the family's children. Richard Ivan Jobs, *Riding the New Wave: Youth and the Rejuvenation of France after the Second World War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 191; Laura Levine Frader, *Breadwinners and Citizens: Gender and the Making of the French Social Model* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 234-235.

conventional wisdom of the period suggested that national strength, both economic and military, was tied directly to population numbers. As such, a lengthy process of depopulation proved cause for national anxiety.<sup>30</sup> The bloodletting of the First World War brought existing fears about French depopulation to a fever pitch. In the war's aftermath, the conservative French National Assembly deemed it prudent to intervene into the sexual lives of French citizens, culminating in a number of pro-natal strategies, including stringent law in defense of procreation.<sup>31</sup> It also turned to a number of policies meant to encourage higher birthrates, including the creation of robust social benefits as well as symbolic gestures that celebrated motherhood.<sup>32</sup> Despite failing to meet its intended goal of increasing national fertility, portions of the laws prohibiting contraceptives were later codified into the Public Health Code under the postwar Fourth Republic, reaffirming the state's commitment to increasing France's birth rates.<sup>33</sup> Despite mounting pressure for revision from the 1950s onward, the law remained in effect well into the 1960s; contraceptives were only partially legalized with the passage of the Neuwirth law in December 1967.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Mary-Louise Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 99.

<sup>31</sup> The law, passed on 31 July 1920, outlawed abortion and made all sale, distribution, and advertisement of contraceptives illegal. Any materials, ranging from pamphlets and books to fliers, that promoted or offered instruction for the prevention of pregnancy fell under purview of the law. See Janine Mossuz-Lavau, *Les lois de l'amour: Les politiques de la sexualité en France (1950-2002)* (Paris: Payot & Rivages, 2002), 16. For a thorough examination of the law as an expression of cultural anxieties, see the chapter "A Matter of Life or Death" in Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes*, 93-119.

<sup>32</sup> For instance, the Medal of the French Family, created in 1920, awarded mothers throughout France medals; bronze, silver, or gold depending on the number of children produced. In a similar spirit, the government established Mother's Day in 1926 as a means to celebrate mothers' contributions to the nation. Frader, *Breadwinners and Citizens*, 21-22.

<sup>33</sup> As opponents of the law made clear in the late 1950s, annual birthrates in France continued to decline, from approximately 800,000 annually in 1920 at the time of the law's passage to approximately 600,000 some 20 years later. See Mossuz-Lavau, *Les lois de l'amour*, 18-30.

<sup>34</sup> Already in the 1950s a growing number of advocacy groups, medical practitioners, and politicians began mounting challenges to the law. It was in 1965, however, that the question came into national focus, when, during the presidential election, the leftist candidate François Mitterrand made the legalization of contraceptives a part of

The attitudes on display in the *yé-yé* discourse, however far removed from the century-long politics of motherhood, were nevertheless products of this historical legacy. To be sure, the *yé-yé* media generally avoided discussion of questions of a sexual and political nature. This is not completely surprising, given that the *yé-yé* popular culture's (ostensible) purpose was to entertain, to say nothing of the fact that its primary audience consisted of adolescents ineligible to vote on such matters. Still, it was precisely because *yé-yé* appeared apolitical that the cultural assumptions it advanced carried weight – they were treated not as contested political views but as simple reflections of *nature*.

Many of the most famous stars of *yé-yé* confirmed these feminine ideals, either directly in interviews or indirectly through their depiction in entertainment stories. The singer France Gall, in the introductory issue of the youth magazine *Formidable*, confessed that “like all the girls” her age, she waited for “prince charming.” “I would like to have two or three children,” she added, noting that “as soon as their birth, I will abandon [my professional career] forever.”<sup>35</sup> More vaguely, Sylvie Vartan, noted once that, if she was unable to reconcile her professional and personal lives and had to choose one, she would “opt for the private life, for marriage.”<sup>36</sup> It was precisely this attitude that garnered favor elsewhere in the media. In an article appearing in a 1963 issue of *Age tendre et tête de bois*, two music critics sparred over which singer was better, Françoise Hardy or Vartan. The singers were the two most celebrated *chanteuses* in all of *yé-yé* and, as such, the critics debated their merits. Though seemingly unrelated to her capacity to

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his platform, a stark contrast to President Charles de Gaulle's paternalistic approach. The passage of the Neuwirth law on December 28, 1967 made contraceptives legal, but advertisements were still heavily regulated and youths under the age of 21 still needed parental consent for access. Mossuz-Lavau, *Les lois de l'amour*, 20-48; Robert Muchembled, *Insoumises: Une autre histoire des Françaises, XVI<sup>e</sup>-XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Autrement, 2013), 248.

<sup>35</sup> Claude Stevens, “Allez France,” *Formidable*, January 1965, 52.

<sup>36</sup> Raymond Mouly, “Songeuse Sylvie, Souriante et Sage,” *Salut les copains*, March 1963, 78.

perform music, the critic arguing in Vartan's favor, Michèle Ribaud, averred that, unlike the independent Hardy, it was one of Sylvie's charms that she could "admit that she is capable of abandoning her career to establish a home and have children."<sup>37</sup> On numerous occasions, the *yé-yé* media offered a romantic view of the family ideal. But it was not only the youth press that linked the stars of *yé-yé* to the prevailing conception of family in postwar France.

Adult-oriented magazines likewise seized opportunities to cast *yé-yé* singers in a domestic context. The popular women's magazine *Elle* ran a story in its July 1963 issue spotlighting Michèle Anthony, the wife of the *yé-yé* singer Richard Anthony.<sup>38</sup> The article no doubt sought to satisfy the public's appetite for information about the private lives of the famous. But instead of painting the picture of an exceptional lifestyle, the article stressed Madame Anthony's normalness in spite of her husband's unique career. Immediately, the journalist characterizes Madame Anthony as a demure housewife, eager to stay out of the spotlight and reluctant to be the article's main focus. The journalist describes the Anthonys' house, a domicile far removed from her expectations, and the sight of Madame Anthony's arrival at the foot of the staircase. She was, as the journalist described her, the "perfect lady of the house." As the conscientious host, Madame Anthony promptly laid out a pristine table setting and served her guest a warm beverage. Enjoying the arrangement, the author of the article deemed it "the *bourgeoisie* at tea-time."<sup>39</sup> In short, she was the ideal housewife. Equally suggestive was the inclusion of several photographs demonstrating Madame Anthony's motherly bona fides. In one

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<sup>37</sup> Louys Gros and Michèle Ribaud, "Françoise et Sylvie: c'est la guerre de sourires," *Age tendre et tête de bois*, April 1963, 31.

<sup>38</sup> Marlyse Shaeffer, "Comment vit la femme d'une idole: Mme Richard Anthony," *Elle*, July 26, 1963, 32-35.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.



photo, she laid in the grass, accompanied by her husband, their two young children, and the family dog. In it the two parents looked towards their children lovingly, a harmonious nuclear family. In another, Madame Anthony was depicted delicately feeding her children.<sup>40</sup> Capturing her at the most banal moments of the day, the article demystified the life of the celebrity wife while simultaneously affirming the universality of the housewife-mother ideal.

In a 1965 issue, the magazine *Mademoiselle âge tendre* provided a roundtable-type discussion that prompted six famous young women to offer their thoughts on marriage. Among them, four were musical performers (Sylvie Vartan, Françoise Hardy, Gillian Hills, and Marianne Faithfull), one an Olympic swimmer (Christine Caron), and the other a champion Alpine skier (Annie Famose).<sup>41</sup> Among other questions, the magazine asked the contributors whether marriage was a necessity and what constituted the ideal husband and the ideal wife. All of the participants, save for Françoise Hardy, deemed marriage a necessity.<sup>42</sup> The occasion provided the opportunity to affirm existing perceptions of the feminine ideal. Several respondents conjured the image of the modest housewife and doting mother as the model spouse. Caron, the Olympic swimmer, responded that “the ideal spouse is .... a girl capable of sewing, ironing, and cooking,” all while maintaining a smiling visage and a gay and coquettish demeanor. Understanding the unlikely reality of this ideal, Caron jokingly continued, “alas, I am not yet fit to marry.”<sup>43</sup> In the same discussion, Vartan defined the ideal wife more plainly. She

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 33, 35.

<sup>41</sup> "Le mariage: pourquoi? Quand? Comment? Six filles connues répondent ...," *Mademoiselle âge tendre*, May 1965, 62-65.

<sup>42</sup> Raised by an unmarried, single mother in a bourgeois *quartier* of Paris, it is perhaps unsurprising that Hardy felt little inclination to perpetuate the ideals of marriage and family that likely had little resonance with her. A recent biography, though unintended for a scholarly audience, sheds light on Hardy's upbringing. See Pierre Mikailoff, *Françoise Hardy: Tant de belles choses* (Monaco: Alphée Jean-Paul Bertrand, 2009).

<sup>43</sup> "Le mariage: pourquoi? Quand? Comment? Six filles connues répondent ...," 64.

concluded that “a girl who is going to marry must think foremost to two things: does she know how to keep [up] a house? Will she know how to take care of infants who might come?”<sup>44</sup>

As the above evidence suggests, the roles of mother and housewife often went hand in hand. Still, there were numerous occasions when the topic of children remained absent from discussion. Even without mention of children, though, the feminine ideal espoused in the *yé-yé* media still remained firmly rooted in the domestic sphere. The female stars of *yé-yé* were often expected to display the requisite qualities of being a housewife. Early in an interview with Sylvie Vartan, for instance, a journalist asked: “I would like to know if you have any household talents, if for example one could count on you to make an omelet.” The journalist, Raymond Mouly, continued, noting that he finds that “almost all of the female singers (*chanteuses*) have a little specialty that brings joy to their *copains* and to journalists.”<sup>45</sup> Somewhat defensively, Vartan replied that she helped her mother “sweep up and run the vacuum cleaner, that’s all.” Vartan, whose family emigrated from Bulgaria when she was eight years old, felt the need to explain her lack of further domestic knowhow. The rigors of learning the language consumed her energies: “At the age where I would have been able to learn cooking and sewing, like a lot of young girls do, I was a student completely absorbed by my studies,” she responded, reminding the interviewer of her Bulgarian origins.<sup>46</sup> Michèle Torr, interviewed in *Salut les copains*, was asked similar questions. The interviewer inquired whether the young singer knew how to sew and whether she could cook. Torr confessed that, while she had general knowledge in both, she was not particularly adept at either. It was in this same interview, already discussed earlier in the

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>45</sup> Mouly, “Songeuse Sylvie, Souriante et Sage,” 36.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

chapter, where Torr acknowledged her desire to delay marriage. In the following month's issue, a male reader wrote to the editor with a bit of sardonic advice. "Michèle Torr has good reason to want to marry as late as possible," he wrote. "She isn't sure how to sew a dress, she doesn't like to cook, and cites sleeping as her favorite distraction. Therefore guys, you've understood, if you nab Michèle, first get yourself a housemaid."<sup>47</sup>

While female domesticity had its roots in a nineteenth century *bourgeois* conception of privacy, the housewife envisioned in the descriptions above was a product of France's postwar experience. The Second World War threw the conception of "home" into turmoil, exacerbating existing shortcomings in housing that had plagued France since the nineteenth century.<sup>48</sup> The historian W. Brian Newsome estimates that France lost over two million structures as a result of the war.<sup>49</sup> The conflict left millions of families without adequate living accommodations. As national recovery commenced, housing became not only a site of reconstruction, but also of France's modernization efforts. Though rebuilding efforts launched at a slower rate than anticipated, by the mid-1950s the pace had great increased, reaching some 270,000 new housing

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<sup>47</sup> Gilles Gravier, "Si vous en pincez pour Michèle," *Salut les copains*, April 1965, 12.

<sup>48</sup> Even before the destruction brought by the war, there were questions about the state of French housing. An assessment undertaken by the wartime Vichy government in 1941-1942 underscored the dire situation. The survey found that the average house in France was fifty-seven years old and a fifth of all buildings were constructed before 1850. The average ages of buildings fluctuated greatly between regions. Parisian structures averaged seventy-three years. In Normandy, by contrast, country houses averaged 137 years old and a full 84% of them were over one hundred years old. French housing was plagued by more than just age though. The country also suffered from housing shortages and deficiencies. In 1912, for instance, a Paris survey found that only 50% of all Parisians (not just the working class) lived in comfortable housing. Meanwhile, some 300,000 of the city's inhabitants lived in cramped housing conditions, sometimes with whole families occupying a single room. On these figures, see Steven Zdatny, "The French Hygiene Offensive of the 1950s: A Critical Moment in the History of Manners," *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 84, no. 4 (December, 2012), 911; and James F. McMillan, *Twentieth Century France: Politics and Society 1898-1991* (London: Hodder Education, 1992), 56.

<sup>49</sup> W. Brian Newsome. *French Urban Planning 1940-1968: The Construction and Deconstruction of an Authoritarian System* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 1.

units per annum by 1957.<sup>50</sup> With the building of new housing came an increased appetite for domestic comforts from a population that had weathered a lengthy period of economic and material hardship. First came increased access to basic comforts, like clean running water, as well as indoor toilets, showers, and bathtubs.<sup>51</sup> Second, the expansion of France's economy availed the purchase of consumer durables that similarly spelled comfort within the home.

Appliances like the refrigerator and the washing machine became symbols of a modernized household, distancing French citizens from the memory of war and penury. The new home, replete with sophisticated consumer products, was symptomatic of France's larger modernization efforts, and whereas a new educated class of salaried, technocratic employees emerged to manage an increasingly technological and corporate postwar economy, women increasingly became seen as managers of the new household.<sup>52</sup> Adam C. Stanley argues that an

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<sup>50</sup> For comparison, only 74,920 housing units were built in the year 1952. Maurice Larkin, *France since the Popular Front: Government and People, 1936-1996*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 188.

<sup>51</sup> To point to only a couple of different metrics, in 1946 approximately 37% of households in France had access to running water in the home. By 1954 the number had climbed to approximately 58% of all homes. In 1946, roughly 5% had indoor bathrooms. This number had climbed to approximately 10% in 1954. Within these statistics, great disparities existed between major urban areas and rural communes. Still, the general trend was for greater access to these amenities. Of course, despite the general trajectory, shortcomings continued. Even by the mid-1960s, despite the massive building efforts, roughly half of French houses lacked indoor toilets. Zdatny, "The French Hygiene Offensive of the 1950s," 914-916; Larkin, *France since the Popular Front*, 211.

<sup>52</sup> The modernization of France's economy led to an increased need for an increasingly educated and trained workforce capable of managing an increasingly corporate economic landscape. This transformation lent itself to the emergence of a new middle class, one likely to occupy a mid-level, salaried position within a company or some other corporate entity. This was in contrast to the *petite bourgeoisie* of self-employed shopkeepers from earlier decades. Luc Botanski provides a thorough study of this new class in the context of postwar France. See Luc Botanski, *The Making of a Class: Cadres in French Society*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Rebecca J. Pulju meanwhile argues that women's social status underwent renegotiation in the postwar period. Enfranchised in 1944, women gained a new opportunity to participate in the public sphere. A societal priority on both rebuilding and modernizing the French economy provided women an opportunity to aid in this rebuilding efforts through their role as consumers. As "citizen consumers," they consumed for the good of their family while simultaneously helping to stimulate the economy. At the same time, though, dominant discourses defined women's contributions to the nation through their consumption and their "management" of the home and, in the process, secured their place in the domestic sphere in spite of newfound political rights. See Pulju, *Women and Mass Consumer Society in Postwar France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

ideology linking women to the “modern,” appliance-equipped home began in the interwar years at a time when actual ownership of domestic appliances was scant.<sup>53</sup> In the postwar period, discourse, imbued with an ideology of productivity and efficiency, linked women to the household further. Popular women’s magazines like *Elle* and *Marie-Claire* endeavored to educate their female readership, teaching them how to manage their homes in an efficient and orderly manner. Sharing the same mindset, domestic science courses prepared school-age girls to assume their eventual roles as productive, knowledgeable housewives.<sup>54</sup> The contradiction, of course, was that for many working-class and lower middle-class families, two incomes were required in order to afford the modern appliances.<sup>55</sup> As such, with the rise of an expanding consumer economy in the 1950s and 1960s, the number of two-income families in France duly rose. Still, despite an increasing need for women in the workplace, both state taxation policies and public opinion served to dissuade the participation of married women in the workforce well into the 1960s.<sup>56</sup> As late as 1963, 82% of the population thought that a married woman’s place was in the home.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> See the chapter “Duty and Empowerment: Constructing Modern Housewives” in Adam C. Stanley, *Modernizing Tradition: Gender and Consumerism in Interwar France and Germany* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 25-55.

<sup>54</sup> Duchon, *Women’s Rights and Women’s Lives in France 1944-1968*, 67-72.

<sup>55</sup> Françoise Battagliola, *Histoire du travail des femmes*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Découverte, 2008), 86.

<sup>56</sup> If a married couple both earned wages, they were taxed at a higher rate than if the husband was the sole wage-earner and also at a higher rate than if the two had declared their taxes separately. This situation served to discourage married women from entering the workforce. *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>57</sup> A Gallup Poll, working with the Institut Français d’Opinion Publique (IFOP) asked whether a married woman “should have a job” or “spend all of her time working at home.” Eighty-two percent felt she should “work at home” while only 17% thought she “should have a job” (1% did not know their feelings on the matter). See George H. Gallup, *The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls: France 1939, 1944-1975*, vol. 1 (New York: Random House, 1976), 363.

### Containing Youth Sexuality

As a dominant signifier of femininity, though, the mother-housewife had its rivals. In particular, the image of the young, independent girl provided a contrasting symbol to the tenets of motherhood and marriage. As depicted in popular media, the young girl often evoked, for good or for bad, visions of modernity. A potent early incarnation of the modern girl was the *garçonne*, a figure that entered the French cultural imagination in the 1920s. Featuring a short skirt, a bobbed haircut, and a casual attitude towards sexuality, the *garçonne* seemed to flout conservative societal norms. For observers, the *garçonne*, whether real or imagined, seemed to represent the myriad disruptions to the *bourgeois* social order in the aftermath of World War I.<sup>58</sup> In the 1950s a new image of youthful femininity appeared, conjured into being by popular works in film, literature, and advertisements. With these various works, a whole constellation of cultural signifiers emerged to lend coherence to a specific view of youthful femininity that, while different from the 1920s variant, nevertheless shared the apparent sexual promiscuity and subversive independence of its forebear. A representative example of this ascendant view of adolescent femininity was on full display in the 1954 novel *Bonjour tristesse* (*Hello, sadness*). Written by Françoise Sagan, who was herself not yet twenty years old, the novel centered around the teenage lead Cécile, a character defined by her sharp cynicism, manipulative behavior, and unburdened sexual urges. The book was an immediate, if controversial, success, selling over one million copies in France alone and winning a prestigious literary award in the year of its release. Its popularity nevertheless offered for some observers an uncomfortable image of teenage independence exercising resistance to a patriarchal *bourgeois* order through sexual means and a

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<sup>58</sup> For an examination of the *garçonne* in the interwar French cultural imagination, see Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes*, 19-87.

disregard for parental authority. The fact that the story came from the mind of a young girl made the anxiety all the more acute.<sup>59</sup>

While *Bonjour tristesse* became an obvious point of reference for the new, sexually-charged and independent femininity, no single person or cultural product came to define this postwar image more than the actress and fashion model Brigitte Bardot. Between 1952 and 1965, she cemented her reputation as one of the most recognizable international celebrities, appearing in nearly forty films and gracing the pages of innumerable magazines and tabloids during that span. Thanks to an insatiable interest from paparazzi, Bardot received more coverage in the press than even the French president, Charles de Gaulle.<sup>60</sup> Throughout, she exuded a cool and confident demeanor, outfitted in occasionally skimpy but always stylish ready-to-wear clothing alongside an effortlessly unkempt coiffure. It was a look eagerly emulated by millions of girls. In the process, she staked her claim as the first bona fide postwar sex symbol thanks to her sultry appearances in numerous films, like Roger Vadim's 1956 *Et Dieu ... créa la femme* (*And God created Woman*), where she comfortably flaunted her nude body onscreen for viewers' titillation. Her off-screen persona followed similar lines, with the media routinely sexualizing her image. What made Bardot so seemingly scandalous, though, was not only her comfortable expressions of sexual desire, it was also her unencumbered sexual aggressiveness. Her willing pursuit of male counterparts in search of her own sexual gratification, whether on-screen or off, appeared to subvert the gendered order of society, in which women were expected to be demure and

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<sup>59</sup> Jobs, *Riding the New Wave*, 206-213.

<sup>60</sup> Diana Holmes, "'A Girl of Today: Brigitte Bardot'" in John Gaffney and Diana Holmes, eds., *Stardom in Postwar France* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 43.

unassertive, waiting patiently for male attention.<sup>61</sup> It was ultimately Bardot's rejection of societal expectations regarding femininity that made her so simultaneously alluring and scandalous.<sup>62</sup>

With the rise of the *yé-yé* in the 1960s, the dominant image of youthful femininity underwent a subtle change. The casual sexuality displayed by Bardot and others was rebuked in favor of a more contained, conservative outlook. Emblematic of this shifting attitude was an article in the first issue of *Age tendre et tête de bois*. In an article, the journalist Naej Yruam excoriated Bardot, as the reigning sex symbol of the era, for crafting an unsuitable image for young people.<sup>63</sup> To begin the article, the journalist looked back nostalgically to Bardot's early career, when she was the so-called "Marianne of our youth" and the "petite princess of the 20<sup>th</sup> century." A number of controversies swiftly sullied this wholesome image. "But suddenly, alas," Yruam continued, "marriage, divorces, suicide [attempts], and above all films restricted to teens younger than 18."<sup>64</sup> To make the case that this view was not held by the author alone, the article included a number of brief responses from teenagers. Some understood the celebrity's decisions. Others, however, echoed the author's argument. One, an eighteen year old factory worker remarked that Bardot had "betrayed" young people with her regrettable actions. Another, a teenage girl, opined that young people needed a soft, agreeable, and intelligent girl to serve as a role model to young people. At one time Bardot met that criteria, the girl continued, but "it's true that she disappointed me."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Jobs, *Riding the New Wave*, 197-202.

<sup>62</sup> Michel Winock, *Chronique des années soixante* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), 146.

<sup>63</sup> Naej Yruam, "B. B. a-t-elle trahi la jeunesse?," *Age tendre et tête de bois*, January 1963, 34-39.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.



With the rejection of the sexualized image of Bardot, the *yé-yé* phenomenon began crafting its own image of youthful femininity in the form of the *copine*. The *copine* – the idealized female adherent of *yé-yé* – retained some hallmarks from its 1950s predecessors, adopting the carefree and independent spirit as well as the gratification through personal pleasure. But whereas the pursuit of pleasure was expressed in sexual terms by earlier icons like Bardot, the *copines* channeled it in different ways, redirecting it from sexuality and towards consumption and leisure. In the process, the concept of youthful femininity became contained; no longer did it stand in stark contrast to the domesticity of the mouser-housewife ideal. Instead, it became a prelude to it, a brief window of time where an adolescent girl can enjoy her frivolities before assuming her ordained role within the home.<sup>66</sup>

The teen magazine *Formidable* reflected as much in a lengthy examination of “the girls [of] ‘66.’”<sup>67</sup> Immediately, the article revealed the fact that the “typical” girl in 1966 would pursue her driver’s examinations with an eye towards eventual automobile ownership. The girl of 1966 wore the latest fashions, had money to spend, and was highly sociable. She could go out several evenings per week and she could remark freely about the trivialities of teenage romance. Taken together, the article suggested that the modern girl was an independent, fun-loving, and carefree consumer. Before concluding, though, the article felt it necessary to remind its readers that, though these teens knew how to have fun, they still “contemplate marriage with much

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<sup>66</sup> This is an argument made by Susan Wiener. Though not addressing the *copine* specifically, she finds that popular representations of teenage girls in the 1960s framed the apparent independence brought by consumption and leisure as a precursor to an eventual lifetime of marriage and motherhood. See Susan Weiner, “Two Modernities: From ‘Elle’ to ‘Mademoiselle’ . Women’s magazines in Postwar France,” *Contemporary European History* 8, no. 3 (Nov., 1999): 395-409.

<sup>67</sup> Annie Boutaud, “Les filles 66 sont comme ça,” *Formidable*, November 1965, 21-27.

seriousness.”<sup>68</sup> Intending to marry between 20 and 22 years old, these girls would soon be the “perfect spouses.” The following quotation from a young respondent made it clear what this meant: for her future husband, the girl quoted promised that she “will make all his favorite meals.”<sup>69</sup> As such, the girls, while enjoying the pleasures of youth, still looked forward to a lifetime as loyal spouses.

Well into the 1960s, the *yé-yé* popular culture offered a singular vision of marriage and family. Popular female singers and journalists affirmed the importance of marriage and roles of mothers and housewives within it. Throughout, magazines, songs, and other sources collectively operated to define adolescence in relation to the feminine domestic ideal. While they could have fun, they were expected to nevertheless envision the future, aligning their expectations with those of a society that still deemed women’s foremost role within the household. Even with the emergence of expressions of sexuality outside of marriage, on display in works like *Bonjour tristesse* and the films of Brigitte Bardot, the major influences of *yé-yé* continued to echo dominant notions of gender and sexuality emblematic of the early postwar period. When, in the late 1960s, young people began to challenge the conservative outlook on sexuality and gender, they likewise rejected the assumptions upheld by the stars and media of *yé-yé*. As the epilogue suggests, the popular resonance of *yé-yé* amongst young people, so prevalent in the middle of the 1960s, correspondingly declined in accordance with changing tastes and attitudes.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 26.

## EPILOQUE: THE DECLINE OF YÉ-YÉ, 1966-1968

In May 1968, the whole of France was brought to a screeching halt. What started out as a campus protest at a university on the outskirts of Paris had escalated by month's end to a nationwide general strike that joined students and workers, both disillusioned by France's modernization efforts, in a common cause to refashion French society. Workers occupied factories while the university students seized control of campuses. Leftist organizations staged massive marches, and students clashed with police, forming cobblestone barricades and placarding Paris with inventive graffiti and posters. For the discontented students, the events of May proved a cathartic revolt against a system that had reserved a vital role for them but allowed them no voice. Their ambitious agenda included education reform, heightened sexual freedoms, and more political participation, as well as a general rejection of what they saw as an increasingly technocratic and bureaucratic society of consumption under the heavy hand of Gaullism. While the music and of *yé-yé* was not caught directly in the fray, it was nevertheless an integral part of the system that felt so stifling for so many young people. The protestors' impassioned lament of "consumer society" certainly included a *yé-yé* popular culture which had gone to such lengths to celebrate France's consumerist aspirations.<sup>1</sup>

The protests of May 1968 were not the first signs of a fading *yé-yé* popular culture, but rather the final pronounced denouement of a gradual decline that began several years earlier. The rise of the folk singer Antoine, who burst onto the French music scene in 1966, and his subsequent rift with Johnny Hallyday, *yé-yé*'s reigning king, was a pronounced example of the

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<sup>1</sup> For a general history of the May 1968 events in France, see Andrew Feenberg and Jim Freedman, *When Poetry Ruled the Streets: The French May Events of 1968* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001);

changing direction of French popular music. From the start, he cultivated an image built in opposition to the wholesome *copains* of *yé-yé*. Whereas, by 1965, Johnny Hallyday (the preeminent *yé-yé* teen idol) had adopted a respectably clean-cut middle class persona, Antoine offered a rebellious bohemian image more befitting Haight-Ashbury than the Left Bank of Paris.<sup>2</sup> Antoine's self-titled debut album, released in early 1966, featured the singer crouched with acoustic guitar in hand, his shoulder-length hair falling on a flowery shirt. His biggest hit from the album, "Les Elucubrations D'Antoine" ("The Rantings of Antoine"), stirred controversy with its flippant lyrics laced with sarcasm.<sup>3</sup> Aside from mentioning the singer's preference for long hair and flower-print shirts, it also touched on social issues: its final verse recounted a fictional conversation with President de Gaulle who asked the singer what he would do to improve the country. His response: "Put the [birth control] pill on sale in the [retail store] Monoprix."<sup>4</sup> The lyrics celebrated newness and change. As one verse read: "Everything should change all the time/ The world would be much more amusing/ We would see planes in the metro corridors/ And Johnny Hallyday in a cage at [the] Médrano [Circus]."<sup>5</sup> Mocking the most popular *yé-yé* singer underscored Antoine's bid to differentiate himself. Hallyday responded to the public slight with a song of his own, titled "Cheveux Longs et Idées Courtes" ("Long Hair and Short on Ideas"),

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<sup>2</sup> For evidence of Hallyday's carefully constructed image, one need look no further than his album covers. His 1964 album, released at the height of *yé-yé*'s popularity, featured the singer wearing a neat button-up shirt with a cardigan tied loosely around his shoulders. See Johnny Hallyday, *No. 3*, Philips B 76 557 R, 1964, 10" Album.

<sup>3</sup> Antoine, "Les Elucubrations D'Antoine," *Antoine*, Disques Vogue LVLX 56 30, 1966, LP.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

which mocked the self-righteousness and self-aggrandizement of Antoine and others.<sup>6</sup> His image changed too, as by late 1966 he had long sideburns and shaggy hair, but it was too little too late.<sup>7</sup>

A *New York Times* article, highlighting the feud between Antoine and Hallyday, recognized the changing shift in popular tastes. Hallyday, the article found, was “a young man with long hair which may not be quite long enough.”<sup>8</sup> “His elders viewed him as a smoldering rebel” the article continued, “but can it be that, at the ripe age of 23, he has become bourgeois?” The two singers personified the larger gulf between the apolitical conservatism of *yé-yé* and the newer musical trends shaped by a yearning for political expression. “The Antoine enthusiasts have made it very clear that they consider Hallyday passé, bourgeois, someone who has nothing to say. On the other hand, Hallyday and his fans believe that Antoine represents a trend toward a new femininity in men.”<sup>9</sup> The difference, the article noted, came down to the fact that Hallyday played uncomplicated rock and roll while Antoine “clicks with songs about current events,” which included birth control, the Vietnam War, and racism. It was clear that Antoine, with his “rambling songs of protest,” had become the new trendsetter.<sup>10</sup>

The sensations caused by Antoine were symptomatic of a larger transformation. For one, the popular music press changed, becoming more fragmented. For the first half of the decade, the majority of the magazines collectively affirmed, in one way or another, the *copain* culture. Over the second half of the decade, a number of new music magazines emerged. Unlike the magazines

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<sup>6</sup> Johnny Hallyday, “Cheveux Longs et Idées Courtes,” *La Génération Perdue*, Philips P 70 381, 1966, LP.

<sup>7</sup> See for instance the cover of his 1966 album *La Génération Perdue*, particularly compared to his prior full-length album *No. 7*, which, released in 1964, featured Hallyday in his military uniform. See Johnny Hallyday, *No. 7*, Philips B 76600 R, 1964, 10” Album.

<sup>8</sup> David Halberstam, “Ye Ye ou Non, Non?,” *New York Times*, July 17, 1966, 20d.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

of *yé-yé*, which contented themselves following teen idols and celebrating adolescent fun, these new periodicals struck a more intellectual and analytical tone. First came *Rock & Folk* in 1966, then *Beat* in 1968, and finally *Actuel* in 1970.<sup>11</sup> By the late 1960s, there remained only vestiges of the once prominent musical phenomenon. Many of the teen music magazines dated from the *yé-yé* years between 1962 and 1966 folded; only *Salut les copains* and its sister publication *Mademoiselle âge tendre*, not coincidentally both under the capable direction of Daniel Filipacchi, continued into the 1970s. At the same time, many of the teen idols who found fame during the *yé-yé* phenomenon's height struggled to adapt. Of the popular singers, only the biggest stars to emerge from the genre, like Françoise Hardy and Sylvie Vartan, proved able to sustain success late into their careers. They did so, however, by transcending the *yé-yé* image and sound. Others, like Claude François and Sheila, reinvented themselves by riding the next wave in French popular music, disco.

Though the decline was gradual, by 1968 the *yé-yé* popular culture proved out of step with the young people it had long claimed to reflect. This was made abundantly clear amid the protests of May. The collective silence from the phenomenon's major voices – teen idols and magazines – on the topic spoke volumes. A June 1968 issue of the magazine *Noir et blanc* interviewed a number of teen idols to determine “what they think of the young people's ‘revolution.’”<sup>12</sup> Most, like Johnny Hallyday and Sheila, proved evasive, refusing to offer a clear opinion. Françoise Hardy, perceived to be the most cerebral of the *yé-yé* teen idols, responded

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<sup>11</sup> David Looseley, "In from the margins: *chanson*, pop and cultural legitimacy," in Hugh Dauncey and Steve Cannon, ed.s, *Popular Music in France from Chanson to Techno: Culture, Identity, and Society* (Burlington, VA: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003), 34; Chris Warne, "Bringing Counterculture to France: *Actuel* Magazine and the Legacy of May '68," *Modern & Contemporary France* 15, no. 3 (August 2007): 309-324.

<sup>12</sup> Alain Spiraux, "Ce qu'ils pensent de la 'révolution' des jeunes," *Noir et blanc*, no. 1213, June 27-July 3, 1968, 7-9.

that she was “neither a suffragette nor a militant” and refused to take a public position.<sup>13</sup> Some went even further. France Gall noted that what had started out as “a certain irritation” eventually escalated to a level that scared her. “But today,” she continued, “I am completely reassured. Everything has returned to order. What happiness!”<sup>14</sup> Frank Alamo went so far as to say that “fortunately,” after all of the commotion, “General de Gaulle has proven himself up to the task. He was the strongest and he showed it.”<sup>15</sup> The *presse des jeunes* reacted similarly. The July 1968 issue of *Salut les copains*, for instance, featured no mention of the near-revolution the month prior. It contented itself with coverage of Johnny Hallyday and Sylvie Vartan’s tour and vacation of South America and Claude François’ travels to Africa.<sup>16</sup> In the May issue, meanwhile, only André Arnaud, the magazine’s resident news and opinion columnist, mentioned the nationwide protests. His column featured a certain level of sympathy for the plight of the student protesters, but Arnaud made sure to couple it with admonishment for the “agitators” whose only aim, he averred, was to cause chaos. Throughout the article, Arnaud sternly reminded his readers that a noble goal is easily corrupted by vandalism and ill-directed anger.<sup>17</sup>

In an analysis the following year, the sociologist and social commentator Edgar Morin found that the rise of mass culture and mass consumption in a society of leisure and affluence allowed for the creation of two distinct categories of youth. On the “right wing” he identified a youth culture that was “almost entirely integrated and integrationist, with its cult of the stars (fan clubs, autographed photos, almost total absence of dissonance)” typified by the *yé-yé* popular

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>16</sup> *Salut les copains*, June 1968.

<sup>17</sup> André Arnaud, “Copains-flashes,” *Salut les copains*, May 1968, 28, 31.

culture. Among the “left wing,” Morin observed a youth culture where “consummation took priority over consumption, where one is very close to violence, to marijuana, to LSD, to the denunciation of official values, to political contestation.”<sup>18</sup>

What was the legacy of *yé-yé*? Certainly, from a musical standpoint, its enduring impact was limited; it never gained the critical praise that other genres like jazz or the *chanson française*, did, and it was only once popular music musicians began crafting songs in contrast to the “mainstream” *yé-yé* sound that the Anglo-American musical style gained a legitimacy of its own in France.<sup>19</sup> The genre nevertheless deserves credit for adapting American-influenced popular musical styles into an original French alternative. As this thesis has suggested all along, though, *yé-yé*'s impact extended far beyond its musical contributions. Through its sheer magnitude and popularity, the popular culture found itself well-positioned to define what it meant to be young in mid-1960s France, and in doing so offered a cohesive image of adolescence that fully embraced the broader goals of a decolonized France.

Taken further, in defining youth, the popular culture also, on some level, articulated a vision of modern France. It accepted, if tacitly, the imperatives of economic and cultural modernization that preoccupied the intellectual and political elite of the era. *Yé-yé* provided a rational portrait of France's transformation into a mass consumer society, one that, if its popularity was any indication, enjoyed a level of legitimacy and consensus. Its widespread acceptance marked a departure from the era of the *blousons noirs* only a few short years prior, when the idea of youth consumerism stoked exaggerated fears about the erosion of France's

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<sup>18</sup> Edgar Morin, “Culture adolescente et révolte étudiante,” *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 24, no. 3 (May-June 1969): 767.

<sup>19</sup> This is an argument put forth by David Looseley. See Looseley, “In from the margins,” 27-39.



identity amid the twin threats of modernization and “Americanization.” At the same time, the archetypal *copain*, as defined discursively, implied both an urban and increasingly educated existence as integral to the modern adolescent experience. Such a representation lent a cultural coherence to the social and economic changes underway at the time. It reflected the democratization and expansion of secondary and higher education, an undertaking deemed vital to France’s modernization efforts and its thrust towards swift technological advancement. Finally, if popular media representations were any indication, the *copain* culture also suggested an inherent whiteness, lending the appearance of (racial and ethnic) unity in the definition of “Frenchness” in the wake of decolonization, a definition that obscured France’s complex racial makeup and put the appearance of distance between “modern” France and its imperial past.

Though the *yé-yé* phenomenon never had any direct affinity with the ruling Gaullists, it was nevertheless a product of the climate of conservatism and stability engendered by de Gaulle and his contemporaries. Coming on the heels of an half century of uninterrupted crises (two world wars followed by a succession of colonial wars, periods of economic hardship as well as social and political turmoil), by the early 1960s the French public placed a premium on stability. *Yé-yé* helped serve that need, coupling its consumerist outlook with an apolitical social conservatism that emphasized traditional gender roles and sexual relationships. The popular culture helped usher in a period where the French public, unburdened by any major internal or external crisis, could enjoy the fruits of national prosperity. It was only once France became “bored,” to quote a prescient *Le Monde* article from spring 1968, that the world envisioned by

yé-yé lost its allure.<sup>20</sup> For a baby boomer generation who had never known anything other than affluence and abundance, yé-yé's promotion of apolitical leisure and consumption was no longer enough. Like de Gaulle, the popular music was deemed too conservative and too out of touch with the needs of France's young generation. Their vociferous, if ultimately unrealized, rejection of what France had become – namely, a nation that had over a relatively brief span of time undergone a consumer revolution buttressed by far-reaching economic and technological change, while abandoning a global empire in favor of a strictly defined border on the European continent, all under de Gaulle's paternalistic stewardship – underscored just how much France had changed (or was perceived to have changed). The yé-yé popular culture was vital to that perceived change, articulating a vision of modern France and youth's role in it.

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<sup>20</sup> On March 15, 1968, Pierre Viansson-Ponté published an article in the daily newspaper *Le Monde* titled "France is bored." It evidently captured a palpable feeling of frustration that would manifest itself less than two months later in the protests of May 1968. The article is mentioned in Charles G. Cogan, "The Break-up: General de Gaulle's Separation from Power," *Journal of Contemporary History* 27, no. 1 (Jan. 1992): 177.

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