

Special Feature:

JWSFH Mixtape:

50th Anniversary Edition

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NOISE REDUCTION

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TABETHA LEIGH EWING
SARAH MILES
ROBIN WALZ

Welcome to the *JWSFH MIXTAPE*. To mark the 50th anniversary of the Western Society for French History in 2024, we decided to take the journal's readers back in time, reflecting on the last five decades of scholarship that has appeared in its volumes. We invited three different historians of France and the Francophone world to look through back issues of the journal. They then generated a "playlist" of five papers/articles, one drawn from each decade since WSFH's inaugural meeting back in 1974. We love the way each of these authors made this assignment their own. Tabetha Ewing leaned into music and sound, linking her selections to some killer songs. Sarah Miles emphasized political action and past-present connections in a list that highlights our roles as scholars and educators. Robin Walz reflected on the collegial connections that have shaped his understanding of the field over decades. We hope you enjoy their mix as much as we do!

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1974-1983

["Luncheon Remarks" of Consul General Emmanuel de Castéja, vol. 2 \(1975\): viii-x.](#)

Reparative Description? "Remember back in the day, when everyone was black and conscious, and that brought us all together?" Liquid and soulful, Meshell Ndegeocello's edgy lament captures my 1970s, when being "conscious" or "woke" was warm, collective, and hopeful. Too soon along this beautiful project, I was stopped by the violence of the racist antiracism in the consul's remarks. "Race" was not my key term, yet race was right there at the origin of our learned societies, despite its periodic disappearance as a legitimate category of historical analysis. I put this project down for a month, consulted with an expert on archiving and reparative description, and skipped ahead to 2021. TE

[Patricia and Robert Baker, "Actions Speak Louder than Words, but what do they say? An Essay on Working-Class Language and Politics in Early Twentieth-Century France," vol. 3 \(1975\): 402-411.](#)

Patricia and Robert Baker's 1975 essay examines the language of working-class action in early twentieth-century France. They focus on two strikes: one in Halluin (on the border near Belgium) in 1903 and one in Lille in 1909 to understand how "working-class dissatisfaction" was expressed within "the existing means of communication": namely, analyzing

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the semiotics of actions rather than written text.

A classic example of the research in the linguistic turn, the Bakers are also fascinating as scholars. The couple managed a ranch in Colorado while Robert taught classes at Colorado Mountain College—for them, exploring how working-class people dreamt "revolutionary futures" without writing them down might have been a personal as well as a scholarly goal. SM

[John Merriman, "The 'Demoiselles' of the Ariège, 1829-30," vol. 1 \(1974\): 152-164.](#)

John Merriman was a loyal member of the WSFH, who mentored multiple generations of graduate students and colleagues. I was delighted to discover this article by him in the first issue of the *Proceedings* (whose typewritten text and xerox quality resemble a fanzine). A young scholar at the time, hallmark themes in his scholarship are already present: the history of France told through provincial archives, the social history of common people, and delightful stories about contrarians who challenge the established order. For me, his crowning achievement is *Police Stories: Building the French State 1815-1851* (Oxford University Press, 2007). RW

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1984-1993

[Arlette Farge, « Les Comportements Populaire à Paris au XVIII^e Siècle: Représentations Culturelles et Sociales » vol. 14 \(1987\): 101-114.](#)

Voice of the People. Tuning in to WBGO Newark jazz from New York City. Christy Pichichero and Jennifer Boittin introduce a short ethnography in Volume 48 (2022) that cautions against speaking for others and the misuse of conventional archives. The voices of Elsa Vallot and Lamine Tandian in “Penser le quartier de Barbès” took me back to the 1986 keynote of Arlette Farge. Here, Farge reflects on the complexity of her archive and on the risks of confounding individual and collective thought as we pursue the question, who matters in history. Farge’s experiments in amplifying old regime voices have modeled how to work ethnographically without abandoning questions distinct to historical inquiry. TE

[William Logue, “French Political Thought in the 1980s: Return to the Rights of Man?” vol. 16 \(1988\): 283-290.](#)

While in Paris in 1986-1987 researching the politics of the early Third Republic, William Logue noticed an upsurge in publications arguing for a liberal return to the “Rights of Man.” Presaging later work on the history of human rights, Logue argues in this essay that socialists’ and communists’ “belated recognition” of

humanitarian abuses in the Soviet Bloc and the anti-authoritarianism of May ’68 helped to bring liberal theories of the Rights of Man back to the foreground in the late 1980s. Though he repeats now-challenged tropes (for instance, that Alexandr Solzhenitsyn’s *Gulag Archipelago* revealed the reality of gulags to the French Left), Logue’s historical analysis of a phenomenon he himself witnessed is a worthy example of how to think about the present through the past. SM

[Amy B. Millstone, “Histoire de la Troisième République’: A Right-Wing Satirical Cartoon,” vol. 16 \(1988\): 464-472.](#)

Amy Millstone’s legacy endures in the WSFH through the Millstone Prize for Best Interdisciplinary Paper and Millstone Research Fellowships. This article displays her own interdisciplinary prowess through a textual and visual analysis of a Second Empire cartoon penned by antisemitic woman of letters and right-wing anarchist Gyp. Millstone had outlined Gyp’s childhood and education in the previous issue of the *Proceedings*, “Behind Closed Doors: A Girl’s Liberal Home Education under the Second Empire” (vol. 15, 1987). Gyp’s personal and political antinomies are further elucidated in Willa Z. Silverman’s *The Notorious Life of Gyp: Right-Wing Anarchist in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Oxford University Press, 1995). RW

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1994-2003

[Daniel Rosenberg, "Condillac's Exemplary Student," vol. 24 \(1997\): 462-471.](#)

Non-Reflective Glass. Listening to David Bowie's "I'm Afraid of Americans" slide into MC Lyte's "Cold Rock A Party." (Don't ask!) "Condillac's Exemplary Student" is analytical precision from a master storyteller who casts ideas and infrastructures as protagonists. As with Leslie Tuttle's essay, an ethnographic reading of historical thinking is embedded in the argument. Rosenberg's work, here and elsewhere, may capture the structuring structures that structured daily life, but it's also, somehow, readable and funny. TE

[Joshua M. Humphreys, "Memories of Abandonment and Intervention: Reconsidering French Communism during Prague 1968," vol. 27 \(1999\): 22-32.](#)

In 1998, the French Communist Party's Secretary-General Robert Hue decided to open the national party's archives. Now a regular stop for scholars of the French Left and internationalism, Humphreys' 1999 essay takes advantage of this development to examine how French Communists responded to the crisis of the Prague Spring. He argues that the PCF's critical stance in 1968 had more to do with domestic concerns shaped by the memory of Soviet intervention in Hungary than with a sense of "fraternal solidarity with reform movements" in the Soviet bloc. Even while working on

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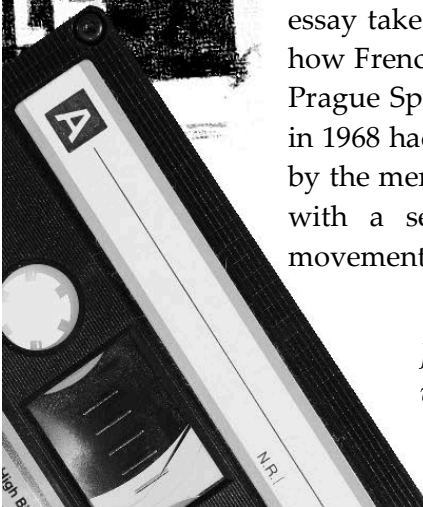
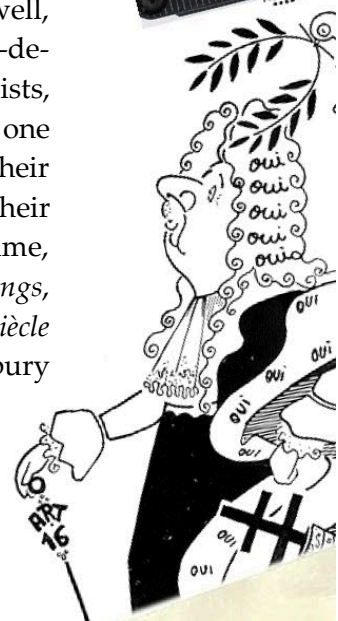
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an increasingly distant past, the archival politics of the present – as Humphreys shows and as contemporary scholars of French Algeria know – shapes the work we do as historians. At least, this piece reminds us, there's always hope new material might be released. SM

[Susan A. Ashley, "Marginal People: Degeneration and Genius," vol. 24 \(1997\): 101-109.](#)

Susan Ashley, former President and Secretary of the WSFH, has been a supportive colleague to me for many years. She has been a challenging one as well, questioning my critical perspective that pits fin-de-siècle French and Italian criminologists, psychiatrists, social theorists, medical and legal experts against one another, to argue that in historical context their conceptual frameworks shared more than their disagreements. This is one of several articles on crime, insanity, and deviance she published in the *Proceedings*, reworked into the chapters of "Misfits" in *Fin-de-Siècle France and Italy: Anatomies of Difference* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2017). RW

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2004-2013

[Autumn Dolan, "You Would Do Better to Keep Your Mouth Shut": The Significance of Talk in Sixth-Century Gaul," vol. 40 \(2012\): 1-14.](#)

Go Small. Listening to Bach's "Passacaglia" in C-minor and Stevie Wonder's "They Won't Go When I Go," successively, I'm thinking about percussive repetition and satisfaction. Dolan's "Keep Your Mouth Shut" about rumor and talk in 6th-century Gaul is satisfying. Like the opening repetition of Stevie and Bach, it works expertly inside a narrow set of contemporary sources. Dolan is concerned with countering influential stereotypes of this period's violence. In fact, what I appreciate is precisely how its reliance on a circumscribed set of sources makes the grand argument seem less important, allowing the descriptive power of historical writing to come to the fore. TE

[Gillian Glaes, "Africans against Algerians... the exploited against the exploited: Media representations of the 1963 Saint Denis Riot," vol. 36 \(2008\): 309-321.](#)

In 2005, French President Nicolas Sarkozy denigrated the residents of Paris' *banlieue*, setting off a media frenzy with an oft-cited racial epithet. Three years later, Glaes examined media coverage of the 1963 "Saint Denis Riot"—a conflict between West African and Algerian workers in one of Paris' suburbs— to explore how France's immigrant communities experienced the

transition from colonial to postcolonial in the early years after African independence. Much like the 2005 "riots", those in 1963 took on an "air of 'epic proportion'" in the media of the 1960s. Linking media studies with studies of urban rebellion in a moment of transition, Glaes shows how media coverage—some critical and some revelatory of the conditions of immigrant workers—can highlight the lingering traces of "colonial perspectives...into the post-colonial era." SM

[Sandra Ott, "Gift-Giving and the Management of Justice: Borderland Basques under the German Occupation \(1942-1944\) and during the Liberation," vol. 34 \(2006\): 266-281.](#)

Sandra Ott, Professor Basque Studies at the University of Nevada Reno, received the Millstone Prize for this paper. A doctoral student in social anthropology at Oxford University during the 1970s, over subsequent decades she cultivated acquaintances in the French Basque region and interviewed them about life under the German Occupation. Additionally, she conducted historical research in the Pyrénées-Atlantique departmental archives. This article skillfully weaves together anthropological and historical methodologies, serving as a prelude to her superb *Living with the Enemy: German Occupation, Collaboration, and Justice in the Western Pyrenees, 1940-1948* (Cambridge University Press, 2017). RW

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2014-2023

[Leslie Tuttle, "Dom Calmet and Divine Dreams during the Enlightenment Era," vol. 47 \(2021\): 32-39.](#)

Dreams. After reading the 1974 issue, with wakefulness and dreams in mind, I listened to Rameau's *Castor et Pollux*. I traveled to a sure thing—the brilliant analysis, careful and sensitive research, and beautiful writing of Leslie Tuttle on dreams, revelation, and Enlightenment. "Dom Calmet and Divine Dreams" explicitly challenges the primacy of the secular in the Enlightenment but also accomplishes with little fanfare so much more in offering an ethnographic reading of historical understanding, contributing to the history of disciplines, and globalizing the history of French epistemologies. TE

[Lloyd Kramer, "Dancing on a Volcano: The Crisis in French Historical Studies," vol. 44 \(2016\): 18-25.](#)

This provocatively titled piece explores a topic that's been so regularly covered in my time as a historian that it's almost exhausting to hear about. Ever-optimistic, however, Kramer suggests that it's hard to talk about a crisis while attending such a creative and engaging conference—the same could be said about writing for the WSFH in 2024. And yet. Kramer calls on us to consider how French history can help students examine some of the biggest questions we face today: using our knowledge to provide a launchpad for

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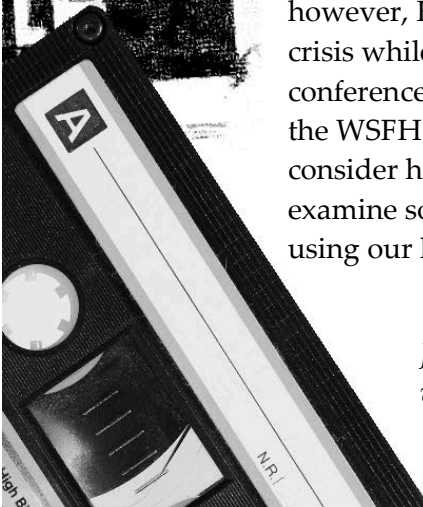
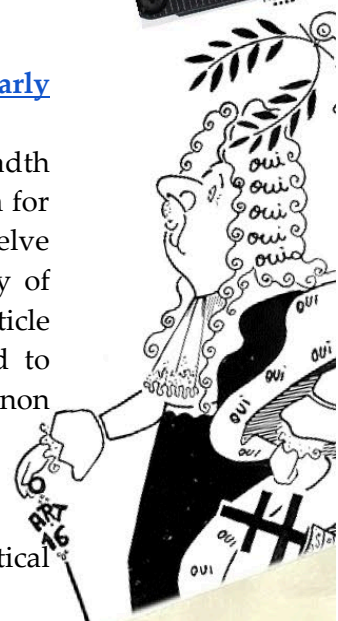
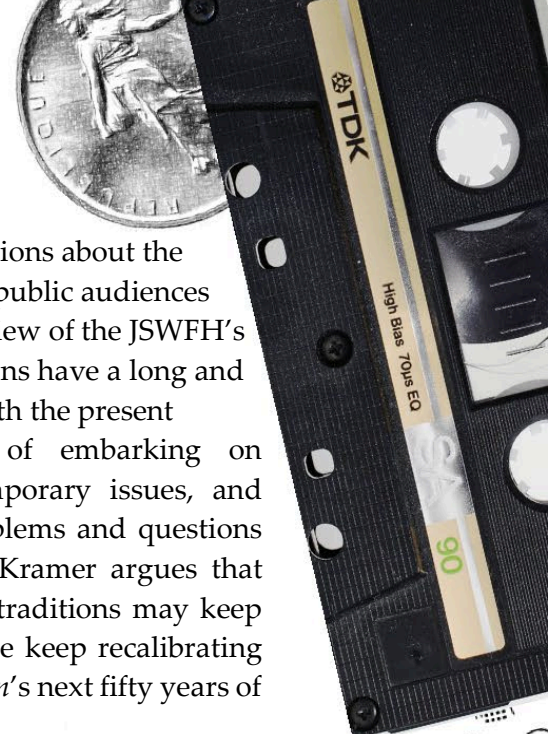
creative and complicated conversations about the present through engagement with public audiences and teachers of all kinds. An overview of the JWSFH's archives shows that French historians have a long and illustrious tradition of engaging with the present through historical scholarship, of embarking on research that matters for contemporary issues, and asking questions through the problems and questions we face in our time. Ultimately, Kramer argues that "rethinking and recalibrating our traditions may keep us dancing on the volcano." As we keep recalibrating and rethinking, here's to the *Western's* next fifty years of dance. SM

[Victoria E. Thompson, "Memories of Fear in the Early French Revolution," vol. 44 \(2016\): 35-48.](#)

Victoria Thompson is a historian of impressive breadth and depth, whom I've known through the *Western* for three decades. A senior scholar, she continues to delve into new fields of inquiry, in this case the history of emotions. Recipient of the Millstone Prize, this article looks beyond emotions as individually embodied to examine fear as a collective political phenomenon (prescient for our times!). I look forward to the completion of her book, "Inventing Public Space: Sentiment and Citizenship in Paris, 1748-1789," which promises to give full expression to critical issues raised by this article. RW

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Tabetha Leigh Ewing is Associate Professor of History at Bard College and the Executive Director of the Society for French Historical Studies. A specialist in the sociocultural and sociopolitical history of eighteenth-century France, she is the author of *Rumor, Diplomacy and War in Enlightenment Paris* (2014). Her current work-in-progress, provisionally titled "Rights Over Persons: France and Extradition in the Age of Kings," is a study of runaway wives, clandestine marriages, fugitive slaves, dissident writers, counterfeiters, identity thieves, and spies.

Sarah Miles is a postdoctoral fellow at the Centre de Recherche Interdisciplinaire sur la Diversité et Démocratie ([CRIDAQ](#)) at the Université du Québec à Montréal. Her PhD thesis on transnational revolutionary networks in France, Québec, and Algeria in the 1960s and 70s was awarded a Dean's Distinguished Dissertation Prize for the Humanities and Fine Arts at the University of North Carolina in 2024. The author of several scholarly and public-facing articles and essays, she served as co-director of the Digital History Lab at UNC, and is currently a host of New Books in French Studies, a podcast channel on the New Books Network.

Robin Walz, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Alaska Southeast. A specialist of modern European intellectual history and the history of popular culture in modern France, he has published widely on surrealism, film, and the avant-garde, including *Pulp Surrealism: Insolent Popular Culture in Early Twentieth-Century Paris* (2000), *Modernism* (2013), and *Surrealism and Film* (2015). He has served the WSFH in multiple capacities, most notably as President (2018) and Co-Editor with Joelle Neulander of *JWSFH*, formerly *Proceedings* (vols. 39-41).