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Fast Cars, Clean Bodies examines the crucial decade from Dien Bien Phu to the mid-1960s when France shifted rapidly from an agrarian, insular, and empire-oriented society to a decolonized, Americanized, and fully industrial one. In this analysis of a startling cultural transformation Kristin Ross finds the contradictions of the period embedded in its various commodities and cultural artifacts—automobiles, washing machines, women's magazines, film, popular fiction, even structuralism—as ...

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The car, the new cult of cleanliness, and the waning of Sartre from national attention, focus in this prehistory of postmodern France. From the Back Cover 'Fast Cars, Clean Bodies' examines the crucial decade from Dien Bien Phu to the mid-1960s, when France shifted from an agrarian, insular, and empire-oriented society to a decolonized, Americanized, and fully industrial one.

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Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture (London and Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995). Show all authors. Michael Kelly. Michael Kelly. See all articles by this author. Search Google Scholar for this author. First Published October 1, 1995 Review Article.

### Essay Review : Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Kristin Ross. Fast ...

Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture. MIT Press. 1995. ISBN 9780262181617. French translation, re-edition, Flammarion, 2006. May '68 and Its Afterlives. Chicago. 2002. ISBN 9780226727974. French translation, Le Monde Diplomatique/Complexe, 2005. Re-edition Editions Agone 2011. (co-editor, with Andrew Ross).

Fast Cars, Clean Bodies examines the crucial decade from Dien Bien Phu to the mid-1960s when France shifted rapidly from an agrarian, insular, and empire-oriented society to a decolonized, Americanized, and fully industrial one. In this analysis of a startling cultural transformation Kristin Ross finds the contradictions of the period embedded in its various commodities and cultural artifacts--automobiles, washing machines, women's magazines, film, popular fiction, even structuralism--as well as in the practices that shape, determine, and delimit their uses. In each of the book's four chapters, a central object of mythical image is refracted across a range of discursive and material spaces: social and private, textual and cinematic, national and international. The automobile, the new cult of cleanliness in the capital and the colonies, the waning of Sartre and de Beauvoir as the couple of national attention, and the emergence of reshaped, functionalist masculinities (revolutionary, corporate, and structural) become the key elements in this prehistory of postmodernism in France. Modernization ideology, Ross argues, offered the promise of limitless, even timeless, development. By situating the rise of "end of history" ideologies within the context of France's transition into mass culture and consumption, Ross returns the touted timelessness of modernization to history. She shows how the realist fiction and film of the period, as well as the work of social theorists such as Barthes, Lefebvre, and Morin who began at the time to conceptualize "everyday life," laid bare the disruptions and the social costs of events. And she argues that the logic of the racism prevalent in France today, focused on the figure of the immigrant worker, is itself the outcome of the French state's embrace of capitalist modernization ideology in the 1950s and 1960s.

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During May 1968, students and workers in France united in the biggest strike and the largest mass movement in French history. Protesting capitalism, American imperialism, and Gaullism, 9 million people from all walks of life, from shipbuilders to department store clerks, stopped working. The nation was paralyzed—no sector of the workplace was untouched. Yet, just thirty years later, the mainstream image of May '68 in France has become that of a mellow youth revolt, a cultural transformation stripped of its violence and profound sociopolitical implications. Kristin Ross shows how the current official memory of May '68 came to serve a political agenda antithetical to the movement's aspirations. She examines the roles played by sociologists, repentant ex-student leaders, and the mainstream media in giving what was a political event a predominantly cultural and ethical meaning. Recovering the political language of May '68 through the tracts, pamphlets, and documentary film footage of the era, Ross reveals how the original movement, concerned above all with the question of equality, gained a new and counterfeit history, one that erased police violence and the deaths of participants, removed workers from the picture, and eliminated all traces of anti-Americanism, anti-imperialism, and the influences of Algeria and Vietnam. *May '68 and Its Afterlives* is especially timely given the rise of a new mass political movement opposing global capitalism, from labor strikes and anti-McDonald's protests in France to the demonstrations against the World Trade Organization in Seattle.

Of all the aspects of recovery in postwar Germany perhaps none was as critical or as complicated as the matter of dealing with Nazi criminals, and, more broadly, with the Nazi past. While on the international stage German officials spoke with contrition of their nation's burden of guilt, at home questions of responsibility and retribution were not so clear. In this masterful examination of Germany under Adenauer, Norbert Frei shows that, beginning in 1949, the West German government dramatically reversed the denazification policies of the immediate postwar period and initiated a new "Vergangenheitspolitik," or "policy for the past," which has had enormous consequences reaching into the present. *Adenauer's Germany and the Nazi Past* chronicles how amnesty laws for Nazi officials were passed unanimously and civil servants who had been dismissed in 1945 were reinstated liberally—and how a massive popular outcry led to the release of war criminals who had been condemned by the Allies. These measures and movements represented more than just the rehabilitation of particular individuals. Frei argues that the amnesty process delegitimized the previous political expurgation administered by the Allies and, on a deeper level, served to satisfy the collective psychic needs of a society longing for a clean break with the unparalleled political and moral catastrophe it had undergone in the 1940s. Thus the era of Adenauer devolved into a scandal-ridden period of reintegration at any cost. Frei's work brilliantly and chillingly explores how the collective will of the German people, expressed through mass allegiance to new consensus-oriented democratic parties, cast off responsibility for the horrors of the war and Holocaust, effectively silencing engagement with the enormities of the Nazi past.

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Against the backdrop of one of the great transformations of our century, the sudden and unexpected fall of communism as a ruling system, Charles Maier recounts the history and demise of East Germany. *Dissolution* is his poignant, analytically provocative account of the decline and fall of the late German Democratic Republic. This book explains the powerful causes for the disintegration of German communism as it constructs the complex history of the GDR. Maier looks at the turning points in East Germany's forty-year history and at the mix of coercion and consent by which the regime functioned. He analyzes the GDR as it evolved from the purges of the 1950s to the peace movements and emerging youth culture of the 1980s, and then turns his attention to charges of Stasi collaboration that surfaced after 1989. In the context of describing the larger collapse of communism, Maier analyzes German elements that had counterparts throughout the Soviet bloc, including its systemic and eventually terminal economic crisis, corruption and privilege in the SED, the influence of the Stasi and the plight of intellectuals and writers, and the slow loss of confidence on the part of the ruling elite. He then discusses the mass protests and proliferation of dissident groups in 1989, the collapse of the ruling party, and the troubled aftermath of unification. *Dissolution* is the first book that spans the communist collapse and the ensuing process of unification, and that draws on newly available archival documents from the last phases of the GDR, including Stasi reports, transcripts of Politburo and Central Committee debates, and papers from the Economic Planning Commission, the Council of Ministers, and the office files of key party officials. This book is further bolstered by Maier's extensive knowledge of European history and the Cold War, his personal observations and conversations with East Germans during the country's dramatic transition, and memoirs and other eyewitness accounts published during the four-decade history of the GDR.

France today is in the throes of a crisis about whether to represent social differences within its political system and, if so, how. It is a crisis defined by the rhetoric of a universalism that takes the abstract individual to be the representative not only of citizens but also of the nation. In *Parité!* Joan Wallach Scott shows how the requirement for abstraction has led to the exclusion of women from French politics. During the 1990s, *le mouvement pour la parité* successfully campaigned for women's inclusion in elective office with an argument that is unprecedented in the annals of feminism. The paritaristes insisted that if the abstract individual were thought of as sexed, then sexual difference would no longer be a relevant consideration in politics. Scott insists that this argument was neither essentialist nor separatist; it was not about women's special qualities or interests. Instead, *parité* was rigorously universalist—and for that reason was both misunderstood and a source of heated debate.

Reclaiming the legacy of the Paris Commune for the twenty-first century Kristin Ross's highly acclaimed work on the thought and culture of the Communard uprising of 1871 resonates with the motivations and actions of contemporary protest, which has found its most powerful expression in the reclamation of public space. Today's concerns—internationalism, education, the future of labor, the status of art, and ecological theory and practice—frame and inform her carefully researched restaging of the words and actions of individual Communards. This original analysis of an event and its centrifugal effects brings to life the workers in Paris who became

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revolutionaries, the significance they attributed to their struggle, and the elaboration and continuation of their thought in the encounters that transpired between the insurrection's survivors and supporters like Marx, Kropotkin, and William Morris. The Paris Commune was a laboratory of political invention, important simply and above all for, as Marx reminds us, its own "working existence." Communal Luxury allows readers to revisit the intricate workings of an extraordinary experiment.

Kennedy in Berlin examines one of the most spectacular political events of the twentieth century. It tells the story of the enthusiastically celebrated visit that US president John F. Kennedy paid to Berlin, the 'frontline city of the Cold War,' in June 1963. The president's tour resonated around the world, not least on account of Kennedy's famous declaration – 'Ich bin ein Berliner.' Andreas W. Daum sets Kennedy's visit against the background of the special relationship that had developed between the United States and West Berlin in the wake of World War II, and Kennedy in Berlin is an innovative contribution to the study of transatlantic relations, the Cold War, and the conduct of diplomacy in the age of mass media. Using a broad range of sources, this book sheds new light on the interplay between politics and culture in the modern era.

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