
The VIEW FROM NOTRE-DAME

Je suis un éphémère et point trop mécontent citoyen d'une métropole crue moderne parce que tout goût connu a été érudé dans les ameublements et l'extérieur des maisons aussi bien que dans le plan de la ville. . . . Ces millions de gens qui n'ont pas besoin de se connaître amènent si pareillement l'éducation, le métier et la vieillesse, que ce cours de vie doit être plusieurs fois moins long que ce qu'une statistique folle trouve pour les peuples du continent.

—Arthur Rimbaud¹

The Argument

That it is tempting to see a connection between the modernization of Paris put through by Napoleon III and his henchmen—in particular by his prefect of the Seine, Baron Haussmann—and the new painting of the time. A critic unfriendly to that painting, and particularly to its claim to strict optical neutrality, might be disposed to put the connection thus: It seems that only when the city has been systematically occupied by the bourgeoisie, and made quite ruthlessly to represent that class's rule, can it be taken by painters to be an appropriate and purely visual subject for their art. They see it as a space from which mere anecdote and narrative have been displaced at last, and which therefore is paintable; but do they not mean by anecdote and narrative simply the presence—the pressure, the interference—of other classes besides their own? Haussmann's modernity, this critic would say, was philistine and repressive, and it is right that our gorges should rise at Fourcade La Roquette's unctuous reminder, in the 1869 debate over the baron's achievements, that as recently as 1847 "the street lamps were still not lit on nights when the moon shone," and at the "laughter in the House" which greeted the minister's sally at the bad old days.² For the House knew well that Haussmann's modernity had been built by evicting the working class of Paris from the centre of the city, and putting it down on the hill of Belleville or the plains of La Villette, where the moon was still most often the only street light available. And what did painters do except join in the cynical laughter and propagate the myth of modernity?



8. Edouard Manet, *Rue Mosnier Pavoisée*, 1877.

A defender, on the other hand, might say that modernist painters, though they showed the new Paris, most often did so in terms which had nothing in common with the official myth. They largely avoided those spaces, perspectives, occasions, and monuments which Haussmann himself would have seen as the essence of Haussmannization. Not until later, in the 1890s, did Pissarro present a full Haussmannian *point de vue* from one end of the Avenue de l'Opéra to the other (Plate III). In the 1860s and 1870s, what seemed to impress the new painting was the city's arbitrary and unfinished character. Manet, for instance, in his painting of the empire's Exposition Universelle of 1867 (Plate IV), was half inclined to outright satire of the city and its small enthusiasts. We should compare his view of the fictional form of Paris here—panoramic, unified, theatrical, spectacular, and flat—with his picture, painted ten years later, of the facts attendant on such exhibitions: the nondescript perspective of a street effaced by the regulation blood-red flag, or the same street containing a one-legged man *en blouse*—a veteran of 1870, say, or, even worse, of 1871.³

This chapter tries to mediate between these opposing views by putting a stress on the effort at ideological unity involved in Haussmann's rebuilding, and on the degree to which that effort failed. It therefore suggests that quite special problems are involved in the attempt, within the miniature confines of a canvas, to give that representation form.

It might be best to begin a description of Haussmannization at the edge of Paris, after the baron's work was done. Some time in 1886—let us assume it was subsequent to seeing Seurat's *Dimanche après-midi à l'île de La Grande Jatte* in the artist's studio or the Impressionist exhibition—Vincent van Gogh painted a small picture of the city's northern outskirts. We cannot be sure whether the tract of land he shows us stretches away to the north or the south, but it must be roughly one point of the compass or the other, for we are somewhere in the brief interval of open country between the working suburbs of Clignancourt and the iron-and-steel town of Saint-Denis to the north.

It was not unusual in the 1880s for a painter to choose a subject like this and believe it to be modern and poetical. There was a notion in the nineteenth century that the city divulged its secrets in such places, and that the curious ground between town and country—the *banlieue*, as Parisians

9. Vincent van Gogh, *The Outskirts of Paris*, 1886.



called it—had its own poetry and sharpened the dreaming onlooker's sense of what it meant to be bourgeois or *campagnard*. Victor Hugo put it as follows, in a passage he added to his novel *Les Misérables* for the new edition of 1861:

To wander in a kind of reverie, to take a stroll as they call it, is a good way for a philosopher to spend his time; particularly in that kind of bastard countryside, somewhat ugly but bizarre, made up of two different natures, which surrounds certain great cities, notably Paris. To observe the *banlieue* is to observe an amphibian. End of trees, beginning of roofs, end of grass, beginning of paving stones, end of ploughed fields, beginning of shops, the end of the beaten track, the beginning of the passions [*fin des ornières, commencement des passions*], the end of the murmur of things divine, the beginning of the noise of humankind—all of this holds an extraordinary interest.

And thus, in these unattractive places, forever marked by the passer-by with the epithet *sad*, the promenades, apparently aimless, of the dreamer. [*De là, dans ces lieux peu attrayants, et marqués à jamais par le passant de l'épithète: triste, les promenades, en apparence sans but, du songeur.*]⁴

These paragraphs may have left their traces in van Gogh's elaborate, bookish mind. In any case he would have known for certain that the *banlieue* was meant to be melancholy, and that by 1886 there were even specialists—poets and painters—in the new commodity. The *banlieue* was the place where autumn was always ending on an empty boulevard, and the last traces of Haussmann's city—a kiosk, a lamppost, a cast-iron *pissoirière*—petered out in the snow. It was the territory of ragpickers, gypsies, and gasometers, the property of painters like Jean-François Raffaëlli and Luigi Loir. The best insult to *La Grande Jatte* that Armand Guillaumin could devise in 1886 was to tell Seurat he was “doing a Raffaëlli.”⁵ So van

10. Luigi Loir, *La Fin de l'automne*, 1882.





11. Jean-François Raffaëlli, *La Butte des chiffonniers*. From *Les Types de Paris*, 1889.

Gogh would have known that there were various *banlieues* to be avoided if one wished to stay part of the avant-garde.

We might suspect van Gogh of wanting to maintain Hugo's attitude, but of realizing that it would have to be reworked by a consciousness that all the epithets applied to the *banlieue*—sad, grey, desolate, ruined, even the *vague* of *terrain vague*—had been used too often, at least by bourgeois passers-by. Put them in the mouths of a laundress and a metalworker, as Zola did in chapter 8 of *L'Assommoir*, and they might be allowed to rekindle for a moment. Gervaise and Goujet climb the north side of Montmartre:

With their heads lowered, they made their way along the well-worn path, amid the rumbling of the factories. Then, after two hundred yards, without thinking, as if they had known the place all along, they turned left, still keeping silent, and came out into an empty terrain. There, between a mechanical sawmill and a button works, was a strip of meadow still remaining, with patches of scorched yellow grass; a goat, tied to a post, walked round in circles bleating; further on a dead tree crumbled in the hot sun.

"Really," Gervaise murmured, "you'd believe you were in the countryside." . . .

The two of them said nothing. In the sky, a flock of white clouds swam past as slowly as a swan. In the corner of the field, the goat had turned in their direction and looked at them; from time to time, at regular intervals, it bleated softly. And

holding hands, their eyes brimming with tenderness, they looked into the distance, lost in thought, on the pallid slopes of Montmartre, surrounded by the great forest of factory chimneys blocking out the horizon, in that chalky and desolate *banlieue*, where the green trees shading the cheap taverns moved them to the edge of tears [*dans cette banlieue plâtreuse et désolée, où les bosquets verts des cabarets borgnes les touchaient jusqu'aux larmes*].⁶

It is all hedged in by a sense of absurdity, and the reader is given the option—perhaps too grossly in that final phrase—of finding Gervaise's vision merely foolish. But the vision and the emotion are not there in the novel simply to be denied; Gervaise and Goujet have their moment of freedom, and the landscape of the *banlieue* is the setting that confirms it and marks its limits.

L'Assommoir was part of van Gogh's reading too. He had read it first in The Hague four years earlier, and he may have looked at it again in Paris. But the picture he finally did of the *banlieue* is not a composite image; my network of possible points of reference is not meant to suggest it is. On the contrary, the image he made is saved from merely belonging to one artistic *banlieue* or another by its very emptiness, and the literalness with which the signs of change are spelt out in it unobtrusively.

Of course the picture has its share of desolation. It is mostly laid on or suggested by the unrelieved drabness of the colours, and by having objects and persons reduced to fluid, approximate, almost apologetic smears of paint. The paint is as slippery as the rained-on clay at the crossroads in the foreground, and as liquid as the cloud cover—that waterlogged, tumescent grey in which the very birds seem bloated and lumbering. The *banlieue* was supposed to look like this: the weather is suitably hopeless, and the brushwork insists on the mud-caked, deliquescent character of everything, even the lamppost. Whatever separate forms there are seem half embedded in the general ooze, but nonetheless van Gogh has been at pains to make them readable, and by means of them he draws up a kind of inventory of the edge of Paris—he does so matter-of-factly, bit by bit. There are the birds and the gaslight; there is a windmill in the distance and two or three tall narrow houses with red-tiled roofs, and on either side of the horizon large, lumpish grey buildings with rows of identical windows. There is some ragged grass, a broken fence, weeds, a line which changes from ochre to pink at the right which may be wheat or barley, or perhaps another path, and a trace of vermilion at the left which might be meant for poppies growing on fallow ground. Two men are dressed in workers' smocks, one near, one far, the nearer keeping company with a woman in black; two children dressed in white are being taken for a walk through the fields, and there are half a dozen other figures, tiny, to the

right, working or walking in the distance. On the path in front of the gaslight stands a character with a stick and a cap, a shapeless brown jacket, and a face which is one unworked block of grey paint.

None of these details are innocent, and most of them tell the same story. The factories—for that is what those lumpish buildings are—will replace the windmill, and the villas will march across the mud and cornfields until they reach the premonitory gas standard. This is a working landscape, with anonymous citizens mostly moving fast, going about their business, not stopping or sauntering, not sitting on the grass. There are no dreamers here. It does not appear to be Sunday afternoon, and the Plaine Saint-Denis is not arranged or proffered to the viewer as a *prospect*; neither the dingy line of buildings nor the edges of fields, nor even the five retreating figures on the path, establish much of a sense of scale or demarcation: things are seeping into one another, and the landscape is taking on a single, indiscriminate shape. It is much like the action of water on chalk and clay in the foreground.

There are those who blamed Baron Haussmann directly for all of this—the factories, the mess of fields and paths and stranded gaslights. As early as 1870 the grandest of Haussmann's enemies, Louis Lazare, had accused the baron of building a second industrial Paris on the edge of the old, and waiting for low rents and the promise of work to lure the working class out to it.

Artisans and workers [wrote Lazare] are shut up in veritable Siberias, criss-crossed with winding, unpaved paths, without lights, without shops, with no water laid on, where everything is lacking. . . .

We have sewn rags onto the purple robe of a queen; we have built within Paris two cities, quite different and hostile: the city of luxury, surrounded, besieged by the city of misery. . . . You have put temptation and covetousness side by side.⁷

As a matter of fact Haussmann had taken a personal hand in selling the Plaine Saint-Denis. He had called the great capitalists Cail and Say into his office and had showed them the open land on the map, free from the city's normal taxes, with new sewers and cheap coal guaranteed.⁸ He most certainly thought that factories should get out of the imperial city. In time the tax laws and the baron's promises had the intended effect: Monsieur Say moved his refinery from Ivry, Monsieur Cail his steel mill from Grenelle. Others followed, and during the 1870s the plain was steadily filling up: Haussmann had had his way with industry, as with so much else.

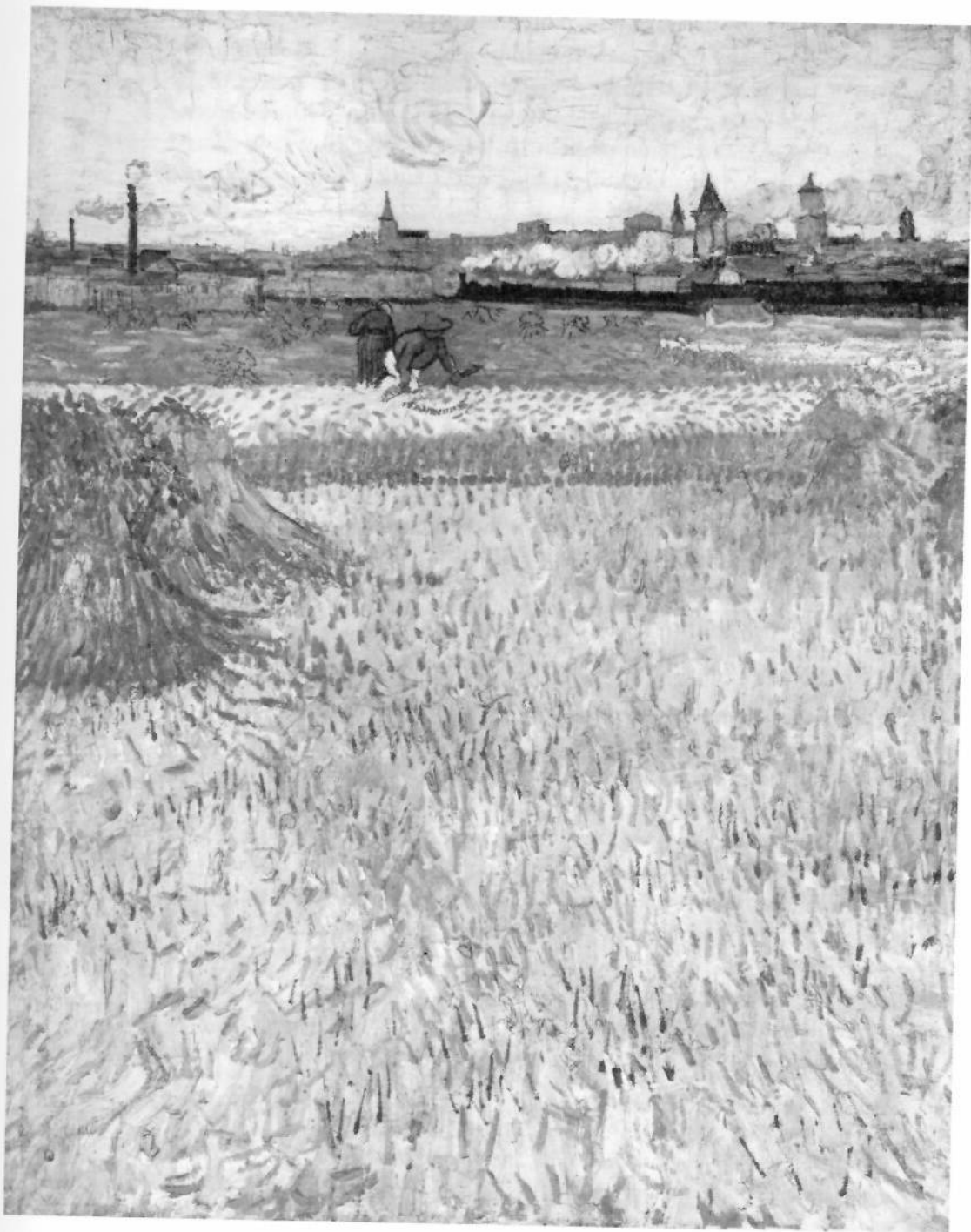
It is unquestionably too glib to read van Gogh's picture as simply an image of Lazare's new Siberia. In describing the painting I have been obliged to move between the language of the melancholic *banlieue*—for

some such discourse is still present here, determining the picture's general look—and another language, more pedestrian and empirical, in which the disparate, provisional character of the place is rehearsed quite soberly. This is not to say that the sobriety does not end up producing something pointed, even chilling—it seems to me it does. But the picture is small and in a sense prosaic; it avoids the sociologist's high moral tone. And yet Lazare is after all probably closer to van Gogh's purpose than Victor Hugo. We could say that the landscape in van Gogh's work—and here is the difference from Hugo and Zola—is no longer envisaged as the edge of something else, the definite city of Paris. The plain is not presented, like Hugo's *banlieue*, as the end of one form of life and the beginning of another; there is no town in van Gogh's picture, and no country; the broken line of factories, villas, and warehouses is no more a marker of the city's edge than the gaslight in the field; and our reading of the open land and its agriculture is determined, surely, by the sea of mud in the foreground—it stands for the casual disrepair of this whole territory.

How different it is from van Gogh's sense of town and country a year or so later, when he paints the plain at the edge of Arles! There the fields are crammed with wheat; the picture's foreground is the rich, dry, stippled yellow of the stubble; and the factories and railway line beside the old city are drawn as a single bounding line—beyond them towers and churches, packed together.

What van Gogh was depicting in 1886 was the aftermath of Haussmannization. I do not think, as I said, that we should make the picture out to be too doom-laden; but there is some doom in it, especially if the edge of Paris is compared with that of Arles. The atmosphere of dissolution and misuse seems unmistakable, and the suggestion strong that the modern may add up to not much more than the vague misappropriation of things. This, we shall see, is not to be explained as the mere bewilderment of a Dutchman in the big city: it is a characteristic note struck by Parisians when they deal with what had happened to Paris in their own time.

The word most often used to describe that process was "Haussmannization," and it was meant to convey the brutality (the Germanic thoroughness) with which the city has been transformed. At the edges of Paris there might be muddle and suburban sprawl, but these were the obverse—the ancillary conditions—of a city which for the most part was hideously well ordered. The reader should immediately beware, however, of the fiction that modernity, brutal or not, had been achieved once and for all by the baron's rebuilding. Certainly there were Parisians who believed as



12. Vincent van Gogh, *The Mowers, Arles in the Background*, 1888.

much, but the things they blamed on Haussmann—the blankness, the sameness, the regularity of the new buildings and streets—had been held to be true of the capital for thirty years or more before the baron took power. They had been extrapolated, always with a sense of doom, from the merest signs of interruption or drift. In 1830, for example, swooping over Paris from the towers of Notre-Dame and fixing on the repetitious architecture of the Bourse and the Rue de Rivoli, Victor Hugo had dreamt Haussmann's city and conjured up a bitter image of its plan:

Let us add that if it is right that the architecture of an edifice be adapted to its purpose in such a way that the purpose be readable from the edifice's exterior alone, we can never be sufficiently amazed at a monument which can equally well be a royal palace, a house of commons, a town hall, a college, a riding school, an academy, an entrepôt, a tribunal, a museum, a barracks, a sepulchre, a temple, a theatre. For the time being it is a Stock Exchange. . . . We have that colonnade going round the monument, under which on the great days of religious observance there can be developed in majestic style the theories of stockbrokers and commission agents.

Without a doubt these are quite superb monuments. Add to them a quantity of handsome streets, amusing and varied like the Rue de Rivoli, and I do not despair that Paris, seen from a balloon, should one day present that richness of line, that opulence of detail, that diversity of aspect, that hint of the grandiose in the simple and the unexpected in the beautiful, which characterizes a checkerboard.⁹

Hugo's metaphor would be borrowed regularly later, when the battle with Haussmann was on. By the 1840s there were plenty of town councillors and Saint-Simonians to moderate the poet's apocalyptic sarcasms and put his objection in reasonable, practical terms. The problem with Paris, the experts thought, was that its inner core was on the move to the west, following the drift of commerce towards the Bourse and the *grands boulevards*.¹⁰ If something drastic was not done, the city would be left with a dead centre, its streets too narrow, its tradesmen gone in search of the rich. "The old Paris is passing," Balzac had written in *Les Petits Bourgeois*, "following the kings who have passed."¹¹ The new Paris was struggling to be born; and once again what is striking is the commentators' wish to have it there already, fully fledged.

Let me tell you what threatens everything in Paris: this abrupt efflorescence of bricks and slate, this profusion of building timbers and ashlar, this exuberant vegetation of casement windows, shutters, and *portes cochères*. . . . A craze for building reigns like an epidemic: the tide of houses rises as we look, overflowing the *barrières*, invading the *banlieue* and making its first assault on the outworks of the city's fortifications [in other words, spreading out to the land round Porte de Clichy and Porte de la Chapelle: no more than a stone's throw from van

Gogh's path and lamppost]. Can we stop this fever, this mania for piling stone on stone?¹²

This was Texier's verdict in 1852, before Haussmann had even entered the prefecture; and this was the diagnosis two years earlier in a pamphlet entitled *De la décentralisation des Halles*:

As a result of the transformation of the old Paris, the opening of new streets, the widening of narrow ones, the high price of land, the extension of commerce and industry, with the old slums giving way each day to apartment houses, vast stores, and workshops, the poor and working population finds itself, and will find itself more and more, forced out to the extremities of Paris; which means that the centre is destined to be inhabited in future only by the well-to-do [*ce qui fait que le centre est appelé à ne plus être peuplé dans la suite que par la population aisée*].¹³

None of these descriptions is arbitrary, still less straightforwardly untrue. Paris was drifting west in the 1840s; the Bourse was a special kind of architecture and would have progeny; there was undoubtedly a building boom before Haussmann. (One of the baron's first problems in the western *faubourgs* was that he was obliged, in order to build his new boulevards, to pull down so many fine houses which had been standing for only a handful of years—and whose owners had influence at court.¹⁴) But all the same these texts, especially Hugo's, *anticipate* modernity: it is as if the various authors needed it to be there, and made believe it was, in order to anathematize it. The most effective conjuration was certainly that hurled from the towers of Notre-Dame, and it should give us pause straightaway that the best description of Haussmannization was written thirty years before the event. Pamphleteers in the 1860s liked to take Hugo's tour de force for an epigraph,¹⁵ and then go on to repeat its basic imagery—discovering a city of straight lines and unreadable façades, in which the stockbroker and commission agent still waxed theoretical on feast days. We might say of these writers that they seem to *want* the city to have a shape—a logic and a uniformity—and therefore construct one from the signs they have, however sparse and unsystematic. They see or sense a process and want it finished, for then the terms in which one might oppose it will at least be clear. The ultimate horror would be to have modernity (or at any rate not to have what had preceded it), to know it was hateful, but not to know what it was.

It is just that latter condition which haunts the most intense of these forebodings—the one in which prediction finally fuses with description—the entry in the Goncourts' journal of 18 November 1860:

I go in the evenings to the Eldorado, a big café-concert on the Boulevard de Strasbourg, a room with columns and very luxurious decor and paintings, something rather like Kroll's in Berlin.

Our Paris, the Paris where we were born, the Paris of the way of life of 1830 to 1848, is passing away. Its passing is not material but moral. Social life is going through a great evolution, which is beginning. I see women, children, households, families in this café. The interior is passing away. Life turns back to become public. The club for those on high, the café for those below, that is what society and the people are come to. All of this makes me feel, in this country so dear to my heart, like a traveller. I am a stranger to what is coming, to what is, as I am to these new boulevards, which no longer smack of the world of Balzac, which smack of London, some Babylon of the future. It is idiotic to arrive in an age under construction: the soul has discomforts as a result, like a man who lives in a newly built house.¹⁶

Again the date of the entry is important. By the winter of 1860 the new city was manifestly in the making. The Goncourts were seated in a café-concert on the enormous boulevard which Haussmann had laid out a year or so earlier to connect the Cité to the Gare de l'Est. But the baron's improvements were still in progress, and the shape of the *deuxième réseau*—the second, decisive instalment of street improvements and public works—was still not clear. The Rue de Rivoli had been finished, to Hugo's chagrin, in 1858, and the Boulevard Saint-Michel; but the network of grand avenues to the west, which would exacerbate the city's drift in that direction, was only just begun; the spinal cord of the new West End, the great Boulevard Malesherbes, was a wilderness of mud and scaffolding; and the subjection of the eastern, working-class *faubourgs* was mapped out but not yet put into practice. There was some understandable confusion, therefore, about Haussmann's purposes and their effect on Parisian life; the battle against Haussmannization had hardly started, and the word itself was not yet in circulation.

The Goncourts' verdict on this state of affairs is unfriendly but elusive; and whatever splenetic certainty it appears to have at first reading tends to dissipate the more one pays heed to the elliptical imagery and the indecisive tense of so many of the crucial verbs. When Edmond tidied up the text of the *Journal* for publication in 1891, he tried to make the imagery more concrete—or at least more vivid—and to mend his original uncertainty as to what was happening, what had happened, and what the future might hold in store:

I am going this evening to the Eldorado, a café-concert on the Boulevard de Strasbourg, a room with columns and very luxurious decor and paintings.

My Paris, the Paris where I was born, the Paris of the way of life of 1830 to 1848, is passing away. If it is passing in material terms, it is passing in terms of morality. Social life is going through a great evolution, which is beginning. I see women, children, households, families in this café. The interior is going to die. Life threatens to become public. The club for those on high, the café for those

below, that is what society and the people will come to. . . . From this an impression of passing through these things, like a traveller. I am a stranger to what is coming, to what is, as I am to these new boulevards without turnings, without chance perspectives, implacable in their straight lines, which no longer smack of the world of Balzac, which make one think of some American Babylon of the future.¹⁷

London would no longer quite do as a point of reference for what Haussmann was attempting: it was replaced by New York and Chicago. Paris, after all, was passing away materially as well as morally. The contradictory double time implied in the original phrase, "La vie retourne à devenir publique"—it is as if the present public life was a regression from the fierce privacy which had hitherto characterized bourgeois existence, but also the form of the future—was rewritten as simple threat, "La vie menace de devenir publique." And the clichés of Haussmann's critics were now given room in the text: the boulevards as usual became things "without turnings, without chance perspectives, implacable in their straight lines." (There was joke after joke on this theme in the 1860s, the best being Edmond About's: his old soldier Colonel Fougas saw the way things were going in Paris and dreamt of the day when the Seine itself would be straightened, "because its irregular curve is really rather shocking."¹⁸)

The original version of the Goncourts' text was less formulaic than this. It did not *have* a Paris, in the way the Hugo had, or the other writers I have quoted. It was on the verge of recognizing in itself—through deployment of tenses, and production of the narrator as a kind of ghostly, idiot intruder in the text, having nothing to do with the forms of life he attempts to describe—the very work of extrapolation which the other commentators took for granted. Of course the Goncourts' entry amounts in the end to an offer of knowledge, a picture of Paris, and one made almost coherent by the simple pressure of disgust—the interior is dying, whatever was once of value in bourgeois existence is sabotaged or travestied, and life spills out into the streets and the Eldorados. But "picture" here is not quite the right word: the Goncourts' Paris—this is its originality—is only incompletely an image. It is not really visualized, and that reticence seems to have been exactly true to what was going on in 1860: a city was being made, vigorously and well, but with no forms of visualization provided, or none the Goncourts could believe in.

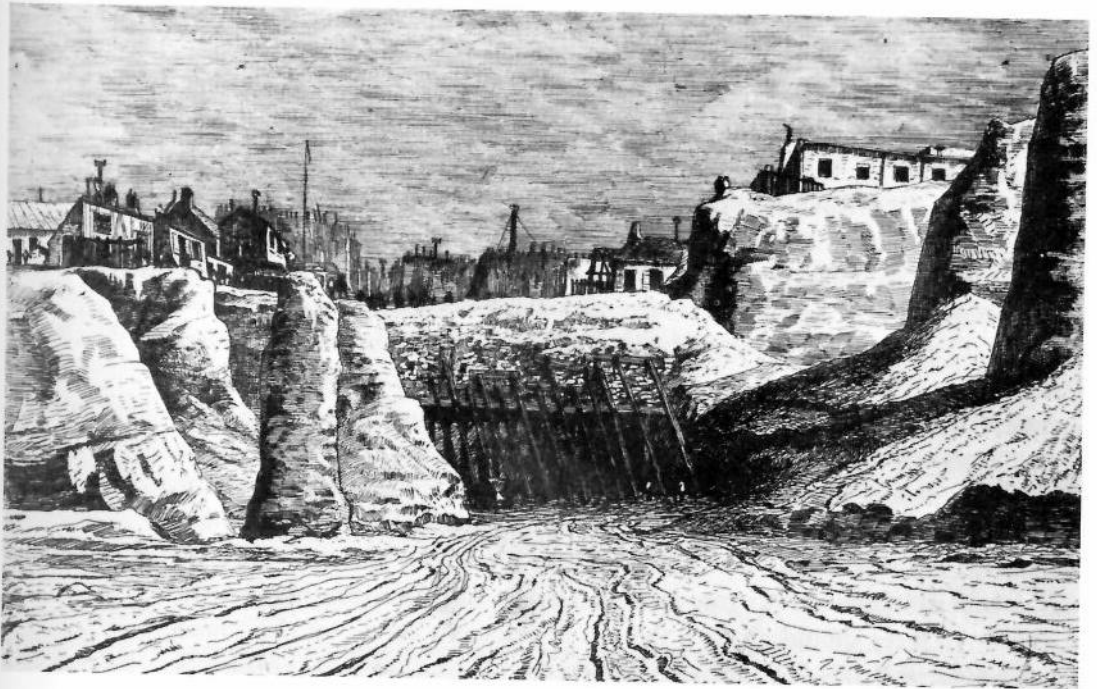
We seem to have reached an impasse. Did Hausmannization give the city form or not? To many contemporaries the question would have seemed entirely odd; for what were the boulevards, the squares, and the new street furniture if not an attempt to make Paris look a certain way—to make it the image the critics had been anticipating? But it was possible to say—Lazare said it, and Haussmann sued him for doing so—that the attempt

was turning out a failure.¹⁹ The city was eluding its various forms and furnishings, and perhaps what Haussmann would prove to have done was to provide a framework in which another order of urban life—an order without an imagery—would be allowed its mere existence. (The real doom comes, the Goncourts might have agreed, when there are no images of it, and therefore no sense of it much.) In this perspective—and I suppose its very grimness means that it is not maintained very often, or for long—the whole debate about Haussmann’s *aesthetics* has a nostalgic ring. So the baron pined for long straight lines and striking “points of view,” and his critics for chance perspectives! But what had either to do with the winding paths of Lazare’s Siberia, or the mute efficiency of the speculators around the Parc Monceau? Capital did not need to have a representation of itself laid out upon the ground in bricks and mortar, or inscribed as a map in the minds of its city-dwellers. One might even say that capital preferred the city not to be an image—not to have form, not to be accessible to the imagination, to readings and misreadings, to a conflict of claims on its space—in order that it might mass-produce an image of its own to put in place of those it destroyed. On the face of things, the new image did not look entirely different from the old ones. It still seemed to propose that the city was one place, in some sense belonging to those who lived in it. But it belonged to them now simply *as an image*, something occasionally and casually consumed in spaces expressly designed for the purpose—promenades, panoramas, outings on Sundays, great exhibitions, and official parades. It could not be had elsewhere, apparently; it was no longer part of those patterns of action and appropriation which made up the spectators’ everyday lives.

I shall call that last achievement the spectacle, and it seems to me clear that Haussmann’s rebuilding was spectacular in the most oppressive sense of the word. We look back at Haussmanization now and see the various ways in which it let the city be consumed in the abstract, as one convenient fiction. But we should beware of too much teleology: the truth is that Haussmann’s purposes were many and contradictory, and that the spectacle arrived, one might say, against the grain of the empire’s transformations, and incompletely. (The spectacle is never an image mounted securely and finally in place; it is always an account of the world competing with others, and meeting the resistance of different, sometimes tenacious forms of social practice.) Pay heed to the Goncourts’ casting round for an image of Paris and not finding one—it points very well to the limits of Haussmannization.

The bare details of destruction speak for themselves. In seventeen years Haussmann remade the city in a quite unprecedented way. On his own





13. A. P. Martial, *Petite Pologne, destruction pour le boulevard Malesherbes*, 1861. Etching.

estimation, the new boulevards and open spaces displaced 350,000 people;²⁰ 12,000 of them were uprooted by the building of the Rue de Rivoli and Les Halles alone.²¹ Statistics are the language of Haussmannization, and capable of a certain rough eloquence in the baron's favour: by 1870 one-fifth of the streets in central Paris were his creation;²² he had spent 80 million francs on sewers, and 2.5 billion francs on the city as a whole; at the height of the fever for reconstruction, one in five Parisian workers was employed in the building trade.²³

Boulevards were the heart of the matter: it was they that laid waste the city, and we have photographs, prints, and paintings to indicate how dramatically. There was thus the possibility of a picturesque of demolition: the Boulevard Malesherbes in Martial's print is shown surging through the slums of Petit Pologne like a force of nature, a wave about to burst a flimsy dam, something that could make the city look sublime for a moment if engraved with the right degree of detachment; and there are scores of images from the same decade in which a painter put together out of broken walls and scaffolding a good semblance of a ruin. (Gautier as early as 1856 called Haussmann the new Piranesi in an article entitled "Mosaique de ruines."²⁴) But Haussmannization was much more than the making of streets.

It was laying out new aqueducts along the Dhuis one hundred miles from Paris; it was doubling the acreage of the city by annexation, fitting new lenses on the gas lamps, having Viollet-le-Duc put up a spire of oak and lead on Notre-Dame, declaring open the great collector sewer, providing ways for men to relieve themselves (more or less) in public, putting an outer circle of railways round the city, building the new Opéra and the new morgue. Haussmann's proudest moments included breaking the monopoly of the cab company—the Compagnie des Petites Voitures—in 1866, and promoting that of the makers of street lamps—the Compagnie Parisienne d'Éclairage—in 1856.²⁵ By the end of the 1860s he could boast that Paris had twice as many trees as in 1850, most of them transplanted full grown;²⁶ it had policemen and night patrols, bus shelters, tap water, and better access to the cemeteries.

The business of building a modern city was complex and irksome. It is easy to point out the extent to which Haussmann failed, even by his own standards. He was in any case a man whose modernity had its limits: he never believed in electric light, and recoiled in horror from the thought that human feces should go with the rest of the city's debris into his *grand égout collecteur*.²⁷ His faith in free enterprise was profound, but one of his first acts was to introduce a municipal Caisse des Boulangers to keep the price of bread steady and stave off the possibility of food riots.²⁸ (That smacked too much of *sans-culotte* politics for his republican successors; they abolished the Caisse in 1872.) Paris in 1870 still had fleets of sedan chairs²⁹ and public executions at the Barrière Saint-Jacques. The poor still ended in the *fosse commune*, much as Haussmann deplored the fact in his speeches. There had been cholera again in 1867, and tuberculosis was on the increase.³⁰

Nevertheless the city had been reconstructed; no one disputed that. There was more disagreement when it came to explaining why. In the black-and-white political climate of the 1860s men chose their reasons for Haussmannization according to their general view of the empire, and Haussmann himself was no exception. Some said that empires always believed (too much) in public works, as a means to employ the unruly populace, as a source of patronage, and as a general provider of goods to the economy.³¹ It was certainly true that the emperor himself had arrived back from London in 1848 with various Saint-Simonian dreams of the city, and that he was less quickly disabused of them than of his other utopian hopes. It was he who drew the original rough map of the Paris-to-be which Haussmann pinned up on the wall of his office in the Hôtel de Ville; it was he who received the baron each day at the Tuileries, after the prefect of police, for a personal report on the state of the capital; and in his official portrait

by Flandrin, underneath a brochure on the table entitled *A la France* lies the "Plan de Paris," discreetly displayed as the emperor's handiwork.³² His dreams said that the city should be clean and light, with parks and churches and lakes, and traffic on the move. They also said that the city should have no more revolutions, or none with a chance of succeeding.

There was no disputing that part of Haussmann's modernity was his wish to put an end to insurrection.³³ He stated as much himself: it was a good argument to lean on when pleading for funds from the Conseil Municipal. Years after the event, he was still musing in his *Mémoires* over the hidden benefits of the Boulevard Sébastopol:

It meant the disembowelling of the old Paris, the *quartier* of uprisings and barricades, by a wide central street piercing through and through this almost impossible maze, and provided with communicating side streets, whose continuation would be bound to complete the work thus begun. The subsequent completion of the Rue de Turbigo made the Rue Transnonain [symbolic capital of the barricades] disappear from the map of Paris!³⁴

Nor was this merely a matter of hindsight on Haussmann's part. The



14. Hippolyte Flandrin,
Napoleon III, c. 1860-61.

details of counterrevolution weighed heavily on the planners' minds at the time: Napoleon intervened directly in 1857 to prevent the encirclement of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine from being spoiled by a mere architect's whim: "the construction of arcades on the Boulevard Mazas," he wrote, "would seriously damage the strategic system of Paris."³⁵ The arcades were quietly dropped from the designs.

The decent adjective "strategic" echoes through the 1860s. Covering the old Canal Saint-Martin was a fine strategy, robbing the *faubourgs* of one of their favourite lines of defence;³⁶ making wide roads to all the railway stations meant not just that goods went out to the provinces, but that soldiers could more easily be shipped in; the network of new churches was excellent for working-class morale, but hardly more so than the new barracks put up at all the major crossroads.

How the opposition made hay with this aspect of Haussmannization! The baron had done his work "against Paris," said Charles Delon, and Paris in its innocence had not seen what was happening until too late.³⁷ Writers were eager now to draw back the veil. Consider Victor Fournel, for example, in *Paris nouveau et Paris futur*, published in 1865:

It must be said that what are called the embellishments of Paris are basically nothing but a general system of offensive and defensive armament against uprising, a precaution taken against future revolutions, which has been pursued for twelve years with an indefatigable perseverance, without the ingenuous Parisian's appearing to suspect a thing.³⁸

Or the same message in the mouth of a triumphant general (retired), strutting the boards of Eugène Pelletan's *Nouvelle Babylone* in 1862:

This is the reason [the general exults] why Paris has been demolished. We wished to make Paris an armed camp, and the Louvre our quadrilateral; with that and the imperial guard for garrison, the principle of authority can sleep easy. And honest men will no longer see individuals in cotton aprons, carrying pots of paste in their hands, daubing the walls with their brushes and gravely putting up on street corners posters announcing the formation of a new government.³⁹

Looking back from the other side of 1870, we are not likely to be impressed by the general's powers of prophecy; and really his whole diagnosis is no more accurate, on its own, than his political soothsaying. Readers may have wanted to believe him in 1862—and Pelletan, the wide-eyed and disapproving visitor from the provinces, was certainly inclined to do so—but again there is pathos in the very wish that Paris amount to one thing. The city ought to have a reason, the streets must be part of a plot. It should not surprise us that Fournel's little book begins with the passage from Hugo on Paris as checkerboard, and ends with the author's own dream of the capital in 1965, swollen to the size of the Seine De-

partment, totally rectilinear and centralized, with the centre taken up by an impenetrable barracks, as big as a city in its own right.⁴⁰

The truth was that Haussmann's rebuilding obeyed various kinds of logic. Counterrevolution was part of it, and so were public works, and the need to do something for the worn-out and distended fabric of the capital. There was the simple wish to have an imperial city to show off to strangers. There was the profit motive (did not Haussmann in retirement end up as director of the *Crédit Mobilier* and the *Magasins Généraux*, in frank reward for services rendered?).⁴¹ By 1865, certainly, there was a wish to do something to appease one's critics, to help the *banlieue* and deliver the goods to those who felt themselves excluded from modernity thus far.⁴² All of these purposes were real and substantial: they crossed and obstructed one another sometimes, and often they colluded. But what they produced was something, the city, which wholly exceeded any of their arguments; and this too was recognized at the time, not just by Lazare and the brothers Goncourt.

The reader will have noticed how tempting it is to make this chapter out of nothing but the voices of the discontented. There were plenty of them: at times in the later 1860s it seemed as if Haussmann had hardly a single friend, apart from the pamphleteers he paid and the editors of guidebooks, who are obliged to make the best of things. Haussmannization was unpopular in Paris: the defeat of the official slate in the city in the 1869 elections was bound up with that fact, as was the decisive no which Paris gave to the emperor's plebiscite of 1870; so too was the uprising against the empire on 4 September of the same year. Revenge on Haussmann could occasionally be sweet. An American called Sheppard described the scene in the western districts on 4 September as follows: "The busts of the Emperor and Empress were thrown out of the windows of the houses in which they were found; and on one ladder I saw a well-dressed *bourgeois* effacing the street name of the Boulevard Haussmann, and substituting that of 'Victor Hugo.'"⁴³ One month later, when the mob first invaded the *Hôtel de Ville*, there was some of the same symbolism: "Furniture is smashed. A splendid plan of Paris, drawn up by Haussmann's engineers and Napoleon's Haussmann, is cut to pieces by the vengeful Reds. They break into the chamber where the twenty mayors are in session. The mayors flee."⁴⁴

Time and again one is struck by the vehemence and diversity of opposition to the new city: vengeful Reds and well-dressed bourgeois in temporary agreement as to what they had suffered at whose hands. It is often hard to make out what the agreement derived from: what was it

exactly that so little endeared Baron Haussmann to his fellow citizens, and persuaded them that public works were the worst part of empire? To answer that question we need more voices and more intimacy still with disaffection.

The critics said that they had lost Paris and were living in someone else's city. This was a figure of speech, and people were not necessarily meant to take it seriously. The playwright Victorien Sardou put on a comedy, *Maison neuve*, in 1866, and seemed to make light of the fears of an elderly haberdasher in the face of progress. The character's nephew and niece are intent on moving to the Boulevard Malesherbes and ask him, laughing, what it is he has against the new Paris, what he thinks will be lost by changing places. He replies in a grand speech:

Dear child! It is the old Paris that is lost, the real Paris! A city which was narrow, unhealthy, insufficient, but picturesque, varied, charming, full of memories. We had our favourite walks a step or two away, and our favourite sights, all happily grouped together! We had our little outings with our own folk: how nice it was! . . . Going for a stroll was not something that tired you out, it was a delight. It gave birth to that eminently Parisian compromise between laziness and activity known as *flânerie*! Nowadays, for the least excursion, there are miles to go! A muddy thoroughfare which women cross without grace, since it no longer has the elasticity of the old paving stones to support them! An eternal sidewalk going on and on forever! A tree, a bench, a kiosk! . . . A tree, a bench, a kiosk! . . . A tree, a bench . . . And on top of all that, the sun! the dust! the mess! the dirt! A crowd of people of all shapes and sizes, cosmopolitans jabbering away in every language, decked out in every conceivable colour. Nothing left of the things which once constituted our own little world, a world apart; a world of expertise, judgement and refinement, an elite of wit and good taste.—What is it we are losing, by God? Everything! This is not Athens any longer, it is Babylon! It is not the capital of France, but of Europe! A wonder, we shall never see the like—a world!—agreed . . . Nevertheless, it isn't Paris . . . and there are no Parisians any longer.

CLAIRE, *in reply*: Come now, uncle, don't you understand how grand it is, how comfortable, how hygienic?

GENEVOIX, *again*: But haven't I told you that I admire it! It was inevitable; they had to do it, they did it! They did well! and altogether, things have turned out for the best! Long live the city! I applaud it heartily—and beg leave to think it fortunate that God himself was ignorant of this marvellous municipal system, and did not choose to arrange the trees in the forest in rows . . . with all the stars above in two straight lines.⁴⁵

We are presumably meant to laugh, and sympathize, and have more than a sneaking feeling that Genevoix may be right. And so it proves: the new house on the Boulevard Malesherbes turns out to be a financial (and moral) disaster, and the comedy ends with the family chastened and reunited in

the draper's shop off the Rue Saint-Denis. Sardou knew his vaudeville audience well: he contrived the denouement he thought they wanted.

The separate heads in the case against Haussmannization—some of which appear in Sardou's monologue—can be rehearsed as follows. First, the business had been done wastefully and dishonestly. The empire was in league with the speculators and the Haute Banque, and the baron had used his power to sell off the richest shares in the new construction work to the brothers Pereire and their unloved Crédit Mobilier.⁴⁶ Boulevards and railways were all one in the opposition's eyes: things built too quickly, whose profits went to a secret few, and whose appetite for capital distorted the whole industry of France. The argument was only sharpened by its distance from the truth: in fact the profits of reconstruction had been spread quite wide, to the small proprietors grown rich on compensation, to the landlords making their fortune from inflated rents, to the swarm of men who fattened on the process of rebuilding and found a way to make money out of its side effects. The sight of such fortunes being made enraged those bourgeois who had not been richly expropriated or had somehow missed the chance to buy at the right time.⁴⁷ What a howl went up in 1867 when the tinsmith from Fontanges, Lapeyre, was given the contract to demolish the pavilions of the Exposition Universelle and sell them off for scrap! He had caught Haussmann's eye originally in the auctions of rubbish from the slums; had been given key concessions; and when his son was married the baron had sent his card.⁴⁸ It was all favours, kickbacks, and corruption, said those who wanted a part of all three.

Second, the city that resulted from this fever was supposed to be regular, empty, and boring. Haussmann had killed the street and the *quartier*; he had made instead "la CITÉ NEUTRE des peuples civilisés."⁴⁹ Once upon a time there had "existed groups, neighbourhoods, districts, traditions" but all of them had passed away.⁵⁰ There was no more multiformity in Paris, no more surprise, no more *Paris inconnu*. If the old bohemian Privat d'Anglemont, the man who had written the book of that name, could rise again

from his humble grave at Montmartre, and . . . indulge in one of those wild night-walks his spirit loved, he would lose his way at every step: he would be bewildered indeed before the *Collège de France*, and on the ground of the broken-down, dark, dirty and disreputable streets and alleys and wastes, which once had the *Cloître Saint-Jean de Latran* for their centre. Here were the headquarters of wandering Bohemians, street singers and conjurors, the vicious and the criminal and the unfortunate, all afflicted with the common curse of poverty. The Boulevards have broken through all.⁵¹

"The straight line," need one say it,

has killed the picturesque, the unexpected. The Rue de Rivoli is a symbol; a new street, long, wide, cold, frequented by men as well dressed, affected, and cold as the street itself. . . . There are no more coats of many colours, no more extravagant songs and extraordinary speeches. The open-air dentist, the strolling musicians, the ragpicker philosophers, the jugglers, the Northern Hercules, the hurdy-gurdy players, the sickly snake-swallowers, and the men with seals who said "papa"—they have all emigrated. The street existed only in Paris, and the street is dying. . . .⁵²

It would be easy once again to indicate the measure of wish fulfillment in all this gloom. The streets had never been so full as these enthusiasts would have had them, and never so empty as the new Jeremiah prophesied in a pamphlet of 1864:

Man of the house [Hausmann, naturally], you will live to see the city desolate and bleak.

Since you will not believe me, you will continue to build, and marvel will be piled upon marvel. One day, Babylon will be so beautiful that you yourself will be stupefied.

The roads will then become gloomy and deserted, for everything will cost too much.

The family of Landlords will lose their minds.

And solitude, the ancient goddess of the deserts, will come to preside over this new empire. . . .

You will see all this, man of the house.⁵³

The part of fantasy and the need for doom to arrive are evidently making and shaping these texts. But let us accept their imagery as such for the time being, and simply point to its insistence. Something had gone from the streets: a set of differences, some density of life, a presence, a use. It may not have been true that in 1870, when the empire fell, the streets were filled again with those previously excluded by Hausmann's police; but it is right that Sheppard, our American in Paris, should reach for the image so automatically as his figure of Paris lost, Paris becoming the Goncourts' again:

The Boulevards have long since lost their old order and decorum; they are now filled with street performances of all kinds and descriptions. Music upon every instrument that can make it; fortune-tellers, conjurors, gymnasts, dancing dogs, mountebanks—every conceivable dance, trick, or sleight-of-hand for entrapping money.

The new policemen are among the delighted lookers-on at these entertainments. . . . Paris has become very like Naples in the character of the entertainment of its streets, and above all in the crowds of greasy and sometimes not unpicturesque beggars.⁵⁴

Third, the enemies of Hausmann said that the baron had meant from

the beginning to evict the working class from its old place in the centre of Paris, and had applied the simple pressures of the market to the job.⁵⁵ He had demolished the tenements and tortuous streets of the Ile de la Cité and driven his boulevards all through the sacred *sans-culotte* territory of Saint-Denis, Saint-Antoine, and Sainte-Geneviève. In place of the crumbling houses where the tailors and coppersmiths had lived, the builders of boulevards—avid to recoup their costs—had put up lavish blocks of apartments, with stone mouldings and ironwork balconies and running water to the second floor. The rents of such places were impossibly steep, and the rents of the rest of the neighbourhood followed them upwards. By Haussmann's own estimate, rents in the centre of the city doubled between 1851 and 1857,⁵⁶ and they went on climbing thereafter. The working class began to complain. In 1856 the emperor himself received a delegation of workmen come to protest the cost of accommodation in Paris.⁵⁷ He was officially sympathetic. Had he not personally drawn up designs for workers' dwellings and put them on show in the 1855 Exhibition? Did he not still believe—he said as much in a speech a few years later—that the new works were bound to benefit the workers in the end? "We shall see each year," he told his faithful Conseil Municipal, "great arteries being opened, the populous neighbourhoods growing healthy, rents tending to decrease with the multiplicity of construction, the working class enriching itself by labour, poverty diminishing through a better organization of charity, and Paris thus answering increasingly to its high destiny."⁵⁸ That speech was still possible in 1858; in another ten years it seemed no one believed it. By that time it was common knowledge, passed on by foreigners even, that the emperor had always wanted "to shut away the poorer classes somewhere else,"⁵⁹ and Lazare was charting their exodus from the city, street by street. Belleville and Batignolles were built, of stone sold cheap from the demolitions. The factories were working on the Plaine Saint-Denis. The edge of Paris was an image already, something known and feared: Belleville elected Léon Gambetta and Henri Rochefort in 1869, both in opposition to the emperor, and Belleville was not the worst; beyond it was a hinterland of exiles, half wilderness and half armed camp, peopled by those who knew—they were told so often—that they had lost their city, and might still try to take it back.⁶⁰

Fourth, it was argued that in place of one Paris Haussmann had made two. The accusation was linked with the issue of high rents and the plight of those who had lost a place to live in the city. Haussmann, the critics said, had let the city of the bourgeoisie drift west.⁶¹ He had built the Boulevard Malesherbes as a kind of thoroughfare for speculation; he had laid out the inhuman avenues round the Etoile and furnished the Champs-

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Elysées with fountains, candelabra, kiosks, and new cafés-concerts designed by Gabriel-Jean-Antoine Davioud. The site of the Opéra had finally been chosen after long years of debate, and Haussmann had overruled the arguments of those, like Lazare, who wanted it built at the crossroads of Richelieu-Drouot—still straddling the eastern and western halves of the city, that is to say, with avenues leading off from it up the hill to Batignolles and Montmartre.⁶² Instead the baron had it put down in the new space which he had provided for pleasure and business, halfway between the Bourse and the Gare Saint-Lazare. And thus the city had finally been segregated along class lines: a middle-class city in the west now looked across the *terrain vague* of distraction and finance to the workingman's strongholds in the east and north. The figure proved irresistible in the empire's final years: there was hardly a worthy republican who did not evince a sudden enthusiasm for the days gone by when worker and bourgeois had lived together in the same street, even the same house, had done business together, exchanged courtesies, and gained some understanding of each other's ways. That time was gone, alas! The new boulevards had cut Paris in pieces: they had marooned the great Faubourg Saint-Antoine and drained away the rich to the Parc Monceau. Paris was all traffic, all "circulation"; and between the great avenues were separate cities, rich and poor, where one could walk for half an hour without seeing a *blouse*, and then another hour in a different direction with never a private carriage or a rolled umbrella, or even the shiniest, most threadbare of *redingotes*! The differences were unmitigated now, bitter and visible; the signs of class were everywhere, and the sense of approaching disaster. "Bismarck finished what Haussmann began," wrote Hugo in *Actes et paroles*. And Sheppard, before the Siege of 1870 gave way to the Commune, wrote in his diary in similar vein: "If there shall be anything done towards . . . averting the doom which impends over this city . . . it will not be done by the *prolétaire* or the *bourgeois*, by the fire-eater of Belleville or the snobs of the Quartier des Champs-Elysées."⁶³

Lastly, it was said that the new city Haussmann had made—the city of the west and centre—was given over to vice, vulgarity, and display. It was not, except superficially, a city of the bourgeoisie at all, if one meant by that word the solid men who made their fortunes on the Rue Saint-Denis—men like Genevoix the haberdasher, or Balzac's heroes, or Daumier's. No, what one had instead was "a city where those who do nothing spend their winters, the same who go in the season to promenade their idleness on the fashionable beaches, at the seaside resorts, the spas, the Bois, the little places in the country."⁶⁴ If one looked inside the "crinoline architecture" all one would find was rising damp.⁶⁵ This was the city of courtesans and bull

markets. Here was ostentation, not luxury; frippery, not fashion; consumption, not trade. And here above all was *uncertainty*—a pantomime of false rich and false poor, in which anyone could pretend to be anything if he or she had money for clothes.

The refrain, need one say it, became tiresome with too much use. But at times—we have seen it happening already, in the case of the Goncourts—the sense of the new city as characterized by shifts and disguises, by too many surfaces and too few lines of demarcation, appeared to be serious and was certainly vivid. It is important for our purposes because it seems, of all the rhetorics just itemized, the one which leads—too conveniently, almost—to the painting of the avant-garde. For did they not adopt the terms of Haussmann's critics and make an aesthetic of them—an aesthetic of the unfixed and unfinished, an art which declared that the modern was the marginal, and that the truth of perception lay in staying on the surface of things and making do with ambiguity?

We have come to the sharpest bone of contention in the debate; the one which reveals the speakers' opinions as to the nature of city life in general, of social life, of capital, of the claim or wish to be modern, and perhaps of perception itself. The disagreement can be summarized as follows. A city, some said, ought to be readable and maintain a certain separation of parts; it ought to contain different functions, different *quartiers*, different kinds of dress; sign languages which established even for the stranger—and certainly for the native—where one belonged in the city and whom one should be with. These languages and separations had to be finely tuned: too much distinction and the city would forfeit the possibility of being read as a whole by all its citizens; too great a commingling of signs and it would be unclear what any one meant and to whom it belonged. The more sophisticated proponent of this point of view would be ready to admit that the city as a form of life was prone to the latter disorder—that was part of its appeal. Cities are places of show and negotiation, and because they provide for more transactions they allow for more mistakes; there is a greater margin of error in most things, but that is all it amounts to. Mistakes do not necessarily threaten the system; and in a well-ordered city there is a system, a great obligatory one of social appearances—for all that they look, in the thick of it, to be chosen and discarded at will.

There are pamphleteers and painters who disagree with this as a description of Haussmann's Paris, and even sometimes as an ideal. They say that the margin of error in urban life has taken the place of the system, and that thus the city is rendered illegible—that that is its chief new characteristic. It has become a mass of edges now, overlapping and interfering with one another; and living in the city is a matter of improvisation,



15. Edouard Manet, *Un Bal masqué à l'Opéra*, 1873.

of moving from one marginal area to another, of taking temporary shelter in one's chosen subculture and risking each evening the uncertainty of the boulevard or the Eldorado. Something like this is what Manet, for instance, appears to be concerned to paint in his *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, or his *Bal masqué à l'Opéra*, or his *Bar au Folies-Bergère* (Plate XXIV). This ball, this bar, this picnic; this balcony, this walk outside the Great Exhibition, this rest with a novel by the railings, this prostitute's bedroom, this day at the seaside, this café-concert: the list is enough to suggest the territory Manet takes to be Paris. They all seem to be places laid on for display but also for equivocation; places where people are hard to make out, their gestures and expressions unconvincing, their purposes obscure; and it is hereabouts that the city can be seen most sharply. That fact in turn inflects the new painting's account of seeing in general: the visible comes to *be* the illegible, and the new city is thus the perfect place for the painter who trusts to appearances.

This, I should say, is the essential myth of modern life: that the city has become a free field of signs and exhibits, a marketable mass of images, an area in which the old separations have broken down for good. The modern, to repeat the myth once more, is the marginal; it is ambiguity, it is mixture of classes and classifications, it is anomie and improvisation, it is the reign of generalized illusion. None of these statements strike me, or, I hope, the reader, as simply or obviously untrue. But it is surely apparent that they do not match with other things asserted—often by the same writers—about the shape of Haussmann's Paris. Observers agreed that in some important sense the city was more inflexibly classed and divided than ever before; that one was entering the age of the "residential district" and the "industrial suburb," and that those brisk euphemisms disguised an unmistakable sealing and quarantine of the classes. What the myth of modernity fails to do—what entitles us to call it mythical—is to put together its account of anomie with that of social division; it fails to map one form of control upon another. The question will be asked of modernist painting in the pages that follow: To what extent does it contrive to do some of that mapping, most often in spite of its ideology?

One further point needs defending before I proceed. The sceptical reader may wonder how the argument just outlined could possibly tally with some of those propounded earlier—the one about the Goncourts' happy lack of imagery, for instance. For did I not previously put my stress on the baron's failure to provide any forms of intelligibility for his Paris, and on the forces within the capitalist economy which made for dispersal and fragmentation? There is, however, no contradiction here. It is one thing to argue that the capitalist city lacks intelligible *form*, and has no coherence to speak of; it is quite another to say it lacks *order*, that it is uncontrolled or classless. It does not seem to me that the city in our time is specially unclassed or disorderly, or that everyday life within it is lived most fully by liminal or marginal individuals. Perhaps we believe that to be the case because we have lost, as part of the process called modernity, those modes of political, economic, and ideological representation in which the city had once been constructed, as a contingent unity in and through other social practices. We might say, to adapt a previous formula, that capital devises a set of orders and classifications which makes the *city* unintelligible, but does not therefore make modernity so, or everyday life. On the contrary, everyday life in the residential districts and industrial suburbs is hemmed in by instructions and advertisements as never before: the texture of intimacy and free time has seldom been so fixed and classed and classified. It is part of that fixing that the city itself should vanish, since the city was precisely a site of unfixity—uncontrol—in the previous social order: it was a horizon

of possible collective action and understanding, and all such horizons must be made invisible in societies organized under the aegis of the commodity.

It should not surprise us, therefore, that Haussmann and his critics were largely agreed on one main thing. They all wanted the city, in the sense just given, to survive. They wished to give it back its established forms of representation or to give it new ones.

The baron badgered his architects for imagery, for scale, for points of focus.⁶⁶ He disliked the neutrality of the Place de la Concorde, with its indecipherable obelisk, and dreamt of replacing it with something stronger;⁶⁷ he did not seem to realize that there are places in every city which disqualify themselves from the symbolic order—by the very density of different histories that have claimed the place and spilt blood. He was not above cutting down the Liberty Tree in the Jardin du Luxembourg, the last survivor from the great Revolution,⁶⁸ and putting Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux's *Quatre Parties du monde* in its place—imperial messages shouldering out republican ones. There was glee in building the Préfecture de Police on the very site of Eugène Sue's thieves' kitchen in the Rue aux Fèves,⁶⁹ or putting the lawns and lake of the Buttes-Chaumont where once had stood the great gibbet of Montfaucon. On the Place du Château d'Eau the engineers pulled down a *panorama* (one of the last) to make room for a barracks, and the various theatres of the old "Boulevard du Crime"—the Cirque, the Folies-Dramatiques, the Gaîté, the Funambules, the Délass'-Com', the Petit-Lazari—were supposed to give way to a single Orphéon on the east side of the square, where male-voice choirs would harmonize each night for the working man.⁷⁰ Across from the barracks was built a department store, the Magasins Réunis; from one corner of the square an avenue led off to the railway station, and from another the way was straight to the Cimetière du Père Lachaise.

But these were occasional triumphs—and in any case the Orphéon was never built. Even Haussmann's most hostile critics did not necessarily accuse him of giving the streets of Paris a *different* symbolic order—one they disapproved of, one they might still tear down. They said, on the contrary, that there was no symbolic order left, that the street was dying, and that Haussmann was simply standing guard at the funeral. We might ask what a charge of this kind amounted to: What did it mean, in other words, to say that the street no longer existed?

When the streets had been healthy, the guidebooks agreed, they had been full of people doing business on the sidewalk. Flower girls and faggot sellers; water carriers, errand boys, old-clothes dealers, organ grinders,

pedlars, bailiffs, acrobats, wrestlers, rag-and-bone men, bill stickers, lamp-lighters, porters for the market and the shops, porters for hire by the hour; coachmen, window cleaners, dog washers and dog trimmers, knife grinders, booksellers, coal merchants, carters, prostitutes, odd-job men, glaziers, itinerant plumbers, menders of crockery or shoes; sellers of licorice water and lemon juice, of herbs, of baskets, umbrellas, shoelaces, chickweed, and whips; puppet shows, street singers, somnambulists, dogs that played dominoes, Scottish jugglers, baton twirlers, savages with stones round their necks, India-rubber men, and human skeletons.⁷¹ “Sellers of ink, fish, potatoes by the bushel, peat, birdseed; chimneysweeps, saltimbanques, charlatans, stone breakers, open-air jewellers, sixpenny stall holders; all of them shouting, singing, modulating their apostrophes and descanting their sonorous invitations on the scale that most sets one’s teeth on edge.”⁷²

These people—how the journalists vied for the longest, most unlikely, most indisputable list of them!—were the signs that all was well with a neighbourhood. They provided entertainment, but not simply that: the services and information they offered formed part of the pattern of trade on which the *quartier’s* economic life depended; they connected in various ways to the life indoors, to the workshops and covered markets, the shops and *salles de réunion*, the bars and arcades where men with a trade swapped gossip and sought work.

Paris in 1870, for all Haussmann’s alterations, was still overwhelmingly working-class.⁷³ In the census of 1866 almost three men in five were listed as making their living from “industry,” and only one in ten from “commerce.” The terms were vague and capacious, but by and large “industry” still meant the activity of artisans rather than factory workers. It was something done in forges and workshops with crews of half a dozen men, in back yards of tenements or front parlours where seamstresses kept their newfangled sewing machines. The types of work most commonly pursued in Paris seemed on the surface not to have changed in the course of a century or more: the licensing rolls were full of printers and tailors, hosiers, glass cutters, tinsmiths, gunsmiths, brewers, *bronziers*, bakers of bread and cakes, confectioners and *charcutiers*, carpenters and joiners, metalworkers, tanners, glovers and saddlers, cabinetmakers, bookbinders, shoemakers and *ciseleurs d’art*. These were all apparently traditional trades: the names were the same, roughly, as in 1750 or 1650, while the size of the smithy or the builder’s gang had hardly altered, and had sometimes grown smaller.⁷⁴ The owner was often and rightly called an “ouvrier-patron.” He lent a hand on the workshop floor; he had made his way by effort and dexterity; the pomp and companionship of shared skill were omnipresent, in the way work was discussed and divided or the way a “man” regarded a “master.”⁷⁵

The context of industry was the *quartier*. This did not mean, and had never meant, that the neighbourhood was a closed and self-sufficient unit; for what were those people performing in the streets, if not comers and goers from the outside world? But there were matters—on the whole the most important ones—that depended on the *quartier*'s being close-knit, separate, and intimately known. Workshops were small: the same item, be it a cupboard, a shoe, or a stove, was produced in hundreds of different places; and therefore it made sense for those shops to be only a stone's throw apart, so that raw materials could be swapped and traded, prices fixed, and the state of the market discussed in the local wineshop.⁷⁶ Business and sociability were bound together. There were kinds of prestige and ingenuity in trade which came, and could only come, from belonging to a single family of streets—and they were the things, very often, that made the difference between an enterprise's surviving or going under: a long-standing deal with a supplier who knew one well enough to help out in the slack season; a network of arrangements with particular odd-job men, itinerant plumbers, coal merchants, and stall holders; a confidence that one's name would be thought of first when it came to that special brand of chair leg or ball bearing.

Each *quartier* had its own shopkeepers and *négociants*, who gave it the access it needed to Paris and the world beyond: they brought in the stuffs and staples from Les Halles, they knew how to talk to the bank and how best to strike a bargain with Monsieur Cail's or Monsieur Say's agents; they were the bourgeois of the neighbourhood, and recognized as such. But that very bourgeoisie derived from their being almost as much a part of the *quartier* as the "ouvrier-patron": a wholesaler's business most often hinged on his local expertise and reputation, and he had to keep up his credit in the street, be able to tell good from bad payers, know how the haggling conventions changed from one side of the Rue Saint-Paul to the other. Of course he attempted at the same time to stand apart from the streets he belonged to: he feared riot and unruliness, and in time of dearth the grocer's shop on the corner must often have been a tense and uncharitable fortress. The bourgeois knew that his credit depended on difference, and his greatest effort was often invested in the fight to keep up appearances and insist on a measure of respect. Yet even these things—the actual day-to-day negotiation of class distinction and authority—were done in the *quartier* and meant nothing apart from its special pattern of work and knowledge.

If the rumours from the 1860s were right, and Haussmann had intended his embellishments to empty these *quartiers* of their working population, then all the figures suggest that he failed.⁷⁷ Rents went up inexorably and

the workers complained; but more often than not they hung on to the places where skills were learnt and markets were certain. They stayed because it seemed they had no choice. A tailor was lost without his old clients, those who knew him well and told their friends what he could do with a second-hand suit; a housepainter had to be within walking distance of the Place de Grève, where contractors gave out work each morning; a maker of artificial flowers (not an inconsiderable trade in the 1860s) stuck close to her favourite dealers, for how was one supposed to do the job in Belleville when everything turned on the rush order, the altered deadline, and the new rate agreed upon face to face?⁷⁸ By the end of the decade the ancient *quartiers* were bulging at the seams with people: the houses left over from the demolitions had been divided and subdivided; workshop and shopfront were squeezed closer together, and somehow the tailor and the flower girl had found room to stay on. In 1870 there were more workshops than ever before in central Paris, and probably as many inhabitants. It seemed as though the drift to the edge of the city—and there *was* a drift, Lazare had proved it was happening—was no more than accompaniment to a fierce resistance on the part of the working class to any displacement from its old ground. In terms of numbers, the industries of Paris were still in their neighbourhoods, as strong as ever.

Nonetheless these appearances are not to be trusted, and other contradictory signs should be adduced straight away—strikes, for example, and trade unions. The International Working Men's Association, whose most effective French militant was a bookbinder named Eugène Varlin, was recruiting in the Paris trades—so successfully that in 1870 the empire was obliged to haul its leadership through the courts on charges of subversion.⁷⁹ Men with skills were among the first to unionize: compositors and *bronziers* alongside mechanics and iron founders. There was a wave of strikes in Paris in 1864 and 1865, and a bigger one beginning in 1867. In 1865 Haussmann's rebuilding itself was stopped for a month by a strike of stonemasons asking for 6 francs 50 an hour (they went back to work without it).⁸⁰ At the end of the decade, the bitterest and largest strikes of all were of marble workers and gilders of wood, shop assistants, iron founders, and tanners of white leather.

These were the most dramatic outward signs that the world of traditional industry in Paris was changing. The *quartier* was still there, with its masons' yards and forges in place, but it was less and less the real frame of reference for the work and trade which went on inside its boundaries: the lines that had led from the foundry, say, to the moneylender three streets away, and on to the local dealer in scrap metal and the jobbing plumber or the *marchand de robinets*—these lines were breaking down, or no longer pro-

vided enough work on their own for the foundry to survive.⁸¹ Year by year, industry was increasingly a Parisian matter, done citywide; and that in turn meant it was more visibly and insistently capitalist: it dealt in bigger markets and tighter margins of profit and loss; its dealings were impersonal, or seemed so in contrast to the *quartier* economy; effective ownership and control were in the hands of fewer and fewer men; the lines of command in the labour process were complex and often indecipherable, and the business of work was broken into smaller parts, each of them easier to learn and to mechanize.

When men discussed these matters in the 1860s, they often put the blame on two things: Haussmannization and the *grands magasins*. In a sense they were right. The rebuilding of Paris had proved to be a great industry in itself, the city's biggest and most profitable; it drained off labour from the *quartiers* and had strange effects on wages in general; it fostered whole new kinds of work and put paid to others, making the fortunes of scrap merchants and manufacturers of tar macadam, and breaking those of water carriers and men with property in the wrong place. Yet the industry of rebuilding was nothing on its own: it was meant to be the emblem and agent of a wider economic transformation, and to a great extent it was. This theme was dear to Haussmann's heart and his speeches were full of it: his boulevards and sewers had been laid down as humble servants to industry and trade. The straight lines to the railway stations were meant to express the fact that Paris was henceforth part of a national and international economy; the annexation of the *banlieue* was done to direct modern industry to its rightful place—at the edge of the city and out of sight, but tied in to the stock market and department stores by tree-lined streets and suburban railways.

Hausmann *homogenized* the business of the city. The best symbol of that is the list of omnibus companies that closed down in the 1850s and the names of the firms which replaced them. Gone were the liveries of the Orléanaises and the Hirondelles, the Diligentes, Constantines, Favorites, Montrougiennes, Parisiennes, Dames-réunies, Béarnaises, Citadines, Excellentes, and Batignollaises: in their place the dry equipment of the Compagnie Générale, and the sole rival line, which belonged to Piétri—already the owner of the Compagnie Parisienne d'Eclairage!⁸² The example is not simply symbolic, for the new buses and identical gas lights were in themselves not a negligible part of the unity—the uninterrupted field for free enterprise—which Haussmann wanted so much. The dealers and *négociants* had access now to the hinterland of Paris, to Grenelle and Batignolles; and on to La Villette, with its new landscape of soapworks and candle factories, its fifteen timberyards and seven salt refineries, its forge which

burnt ten million tons of coal per year, its chemical works, distilleries, and saltworks, its perfume makers and glass blowers, its factories for beer, grand pianos, matches, enamel, freight cars, boneblack, and metal pens.⁸³

The shape and pace of production was changing; that much was a commonplace of the time. It was a matter of choice—or perhaps sometimes of experience—whether one stressed in the 1860s the positive or the negative in the new situation: the ruinous effects of the trade treaties and foreign competition, or the marvels in the shopwindows of La Samaritaine; the volume of production, or the shoddiness of the goods; the self-made men, or the bankrupts.

Shopwindows, shoddy goods, and bankruptcy: it regularly came down to these. For an ordinarily gloomy businessman in 1870 they were signs of a new order—the order of the Bon Marché and the Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville.⁸⁴ Genevoix, for instance, knew very well what that system signified:

I know about them, your fashionable shops! Everything done for the sake of display! Ostentation! Instead of high-grade materials, solid and harmonious but costly, your shopwindow will little by little fill up with dubious chiffons—flashy, tasteless, and cheap. Till we arrive at a great music hall of glittering shops, all doing tremendous crooked business, no doubt! . . . but with less profits than in districts like ours, and above all less honour!—For after all, it is something to sell merchandise that is good and sound! and to say to oneself each night at bedtime: “I have got richer, and it wasn't to anyone's detriment!”⁸⁵

I may be forced in what follows to water down Genevoix's rhetoric a little, but I want to persuade the reader of its general sense; for it was certainly true that the *grands magasins* were the signs—the instruments—of one form of capital's replacing another; and in that they obeyed the general logic of Haussmannization. Were they not built (the voice is approximately Genevoix's again, but it could as well be Lazare's or Gambetta's) with profits derived from the new boulevards and property speculation? Were not the Pereires behind them? Had they not usurped the city's best spaces, lining the Rue de Rivoli, facing the barracks across the Place du Château d'Eau and hemming in the Opéra? Did they not depend, with windows all hissing with gas till well past nightfall—till ten o'clock in some cases—on the baron's policemen,⁸⁶ his buses and trains, his wide sidewalks, and his passion for “circulation”?

The stores were everything the opposition came to hate and blame on empire. They were the ruin of the small man. They appeared to grow fat on a diet of merger, speculation, and sudden collapse, and in 1870 it was far from clear that these erratic movements of capital had ceased. (The year before, two of the biggest shops in town, the Diable Boiteux and the

Fille Mal Gardée, had combined to form one still larger called La Samaritaine.⁸⁷) The stores were bureaucracies, and the clerks and sales assistants employed in them were no doubt a shiftless and untrustworthy lot: in 1869 they went on strike, demanding a twelve-hour day and holidays on Sundays. Varlin himself exulted at the sight of old divisions ending “which had up to now made workers and shop assistants two different classes.”⁸⁸ The strike was broken and the counter-jumpers went back to work on worse terms than before, but the very fact of the struggle confirmed the worse fears of honest republicans.

The *grands magasins des nouveautés* depended, as their name was meant to imply, on buying and selling at speed and in volume. They vied with one another for a multiplicity of lines and “confections”; their shelves were cleared from month to month; they staked everything on fixed prices, low mark-up, and high turnover of stock. They boasted of their ability to mobilize provincial workshops and call on commodities from England, Egypt, or Kashmir. The stores, one might say, put an end to the *privacy* of consumption: they took the commodity out of the *quartier* and made its purchase a matter of more or less impersonal skill.⁸⁹ (No more negotiation face to face, no more pretence of putting one’s reputation in jeopardy each time one bought a bolt of worsted or a new frying pan!) The great floors of the Grands Magasins du Louvre were a space any bourgeois could reach and enter, and many did so for fun. They were a kind of open stage on which the shopper strode purposefully and the commodity prompted; they invited the consumer to relish her own expertise and keep it quiet—not to bargain but to look for bargains, not to have a dress cut out to size but to choose the one which was somehow “just right” from the fifty-four crinolines on show.⁹⁰

The effect of these shops on the *quartier* economy was drastic. By the middle of the 1860s much of the pattern of trade in Paris was organized around them. Their agents came into the *quartiers* with orders written out in hundreds and thousands. They were looking for the kind of goods which it seemed only the artisan workshop could deliver: kitchenware with a hand finish, a well-turned chest of drawers, or the right twist of ribbon on the season’s hats. But they made it clear that skill alone would not guarantee the workshop the job. There were ways to economize on skill or do without it, or buy it cheap elsewhere: an agent nowadays could range far afield for the products he wanted, and in particular he could go to the provinces if need be, or to the factories at La Villette. The atelier most often got the contract in the end, but not before the master and men had agreed to work precisely to the agent’s stipulations, however offensive these might be. They had to produce the goods post haste and in quantity.

Sometimes the middleman insisted on buying the raw materials himself, and sometimes he set an overall price for the job which forced the workshop to cut costs; in any case, the artisans learnt to use cheaper iron or flimsier paper, and care less for the lasting quality of the result.⁹¹ They worked longer hours and had precious little time to recuperate between jobs: the old regime of breaks and holidays was falling out of favour and the master was more of a stickler for discipline on the workshop floor. The day of rest on *saint lundi* was fast becoming a sign of recalcitrance or disaffection: to keep it too often was to run the risk of being laid off or sent packing.⁹²

The nature of the job itself was changing. It made no sense in these new conditions—working against time with shabby materials always deteriorating—for work to be shared out in the old way. The tasks were better broken down into separate stages, and each worker was obliged to make one of them his specialty: he learnt and repeated a single pattern of hammer blows on a skillet or a gun barrel, he knew the glues for a certain kind of joint, he handled that stitch, that binding, that type of burnish.⁹³ The master was obliged in times like these to take in work from other shops, and the agent came down with “finishing” work from the suburbs. What that meant for the workman was a few touches of the file on confections ready for sale, but needing the artisan’s (forged) signature. The agent proposed new tools and techniques, and pressed for their adoption: he offered to lend money to buy a steam press or a mechanical saw, to introduce standard rivets or convert to chemical dyes. The *marchand* and the subcontractor arrived with promises of bigger advances and higher profits still, if the workshop would make things faster and more shoddily, and consent to be specialists in a single “line.” The outcome of that logic—it was one easily reached in the last years of the 1860s—was for the workshop to break up altogether and the agent to deal with a hundred different workers, each with a lathe or a sewing machine at home. That way the agent saved on rent and fuel, and the seamstress was left to bargain direct with capital for her chiffon and cotton reels; in return she was told—the agent showed her—what kind of stitching was all the rage that winter, what shape of bustle, what length of hem.

These were the changes, I believe, that underlay the debate about Haussmannization. They can be seen refracted and displaced in all the main images of the city which were current in the 1860s. To call the new city something made by speculators and monopolists, to say the street was ending as a form of life, to talk of the *quartier* as desolate, of a working class hounded from its old places, of a Paris where two great classes had

been separated out on the map—all these were figures, to some extent appropriate ones, of the process I have just spelled out. If I had to sum up these changes in a single phrase I should not hesitate to say, following Genevoix again, that one kind of capitalism was being superseded by another. The spokesmen of the 1860s regularly said something similar, and not just in monologues at the vaudeville, but in the Assembly or *La Revue Contemporaine*. The best way they had of saying it was to blame the city itself for the transformation. They made the city into Capital: it was as if they wanted the whole texture of dispossession, effacement, and interference—the texture I have just described—to be out there on the map, in the form of ashlar and tar macadam. They were doing the same as Zola's Gervaise in *L'Assommoir*, when she wanders the avenues in the final stages of her misery, looks about for an image of her own dissolution, and finds it in the avenues themselves—the new boulevards Magenta and Ornano, breaking through the old *barrière* Poissonnière:

Gervaise in her turn was angry at these embellishments, which disturbed the dark corner of the *faubourg* she was accustomed to. Her anger came precisely from the fact that the *quartier* was being embellished just as she herself was on the road to ruin. . . .

This *quartier* where now she felt ashamed, there were so many improvements, was opening up on all sides and letting in the air. The Boulevard Magenta, coming up from the heart of Paris, and the Boulevard Ornano, going off into the countryside, had broken through the ancient *barrière*, the proud old barricade of houses, two vast avenues still white with plaster; the old Rue du Faubourg-Poissonnière and the Rue des Poissonniers ran into them, losing their way, broken and mutilated, as ugly and dark as alleyways. For some time now, since the demolition of the customs wall, the outer boulevards had been widened, with a street at each side and a strip of land in the middle for pedestrians, planted out with four lines of little plane trees. It was all one immense crossroads, with its arms stretching out to the horizon along endless thoroughfares, swarming with people, drowned in a chaos of ruins and new construction. But in among the new houses there was many a tumbledown old hovel still standing; between the sculptured façades there were deep pools of black shadow, gaping slums with rags pinned up at their windows. Underneath the rising tide of luxury from Paris, there was the misery of the *faubourg*, spoiling and befouling this new city in the making, put up in such haste.

Lost in the bustle on the wide footpath alongside the little plane trees, Gervaise felt alone and abandoned. And the open spaces of those avenues stretching away down there made her stomach turn; and to think that in all this flood of people, where there must be so many who were well off, there wasn't a single Christian soul to understand her and slip her a ten-sou piece! Yes, it was too big, it was too beautiful; her head was spinning and her legs were giving way, under this endless surface of grey sky stretched out over such a vast space. The dusk had

that dirty yellow colour of Parisian dusks, a colour which makes you want to die straight off, the life of the streets seems so ugly.⁹⁴

I do not mean to say, finally, that Gervaise and Genevoix were simply wrong to put the blame on Haussmannization. The spaces did appear to swallow up the old signs of life, and the streets to go on for ever with their plane trees. A case could be made against the baron's embellishments, even the strict case that they were the essential form of capitalism in the mid-nineteenth century. It is certain that class had never been inscribed so clearly, so consistently, on acre after acre of the city's space; and rarely had a city been given over to the speculators with such aplomb. In general, it is true that Haussmann's Paris was not a neutral form in which capitalism incidentally happened: it was a form of capital itself, and one of the most effective.⁹⁵ Cities were among the best investments available, at least on Baron Haussmann's terms; and from the mass of profits made round the Place de l'Alma and the Rue de Turin came capital to fund new mills in La Villette or to float the issue for La Samaritaine.

All the same, the enemies of Haussmannization meant more and less than this. They had no very precise notion of how the baron's work belonged to capitalism, and they did not interest themselves overmuch in its financial logic—beyond accusations of secrecy and waste. What was vivid with them was the sense of some kind of life which Haussmannization had destroyed. They said they had lost the city, that it had been taken from them. That was their way of saying that capital had invaded and broken the *quartier* economy; that it had become a separate, insistent force inside the world of work, and that what it destroyed was a form of life which had previously *been* Paris, for most of the city's inhabitants.

They said that the city was segregated along class lines; but even that image gained its force from the way it represented and displaced a pattern of class conflict which happened—with increasing intensity as the 1860s drew to an end—*inside* the *quartier*. The strikes and trade unions were the signs of that disorder; they pointed to the way in which the old arrangements and relations between social groups—between shopkeeper and artisan, master and employee, workshop and *négociant*—were changing for the worse. Those arrangements had been in the first place economic, but on them had depended notions of social place and personal identity, and ways of dealing with the detail of everyday life. When writers described the *quartier* as inanimate or empty, it was surely this they were trying to express: that the life in the streets and wineshops of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine had previously been built round distinctions secured, if anywhere, in the process of work; that it was there the peculiar, unhappy claim to bourgeoisie was asserted, and the fabric of accomplishments which made

one man a master and meant another stayed an *ouvrier*. The detail of everyday life had derived from the categories of class; if those categories were now obscure or debatable, or had somehow escaped altogether from the frame of the *quartier*, then there simply was no everyday life remaining—or none with a density deserving the name.

Those who looked back to the life of the *quartier* were fond of calling it the real Paris, which a false one was destroying. Of course their descriptions were formulaic: the appeals to the Paris of 1830 and the world of Balzac and Monsieur Prudhomme became in time as tiresome as the baron's hacks' exulting at modernity. The squalor and smallness of the *quartier* kept appearing round the edges of the myth. Yet the myth was a means of resisting a fantasy which on the whole was worse. Those six-storey houses "sculpted like churches,"⁹⁶ that "CITÉ NEUTRE des peuples civilisés," those shopwindows and policemen and identical benches: they were not Paris. They were something else: an image put in place of a city which had lost its own means of representation.

What that replacing image looked like is suggested well by Manet's painting of the empire's *Exposition Universelle de 1867* (Plate IV). The exhibition's assorted halls and towers are put down in summary notation in the painting's middle distance on the Champ de Mars, and the viewer looks across to them, or up at a tethered balloon in the sky, from the summit of a convenient nearby hill, the Butte de Chaillot. In the foreground, seemingly below us, are a strip of lawn, a flower bed, and a gardener in a straw hat with a hose; a path along which a dandified small boy is being pulled by a dog; a woman on horseback; soldiers standing or sitting on the grass; tourists; a man with binoculars surveying the view; ladies in assorted sizes; and a glimpse of the river at the left, with a crush of people crossing a bridge and a steamboat beside them disgorging still more.

This is all Haussmann's doing, of course: it is how the imperial city was supposed to present itself that year. (The exhibition was, while it lasted, a popular invention, at least with the middle classes. Reports agreed that the war scares and general despondency of the spring abated in the summer months while the show was on, though they revived soon enough when it was over.⁹⁷) Three months before, the exhibition organizers had decided that the Butte de Chaillot was "irregular" and wild, and that therefore the view across the river from the exhibition grounds lacked harmony. They ordered the baron to lower the hill by twenty feet or so and make its profile less untidy.⁹⁸ It was a large demand to make with so little time

left before the emperor was to cut the scarlet ribbon. Haussmann brought in squads of navvies and paid them to work under arc lights through the night; he built a special railway line to cart off the rubble, and used two hundred cars and half a dozen locomotives for the job. The operation attracted sightseers in its own right, and was duly mentioned in *Le Magasin Pittoresque*: "On one side of the river a swarming mass of men, all bent over and armed with picks, was digging trenches and levelling a mountain; on the other was the Champ de Mars, invaded by thousands more workers. . . ." So the hill in the foreground of Manet's painting was built specifically to be regular and provide a view. It was finished just in time, and no doubt the geraniums are doing well under the gardener's watchful eye.

I want to sound a comic note somehow, because it seems to me that that is partly what the picture is doing, with its fat ladies, silhouettes of soldiers, and stray balloons. Its subject is festive and topical—the city containing the world. People are taking their ease on top of the hill, enjoying the exhibition and making sure their enjoyment is noticed; gaping, strolling, sprawling on makeshift grass, pointing things out to one another with umbrellas, looking well on a horse, showing off pets and wearing (they hope) outlandish shades of yellow. This is a comedy of sorts: a picture of people and things in fashion, of crowds crossing bridges in search of the universal, of the power of binoculars and the size of bows. It is a parade of "types" on a suitable stage. The lawns and flower beds may have been planted somewhat hastily, but at least they are not scheduled for dismantling in the fall; most of the picture's middle ground, on the other hand, was not intended to outlast the festivities; the actors move about in front of it as if it were all painted, and what they are pointing to with their umbrellas is no more than a plausible likeness, rattling a bit in the wind—but whose freedom of handling they choose to admire. (No one exactly believes in an exhibition, at least not in its claims to represent the world. And yet the illusion is often effective and fetching, the suspension of disbelief quite possible for an afternoon. Some such attitude seems to apply here, not just to the exhibition but to Paris and Parisians in general.)

There are clearly rather different kinds of comedy mixed up in this occasion, and the way they fit together or fail to is the picture's sharpest subject. We are expected to enjoy the gallery of tourists and *cocottes*, and register the details of class, profession, and up-to-dateness. But what is comic in the painting exceeds that pantomime, and has to do with what these figures are engaged in and how it relates to the painter's presentation of the scene. The comedy quite often comes from the business of seeing itself, in its various aspects: not just how people look as they look at the view, but what that looking consists of—the artifice involved in having a

city thus available to vision, focussed and framed as a unity for the man with binoculars:

*Meantime you gain the height, from whose fair brow
The bursting prospect spreads immense around.*¹⁰⁰

The man with binoculars abstracts and selects with his small machine; the painter gains some further height, outside the scene itself (hovering above it, apparently), and puts the bursting prospect into order.

The city does look well from here; that lost twenty feet makes all the difference. Yet its looking well, as we have seen, is a fragile achievement on the empire's part, something put together in the nick of time. The painting itself—in its general makeup and handling—provides a kind of equivalent for that fact. It is a large-scale piece of work, over six feet wide and three feet high, but—uniquely, I think, for a painting this size by Manet—it is quite insistently *sketchy*. The sketch may be improbably big and overfull of matter, but it pretends all the same to be not quite a picture, not quite finished. The paint is put on in discriminate, sparse patches which show off their abbreviation—puffs of smoke eat into the dome of Les Invalides, streamers and flags blend with the foliage, the shape of a dog is left shadowed and blurred, water hisses from the gardener's hosepipe in neat, dry strokes of colour (as if the hose were the handle of a giant paintbrush), and the hooves of the Amazon's horse are moving just too fast for us to see them. There is even a passage at the left-hand side, between the geraniums and the river, where abbreviation frankly becomes absence of sense, and a sequence of scratchy blue-grey strokes on primed canvas fails to become an image, however hard the viewer tries to make it one.

The picture presented of Paris is approximate, therefore, but not vague. The strollers on the hill would not settle for vagueness; their minimum requirement is that Paris have landmarks and offer up, as cities ought to, some definite and reassuring points of reference—social as well as topographic. Part of the pleasure in taking a walk is to be reminded, in the course of it, of what it means to be Parisian—to see other Parisians and be able to spot their type. These people want the Paris that goes with such transparent citizens; they want it spread out in front of them, a stone's throw away, like a gas-lit picture in a diorama.

And so it is in Manet's painting. The types in the park are drawn for easy reading and do not seem to detain one another's attention too long; they are spiky, dapper, and articulate, picked out on a neutral ground, floating past one another slightly out of scale. The city beyond is these persons' property; the distance between the hilltop and the view is simply

declared not to exist or not to matter: it is a part of the image that does not interest the painter or the pedestrians. The path in the foreground supports its dogs and horses, and then grows tenuous—it peters out into the river at the left and is last seen sliding unresistant through the Pont de l'Alma. The great open space which lies between the Butte de Chaillot and the Champ de Mars—the Seine itself, and the long hinterland leading down to the Pont d'Iéna—is hidden behind the brow of the hill. The grass ends sharply, with soldiers, children, and horses silhouetted along its edge; behind them the exhibition begins, equally brightly; the one world passes into the other without a break. There is a glimpse of the Pont d'Iéna, in fact, on either side of the man with binoculars and his companion: two unmodulated patches of grey, and some dashes and squiggles which stand for the bridge's equestrian statues on their plinths. These are the strongest indices of a middle ground that the viewer is provided. They are too few and too cryptic, and even when—or if—they are recognized for what they are, they do not make the exhibition seem farther off. The towers and pavilions still overlap the bridge, and the distant flags and foliage blend in with Antoine-Auguste Préault's *Gallic Horseman*, perched there at the picture's centre as a noble (and illegible) reminder of the republic.¹⁰¹ These things are all part of the same disembodied flat show, the same spectacle.

What is meant by the word "spectacle" should be coming into focus by now. Part of its meaning is obvious: it points to the ways in which the city (and social life in general) was presented as a unity in the later nineteenth century, as a separate something made to be looked at—an image, a pantomime, a panorama. But this should straightaway be qualified if we wish to prevent the notion of spectacle from declining into a half-baked means of "understanding media" or anathematizing the society of leisure. To call the city "spectacular" is not to describe it as possessing or improvising entertainments, as all cities do, or even to be impressed unduly by its electing times and places for the fashionable to congregate and eye one another. These things can be done—and still were in the 1860s—as *part* of a city's more substantial life; they can derive what intensity they have from the crush of signs, the exchange of signals, in a special overcrowded space. When a city has a public life in this sense—it is regularly organized around entertainments—what mostly impresses the observer is the sheer density of signals conveyed and understood, and the highly coded nature of the conveyance. Public life of this kind is both elliptical and formalized, and also risky: it involves contact and transaction, contests of nuance and misreading, the kind Proust chronicled in his surviving "society." Everything depends on the lady and gentleman's skill with the signs of class, sex, age, and individual character; there is no surer path to ridicule or

oblivion than not to understand, in such places, the way these previous kinds of belonging inflect the comedy of manners.

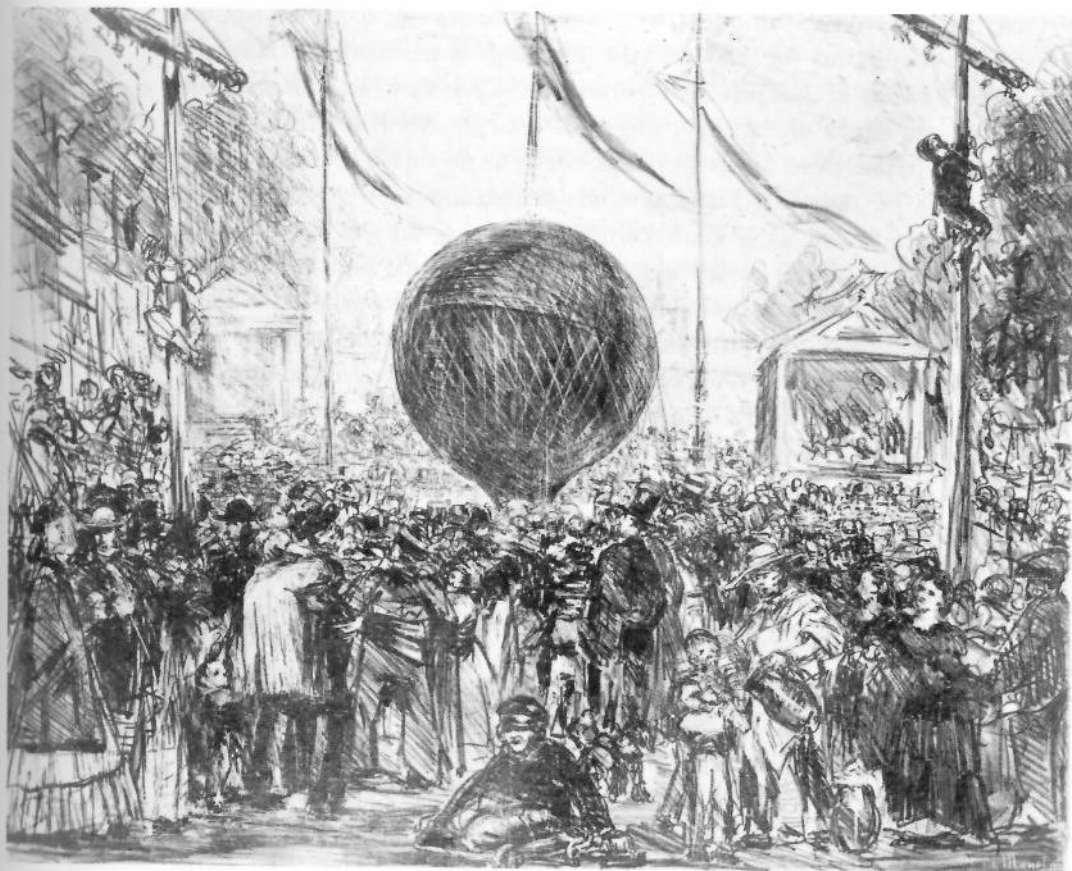
The behaviour that derives from such dealings can be odious or grand (and surely Proust's description does not incline one to enthusiasm over its normal achievements), but it cannot be called "spectacular" because social identities are still a matter for complex negotiation in the public realm. The essential separation of public life from private, and the thorough invasion of both by capital, has not yet been effected. The public idiom is not standardized satisfactorily, not yet available to anyone with the price of a newspaper or this season's hat. In this sense the 1860s are notably an epoch of transition. The great categories of collective life—for instance, class, city, neighbourhood, sex, nation, place on the "occupational ladder"—have not yet been made over into commodity form, though the effort to do so is impressive. And therefore the spectacle is disorganized, almost hybrid: it is too often mixed up with older, more particular forms of sociability and too likely to collapse back into them. It lacks its own machinery; its structures look flimsy alongside the orders and means of representation they are trying to replace.

This seems to me the implication of Manet's earlier picture of public gathering, *La Musique aux Tuileries*, most likely painted in 1862 (Plate V).¹⁰² If we put this curious half-miniature alongside *L'Exposition Universelle*—it is just over half the later picture's size—it will appear, in what it shows and how it shows it, to be strikingly the opposite of its companion: hardly a picture of modernity at all, as it is sometimes supposed to be, but, rather, a description of "society's" resilience in the face of empire.

The public realm in the Jardin des Tuileries is still narrow and definite, composed of particular portraits, professions, and uniforms. It is a realm in which one recognizes friends and relations, and knows precisely how they would wish to be shown. Such knowledge depends in turn on the great protocols of class, which everyone here obeys scrupulously; and it is class itself—the pure category, the disembodied order of appearances—which ends up invading every square inch between the trees. The music is pretext for this more serious counterpoint: the raising of hats, the lifting of veils (if one is a young lady) and the lowering of them (if one is not), the minding of children, the exchange of literary judgements, the saying hello to one's aunt.

Likewise the lithograph entitled *Le Ballon*, done the same year and showing another part of the same park. The distractions in this case are more obtrusive than music from a bandstand, but even so, what matters—what the painter takes as the subject to be faced—is less the balloon and the puppet shows than the greasy press of people in the foreground, lined





16. Edouard Manet, *Le Ballon*, 1862. Lithograph.

up across the narrow stage, usurping it, embarrassing the spectacle behind—ladies in crinolines having to come in contact with legless beggarboys on trolleys.

In the picture of the exposition, by contrast, there is no embarrassment because there is no contact; that is what makes it modern. The crowd is thinned out into individual, slightly vulgar (or slightly elegant) consumers; the marks of class and sex and so forth are broadly handled, and meant as amusement. Everything is held in place by mere vision and design, as opposed to the actual, stifling crush among the iron chairs in the Tuileries—those people obliged to touch one another and recoil, listening, jostling, being polite, pushing their trolleys, making mud pies out of the real earth, taking frightened little ones on their knees, selling lemonade, and climbing flagpoles—as much for the fun of it as for a better view of the balloonist.

That list of activities amounts, as Manet's images do, to a description of a *crowd*: it suggests the way its view of things is necessarily bound up with other kinds of interest and behaviour. The view in *L'Exposition Universelle*, we could almost say, might as well be the balloonist's: does not the neat hypotenuse of his guy rope serve to tie down the image as a whole, and is he not seated in a gondola which looks on second glance like nothing so much as a giant camera, swinging full circle over the Champ de Mars—giving back the gaze of the man with binoculars? The balloon in both cases most probably belonged to the photographer Nadar. Thus the conceit could be pursued one step further, bearing in mind that photograph and spectacle go together (though the one does not amount to the other). It is as if Manet's lithograph is out to show us everything that is supposed not to register on the photographer's plate—the press of relations and identities that cannot be stopped by a shutter (that cannot simply be “seen”); and as if *L'Exposition Universelle* concedes on the contrary that a city exists—it may be temporary, it may be here to stay—which the camera can show quite adequately. There are parts of Paris in which it appears that there *are* no relations, only images arranged in their place.

What is it I have been trying to establish in this chapter so far? Two things, essentially, which may seem on the surface not to go together well, and perhaps even seem to contradict each other. First, that ever since 1830, and undoubtedly before, men and women had believed that their Paris was disappearing and a new one springing up complete upon its ruins; and that that belief is best understood as a fantasy, almost a wish fulfilment, for all it was accompanied very often by anxiety or fear. What is fantastic in this case is not the consciousness of change, or even the sense that some fabric of social practice which had previously constituted Paris was unravelling or wearing thin. It is the wish to *visualize* that process, and have the modern city be an image. But, second, I have argued that Haussmann's work for the most part colluded in that fantasy or tried to. Part of Haussmann's purpose was to give modernity a shape, and he seemed at the time to have a measure of success in doing so: he built a set of forms in which the city appeared to be visible, even intelligible: Paris, to repeat the formula, was becoming a spectacle.

The phrase would not have seemed outlandish to newspaper readers in the 1860s, for formulas quite like it were applied at every turn. Paris was *parade*, phantasmagoria, dream, dumbshow, mirage, masquerade. Traditional ironies at the expense of metropolis mingled with new metaphors of specifically visual untruth. They were intended to stress the sheer os-

tentation and flimsiness of the new streets and apartment blocks, and beyond that to indicate the more and more intrusive machinery of illusion built into the city and determining its use. Exhibitions were the great sign of that development, along with *grands magasins*; restaurants spilling out onto the sidewalks and posting their menus for passers-by to read; parks planted with pampas grass and tobacco, giant-leaved plants which looked well from a distance across the *pelouse interdite*;¹⁰³ 30,000 billiard tables in 12, 543 cafés.¹⁰⁴ “When a man has the spleen, in no matter what language, it is here he comes to make his peace with existence,”¹⁰⁵ and the peace consisted most often of looking and strolling. Contemporaries could be acerbic about such matters. Victor Fournel, for example, took a turn in the new Bois de Boulogne and allowed this much homage to the gardener:

. . . he has often imitated nature very well. It is almost a good likeness. . . . One comes across notaries posed like exclamation marks at every corner, and photographers recording the view. . . . And all of this, moreover, is topped off with painted boats, neat little bridges, chalets, kiosks, café-restaurants, and other objects nature does not provide.¹⁰⁶

The Goncourts described the change in characteristic fashion:

The whole revolution in the streets of Paris is indicated well by the transition from the *Taverne de Lucas* to the *Taverne de Peters*. One of them used to be, and the other now is, the place Parisians dine out. Well! The Parisian of twenty years ago, the man about town, unmarried and not particularly rich, interested in everything, keen on taking part, the man who went to *Lucas's*—he was an artist, a senior civil servant, an officer, a bourgeois, a sporting gentleman with an income of six thousand pounds. Nowadays at *Peters's*, the Parisian diner is almost always a stock-exchange speculator or photographer.¹⁰⁷

Paul de Kock in 1867 described the city as having built itself a whole new centre—an “equator” populated by consumers, shop assistants, and bureaucrats.¹⁰⁸ Those workers who christened the boulevards “the shores of the New World”—the phrase crops up in the pages of Denis Poulot¹⁰⁹—were presumably meaning much the same thing.

Once again I should like to separate out two elements from the list of charges: First, the fact that the critics so often seized on the idea that Paris was no longer *plural*, something produced in a series of neighbourhoods, made and remade in social practice, but instead had become a single, separate entity, passively consumed.¹¹⁰ And second, the way they assumed that entity to be visual, an appearance of some sort standing at an indeterminate distance from the exclaiming notary and the patient photographer.

I have tried in this chapter to strike a balance between an awareness that claims like these are themselves images, attempts at representation,

and a wish to avoid simply looking through them, once they are recognized as such, in search of some other (founding) reality. I shall try to do that once more by way of conclusion. These claims are images, by means of which it was suggested that everyday life was being robbed in the 1860s of its established forms, that it had less and less of an order and substance of its own, and therefore less resistance to those forces which bound it to the market.¹¹¹ The laws of motion within that market were clear to anyone acquainted with the *grands magasins* and the great exhibitions. Their logic was expansive and inclusive, and seemed to say that nothing much could be allowed to exist apart from capital—certainly not the motives and appearances of people in their daily, humdrum production of themselves. People must have their forms and values provided for them, manufactured elsewhere, and sold at a steady rate and a rising price. There must *be* no everyday life any longer; or, rather, that life must be made a matter of consumption as opposed to “industry”—this last word understood in the peculiar, extended sense of the 1866 census takers.

To picture the process in these terms is once again to imagine it completed—putting an end, as it were, to social practice. There was no such apocalypse in the 1860s: the processes in question were barely beginning. The working class, for example, was starting to imitate the bourgeoisie in the way it organized its meals, but much less so in the way it dressed.¹¹² Those workers who ventured onto the “shores of the New World” were impressed by what Gaillard calls, with good reason, the “spectacle des nourritures”¹¹³ provoked by Haussmann’s rebuilding—the *prix fixe* menus in the streets, the sight of people sitting on the sidewalk eating their separate courses. It had never been clear before how the bourgeois dined, and now it was, the whole thing seemed worth imitating; slowly, at much the same rate as meat and greens grew dearer, the working-class housewife tried to adapt her mealtimes to those in evidence on the boulevard. But the same woman did not shop for clothes or kitchenware at the Bon Marché: the prices there were simply beyond her reach, and the kinds of commodities designed for a different clientele. Likewise, the working class was only partially captivated by the great exhibitions. The workers at Cail’s demanded and were given the day off to see the phantasmagoria of machines; but the reports of the various trades, drafted as part of the exhibition’s official literature, were thoroughly sceptical of the same spectacle, and rightly doubted its relevance to problems in the workplace.¹¹⁴

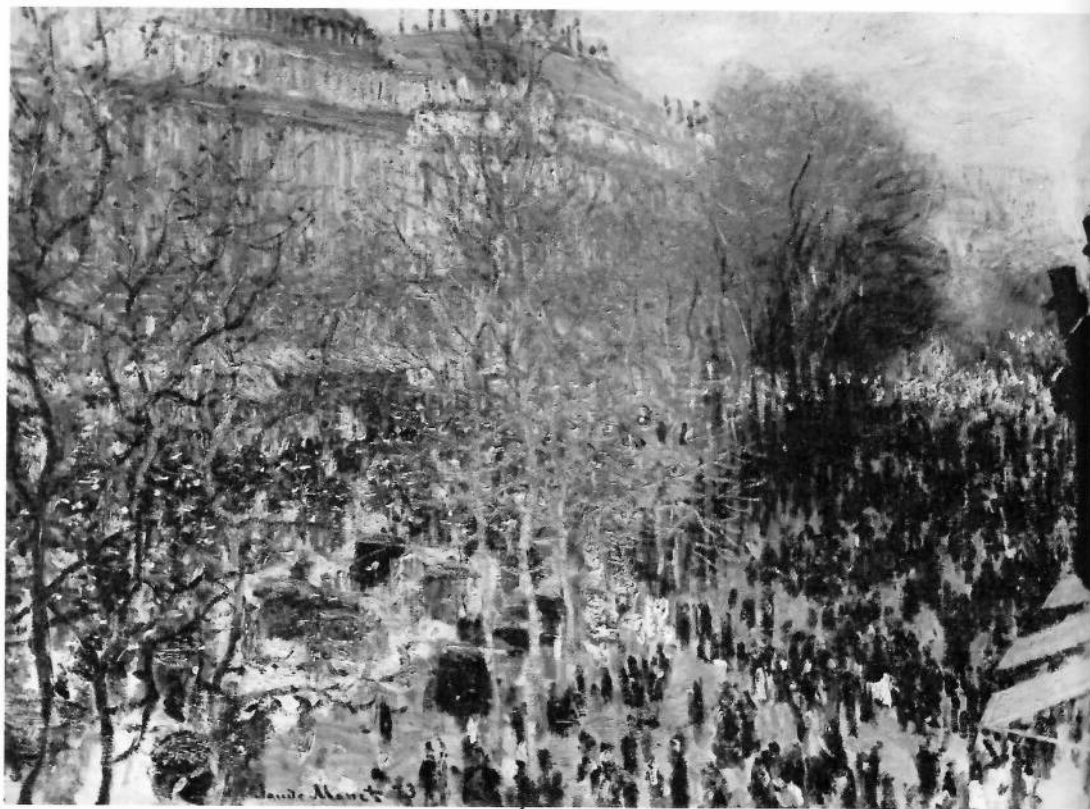
These kinds of resistance and disparity could be duplicated in every sphere of social life in the decade: the history of Haussmannization is quite largely one of incompleteness, opposition, and simple refusal to move. The Commune suggests the degree of recalcitrance, on the part

of Parisians, at having Paris provided in doses by the powers that be.

Yet the Commune was defeated, and the images of the commentators—all that emptiness and uniformity, that dying of the street—were not simply hyperbole. Paris in some sense was being put to death, and the ground prepared for the “consumer society.” Part of that groundwork was the change in the *quartier* economy I have described at such length: it is surely reasonable to expect that the working class would not be made into consumers of commodities until they had become fully producers of them—until their world of work had been broken and reconstructed by capital. It was the pace and force of that reconstruction in the 1860s, and the fact that it was not finished—that there was as yet no other fixed pattern of buying and behaviour to take the place of the one disintegrating—which gave the discourse on Haussmann’s work its urgency.

It was urgent and to a great extent accurate. The commentators were right, I think, to put the stress they did on the physical, visual changes made in the city. They were correct in strictly economic terms, for public works were the motor of capitalism in the mid-nineteenth century (they were the avant-garde of the economy to come). And they were right in more interesting and complex ways. What they wished to describe, in a word, was capitalism coming to determine the main motions of social life—altering the ways in which men and women worked, bought, sold, set up house, and arranged their day. Capitalism was assuredly visible from time to time, in a street of new factories or the theatricals of the Bourse; but it was only in the form of the city that it appeared as what it was, a shaping spirit, a force remaking things with ineluctable logic—the argument of freight statistics and double-entry bookkeeping. The city was the *sign* of capital: it was there one saw the commodity take on flesh—take up and eviscerate the varieties of social practice, and give them back with ventriloquial precision.

To picture the city as a separate thing, as a free field for the shop assistant and consumer, as a sphere of controlled and standardized appearance: these were metaphors for what would happen when everyday life was finally colonized. They were ways of imagining the future in the present. There would come a time, the writers said, when the whole of Paris would be like the Butte de Chaillot or the Bois de Boulogne. In a sense, that time had already arrived. Were not the streets deserted and even the *marchands forains* provided with identical booths at holiday time by the municipality?¹¹⁵ Had not the bourgeois, the artist, the racing gentleman, the soldier, and the civil servant—those types of a form of bourgeois life which had once thrived on difference, on varieties of power and exchange—been replaced by the servants of illusion, the *boursier* and the *photographe*? The Goncourts,



17. Claude Monet, *Le Boulevard des Capucines*, 1873.

of course, were ironists and pessimists, and anyway out of date. Yet their vision of the future should strike the twentieth-century reader as erring largely on the side of mildness. They could not have envisaged a time when the broker was replaced in the restaurants by an infinity of *petits cadres*, and every man was encouraged to become his own photographer. That state of affairs is spectacular. There were too many anticipations of it in the 1860s for anyone to feel at ease.

It should go without saying that this situation—Haussmann's work and its aftermath—presented painting with as many problems as opportunities. Naturally it offered occasions for a meretricious delight in the modern, or proposals in paint that the street henceforward would be a fine and dandy place. (I cannot see, for example, that Monet's two pictures of *Le Boulevard des Capucines* in 1873 do more than provide that kind of touristic enter-



18. Claude Monet, *Le Boulevard des Capucines*, 1873.



19. Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Les Grands Boulevards*, 1875.

tainment, fleshed out with some low-level demonstrations of painterliness. Where Monet went, Renoir inevitably followed: his image of the *grands boulevards* in 1875 is untroubled by its subject's meanings, and not helped by this innocence.) For painting of a more serious cast—the kind which took Manet's example to heart, and sought to emulate *L'Exposition Universelle* or the *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*—the unsettling of meaning I have described was the matter of modern art, its main concern, but also the devil to handle in paint.

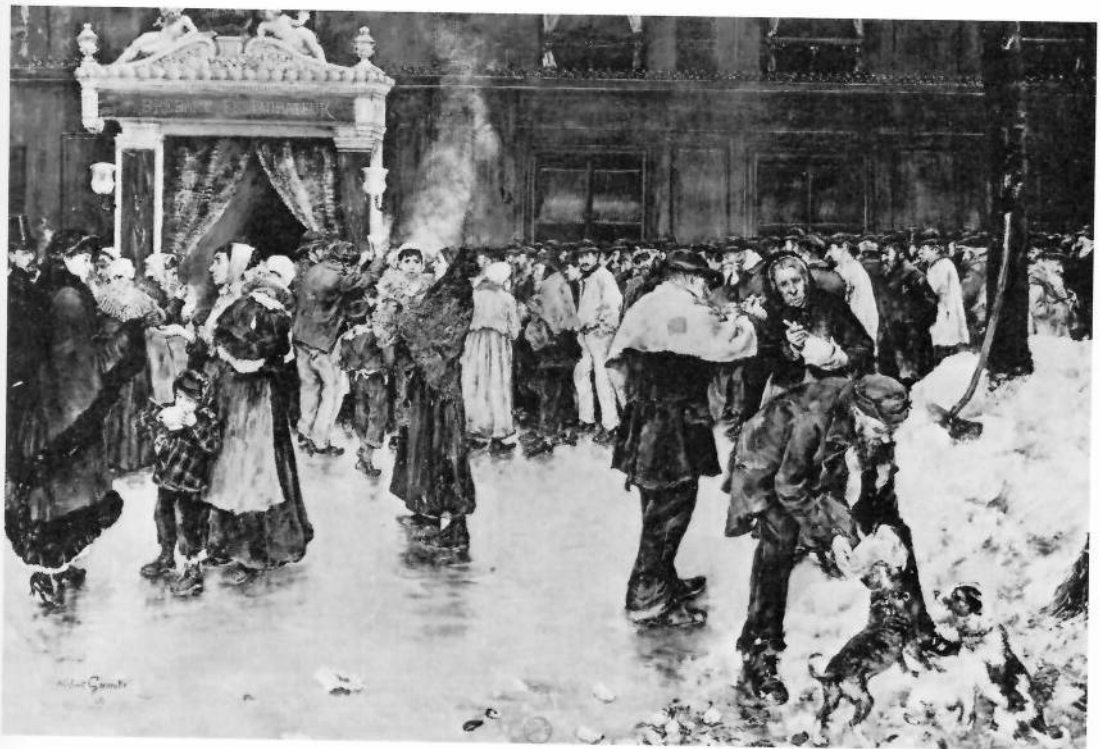
Seriousness was not enough, nor even a measure of class consciousness. Norbert Goeneutte's intentions in *La Distribution de la soupe aux pauvres à la porte du restaurant Bréban*¹¹⁶ were probably impeccable—Manet's and Courbet's examples loom large—but his painting of poverty and charity will rightly strike us as old-fashioned, because the street itself is presented as if untouched by the travail of previous decades. It is still a stage, a closed and focussed foreground on which the established transactions of class take place and are easily read. A hand reaches out for alms and receives them, an old *clochard* shares his bowl with a dog, faces are pitiful, grim, suspicious, pinched with cold, hunger, or age. History is full of *subjects* here, full of



expressions; we are far from the man without a face in the field beside the gaslight, or the gardener averting his gaze from the view on the Butte de Chaillot.

The choice in such cases is not necessarily between indirection and guardedness, revealed as the truth of modernity after all, and Goeneutte's more pointed sign language. One might have sign language of a legible and pungent kind and still retain the sense that part of Haussmann's Paris—part of its new class system—was the infrequency of such touching scenes as Goeneutte chose to paint. The typical scene—this the new painting certainly suggested—was likely to be one in which the classes coexisted but did not touch; where each was absorbed in a kind of dream, cryptic, turned in on itself or out to some spectacle, giving off equivocal signals: the worker looking out of the street without sides in Caillebotte's *Le Pont de l'Europe*, and the bourgeois engaged in mysterious transaction with a woman—his wife, his mistress, a passer-by, a prostitute, who knows? Class exists, but Haussmann's spaces allow it to be overlooked. It is like the lady streetsweeper in de Nittis's sketch of the *Place des Pyramides*: something

20. Norbert Goeneutte, *La Distribution de la soupe aux pauvres à la porte du restaurant Brébant*, 1880.





21. Gustave Caillebotte, *Le Pont de l'Europe*, 1876.



22. Giuseppe de Nittis, *Place des Pyramides*, c. 1875.





23. Edgar Degas, *Place de la Concorde, Paris*, c. 1873.

in the foreground, less important than the oranges and the Tuileries: class as *repoussoir*. History exists, but Haussmann's spaces have room for it to be hidden. It lurks behind the Viscount Lepic's top hat, for example, in Degas's *Place de la Concorde*, where the statue of Strasbourg stands all smothered in wreaths and flowers,¹⁷ the place where Paris mourned Alsace, so recently lost to the Hun.

What does the viscount care for history, even recent history, with a good cigar wedged firmly between his teeth and an umbrella under one arm at a forty-five-degree angle? As little as his children do; no more than the passing, abstract stroller. Their inattention is *provided for* by the empty spaces and the stream of sights—in that sense, Renoir's boulevard pastoral, or Monet's bird's-eye view, is a product indeed of Haussmann's labours:

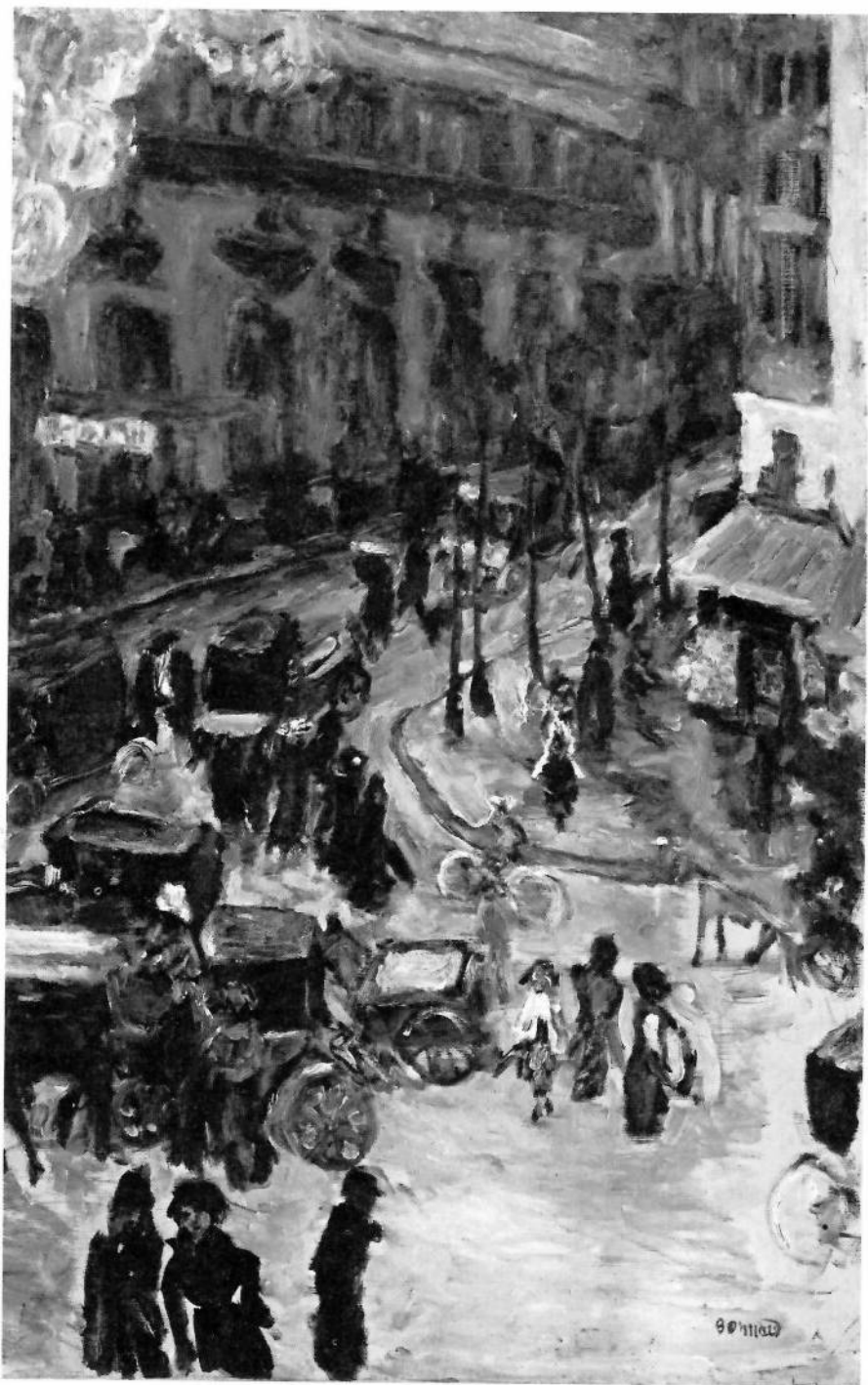
So, step by step, you reach the Place de l'Opéra. It is here that Paris makes one of its grandest impressions. You have before you the façade of the Théâtre, enormous and bold, resplendent with colossal lamps between the elegant columns, before which open rue Auber and rue Halévy; to the right, the great furnace of the Boulevard des Italiens; to the left, the flaming Boulevard des Capucines, which stretches out between the two burning walls of the Boulevard Madeleine, and



24. Pierre Zandomeneghi, *Square d'Anvers, Paris, 1880.*

turning around, you see three great diverging streets which dazzle you like so many luminous abysses: rue de la Paix, all gleaming with gold and jewels, at the end of which the black Colonne Vendôme rises against the starry sky; the Avenue de l'Opéra inundated with electric light; rue Quatre Septembre shining with its thousand gas jets, and seven continuous lines of carriages issuing from the two Boulevards and five streets, crossing each other rapidly on the square, and a crowd coming and going under a shower of rosy and whitest light diffused from the great ground-glass globes, which produce the effect of wreaths and garlands of full moons, colouring the trees, high buildings and the multitude with the weird and mysterious reflections of the final scene of a fancy ballet. Here one experiences for the moment the sensations produced by Hasheesh. That mass of gleaming streets which lead to the Théâtre Français, to the Tuileries, to the Concorde and Champs-Élysées, each one of which brings you a voice of the great Paris festival, calling and attracting you on seven sides, like the stately entrances of seven enchanted palaces, and kindling in your brain and veins the madness of pleasure."⁸

The street, the street! How it rose like a phoenix out of Haussmann's fire, and how much it still delighted the foreigner—the foreign artist—and the visitor from Fontenay-aux-Roses! There was something like a crowd again, and something like charm, in Zandomeneghi's small painting of the *Square d'Anvers*, with its mothers in earnest conversation in the shade, its pets and perambulators, its occasional dandy, its nursemaid helping a baby piss on the parterre; or in Bonnard's pneumatic, impalpable



25. Pierre Bonnard, *Boulevard de Clichy*, 1911.

Boulevard de Clichy, or even old Pissarro's views from his hotel window!* But modern art in its first manifestations—in the painting of Manet above all—did not accept the boulevards as charming. It was more impressed with the queerness of those who used them—the prostitutes, the street singers, the men of the world leaning out of their windows, the beggars, the types with binoculars. It wanted to paint Haussmann's Paris as a place of pleasure, particularly for the eye, but in such a way as to suggest that the pleasures of seeing involved some sort of lack—a repression, or alternatively a brazenness. The prostitute was seemingly an ideal figure for things of this kind, for she concentrated them in her person; and Manet like others took her to represent the truth of the city Haussmann had built.

* This last page or so of descriptions is not meant, incidentally, to amount to a judgement of the relative merit of the pictures passed in review (still less to insinuate such a judgement without daring to state it out loud). The Caillebotte, for example, is in my view a lesser painting than the Degas, however much I may sympathize with its thoughtfulness. The requisite clichés are brought on stage a bit less glibly, but that does not save the picture from having the look of a rehearsal as opposed to a real performance. The value of a work of art cannot ultimately turn on the more or less of its subservience to ideology; for painting can be grandly subservient to the half-truths of the moment, doggedly servile, and yet be no less intense. How that last fact affects the general business of criticism is not clear. But one thing that does not follow from it, as far as I can see, is that viewers of paintings should ignore or deny the subservience, in the hope of thereby attaining to the "aesthetic." It matters what the materials of a pictorial order are, even if the order is something different from the materials, and in the end more important than they are.