



## Modern & Contemporary France

ISSN: 0963-9489 (Print) 1469-9869 (Online) Journal homepage: [www.tandfonline.com/journals/cmcf20](http://www.tandfonline.com/journals/cmcf20)

# Les temps nouveaux: En finir avec la nostalgie des Trente Glorieuses

edited by Vincent Martigny, Paris, Seuil, 2025, 256 pp., £21.00 (paperback), ISBN: 9782021584981

Emile Chabal

To cite this article: Emile Chabal (27 May 2026): Les temps nouveaux: En finir avec la nostalgie des Trente Glorieuses, Modern & Contemporary France, DOI: [10.1080/09639489.2026.2671051](https://doi.org/10.1080/09639489.2026.2671051)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09639489.2026.2671051>



Published online: 27 May 2026.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

## BOOK REVIEW

**Les temps nouveaux: En finir avec la nostalgie des Trente Glorieuses**, edited by Vincent Martigny, Paris, Seuil, 2025, 256 pp., £21.00 (paperback), ISBN: 9782021584981

As the twentieth-century gospel of progress has expired, drowned in a sea of climate anxiety and economic inequality, many people in the Western world have embraced nostalgia. Brexit and Make America Great Again provide the two best-known examples of this phenomenon, but every Western country has a variant of it. In France, it is most visible in the celebration of the three-decade period of economic growth after the Second World War. This came to be known as ‘Les Trente glorieuses’ – the Thirty Glorious Years – after the title of a famous book on the subject published in 1979 by the economist and bureaucrat, Jean Fourastié.

The issue is not with nostalgia as such; fond memories of an imagined past can serve all kinds of palliative functions. Rather, it is the fact that nostalgia prevents people from confronting the realities of a changing world. This, in turn, hampers the search for solutions. As Vincent Martigny puts it in the introduction to this stimulating collection of essays: ‘the past will not be enough’. Enough for what, though? The answer to this question is left to the thirteen journalists, academics and policy wonks whose short essays each set out to dissect the legacy of the Trente glorieuses in their respective domains of expertise.

Some of them do it better than others. Maia Mazaurette’s opening essay on the sexual repression of the Trente glorieuses and the recent lifting of taboos around domestic violence, incest and heteronormativity is refreshing in its strident, anti-nostalgic pose. Raphaël LLorca’s dissection of the culture of consumption in post-war Europe will be familiar to anyone who knows the historical literature on the subject, but his call to ‘make consumption a political issue’ rings true. Martigny’s own chapter on the danger of the hyper-presidentialism of the Fifth Republic effectively captures the tensions of a political system stretched to breaking-point. And Claire Alet’s piece on the deeply conservative model of the family that underpinned the economic and social advancements of the Trente glorieuses is a startling reminder of how little French family law has evolved since the 1970s.

Nevertheless, one is struck by the timidity of many of the proposals. Why nothing on reforming the tax code or the property market? Or writing a new constitution? Or transforming urban spaces to deal with the climate crisis? This could be because of the left-liberal orientation of the contributors, which predisposes them to relatively sensible and even-handed policy positions. But it is still hard not to feel a sense of disappointment. As an overview of what has gone wrong, this book does a fine job, but, as a manifesto for what is to come, it is decidedly tame.

Emile Chabal

*School of History, Classics and Archaeology, The University of Edinburgh School of History  
Classics and Archaeology, Edinburgh, UK*

✉ [emile.chabal@ed.ac.uk](mailto:emile.chabal@ed.ac.uk)

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2128-8878>

© 2026 The Author(s)

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09639489.2026.2671051>

