

Hausmann and *Hausmannisation*: The Legacy for Paris

David P. Jordan

When Georges-Eugène Hausmann died (10 January 1891) he had been so long absent from public life that there was no recent picture to accompany his obituary. *L'illustration* doctored an old photograph, deepening the lines around eyes and mouth, taking some flesh off his cheeks, removing most of his hair, and changing his coat and cravat. The now melancholy, tired countenance of a vanished supremacy gazes sadly out at us.¹

He had fallen from power more than twenty years earlier, reluctantly sacrificed by Napoléon III, who no more understood the financial legerdemain that brought his prefect down than did most of those closing in for the kill. Few regretted the departure of this harsh, arrogant, humorless, and utterly efficient administrator. His reputation was soon completely ruined by the debacle of Sedan, which engulfed the Second Empire in vituperation. But of all the significant figures of the age Hausmann created work that endured longer, even aged gracefully, and entered into the consciousness of the French in ways impossible to measure. The plan and to some extent the vision of Paris that all who live there or have spent time in residence there carry in their minds is the city he made. There is a nice irony in the fact that the

David P. Jordan is LAS Distinguished Professor of French History at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He is the author of several books including *Transforming Paris: The Life and Labors of Baron Hausmann* (Chicago, 1995). He is presently working on a study of Napoléon and the French Revolution.

¹ David P. Jordan, *Transforming Paris: The Life and Labors of Baron Hausmann* (New York, 1995), reproduces this portrait, between pages 328 and 329. The French historical tradition, so rich in invention, philosophical acumen, and erudition, has not much cultivated the biographical form, so highly evolved in the Anglophone world. There are two recent biographies of Hausmann in French: Michel Carmona, *Hausmann* (Paris, 2000), and Georges Valance, *Hausmann le grand* (Paris, 2001). Neither breaks new ground, and both may be read for the details of his life and an account of his work. Nicolas Chaudun, *Hausmann au crible* (Paris, 2000), is biographical in approach, although less detailed than Carmona and Valance.

Boulevard Haussmann—there was a rancorous debate in the Chamber of Deputies about thus honoring him—was the only major street cut, or rather completed, between 1920 and 1940.² The city's debt for his massive urban renewal was retired only in 1929.

Urban patterns persist, sometimes through centuries, and bind future generations. Witness the Louvre-Tuileries palace. From the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, from François I to François Mitterrand, successive regimes could not resist laying hands on the buildings, which became the largest palace in the world. No other structure in Paris has so successfully survived so many royal (or imperial) masters and their architects. Haussmann's work on Paris, I here argue, is similar. He fixed the shape, the itineraries, the architecture, and in part the culture of Paris in ways that have shown surprising vitality for more than a century. His successors have added onto his work without obliterating it. Even those who loathe Haussmann's urban ideas and influence have found themselves enmeshed in his net. The Third Republic embraced and continued his work, despite official denials. The most radical proposals for transforming Paris anew, those of Le Corbusier, were in fact *haussmannisme* raised to another level. Throughout the twentieth century small but significant efforts were made to escape his conceptualization of the city, culminating in the De Gaulle and Pompidou years, when a new Paris lifted skyward. At ground level Haussmann's streets endured, and so too did public attachment to his city under attack. Mitterrand erected enormous new urban monuments, yet paradoxically they were in the manner dictated by Haussmann's work.

Although the template of modern Paris, particularly the itineraries above and below ground, remains Haussmann's, the city is no longer his. At what moment, it is worth asking, would the powerful *préfet de la Seine* have ceased to recognize the city whose transformation he had supervised for seventeen years?³ Not, I think, until the 1960s, a long life for an organism so gigantic and complex as Paris.

Haussmannisation during the Second Empire

Those who detested the man and his work coined the term *haussmanniser* in 1892 to define urban renewal by demolition. His parti-

² The first decree for the new boulevard was issued in 1857. The two distinct sections of work were completed in 1863. Two prolongations were completed in 1865 and 1868. The boulevard was finished only in 1927, after a decree of 1913.

³ Haussmann's transformations can be quantified—he greatly enjoyed making careful enumerations in his *Mémoires* of meters of sewer pipe and roadway and of chestnut trees planted, for he was always comfortable with the arithmetical component of administration—but just how much he accomplished may be seen most clearly in a simple *bilan* of the major streets cut when he was prefect. I count fifty-three, which includes every major artery in Paris save the Champs-Élysées.

sans take a more analytical view. It was, writes Pierre Pinon, “a precise response to a specific problem: opening up [*dégagement*] the historic center of Paris by cutting new streets.”⁴ Haussmann’s preeminent concerns were “to cut [streets], align, embellish, and monumentalize the city by regularizing all the façades.”⁵ No section of Paris was untouched by these transformations, although much of the Left Bank was relatively unaffected, and some neighborhoods, notably the Marais, were cut adrift from the city and continued their slide into decay. Yet “most of the projects from the end of the [nineteenth] century until World War I completed projects either launched or planned by Haussmann.”⁶

The uniform look of the new city was created as much by the buildings lining the new, obsessively straight streets as by the streets themselves. The striking regularity of the typical Haussmann building—in the Beaux-Arts manner, its height fixed by decree depending on the width of the street, with balconies (their depth regulated) and ornamental ironwork—was achieved with surprisingly vague general regulations. On the Boulevard Saint-Germain, for example, “owners and their neighbors should arrange between themselves to have, in each construction *îlot*, the same height for each floor in order to continue the principal lines of the façades and to make the entire *îlot* a single architectural ensemble.”⁷ The architects of the day shared a common vocabulary and needed no additional coercion to produce a homogeneous cityscape.

Haussmann underlined the severe rectilinearity of the transformed city by planting rows of chestnut trees and, in the center of Paris, where the urban fabric was closely woven and he had little room to maneuver, by improvising, sometimes brilliantly, sometimes clumsily, to keep his neoclassical aesthetics intact. He created optical illusions by moving monuments (or building new ones) and occasionally erected an eccentric new building or monument to fill an irregular urban space or to complete a geometric pattern. His most successful illusion is the Boule-

4 Pierre Pinon, *Paris: Biographie d'une capitale* (Paris, 1999), 279. Himself an architect by training, Pinon is particularly good on the role of architects in the history of Paris. This is the best recent book on the history of Paris, although, like virtually all work by French scholars, it is indifferent to that of non-Francophone scholars. For instance, David Van Zanten, *Building Paris: Architectural Institutions and the Transformation of the French Capital, 1830–1870* (Cambridge, 1994), the best study of how buildings got built in the capital, is not mentioned, nor is some recent work on Haussmann.

5 Louis Bergeron, “Paysages de Paris,” in *Paris: Genèse d'un paysage*, ed. Louis Bergeron (Paris, 1989), 268.

6 Bernard Rouleau, *Paris: Histoire d'un espace* (Paris, 1997), 364.

7 Quoted in Pinon, *Paris: Biographie d'une capitale*, 218–19. He gives an excellent description of “le paysage haussmannien” (216–17). François Loyer, *Paris XIXe siècle: L'immeuble et la rue* (Paris, 1987), has a superb set of photographs, mostly his own, showing simultaneously the fundamental uniformity of Haussmann's Paris and the degree of ornamental variation possible; see, among many examples, 165, 178–79, 202–6, 242–43.

vard Henri IV. At one end it is perfectly bisected by the July Column in the Place de la Bastille, at the other by Soufflot's great dome of the Panthéon. To create the appearance of geometric regularity he had to make the Pont Sully, which carries the Boulevard Henri IV to the Left Bank, the only bridge over the Seine not parallel with the others. The visual illusion is exposed as soon as one tries to walk from the Place de la Bastille to the Panthéon. The old, twisting streets up the Montagne Sainte-Geneviève are the only routes.

To create the new Place du Châtelet, originally envisioned as the center for the new Paris,⁸ Haussmann moved Pierre Fontaine's 1808 palm fountain to the center of the Place, built the two theaters (Théâtre de la Ville and Théâtre Musical de Paris) to anchor the Place, and then, on the Ile de la Cité, built the Cour de Commerce with its off-center dome, which makes no sense until one notices (standing in the middle of the Boulevard Réaumur-Sébastopol and looking south) that it visually bisects that thoroughfare. On a map one can see that the dome of the Cour de Commerce is in turn balanced by the Gare de l'Est at the northern edge of this cityscape. Across the Seine Haussmann built the fountain at the Place Saint-Michel to close the perspective from the Cour de Commerce on the Left Bank, visually ignoring the bend in the boulevards when the Boulevard du Palais bisects the Ile de la Cité.

His aesthetic rigidity gave Paris the general uniformity of appearance it still has, which is fundamental to the city's character and beauty. But even the indefatigable administrator, anxious to impose order everywhere, could not master the accumulated diversity of the historical city. Where he was able to build on unurbanized land, in northwestern Paris, *haussmannisation* (this is a coinage from 1926) succeeded. Emile Zola likened the process to radical surgery accomplished by saber, since cutting streets is fundamental. In the older sections his efforts were often thwarted. Turn off any number of his new streets and you will find old Paris: the Avenue de l'Opéra or the Boulevard Saint-Germain are good examples. Such juxtapositions, for many, contribute to the city's charm.

Haussmann's *percées* imposed an enduring template on Paris and on an urban logic worked out in the quarter century after his fall. Paris was seen as the quintessential modern city at the end of the nineteenth century not because its buildings were technically advanced (mostly they were not), or because new patterns of urbanization had been developed (Haussmann's ideas were traditional, neoclassical), or because Haussmann brought new levels of comfort to urban living (quite the

⁸ This is the argument in Van Zanten, *Building Paris*.

contrary). His most unconventional and innovative ideas—moving the cemeteries out of the city, for example—were rejected. It was the new streets, especially the boulevards, that were universally admired. Haussmann's shortcomings as a city maker were perpetuated by virtually all the successive governments through the Third and Fourth Republics, indeed well into the 1960s. The scope of his transformations was enormous.⁹

Haussmann built streets for several purposes. The Rue du Havre began the series of streets for access from the train stations to the center of Paris. It was followed by the Boulevard de Strasbourg, the southern part of the Rue de Rennes, and the Rue de Rouen (today the Rue Auber). A subcategory of these streets comprised those that set off monuments. The Rues Scribe, Meyerbeer, Glück, and Halévy created the island on which Garnier's Opéra eventually sat. The Avenue Victoria (named in honor of the English queen when she visited Paris in 1855 for the Universal Exposition) presented the Hôtel de Ville, while the Rue des Ecoles was originally intended to give access to the Sorbonne and the Collège de France. The taste for monuments as a species of urban sculpture, which Haussmann had inherited, continued well into the twentieth century. One aspect of this sculptural predisposition, little heeded at the time, was the destruction of the historical context of buildings and monuments. Haussmann was responsible for the huge *parvis* of Notre-Dame that isolates that great church from the city, but Parisians had long clamored for the church to be freed of the barnacles that had clung to it for centuries, and they welcomed the work.

The Grande Croisée (the Sébastopol-Rivoli axis) needed the Boulevards Saint-Michel and Saint-Antoine as extensions and was designed to open the center of the city. Those streets linking monuments or *places* both opened the city and created urban itineraries that remain fundamental. The Avenue de l'Opéra linked the Théâtre-Française and the opera; the Avenue Bosquet linked the Ecole Militaire and the Pont de l'Alma.¹⁰ The Rues Beaubourg and Réaumur and the Boulevard Raspail, indistinguishable from so many Second Empire streets, were cut by the Third Republic and perpetuated Haussmann's ideas of urbanization. The Avenue de l'Opéra, considered by many the model of the *paysage haussmannien*, with an unbroken series of elegant buildings in the same style, leading like a magnificent carpet to the throne, Garnier's

⁹ The water supply, the sewers, parks, churches, the *mobilier urbain*, housing, schools, and the significant changes in all of these aspects over more than a century are not treated in any detail in this essay. The same is true of immigration patterns, the deindustrialization of Paris, and urban finances—to mention only the most important topics.

¹⁰ I follow Pinon, *Paris: Biographie d'une capitale*, 216–17.

opera house, was not completed until 1875.¹¹ The Boulevard Saint-Germain, another unmistakable Haussmann street, was completed only in 1878. Pierre Lavedan points out that 126,000 new buildings, many along Haussmann's new streets and all in Second Empire style, were erected between 1879 and 1888. Even today these neo-*haussmannien* buildings make up a substantial part not only of the look of Paris but of the city's housing stock.¹² The "type haussmannien d'immeuble," as well as the streets on which those buildings are constructed, lived into the twentieth century. Without looking at the carved name of the architect and the year of construction set into hundreds of Paris apartment houses, even the knowledgeable flaneur often cannot distinguish a Second Empire building from one built twenty years later.

There were attempts to break the mold, many originating with young architects who felt muzzled by the inherited conventions. But the building codes and regulations, although precise and restrictive about ornamentation, were not crippling, and there was no widespread call for change until nearly the end of the century. Clients, always the bane of architects, were content. The building style developed in the 1850s and 1860s, fixed in city regulations and given the imprimatur of the Beaux-Arts curriculum and atelier system associated with good taste, modernity, and wealth, became the style of choice for those able to invest in the new city. Familiar façades, building materials, and predictable ornamentation proclaimed the social standing of the occupants. The "type haussmannien d'immeuble" had become the very essence of a public building. Baltard's sheds at Les Halles were clearly innovative; Garnier's opera was dazzling. But Baltard's subsequent work in Paris was conventional and historicist (the odd Saint-Augustin church built at the intersections of the Boulevards Malesherbes and Haussmann is resplendent with Renaissance motifs and vocabulary), and Garnier built only one other building in Paris (a minor structure off the Boulevard Saint-Germain). Neither architect changed the taste of the age.

Haussmann's Legacy during the Third Republic

Old patterns dominated, but Paris acquired in these years, from Haussmann's fall to World War I, some of its most picturesque and uncharacteristic buildings and monuments; the Sacré Coeur, the Eiffel Tower, the Moulin Rouge, and the Grand Palais.¹³ The Palais de Chaillot and

¹¹ Rouleau, *Paris: Histoire d'un espace*, 365.

¹² *Ibid.*, 379.

¹³ David Harvey, "Monument and Myth: The Building of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart," in *The Urban Experience: Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanization* (Baltimore, Md.,

the Cinéma Rex came a bit later, as did the brick buildings that sprang up around the city and formed an architectural necklace made of new materials where the fortifications of the “zone” had recently stood. Each of these structures is, arguably, outside the aesthetic tolerance of *haussmannisme*. Yet the façades of the Gares Saint-Lazare, d’Orsay, and Lyon, built during the same period, along with the Métro (both underground and elevated), which spread throughout the city the iron structures hitherto isolated at Les Halles and the railroad stations, are within the canon. The *grands lycées* of Paris mostly date from these years, as do the buildings of the Sorbonne, although their deliberate historical references belie the fact. There were also new commercial buildings, notably the *grands magasins*, which proved that Paris architecture was not condemned to endless repetition. Gustave Eiffel and Louis Charles Boileau were involved in the design of the Bon Marché (1876), and Paul Sédille designed the new Printemps (1881). The new capitalist enterprises adopted the introduction of art nouveau, which found dramatic expression in the Galeries Lafayette building (1898) and Frantz Jourdain’s Samaritaine (1905).¹⁴ The point is that individual buildings did not change Haussmann’s city any more than had Garnier’s or Baltard’s exquisite structures. Despite all this innovation, Paris remained solidly *haussmannien*.¹⁵ The bulk of the building that went on in these years was familiar, traditional, and conservative. New and important forms, the brilliant buildings that catch our eye, appeared in the Paris cityscape as *sui generis*. So they remain: unique gems (or magma) set among row upon row of *type haussmannien* structures.

To change the overall look of Paris, innovation was needed on a scale that could compete with Haussmann’s transformations. On the eve of World War I there was a clamor for variety and beauty, but it resulted only in a few unique and striking buildings. Imperial Paris remained largely unchanged. The very titles of books published in these years are eloquent: *La beauté de Paris* by Paul Léon (1909), *Des moyens juridiques de sauvegarder les aspects esthétiques de la ville de Paris* by Charles Magny (1911), *La beauté de Paris et la loi* by Charles Lortsch (1913).¹⁶

1989), is a splendid essay on the politics involved in building the church. Joseph Harriss, *The Tallest Tower: Eiffel and the Belle Epoque* (New York, 1975), although popular in approach, is a useful survey of the tower.

¹⁴ See Norma Evenson, *Paris: A Century of Change, 1878–1978* (New Haven, Conn., 1979), 141–47, for a discussion (and photographs). This remains, to my mind, the best book on the subject, yet it is largely ignored by French authorities.

¹⁵ See Louis Bergeron and Marcel Roncayolo, “D’Haussmann à nos jours,” in Bergeron, *Paris: Genèse d’un paysage*, 231.

¹⁶ The list comes from Pinon, *Paris: Biographie d’une capitale*, 259, and my discussion follows his.

These lovers of the city, who were born and came of age during Haussmann's original transformations or in the long twilight of his influence, imagined another Paris: less uniform, less imitative, less staid, and less controlled by administrative fiat. None of these critics suggested replacing Haussmann's city, but there was a growing concern to preserve those parts of Paris that antedated the Second Empire. Cutting streets and erecting similar and harmonious ranks of apartment houses had far less appeal in the new century than a generation earlier when it was obvious to all that the old Paris was buckling under the weight of its population. A new sensibility about the city was emerging.

The first changes legislated were aesthetic. No one was willing to abandon or radically alter Haussmann's work; no one suggested destroying the uniform urban *paysage*. Either his critics wanted some relaxation of the restrictions on innovation of the façade, or they called for even more streets to be cut and lined with uniform buildings. The former group of critics was more successful: no significant new streets would be cut, except on paper.

New regulations concerning façade design were enacted in 1882. These made no radical changes in the old restrictions and pleased few besides Haussmann's devoted successors and protégés. *Encorbellement* remained prohibited; balcony dimensions were unchanged. Precise measurements were fixed for "every decorative element, including columns and pilasters, friezes, cornices, consoles, and capitals."¹⁷ The decree of 13 August 1902, however, was different (although the government habit of announcing change and bad news in August, then as now, is familiar). The *décret* was a response to the strict enforcement of regulations about façade decoration which, said critics, was turning Paris into a "ville-caserne."¹⁸ It was explicitly crafted "to encourage an inclination toward the picturesque long constrained by a regime of obligatory regularization, [and] to let the most unexpected and picturesque effects

¹⁷ Evenson, *Paris: A Century of Change*, 149.

¹⁸ It is worth noting that the criticism was first made during the Second Empire. Then, as at the end of the century, it was an aesthetic judgment and had nothing to do with the misleading cliché, still much repeated, that Haussmann's transformations were made for strategic reasons, to prevent or destroy urban insurrection. Haussmann himself spoke of the Boulevard Richard Lenoir as deliberately strategic, providing military access to the neighborhood around the Place de la Bastille that had held up General Cavaignac's troops for a week in 1848. See *Mémoires du Baron Haussmann*, 3 vols. (Paris 1890), 2:318. The cliché that the underlying purpose of Haussmann's boulevards was to create clear fields for artillery fire and room for cavalry charges has been perennially argued, most brilliantly by Walter Benjamin. In fact, the prefect's motives were aesthetic, bureaucratic, and economic. See Gaillard, *Paris, la ville*, 67ff., for the careful distinctions made between rich, less rich, and poor neighborhoods. The only other project with a strong strategic component—the system of streets on the Left Bank that surrounded the Panthéon neighborhood—was the Third Réseau, the last of Haussmann's transformations, and its purpose was to quarantine a potentially dangerous neighborhood rather than to attack the insurgents.

emerge.”¹⁹ For the first time façades were to be regulated not by measuring specific elements of design, but in reference to an overall spatial envelope, or *gabarit*. “Within this *gabarit*, the architect was to have a new freedom in composing the façade, with the permissible degree of overhang related to the width of the street.”²⁰ Here was a deliberate, but only partial, rejection of the *type haussmannien*.

Loosening the restrictions on façades let the genie out of the bottle. When the extension of the Rue Réaumur was opened (1897), the Municipal Council of Paris sponsored a competition with prizes for the best façades, hoping to give the street distinction and architectural prestige. The following year the competition was extended to all of Paris, and six prizes were awarded annually from 1898 until 1914.²¹ Paul Léon and his friends, who had sounded the call for urban beauty and some relaxation of restrictions, were soon lamenting the excesses. They found the buildings on the new Rue Etienne-Marcel, for example, completely disproportionate to the Place des Victoires, the last *place* built by the monarchy before the Revolution. Now was heard the first sneering invocation of other cities as the antithesis of Paris (and beauty). “We would hope,” Lavedan elaborated and embellished in 1975, “that the natural look of Paris remain Parisian, that it not become a replica of Moscow or New York.”²²

A far more serious threat to the look and fabric of Paris entailed Haussmann’s other urban obsession: transportation. Eugène Hénard, the son of a Paris architect who had studied in his father’s atelier, held an appointment in the Travaux de Paris, the office that directed public works, where he remained in relative obscurity until his retirement in 1913. In his official capacity he worked on the expositions of 1889 and 1900. He is remembered, however, for the eight studies or *fascicules* he published between 1903 and 1909 on the planning problems of Paris. These established his reputation as an urbanist,²³ particularly as an expert on traffic circulation. There is no need here to explicate and analyze Hénard’s ideas and proposals in detail, since none of them was realized. The transportation problems Haussmann had been unable

¹⁹ Quoted in Pinon, *Paris: Biographie d’une capitale*, 228.

²⁰ See Evenson, *Paris: A Century of Change*, 149, esp. n. 38, where she gives the specific details of the new restrictions.

²¹ See *Les concours de façades de la ville de Paris, 1898–1905* (Paris, 1905) and subsequent years.

²² Quoted in Pinon, *Paris: Biographie d’une capitale*, 259.

²³ The word does not come into English, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, until 1930. *Le Robert* gives 1910 as the date for the earliest French usage: “Spécialiste de l’aménagement des espaces urbains.” Prior to the need for a new coinage, *urbaniste* had the exceptionally specialized and long obsolete meaning of an adherent of Pope Urban VI, the first pope elected after the Babylonian captivity. *Urbaniser* came a bit earlier (1873), *urbanisation* later (1919).

or unwilling to solve remained (and still exist) to plague the city. He has been castigated for not having anticipated the automobile, and the most radical urbanists and architects, from Hénard to the present, have sought to remedy this myopia. Ultimately, getting from here to there in historical Paris was and is enormously difficult. Some thoroughfares could be cut through Paris; others could not (except in Hénard's, and later Le Corbusier's, imagination).

Hénard may here serve as a representative figure. He was the first to propose comprehensive solutions to the perennial problem of Paris transportation. Haussmann's ideas on getting about in the city were, even for the mid-nineteenth century, primitive, limited as they were to walking and the private carriage. He had little or no sense of the importance of public transportation within the city, although he could be imaginative about trains to, from, and around Paris. The car may be strangling the streets of Paris a bit more than those of American cities—although the degree of choking escapes precise quantification—and many since Hénard have tried to fix the mess. The Left Bank highway along the *quai* proposed during Pompidou's presidency, which would mirror one across the river, was blocked only at the last minute by popular and political pressure. The current low-lying barriers erected on some thoroughfares to maintain a single fast lane for buses and taxis is the most recent attempt to get traffic moving in Paris. The squat cement barriers everywhere in Paris are there to keep motorists from parking on the walkways.

Haussmann had been defeated by historical Paris. The chief instrument of *haussmannisation*, the street, was trumped by old architecture. Fortunately for those who love the city as a historical monster, so too would be all those impatient or angry transformers who followed the great prefect. The unmovable monuments he yielded to still thwart those who would cross the city, especially from south to north. Two of the most prestigious structures in Paris make it impossible to connect the banks of the Seine in the middle of the city: Le Vau's Institut de France on the Left Bank and the Louvre-Tuileries across the river. No major Left Bank street connects to the Ponts Neuf, Carrousel, Royal, and Solférino. Haussmann had wanted to carry the Rue de Rennes from the Gare du Maine and the Gare Montparnasse across the Seine, repeating the pattern, which he had used for all the railroad stations, of connecting the terminals with major arteries into the center of the city. Extending the Rue de Rennes would have meant destroying the Institut. Haussmann demurred. Across the river the massive Louvre-Tuileries and its gardens effectively blocks a huge chunk of the Right Bank. The

Right Bank roadway along the *quai*, both at and below street level, is a twentieth-century attempt to get around the Louvre-Tuileries blockade. Moreover, the Boulevard Saint-Germain, which runs like a slack rope from the Pont Sully to the Pont de la Concorde, essentially turns its back on the river, because there is no convenient crossing, and continues the orientation of the Left Bank to the south rather than the north. Even the Left Bank road proposed in the 1960s, which would have straightened out the Boulevard Saint-Germain, contained no provisions for linking the two banks of the Seine.

Hénard had wanted more *haussmannisation*. He was virtually alone in the early twentieth century in his praise of the prefect's work until Le Corbusier, in 1925, added the prestige of his name: "Haussmann did nothing more than replace sordid six-story buildings with sumptuous six-story buildings, wretched neighborhoods with magnificent neighborhoods."²⁴ Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin (1925) proposed cutting broad highways across Paris and lining them with massive skyscrapers to solve the transportation and housing problems simultaneously.

These paper proposals would have transformed Haussmann's Paris by carrying his ideas to a radical conclusion. Instead the city has lived with the problems the prefect could not solve. Virtually every new urban project, whether building, monument, or street, harks back to Haussmann's work, and his name became a banner both for those who would build more and those who would preserve. The preservationists dominated the first half of the twentieth century. It seemed that *haussmannisation* had run its course. From 1914 until well after World War II, transformations of Paris, at least in the old core city, were minimal. The disastrous political history of the twentieth century overwhelmed France. If there was the will to change the capital significantly, which is doubtful, there was no money. The city remained "perfectly identifiable" in the vast urban agglomeration on the Seine. It remained Haussmann's city. What changes there have been, some of them significant, have not burst the old urban envelope. Paris kept (and still keeps) the city limits created by Haussmann in 1859. With the exceptions of the Bois de Boulogne and the Bois de Vincennes, which were absorbed, there were no further annexations. Haussmann's proposed "green belt" around the city became the *périphérique* highway of the 1970s and served not only to contain Paris but also to perpetuate its medieval form as a walled city. Around 1940 Jules Romains, an exceptional observer of the city, wrote: "Paris is a fortress which has changed its carapace several

²⁴ Le Corbusier, *Urbanisme*, 2d ed. (Paris, 1966), 255.

times because the energy generated inside the fortress exploded the old carapace. But the broad outline [of the city] remains the same.”²⁵ The city had been walled by Philippe Auguste and Charles V. Louis XIV took down their walls and created the *grands boulevards*. These boulevards, by circumvallating the core city, effectively kept Paris a walled town. The 1785 wall of the Fermiers-Généraux reprised (this time in wood) the wall Louis had razed. The French Revolution tore it down. Then Adolphe Thiers’s wall of the 1840s, which created an uninhabited “zone” between the old walls and his new defenses, again fixed the physical limits of Paris. When this wall came down, the outer boulevards, the so-called *Maréchaux*, named for Napoléon’s marshals, were built. The highway now ringing Paris is the modern version of the medieval wall: Paris inside the road, non-Paris beyond.²⁶

Just as its physical form and problems persist, so too do the politics and mechanisms of urban change. With Haussmann the political power of the state was incessantly focused on Paris, not for a project or two but for every project during a seventeen-year period. Behind his authority and the massive urban renewal was the emperor. Someone once quipped there have been many Haussmanns (or would-be Haussmanns) but only one Napoléon III. The state has remained central to all Paris projects. “From the Hundred Years War to the Commune, including along the way the Revolution of 1789, the people of Paris have found themselves enmeshed in national politics, and often in a brutal way.”²⁷ In mechanical terms, the system of *lotissements* that created units of land for development, both new (in the case of vast stretches of western and southern Paris hitherto undeveloped) and renewed (usually acquired in the name of public utility), was the necessary instrument and unit of state intervention. The size and shape of lots determined the form of urbanization by controlling what could be built on the newly available land.

Lotissements originally date from the thirteenth century and were the means by which rural land was divided into lots and urbanized.²⁸ The fundamental differences between the building up of the Right and Left Banks can be traced back to the earliest *lotissements*, when Paris spread to the south of the Seine, seeking open land. The development of the Faubourg Saint-Germain repeated the pattern a few cen-

²⁵ Jules Romains, Lecture, “Paris, Londres, New-York,” several editions in the 1940s; quoted in Roncayolo and Bergeron, “D’Haussmann à nos jours,” 218.

²⁶ The suggestion is familiar. Louis Bergeron, “Paysages de Paris,” in Bergeron, *Paris: Genèse d’un paysage*, 270, has most recently reiterated it.

²⁷ Jean-Paul Lacaze, *Urbanisme d’Etat et destin d’une ville* (Paris, 1994), 33.

²⁸ See Pinon, *Paris: Biographie d’une capitale*, 15.

turies later, when land was divided into lots fit for the gorgeous town houses of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The confiscations of the French Revolution were often severed into smaller lots and auctioned off, as were the pieces of available land created by Napoléon I's demolition of ecclesiastical buildings. By the Second Empire the most important stretch of hitherto undeveloped land was in western Paris, on the Right Bank, where the emperor's uncle had built his Arc de Triomphe. Much of this was owned by the Péreire brothers. This land was now also broken into lots, following Haussmann's new boulevards, on which apartment buildings would be built, with a few lots bordering the Parc Monceau and lying along the boulevards designed for the urban palaces of the imperial elite.

Haussmann inherited the tradition of urban planning by *lotissements*. He had begun his transformations by condemning more land than he needed for a particular project. He then sold what the city did not use as *lotissements*, reaping the profits of enhanced property values because of the new streets he had cut. Those who acquired these new lots were compelled to develop them in harmony with Haussmann's plans. Not only did he finance future work, but he also assured the uniformity of the new neighborhoods. The Paris landowners soon put the city out of the real estate business by limiting all legal condemnations strictly to what was necessary. The city was permitted only to condemn enough property to build a street, lay sewer and water pipes, and install gas lines. The landlords themselves would now profit from the new urban land market.²⁹ By the twentieth century all the state programs that reurbanized, renewed, developed, or cleared Paris land worked on the system of *lotissements*.

Beyond *Haussmannisation* in the Parisian *Banlieue*

Haussmann's original reasons for incorporation and annexation (the twelfth, fifteenth, and sixteenth arrondissements were added in 1859, along with the communes surrounding the city), which doubled the physical size of Paris and made possible the monster city of many millions, are not perfectly clear. Jeanne Gaillard argues that his motives for incorporating the *banlieue* included the desire to have a single unit to police, close a tax loophole to gain revenue for his insatiable needs, and

²⁹ It was not until 1955 that the state was once again able to expropriate and resell land (Lacaze, *Urbanisme d'Etat*, 77), and then only under the regulations of the ZAC (Zone d'Aménagement Concerté), codified by a 1966 law. Once again the state could regularly recoup, directly and rapidly, the added land values created by urban improvement undertaken at public expense.

extend his personal authority.³⁰ The northeastern suburbs had supplied the insurrectionists of 1848, especially around the Saint-Martin Canal (the last barricades captured by the army), with men and matériel that passed easily in and out of the city. This particular annexation was one of the few strategic aspects of his transformations. Gaillard is persuasive, but Haussmann also had a sense of the need and capacity of Paris to grow. The Second Empire was the first government not to try to check the size of the capital.³¹

A substantial part of the story of Paris after Haussmann concerns the *banlieue*. From 1859 until the early twentieth century this was largely unurbanized land. It had no infrastructure to speak of, lagged far behind the original city in development, and became a dumping ground for the poor driven out of Paris by Haussmann's demolitions and his disinterest in building affordable housing. By 1920 the central city seemed frozen. There were no more neighborhoods in the old city to cannibalize. At exactly this time several of the most characteristic features of the annexed land that created greater Paris were being built. On the periphery of the core city urbanism was alive and well, and this new phase of development shared only superficial characteristics with Haussmann's work, at least above ground. Paris was about to become a city Haussmann could not claim.

He had extended the sewers and water supply to the *banlieue*, and what little building he did there was uniform and aligned along the streets, which were in turn lined with chestnut trees. Building elevations were determined by the size of the new boulevards. Beyond this, there were few similarities of design or intent with the core city. The new apartment houses were built of different materials than Haussmann had used in central Paris; they had little or no ornamentation, were less imposing than he thought acceptable, and, although less expensive, were far more comfortable. The new housing was not designed for families with servants and the incorporated services and conveniences Haussmann thought should be provided by the city (and none too generously) rather than attached to housing.

Free land was and remains the problem for Paris. World War I

³⁰ *Paris, la ville (1852–1870)*, first published as Gaillard's *thèse d'Etat* by the Université de Lille III in 1976 and distributed by Honoré Champion, became a classic. In 1997 L'Harmattan reissued the book, hitherto available only as a bound typewritten *thèse*, with a nice appreciation of the author by the editors, Florence Bourillon and Jean-Luc Pinol.

³¹ Napoléon I envisioned a monster capital for his empire, in which Rome was to be the second city. This vision contributed to Haussmann's, or rather Napoléon III's, decision. The uncle imagined the new city but did little about it except on paper. The nephew built it.

caused the liberation of a vast band of land—four hundred meters deep and stretching around the city for thirty-three kilometers—hitherto occupied by the fortifications erected by the July Monarchy under the inspiration of Adolphe Thiers. After 1914, despite the first Battle of the Marne, there no longer seemed any need to maintain the city's defensive walls. The "zone" was acquired in 1919 in a deal between Paris and the state. The original plan was to surround Paris with a green belt. The housing crisis, the absence of clear political will, and the endless deals that at times gave opportunism a bad name destroyed this vision. World War I made the pressures for affordable housing irresistible, and the city government, unable to satisfy an expanding appetite for living space, gradually sold off pieces of this newly acquired property to private developers and lost control over substantial parts of the project. Never again would the central government dictate the shape of Paris to the degree Haussmann had. There were streets to be cut through the "zone," mostly for access to the new buildings, and the *Maréchaux* boulevards that followed the line of the old fortifications were doubled in width, but urbanization no longer depended on new streets as in Haussmann's day.

The Office des Habitations à Bon Marché de la Seine (HBM) was in charge of most of the work. There were, to be sure, elaborate regulations, and three distinct varieties of building were constructed. For those already living in appalling slum conditions in the "zone," modest, indeed austere, housing, with outside stairwells and white-washed interior cement walls, was built. The more familiar HBM structures, made of brick, with gas, electricity, water, and some amenities in every apartment—no small achievement in the 1920s, when many buildings in Paris lacked these conveniences—were the most extensively built. There were more comfortable apartments for those with more resources (*immeubles à loyers moyens* [ILM]). These had central heating, separate toilets that could be readily improved into what we would call powder rooms, and carpeted elevators. What set the buildings apart from most of central Paris was that they were conceived as self-contained, with adjoining medical facilities, social and sports areas, playgrounds, libraries, and laundry facilities. Not only did the buildings look different and serve needs that Haussmann had deliberately ignored, but the homogeneity of the city, so important to his urban ideas, had been rejected. There is a sameness about the new apartments along the *Maréchaux*, but the buildings are not harmonized with each other into some overarching pattern. The development of the *banlieue* and its eventual emergence as a political *ceinture rouge*, a bastion of Com-

munism and the working class,³² made it clear that a new kind of urbanization would control the future of Paris. It has no name, for it has yet to run its course. There is no uniform plan or controlling intelligence at work.

The urban projects Haussmann had proposed and overseen, which gave precision to the emperor's vague visions, social enthusiasms, and architectural tastes, were driven by increases in the population and by enormous internal migrations from the countryside to Paris. So too were the projects after about 1950.³³ But if the phenomenon continued, its content veered sharply from what Haussmann knew. He imagined that the immigration patterns he had observed would continue. Impoverished provincials, mostly of rural origin, have given way since World War II to provincials who are often better off than many already living in Paris. And this wave of internal migration pales in the face of foreign immigration.³⁴ Recent population figures are revealing. In 1975, the Ile-de-France had 9,877,000 inhabitants, or 18.76 percent of the total French population (52,655,000); in 1982, 10,073,000, or 18.54 percent of the total (54,335,000); and in 1990, 10,661,000, or 18.83 percent of the total (56,614,000).³⁵ Nearly one in five French men and women lives in greater Paris, and the nature of this enormous urban growth is different from that of the nineteenth century.³⁶ Not surprisingly, there are shortages in housing and office space, municipal services and infrastructure are stretched beyond their limits, and traffic is a nightmare. There is no relief in sight.

Even by the end of World War II, Haussmann's city was reeling under the pressure exerted by a growing population on aging buildings.

³² Annie Fourcaut, *Bobigny, banlieue rouge* (Paris, 1986), 13, sees the *banlieue rouge* as a myth born after the municipal elections of 1924–25. Myth or no, John Merriman, *The Margins of City Life: Explorations on the French Urban Frontier, 1815–1851* (New York, 1991), 226, finds a tenacious marginalized existence in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth arrondissements of the northeast, which “like St. Denis and some of the old red belt remain plebian strongholds, peripheral centers of life, for example, for many migrants from northern and black Africa.” See also Marie-Hélène Bacqué and Sylvie Fol, *Le devenir des banlieues rouges* (Paris, 1997) for a history, along with J. Bastié, *La croissance de la banlieue* (Paris, 1965).

³³ Bernard Marchand, *Paris: Histoire d'une ville, XIXe–XXe siècle* (Paris, 1993), emphasizes the demographic basis for the history of the city.

³⁴ The population of Paris is a vast topic. A good place to start is Louis Chevalier's classic *La formation de la population parisienne au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1950), which in a sense placed the subject on a modern basis. His later, more impressionistic *Les Parisiens* (Paris, 1985) forms a nice contrast. Guy Pourcher's *Le peuplement de Paris: Origine régionale, composition sociale, attitudes et motivations . . .* (Paris, 1964) studies the changing internal migration patterns. Gérard Jacquemet, *Belleville au XIXe siècle: Du faubourg à la ville* (Paris, 1984), provides the background on a neighborhood subsequently transformed by foreign immigration.

³⁵ The figures are from Lacaze, *Urbanisme d'Etat*, 52–53.

³⁶ See Jean-Claude Chamboredon, Michel Coste, and Marcel Roncayolo, “Populations et pratiques urbaines,” in *Histoire de la France urbaine: La ville aujourd'hui*, vol. 5, ed. Marcel Roncayolo (Paris, 1985), esp. 441–72.

About 30 percent of the housing stock dated from 1851–80, another 33 percent from 1880–1914. Barely 10 percent had been built between 1915 and 1942.³⁷ Massive efforts were needed, but how, where? Money, land, and political will were essential for the next phase of urbanization, as they had always been. The three components came together in the 1950s. The “time of uncertainty and amalgamations,” as Roncayolo and Bergeron call the period from 1870 to 1950, was about to end, and with it Haussmann’s Paris would itself be transformed. Important, innovative, and often idiosyncratic projects were accomplished in these years, but they remained isolated: Paris was weighed down by enormous conservatism. It might be argued that the long doldrums and the city’s good fortune not to have been bombed in World War II saved enough of Haussmann’s work (and the urban heritage he himself had preserved) that nineteenth-century Paris began the *Trente Glorieuses* relatively intact.³⁸ Old Paris would survive the projects between 1950 and 1990, but deeply wounded. “Cupidity and stupidity, now allied, had at their command unprecedented mechanical muscle.” The remarkable economic recovery and prosperity of postwar France would prove “one of the most stunning periods of French vandalism.”³⁹

The Trente Glorieuses

In 1977 Louis Chevalier, the doyen of historians of Paris, published *L’assassinat de Paris*, his most passionate, polemical, and personal book.⁴⁰ This history of Paris from about 1955 to 1968 is a funeral oration, its long lamentation culminating in the decision taken in 1962 to move Les Halles out of Paris, tear down Baltard’s wonderful iron and glass sheds, and build high-rise office buildings on the site. The story has a bittersweet end, recounted below.

Others have told the melancholy story, although perhaps not so

³⁷ The figures are from Bergeron, “Paysages de Paris,” 268.

³⁸ There is an ironic pun involved in this expression. The *Trois Glorieuses* refer to the three days of the Revolution of 1830 that drove the Bourbons, in the person of Charles X, from the throne and inaugurated the July Monarchy. The Revolution, memorably celebrated by Eugène Delacroix’s painting *Liberty Leading the People*, is usually remembered as the last time a united Paris expressed its will in insurrection. The *Trente Glorieuses* were the years of economic prosperity France enjoyed from about 1945 to 1975, and they were punctuated by political and social unrest as well as by considerable controversy about urban transformation.

³⁹ Louis Réau, *Histoire du vandalisme: Les monuments détruits de l’art français* (Paris: Bouquins, 1994), 928. “The state,” continue Michel Fleury and Guy-Michel Leproux, the editors who brought Réau up to the 1990s, “renouncing its role as protector, became entwined in building by way of the nationalized organizations which were often peopled with its technocrats, the local organisms that [might have] created bottlenecks, and political parties that had to finance increasingly costly electoral campaigns.”

⁴⁰ Translated into English by David P. Jordan as *The Assassination of Paris* (Chicago, 1994). Alas, Chevalier died on 3 August 2001. He was in his ninety-first year.

well. What only Chevalier has done and could have done is to wonder and mourn that Pompidou, his friend of many years, a lover of Baudelaire's poetry (and presumably of Baudelaire's Paris), and a colleague at the Collège de France, became the most important political figure in the "assassination" of the city. Chevalier lived most of his life in Paris, beginning with his student days at the Lycée Henri IV. For many years he had an apartment on the Rue du Cardinal Lemoine, with a splendid view northward of Paris. Smack in the middle of his view was the Beaubourg, which more than any other building is identified with Pompidou, carries his name, and was, for Chevalier, one of the *horreurs* inflicted on his beloved city.⁴¹ "Look at that," he once said to a visitor, pointing out his windows to the Beaubourg. "Paris is blue, and Paris is gray," not red and blue.

What Chevalier thought and loathed was that the urbanization of the *Trente Glorieuses* was different from what had come before. He thought that Haussmann, on balance, had been a friend to Paris and had given the city new life and beauty. But in the late 1950s Chevalier despaired for the city he loved. He saw no overall plan, passionately distrusted the technocrats whose manipulative intelligence admitted no historical or aesthetic considerations, and despised the developers whom he characterized as "cowboys." He considered the political leaders who were responsible for the destruction either spineless or (like Pompidou) motivated by some perverse conviction concerning what they thought necessary.⁴²

The perpetual dilemma for Paris has been the desire of its inhabitants to live and work in the central city. The urban sprawl so familiar in America—made possible by the availability of space—has not developed so extensively in France. Paris is closely confined and dense. The only place to build is up. Despite the vast Manhattanization at La Défense, just beyond the city limits, there was extensive high-rise construction in the old city. The new apartment houses soared over the height limits that dated back to Haussmann's time. A legendary figure in French life and culture, André Malraux, was responsible for

⁴¹ See Nathan Silver, *The Making of Beaubourg: A Building Biography of the Centre Pompidou, Paris* (Cambridge, 1994). The Beaubourg plain had been cleared in the 1930s, having been declared an *îlot insalubre*. It served as a parking lot for trucks making deliveries to Les Halles until the new museum was built. For Chevalier's description of the *horreurs* of Paris, see "Twenty Years Later," the epilogue he wrote to *The Assassination of Paris*, 260–74.

⁴² Réau, *Histoire du vandalisme*, 828–29, bitterly quotes one of Frantz Jourdain's jeremiads: "With troglodytes as with the members of the Commission du Vieux Paris, there is nothing to be done. It's not even worth trying. Let's ignore their whining. Tear up the prehistoric regulations about streets. Give builders the freedom to erect buildings that respond to the aspirations of the twentieth century." Jourdain goes on to suggest that pick and shovel are not efficient enough: "Let's use dynamite or bombs!"

removing the old restrictions. The municipal checks on state interference were bypassed. Paul Delouvrier, a politically important and forceful personage with direct connections to the Elysée Palace, was appointed to head the Paris District in 1961. The next year came the decision to transfer Les Halles. The “vertical urbanization” (the expression is Pinon’s) began at the same time, with the Croulebarbe and Keller towers in the thirteenth arrondissement. The so-called Orgue des Flandres project in the nineteenth arrondissement was begun in 1963. The Maine-Montparnasse tower, the tallest of all at fifty-six stories (and the only skyscraper in the old core city), had first been proposed in 1958. Work was begun in 1969. It became the symbol of a new urbanism out of scale and style with Haussmann’s Paris.

By 1960 all the components of the new urbanism were in place: an efficient and ruthlessly determined administration, an influx of new capital, land made available by demolition, and individual projects unrelated to the immediate neighborhood or its *esprit de quartier*, to Paris’s past, or to any overall plan. The juggernaut was driven by a national and unsentimental political will expressed in a strident and aggressive rhetoric of necessary change and progress. It was adopted by some of the most important men in France, who were actively hostile to pleas for prudence or preservation.

Demolishing the old Maine and Montparnasse railroad stations had long been contemplated as an urban renewal project. The renovated site included apartment buildings but had as its centerpiece the Maine-Montparnasse tower. The 690-foot skyscraper (and skyscrapers in general) had distinguished, unexpected, and eloquent defenders, most significantly Malraux and Pompidou. “The irrational French, especially Parisian, prejudice against towers,” said Pompidou, “is, in my view, completely retrograde. Everything depends on the particular tower: that is to say, where it is, its relationship with the environment, its proportions, its architectural form, and its materials of construction are essential. . . . Would I dare say the towers of Notre-Dame are too low? . . . They say the Maine-Montparnasse tower will dwarf the Ecole Militaire. Is it not dwarfed by the Eiffel Tower?”⁴³ The president thought the place, purpose, and proportions of the Maine-Montparnasse tower perfectly harmonized. High-rise buildings were planned throughout the city, though none so imposing. Despite the outcry against the Maine-Montparnasse skyscraper, denounced as some un-French, alien import from America, there was no widespread outrage over clearing the eight

⁴³ From an interview in *Le monde*, quoted in M. Tilmont and J. C. Croizé, *Les I.G.H. dans la ville* (1978), in Roncayolo, “D’Haussmann à nos jours,” 251.

acres on which it stood. Most of the projects in these years stirred little public protest. They were concentrated in parts of the city where the architectural heritage had little prestige and where the politically persuasive did not live. The historical patrimony of the city, commonly considered to be buildings dating from before 1789, was left virtually untouched.

The attack on Paris neighborhoods without important monuments or historically significant architecture had been going on for some time. The renewed assault against the *îlots insalubres* in the 1930s identified only three decrepit, even rotting *îlots* in the better sections of the city. All the other health hazards scheduled for demolition were scattered in the *quartiers populaires*.⁴⁴ Even those few in the core city—around the Marais and, most famously, the Beaubourg plain—were not much lamented. The doomed areas had long been abandoned to wretchedness, and both public and expert sensibility fixed on buildings, not environments. Individual buildings were worth fighting for, but not neighborhoods with uninteresting or mediocre structures. Only a change in thinking, partly borrowed from concern over the natural environment, would change how Parisians viewed their city.

In addition to the clearance of slums for health reasons, other parcels also outside the historical core were liberated. The abattoirs built by Napoléon I were closed at La Villette, although it took decades to find a new use for the land. Railroad stations yielded the most useful and extensive plots. Not only Maine-Montparnasse but the Gares Gobelins, Charonne, and Reuilly were also razed. The Petite Ceinture rail line was shut down, and significant pieces of industrial Paris were built upon, most particularly the site of the Citroën plant in the fifteenth arrondissement and the warehouse facilities at Bercy in eastern Paris. The city was being deindustrialized, a policy Haussmann himself had pursued.

If the decrepit neighborhoods were unlamented, what replaced the old buildings, rail yards, and terminals did raise an outcry. Around the Place d'Italie, most notoriously the Rue Nationale, an entire neighborhood was razed. Not only did insalubrious buildings disappear, but the very life of the quartier was attacked and destroyed.⁴⁵ Once again, as in Haussmann's day, the poor fled the city—but this time to escape life in the new apartment houses built on streets where their shops and cafés had been.

It was not its ruthlessness that distinguished the destruction of the

⁴⁴ See the map in Evenson, *Paris: A Century of Change*, 214, and her discussion, 213–16.

⁴⁵ See Norma Evenson, "The Passing of the Rue Nationale," in *Paris: A Century of Change*, 255–64.

Rue Nationale from many of Haussmann's depredations. It was the bulldozer mentality at work. Only Haussmann's assault on the Ile de la Cité was comparable. Here he transformed a densely populated slum in the very heart of historical Paris into an odd island of freestanding government buildings.⁴⁶ Haussmann's demolitions habitually cut streets through the heart of the old city. Zola's striking image of saber cuts across the fabric of the city is apt. Haussmann left standing most of what he did not need for thoroughfares. The Marais is a good example. He did not demolish the once fashionable neighborhood. The majority of the elegant *hôtels* are still standing, most of them now rehabilitated. Haussmann's new streets did not ruin the Marais. What condemned the neighborhood to uninterrupted decline and degradation was that he set it adrift in the new city. The Boulevards Sébastopol, Saint-Denis–Saint-Martin, Temple–Filles du Calvaire, and Beaumarchais and the Rue de Rivoli–Saint-Antoine isolate the Marais. Until very recently anyone who could live west of the Boulevard Sébastopol did so. The long downhill slide of the Marais, which began before the Revolution and accelerated in 1789 with the destruction of the Parlement of Paris and the *parlementaire* culture that had made the quartier a center of wealth and elegance, continued headlong. In contrast, the twentieth-century attack on the Rue Nationale left nothing at all standing. The presumption was that there was nothing worth preserving: the new high-rise apartment buildings were thought infinitely preferable. Haussmann, for all his arrogance, was never so presumptuous.

The French language, ever able to provide the right combination of description and judgment, has yielded the formula *l'urbanisme de dalles*—slab urbanism. A *dalle funéraire* is a tombstone: an unmistakable death knell is sounded.⁴⁷ The Front de Seine (fifteenth arrondissement) as well as the Rue de Flandre and the Rue de Belleville (nineteenth and twentieth arrondissements, respectively) suffered a similar *urbanisme*. "The recent evolution of the Rue de Flandre, the Rue Belleville, and the Rue Nationale," writes Bernard Rouleau, "is . . . significant and disquieting. In all three cases the destruction of an entire urban environment built along the old streets, under the pretext of renewal . . . destroyed the very pedestrian paths for so long inscribed in the city, and at the same time made everything that rendered these places alive completely disappear."⁴⁸ It was, however, the assault on Les Halles in the very heart

⁴⁶ See Jordan, *Transforming Paris*, 198–200, 201–3, for the psychological motivations of Haussmann's destruction of the Ile de la Cité.

⁴⁷ Pinon uses the phrase. I do not know if he coined it.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Roncayolo, "Paris en mouvement, 1950–1985," in Bergeron, *Paris: Genèse d'un paysage*, 294.

of Paris that stirred souls. There had been markets there since the reign of Philippe Auguste. Now they were destroyed. The putative reasons were insalubrity and inconvenience, hygiene and traffic flow.

So fundamental were the markets to Paris that there was no thought of moving them until the twentieth century.⁴⁹ Haussmann had given Les Halles new life. His decision to rebuild the markets was one of his very few concessions to the medieval city. Zola thought Baltard's ten iron and glass sheds the only original architecture produced by the Second Empire. When they were built, Paris had a population of around one million. By the eve of World War I the population had already outgrown Les Halles. In 1913 the Commission d'Extension of the prefecture of the Seine issued a report that suggested moving Les Halles out of the center of Paris. "What a park it will be possible to create in front of the nave of Saint-Eustache," the report exclaimed.⁵⁰ Nothing came of the proposal until Les Halles was caught up in the renewal frenzy of the 1960s.

The technical reason given for razing the markets was the need to connect the Métro and the new suburban RER train lines underground. Baltard's sheds had extensive underground storage that would have to be destroyed. There were also legitimate questions about the efficiency and capacity of the old markets. Greater Paris (i.e., much of the Ile-de-France) now had a population of seven million, more than triple what the markets had been planned to handle. But the public controversy centered mostly on aesthetic and sentimental questions.

Incredibly, the city had not thought about what would be built on the site. Only in 1967, five years after the decision to raze Les Halles, did the municipal council ask six different architectural firms to submit proposals. They were instructed to consider building heights up to a maximum of thirty meters. Some found this restriction intolerable. Not only was a Paris landmark and cultural phenomenon to disappear, but it would be replaced by towers! Public protest could not save Baltard's pavilions, but it did keep even more skyscrapers out of the core city.⁵¹ When Valéry Giscard d'Estaing became president in 1974, he prohib-

⁴⁹ There is an extensive literature on the destruction of Les Halles. I follow Chevalier, *Formation de la population parisienne*, 210–16, which is remarkable for its energy and passion, along with Rouleau, *Paris: Histoire d'un espace*; Evenson, *Paris: A Century of Change*; and Marchand, *Paris: Histoire d'une ville*, for details.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Evenson, *Paris: A Century of Change*, 301.

⁵¹ One pavilion was saved, number 8, which had originally been reserved for the sale of eggs and poultry. It was moved to the town of Nogent-sur-Marne and declared a classified historical monument. Some of the original ironwork that had surrounded the pavilion was also preserved. Soon afterward, when the Gaumont-Palace movie house was demolished, its organ was moved into the Pavillon, which has now become a cultural center for concerts and exhibitions.

ited construction of any high-rise buildings on the emptied site of Les Halles, which had become *le grand trou*, one of the most visited, albeit unintentional attractions in Paris. In his public pronouncements Giscard d'Estaing spoke of concern for the "quality of life," and by 1976, at his instigation, a new plan was produced. Few were pleased with it, but a substantial chunk of what had been the old market was eventually made green. A new shopping center, the Forum des Halles, was buried underground.

The struggle to save Les Halles ended in defeat, but it launched a new sense of historical preservation. Since Haussmann, there had been no overall urban plan. The history of Paris after him was a story of piecemeal, improvised, opportunistic development, sometimes public, sometimes private, and always uncoordinated. Slowly but inexorably, the planners and developers chiseled away at the city. By the 1960s, having witnessed the attack on Les Halles, those who cared about Paris saw their city threatened in a more organic way. It was not a particular historical building that was endangered, but an environment. A spirited defense of the neighborhood around Les Halles now began, not because it contained buildings of architectural distinction, for it did not, but because the charm of the market quartier was said to depend on "an ancient urban fabric which determined the prevailing land allotment, street patterns which conform to the historical way of the capital, sequences of facades filled with fantasy and harmony, forming a refined and elegant urban décor."⁵² It should be saved because it was a neighborhood, *tout court*. The new sensibility that Paris was a city of historical neighborhoods that, taken together, constituted urban beauty and were the essence of the city would spare even the *îlots insalubres*. Any demolition subtracted from the city an irreplaceable part of its material past. Filth and wretchedness could be ameliorated. Destruction could not be reversed. This view too marks an end to *haussmannisation*.

When the fate of Les Halles was being passionately debated at the national level, the Communists on the Paris Municipal Council proposed that Baltard's pavilions, or at least a few of them, be made into a retail market. Thus would the historical integrity of the district be preserved. Chevalier, who loathed the Communists, made the same proposal. New alliances were emerging to combat the modern urbanization of the *Trente Glorieuses*. From the 1960s to our day the desire to preserve the fabric of Paris—the idea of protecting the city—has been under-

⁵² "Les Halles: Les études de restauration-réhabilitation," *Paris projet*, no. 1, July 1969; quoted in Evenson, *Paris: A Century of Change*, 305. Michel Fleury, in Réau, *Histoire du vandalisme*, 954, says that 132 buildings in the Halles neighborhood were destroyed between 1970 and 1980.

stood in terms of neighborhoods: the unit of preservation has become larger, the imagery more organic. The danger to Paris is now seen as its steady transformation into a vast mosaic of isolated projects. The homogeneity imposed on Paris by Haussmann is being lost, and there is a new appreciation of his urban ideas.⁵³ It is worth noting that the neighborhoods now in the greatest peril are those that were built in the nineteenth century: the Opéra quartier, for example.

For so many years the struggle to save Paris's pre-Haussmann heritage absorbed the attention of those who cared. The familiar buildings of the Second Empire and Third Republic were not considered national treasures. They were the cancer that had destroyed old Paris. Few viewed them with affection; even fewer appreciated the inheritance of their grandparents' generation. Virtually no one made an aesthetic argument on behalf of the buildings of imperial Paris. In our own day, when much of the earlier patrimony seems safe from the wreckers, Haussmann's work is under serious threat, and there is an awakening of public interest in it. The ninth arrondissement, a neighborhood created during the transformation of Paris, is now old, expensive to rehabilitate, yet increasingly desirable. Transportation is good, and the more sinister aspects of old Montmartre, so colorfully chronicled by Chevalier,⁵⁴ are increasingly confined to a few blocks. Some luxurious *hôtels particuliers* have become offices for insurance companies, and even a few of the more extravagant bordellos have been saved as unique private dwellings, but some of this housing stock is already or potentially among endangered urban species.

The Presidential Projects

Lavedan, the historian of Paris urbanization, believes in the persistence of urban patterns.⁵⁵ Paris remains a walled city. The migration of the medieval university to the Left Bank, where the available land was urbanized differently from that of the Right Bank (a pattern continued

⁵³ François Loyer makes the argument for a new assessment of Haussmann's homogeneous city and shows, with his wonderful photographs, just how much variety there was. See, for example, 294–99 for a discussion of relative scale in Haussmann's buildings, and the photographs on 179 and 243 (the Place Saint-Michel) and 235 (variations within the *règlement* of 1859).

⁵⁴ Louis Chevalier, *Montmartre du plaisir et du crime* (Paris, 1980), is an erudite and vivid history of the infamous neighborhood from the beginning of the nineteenth century until World War II. I often stay in Paris at an apartment on the Rue Pigalle. Chevalier once telephoned me, quite concerned about my safety. He warned me not to walk around that neighborhood late at night. He had in mind the Montmartre of his youth and his studies.

⁵⁵ He has written extensively on Paris and was, in the last generation, a conservative yet very audible voice defending Paris against its destroyers. *Nouvelle Histoire de Paris: Histoire de l'urbanisme à Paris* (Paris, 1975) is perhaps his best-known work.

in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the Saint-Germain quartier was built), long ago laid down a template that continues to distinguish the two banks of the river. The unique relationship between the rulers of France and their capital has also persisted. François I's decision to build the new Louvre and Napoléon III's urban visions are but two among dozens of fateful decisions imposed on the city from above. The most recent frenzy of monumental building in Paris, driven by Mitterrand's passions, tastes, and needs, is another such imposition. The state's power manifested by the president's will is irresistible.

The ironies of the Mitterrand projects are many—the politics of planning, propaganda, and construction are convoluted. There has been, I think, far too little treatment of the history of Paris following the example of François Chaslin, who has written with much wit about these important urban works.⁵⁶ The presidential projects—the Bastille opera, the Louvre-Tuileries pyramid, the new Bibliothèque Nationale, the Grande Arche, and the Ministry of Finance—are the most important transformations to Paris at the end of the century. They will be the last for a very long time. The jury is still out on Mitterrand's architectural endowment of Paris. These are matters of taste, and the controversies will reverberate for generations.

What we can say is that all these projects, with the possible exception of the Grande Arche, which is set amid a completely new and uniformly modern quartier, are the antithesis of Haussmann's urban ideas. They continue and complete the work begun in the 1960s: more *horreurs*, to use Chevalier's language. The new buildings give Paris undeniable variety in terms of both how urban space is constructed and the *paysage* of the city. But the buildings stick out in what remains a nineteenth-century city. The idea of a mosaic has replaced Haussmann's preoccupation with an urban ensemble.⁵⁷ No attempt was made to integrate the new buildings into their built environment. True, they are all

⁵⁶ See *Les Paris de Mitterrand* (Paris, 1986), which I follow here. Chaslin is a journalist, and his sometimes gossipy book lacks historical perspective and depends overmuch on the evidence and assumptions of *petite histoire*, but he has nicely related politics and Paris in a way that is usually neglected by historians. In the same vein, although impeccably scholarly, are Harvey's fine essay on the building of Sacré-Coeur and Chevalier's work, earlier noted. Perhaps because focusing sharply on a building illuminates the shadows of skullduggery and political compromise, and raises questions about where the money comes from and how much is needed, books on the history of individual buildings integrate the political life of Paris and its built environment. Silver's *The Making of Beaubourg* is a recent attempt that, I think, fails to carry off the synthesis. He is predominantly interested in the architectural problems encountered and solved in erecting a technically innovative building. For the most part, however, the political history of Paris is sharply separated from urbanization. See, for example, Philippe Nivet and Yvan Combeau, *Histoire politique de Paris au XXe siècle* (Paris, 2000), which does not connect municipal government or politics with the transformations of the city.

⁵⁷ Rouleau, *Paris: Histoire d'un espace*, 443.

very large (except I. M. Pei's pyramid, which is still large for the confined space it occupies) and not easily blended, but the idea of harmonizing the structures with their surroundings was not part of the new aesthetic. From the Beaubourg museum onward the new, often highly technical buildings were planted in the Paris *paysage* where they stand out as different in style, size, materials, detail, and color. The Grande Bibliothèque particularly declares its isolation. One enters the building by mounting dozens of stairs, eventually reaching a self-contained, vast expanse that is not a conventional street or neighborhood: it is a part of the building, not a part of the city. Similarly, the presidential projects continue the 1960s' indifference to neighborhoods that contained no important buildings or monuments. The new urban preservationist aesthetic was as powerless against a determined state in the 1990s as it had been 30 (or 130) years earlier.

The last possible great Paris projects built on land vacated by the SNCF (the national railroad) or by industry have been launched or completed. Without significant demolitions—and who can be sure they won't occur—Paris *intra-muros* will not again see the kind of major development programs that transformed the capital between 1960 and 1990. The city will return, as it did after Haussmann's major work was finished, to a conservative and relatively quiet mode of parcel-by-parcel, building-by-building renovation, with new construction on a shrunken scale. There are some disquieting aspects to this, most particularly *façadisme*: gutting a building and completely rebuilding its interior. Only the original façade remains. In the name of retaining some of Haussmann's urban uniformity by leaving Second Empire buildings standing, the architectural patrimony and integrity of the nineteenth century are being attacked from within. Ostensibly being safeguarded, the buildings are essentially being destroyed. Not only is their architectural integrity violated when they are gutted, but, more often than not, important features on the outside are destroyed: old windows are replaced, a garage door is added where originally there were shops, the passage from street to courtyard is sealed.⁵⁸ The skeleton, with some of the bones missing, is all that remains to testify to the past.

A New Paris?

Whither Paris? Physically, Haussmann's city endures and is clearly identifiable. Its itineraries, reinforced by the Métro, are engraved on the minds of citizens and visitors. But his city, once almost universally ad-

⁵⁸ Pinon, *Paris: Biographie d'une capitale*, 300–301 (and his notes), deplores the phenomenon and loathes the architects who make a living doing this work.

mired and imitated, and for so long a place of secular pilgrimage, has lost much. The boulevards, the most characteristic aspect of *haussmannisation*, are little loved today, and visitors now seek out the few remaining pockets of pre-Haussmann Paris. For those nostalgic for the old city, it is worth remembering that the Beaubourg, and especially the large esplanade that sets it off—arguably anti-Haussmann in conception—is the most visited tourist attraction in Paris.

Now the imperial capital seems doomed to suffer the same fate as the medieval and classical cities did at Haussmann's hands. It is the fate of cities, if they are not made into museums, to be transformed by every generation of inhabitants, developers, architects, entrepreneurs, immigrants, and property owners. In the case of Paris, there is an added complication: the state has always played a central role in urban transformation. In the two periods of massive urban destruction and rebuilding, the Second Empire and the *Trente Glorieuses*, the state was the principal force at work. Those who would save the old city were outsiders—individuals or groups usually unable to do more than momentarily embarrass and delay the powerful.

For centuries, despite the vandalism and barbarism inflicted on it, Paris rolled with the punches. Because it was so rich in architectural treasures and set on such a remarkable natural site, the city rebounded. Its vibrant urban culture proved resilient. Haussmann's boulevards had been designed to order and control the unruly city, partly by quarantining popular street life. Paradoxically, his *percées* attracted even more activity outdoors. The bourgeoisie now took to the streets. Strolling, window-shopping, and roosting in the sidewalk cafés became touchstones of modern city life. The gentrification of *quartiers populaires* has recently decentralized these urban activities, which Haussmann sought to regulate and concentrate. The Rue Francs-Bourgeois in the now revitalized Marais is an excellent example. Once a sleepy route through the neighborhood, it now teems with shoppers, strollers, and tourists enjoying the chic shops and restored architecture.

Transcending or transforming the urban forms imposed in the last half century seems less and less possible today except here and there, as in the Marais or the now desirable twelfth arrondissement. The pressures of population (and its changing patterns), automobiles, and public transportation, coupled with demands for an improved quality of life, often seem insurmountable. Paris has run out of land to build on. The problems Haussmann thought he had solved have reappeared, and in forms that this time may defy solution.

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