Adolphe Yvon, *Napoléon III Presenting Haussmann with a Decree Annexing the Communes Surrounding Paris* (1859)

TRANSFORMING P·A·R·I·S

The Life and Labors of BARON HAUSSMANN

by

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"The Muscular Generation to Which I Belong"

"TWO HUNDRED TWENTY LITERS OF WINE IN THE BARREL VALUED AT 140 francs, 900 bottles of Bordeaux red valued at 540 francs, 120 bottles of Bordeaux red valued at 100 francs," the *notaire* droned on, "280 bottles of Bordeaux white valued at 168 francs . . . twenty-eight bottles of wine from Cestas . . . fourteen bottles of champagne, seventeen bottles of Pontet-Canet, fourteen bottles of Léoville-Poyferré, fifteen bottles of Mouton-d'Armagnac, fifteen bottles of Chateau Issan, fourteen bottles of Haut-Brion, twenty bottles of Chateau Margaux, twelve bottles of Gruaud-Larose. . ." He was reading the Inventory of the worldly goods of Georges-Eugène Haussmann and his wife, Louise-Octavie de la Harpe, who had died within seventeen days of each other: fifty-two married years of material accumulations.[1] At their marriage the Haussmanns had chosen the regulation of community property for all goods acquired since the marriage, with the provision that should one predecease the other, the remaining spouse would have the use of the deceased spouse's property until his or her death, when the entire estate would be distributed. Present for the reading, which would continue, with some interruptions, from February 7, 1891, to May 1, 1891, were the chief inheritors: Valentine Haussmann (their surviving daughter) and their son-in-law and his two children.[2]

The apartment, where Haussmann and his wife died (12 rue Boissy d'Anglas, not far from the Place de la Concorde and the Tuileries Garden), was in a good bourgeois neighborhood. It has been demolished, as has been his place of birth. Haussmann rented it, along with stabling for two horses and a parking area for two carriages, from the widow Languillet. The rent was equal to his annual pension as a retired prefect.

Spacious, as Paris apartments go, yet not ostentatious, the apartment was densely and eclectically furnished, comfortably cluttered. The salon was in the style of Louis XVI, with white lacquered furniture–a *canapé*, or kind of couch, with six armchairs–and Beauvais tapestry. The dining room could seat fourteen, and the Haussmanns owned porcelain service for eighteen guests, along with sixteen crystal carafes for his collection of excellent Bordeaux wine, and silver worth 7,600 francs.

The apartment "looked as though it had been furnished, certainly regardless of expense, from a bric-à-brac shop. In the drawing-room . . . the furniture was rococo, but there was a magnificent suite of Louis XV chairs amidst this harlequinade. A large and beautiful water-color of Empress Eugénie hung over the gilt consoles." Only the study had "a strong individual character. All the man, one might say, was in this room," where the furniture was in the *style administratif*. There were "numerous photographs of members of the Bonaparte family, signed by the givers" and "a large portrait of Napoléon III met one's eye as one entered." The study "was the office of a Cabinet Minister not too certain of his majority."[3] This room contained a large desk, a map cabinet, two tables, a lacquered cabinet, a green leather easy chair, two side chairs upholstered in ribbed silk, one armchair upholstered in velour, another in heavy cotton, two chairs upholstered in green ribbed silk, a wooden chair, a small safe, a clock, two bronze gas fixtures (Empire style), a desk clock with barometer, a pendulum clock (Byzantine design from the time of Louis XVI), two maps of Paris mounted on the wall, a couple of insipid paintings of country scenes, a pastel of his wife, marble busts of himself and his wife, a portrait of the Prince Imperial and another of Prince Victor Bonaparte, as well as a bronze of himself. One bookcase held 180 bound volumes of the *Mémoires de l'Académie des Sciences*, another contained 150 volumes of jurisprudence.

His many decorations, presented by his own and foreign sovereigns, forty-two in all (including a diamond-encrusted cross of the Legion of Honor), fill two pages of the Inventory. His clothing consisted of thirteen shirts, twelve night shirts, fifteen pair of socks, eighteen handkerchiefs, a prefect's dress uniform, and an academician's uniform. The family papers, an enormous accumulation of stuffed boxes and cartons, the very essence of a bureaucrat's life, were not described, dismissed by the *notaire* as "of no value," no financial significance for the estate.[4]

In addition Haussmann left debts. The estate at Cestas, near Bordeaux, part of his wife's inheritance, was encumbered with debts and mortgages, mostly incurred by borrowing to pay for his extensive transformations of the property.[5] He owed sizable sums to architects and banks, one of which held a judgment against the estate, and his savings account was overdrawn. Two other bank accounts showed current balances of a few hundred francs. Death dues and debts necessitated the sale (at auction) of his chateau. When these transactions were completed there were 428,450 francs left to be distributed. Haussmann and his wife were to be buried in Père Lachaise cemetery, in the Haussmann family plot, six meters owned and paid for in perpetuity. A Parisian by birth, Haussmann had returned to his natal city to die and be buried.

With the exception of a few dozen decorations, two maps of Paris, two uniforms for state or institutional functions, and two autographed photographs of Bonapartes, this melancholy material enumeration of a life of public service gave little sense of Haussmann's unique and stunning achievement, little evidence that he was among the most powerful and influential men of his generation. He had lived too long, into a regime that despised and calumniated him. "I have, for the Republic," he wrote with atypical irony, "a degree of gratitude proportional to this demonstration of munificence toward me."[6]

The Empire, this regime called despotic, impartially protected all believers, all cults. The republican government, this imagined

> regime of liberty for all, showed its impartiality in an inverse sense, by proscribing, generally, the outward expression of intimate convictions with which it had no sympathy.[7]

His funeral, modest, private, and ordinary, underlined the paltriness of his mementos, his vanished greatness. The Third Republic denied him a state burial. The world had forgotten Haussmann. In his last, sorrowful years he sought to remind the world:

> May death strike me standing up [he wrote in his *Mémoires*], as it has so many men of the muscular generation to which I belong: this is now my only ambition. However it comes I will depart this world if not with my head held high as I formerly did in my public life, at least with a strong heart; as for the things of Heaven, [I am] hopeful of the merciful justice of God."[8]

Haussmann's motives for writing an autobiography were an intricate web of pride, egotism, vanity, vengeance, and self-justification. Despite his bold anticipation of death, he felt the need to issue a final prefect's report to the present and the future on his achievements, his *res gestae*. He was, although the world seemed to have forgotten, the man who transformed Paris. His work had been embraced and celebrated, an essential part of the nation's life and culture, the subject of literature, painting, photography, the object of tourism. The city had taken on new vitality just as he himself approached his end. The workman had been forgotten. His only distinct memorial was the boulevard Haussmann, and several attempts had been made to remove his name.

Autobiography was the only historical act available to him, and literature was foreign to his nature and his gifts. He was a man of deeds, not descriptions. He began his *Mémoires* at the urging of a friend, Jules Lair, who convinced Haussmann that he owed himself, his family, and his friends "a summary of my public life," especially "a presentation of my administration of Paris, so diligent, so vigorous," and "a decisive refutation of the errors, often unintentional, of the attacks that were as violent as they were unjust, of the systematic and passionate hostilities, which time has still not completely effaced."[9] The emotional spring of Haussmann's memories was anger. "These are recollections written at a distance, after a long retirement, favorable to reflection and impartiality,"[10] but such literary clichés did not preclude rage and bitterness. Almost liturgically he reiterated that his was a life "of legitimate satisfactions, but was filled, above all, with sharp suffering, cruel disillusionments, and petty miseries."[11]

Haussmann's autobiographical purpose was not to lay bare his innermost self, but to remind the French and the world of what he did, and to have them marvel at his achievement:

> In my long life, the only period that appears to me to excite the interest, the curiosity, of the public, is that when I filled, as prefect of the Seine, the functions of mayor of all Paris, and during which was acquired, without having been sought in the least, the almost universal notoriety that now attaches to my name.[12]

All else is banished from his *Mémoires*. The man he presents and wants remembered is "quite simply a parvenu Parisian, determined to make a name for himself, even a controversial name, in his beloved natal city."[13] A proudly ambitious man: "I followed a direct route, without letting myself be diverted. This was not always easy, but it was a very simple rule of conduct and it was mine." Tenacity and lack of duplicity gave him an advantage over his adversaries, who were much more devious than he: "clever men, little accustomed to the straight and narrow, did not lie in wait for me along this road."[14] And let those who got in his way beware. As he explained to an unidentified "Grande Dame," he gave better than he got: "I strike back with usury."[15]

His fundamental views and assumptions, his personal credo, he assures the reader at the outset, will not be dissembled. Politically he believes in democracy and is "very liberal" but authoritarian: "The only practical form of Democracy is the Empire," and "I was an Imperialist by birth and conviction."[16] But above all he was a dedicated administrator, unattached to any coterie: "absorbed . . . by the substantial mission that I had been given . . . I did not seek to see or know more than what directly concerned me."[17] He is a man, Haussmann assures his readers, they can trust. "After a sincere search of my conscience, I have the profound conviction of never having, in these *Mémoires* or in my life, knowingly caused pain to

anyone or given in to feelings that I might [later] regret." The faults he confesses, but does not explore, are "too much faith in the solidity of the Imperial regime" and consequently "too little concern for our future interests."[18] His character is faithfully reflected, he insists, by the very simplicity and precision of his writing. "I hardly concern myself with style." "Mine is not mannered, it is the style of a familiar account, of a conversation among friends." He prefers "the language of the Law," in which he was trained, where "there are no synonyms. Every word has its own value and one must know it." Such writing may lack elegance but it has precision, which can be seen to best advantage in "my prefectorial orders."[19] But the true language of haussmannization is statistics:

> As arid as might be the terrain of numbers, they are a support that one rarely disregards without perishing, and which never lie. They hold the secret of many forces. Moreover, if the language of numbers is without charm, it is without illusion. Numbers are the prose of business: they are also its eloquence. Clear and precise, they do more than persuade, they provide certainty.[20]

His *Mémoires* are constructed like a prefect's report: dense, detailed, carefully argued, technically well informed, full of statistics and administrative and historical erudition, of which he wrote dozens, all equally masterful and unscintillating. In the very monotony, the accumulation of examples, the lists of figures, a powerful eloquence inculcates his heroic accomplishments.[21]

The *Mémoires* present his own view of the transformation of Paris, "this great and difficult work . . . for which I was the devoted instrument, from 1853 to 1870, and for which I remain the responsible editor, in a country where everything is personified."[22] He is the self-confident hero of his own book. The few regrets he confesses are overwhelmed by the vanity of accomplishment. His editor has provided an apt and accurate appraisal:

> What would we not today give [he asked rhetorically] to possess the account of the transformation [of Rome] by Augustus, and how many minor poems would we not sacrifice in exchange for a work that would reveal to us the practical administration of the Romans?[23]

For all his shortcomings and shortsightedness, Haussmann was essentially correct about himself and his achievement. The *Mémoirs* are not braggadocio. What he missed, what no one of his generation could have seen, was that he was almost an ideal type, a modern bureaucrat *avant la lettre*. So many of the important characteristics of France at midcentury converged in Haussmann, often in exaggerated form because oversized, that his story takes on representative dimensions. The self-conscious administrator devoted to state service (whoever its master), the bureaucrat devoted to the emerging age of statistics and quantification, the urban planner convinced that reason rather than self-interest or sentiment drove his decisions, the hard-working bourgeois disdainful of the more idle and privileged, the citizen who scorned democracy as disorderly and inefficient—all these aspects of his remarkable career he presents and celebrates. It was Haussmann's good fortune to preside over the greatest urban renewal project in history, and he left an indelible imprint on Paris. He shaped none of the primal energies of his century, nor did he articulate their meaning. He was not a master spirit of the age, a great man in our usual understanding of an increasingly ambiguous classification. But he shaped a city that reflected the imperatives of capitalism and centralized imperial power, he integrated the important public works of his age–railroads, sewers, water supply–into the city, he implanted a new commercial city into a decaying urban fabric and gave it new life, he imposed patterns on Paris that had not previously existed, and he permanently altered the city's appearance. To have grasped the route so many careening juggernauts were taking, and to have cleared their irresistible paths, was a kind of greatness.

No name is so attached to a city as is Haussmann's to Paris. The great founders of cities in antiquity, both mythological and actual, even Alexander the Great or the Emperor Constantine, who gave their names to their creations, have not left so indelible an urban imprint. But some parallels with antiquity are apt. The Greco-Roman world was an essentially urban culture and civilization, apparent first in the Greek city-states and then the Roman Republic and Empire, when the provinces looked to the capital, where was

concentrated all that represented the Roman world–emperor, aristocracy, administration, culture, wealth, education, law courts, altars. The provincial cities, which emerged from Roman military camps, including Paris, sought to emulate or copy Rome.

Haussmann enjoyed comparing Paris with Augustan Rome. Not merely because it was flattering to himself and his master, Napoléon III, or a familiar contemporary conceit among the educated. Ancient Rome had been transformed by an emperor and his aediles, imperial officers charged with city administration. The parallels were irresistible; Augustan Rome haunts Haussmann's *Mémoires* as metaphor, model, and benchmark. But this linkage of antiquity to the present was more rhetorical than real. Haussmann preferred a more recent parallel: the Marquis de Tourny, the intendant of Louis XV who transformed Bordeaux in the eighteenth century.

The choice was both excellent and revealing. Cities had ceased being the creation of conquerors or heroes and become the task of bureaucrats and administrators. Tourny did his work in the infancy of the new phenomenon, Haussmann during the adolescence and young adulthood of city planning. The evolution of European cities is more apposite and carries no burden of myth. Besides, for Haussmann, who was insular and chauvinistic, only a French comparison would do. He was emotionally and aesthetically attached to eighteenth-century urbanism, whose dominant elements–rectilinear, planted boulevards leading to monuments or *places*, public parks and promenades, markets in the center of the city, rational street patterns, the city divided into functional "zones," with government separated from commerce and "dirty" industry banished from the city, a hierarchical architectural regularity–were designed to glorify the ruler. In addition Tourny's Bordeaux, where Haussmann spent more than a dozen years before his summons to Paris, had several striking similarities to Haussmann's Paris: a dominant river with embellished quays, grand public buildings inherited from the past, an opera house at the center of the city, a stable commercial bourgeoisie, and an old medieval core that had been successfully integrated into the new city. Haussmann's invocation of the obscure Tourny was also flattering. There were similarities between the eighteenth-century servant

of Louis XV and Haussmann's own position, but the comparison was patently to Haussmann's advantage: Bordeaux was not Paris, the Second Empire was not the old monarchy. The eighteenth century, before the culmination of the centralized state under Napoléon, was not the nineteenth. In Tourny's day provincial capitals might successfully vie with Paris in beauty and modernity. Bordeaux, Nancy, even Arras (where Robespierre was born) could boast stunning new centers that replaced medieval cores with uniform buildings in the best classical style, built of the finest cut stone, which declared local pride and prosperity. The last century of the ancien régime was a great age of urban building and beauty, but none of these renewed French cities was conceptualized on the scale Haussmann brought to Paris, none was rebuilt to represent an empire anxious to assert, in stone, its power and permanence.

There was no city like Paris. The concentration of money, energy, people, and institutions, the dominance of Paris over France, was unparalleled. This characteristic was pushed so far by Haussmann and Napoléon III that Paris burst its old urban integument. Glasgow and Edinburgh, Berlin and Munich, Milan and Turin and Rome, Madrid and Barcelona define the competitive tensions between cities for national dominance. No city in France, or Europe, could compare with Haussmann's Paris. Madrid and Berlin had been built to represent and reflect the requirements of power, imperial power in the former. London had grown more organically, although it provided, with Regent's Street, an early example of a planned quarter and a new street cut through a dense urban fabric. Rome, long shaped by the preponderance of the Papacy, seemed stuck in the Renaissance, and Vienna was about to undergo a transformation nearly as extensive as Haussmann's Paris, although on a smaller scale. Contemporaries recognized the significance of Haussmann's work and sought comparisons. The most apt was likening Haussmann's work to the rebuilding of Lisbon after the earthquake and fire of 1755, stressing the relationship of the Portuguese king and his first minister, Pombal.

The railroads, symbolic of the extraordinary energies of capitalism unleashed, the nation-state solidified, an expanding population,

a global economy, the available marvels of industrialism—all united to make the transformation of Paris necessary, possible, and gigantic. Haussmannization—a contemporary coinage meaning drastic, centralized, violent urban renewal—was made possible by the sharp convergence of the forces of authoritarian urbanism, the new structures of capitalism, and the urban crisis that overwhelmed Paris. The alliance between public and private investment, all accomplished under the intimidating intervention and symbols of imperialism, made Haussmann's work possible.[24] The city itself, with its long history as a royal capital, the center of the kingdom in every possible way, meant that the task of transformation would be on the grandest scale. Once underway Paris became the model of a national city. Not only was it imitated throughout France–Lyon and Marseilles had similar and simultaneous transformations–but throughout the West. Paris became what ancient Rome had been: an urban ideal to which all aspired through emulation or imitation. For the nineteenth century, it was St. Augustine's City of Man, the modern city par excellence. Its boulevards and buildings were exported to the rest of the world as easily as the luxury goods that formed the foundation of the city's economy, while hundreds of thousands went on pilgrimage to the secular Mecca.

The mythic proportions of the place, the pull of Paris, sometimes despite the Parisians, is seemingly universal. The Paris that magnetically attracts still remains Haussmann's Paris.[25] The boulevards, the Place de l'Etoile, indeed all the major *places*, most of the bridges over the Seine, all the squares and small parks, the Bois de Boulogne and Bois de Vincennes, to mention only a few of the aspects that define Paris, were all Haussmann's work. How we walk or drive about the city was determined by him, as was our focus on the various monuments closing the perspectives he created. And the architecture. The overwhelming impression of Paris as a uniform, harmonious urban tapestry accented with charming scenes from an earlier age that survived Haussmann's wreckers, endures. What he left intact is as important in the overall design of Paris as what he demolished. The bits of the old city, alive in the midst of the new, old gems in a new setting, have an appeal all their own. Even in its architectural regularity Paris provides the kind of aesthetic satisfaction unavailable in a city built in many styles over many centuries.

There is an irony to Haussmann's intimate identification with Paris. His is almost a household name, both of admiration and scorn. Yet few know precisely what he did or what he was. He is assumed to have been an architect–he despised them–or, alternately, an engineer–he valued them but thought they lacked vision. In fact he was a bureaucrat, perhaps the most famous or successful administrator in urban history. It is difficult to name another. Only Robert Moses, the individual chiefly responsible for the highways, bridges, public beaches, and power stations of New York City, comes close; and Moses was a great admirer of Haussmann. Not unexpectedly, he valued in Haussmann what he valued in himself: boldness of conception, the ability to grasp the enormous complexity of a great city and treat it as a whole, integrating all the parts, great and small, into a single organism, the predominance of transportation, the importance of parks, administrative genius, contempt for democratic procedures, and a penchant for bullying.

Our distrust for administrators—reflected in presidential promises to trim the bureaucracy, streamline government, make things work—would have been incomprehensible to Haussmann and his contemporaries. He believed administration could and should confront and solve the great questions of the day. Good government was good administration for Haussmann, one of the earliest French proponents of a professional civil service, foreshadowing our own age of the expert, our reliance on technocrats. Haussmann now seems a familiar figure: in his own day he was a new breed of bureaucrat.

He had no patience with abstractions or ideology. He was an administrator who did things, made things, built Paris. He knew and boasted that his achievement and his fame would outlast the personal calumnies he endured. By the time he wrote his *Mémoires*, transformed Paris had not only outlived the Second Empire but had been reaffirmed by the completion of many of his projects, several of which were not fully realized until our century. A few jewel-encrusted decorations, signed photographs of Bonapartes, uniforms no longer worn, boxes of prefectorial reports are all that Haussmann

would have left behind had he not been summoned to Paris in 1853 by Louis Napoléon, emperor not by the grace of God but by his own coup d'état, and given the task of translating the emperor's vague vision of a new capital into reality. Haussmann imprinted himself on history not because of his *Mémoires* or the greatness of his character and life but because he was responsible for one of the modern wonders of the world, the new Paris, whose transformation he oversaw, from the most grandiose conceptions to the most minute detail.

· I ·

Paris Before Haussmann

LONG BEFORE HAUSSMANN, VISITORS WERE AMAZED AT THE CITY IN the bend of the Seine. Paris first seen etched a sharp and sometimes monstrous image in the memory. The city was larger than life, beyond the limits of perception. Its size, density, complexity, both wonderful and terrific when viewed from a distance, were confirmed in the days of more intimate examination that followed the first glimpse. Once experienced at street level, its particular charms and beauties singled out from the overwhelming whole, the city could become Paris remembered, the most familiar form of celebration in memoirs, letters, novels, poetry, and song. In recollection sentiment, sentimentality, and nostalgia softened first impressions, replacing them with a sense of specific loss or regret.

Those who loved or loathed Paris wrote similarly of their first view, struck by the stark contrasts of two cities in one. "I had imagined a city as beautiful as it was big, of the most imposing aspect, where one saw only superb streets, and palaces of marble and gold," wrote Rousseau:

> Entering through the faubourg Saint Marceau, I saw only small, dirty and stinking streets, ugly black houses, an air of filth, poverty, beggars, carters, sewing women, women hawking tisanes and old hats.[1]

"So this is Paris," said the Russian traveler Nikolai Karamzine to himself as he trudged through the mud of the narrow streets of the faubourg Saint Antoine, "the city that seemed so magnificent to me from afar."

> But the decor changed completely when we arrived at the banks of the Seine. There arose before us magnificent edifices, six-story houses, rich shops; what a multitude of people! What variety! What noise![2]

"Leaving Villejuif," wrote Réstif de la Bretonne, who would devote his literary life to prowling Paris streets to record the vitality of the city in all its abundance and perversity,

> we alighted upon a great mass of houses overhung by a cloud of smoke. I asked my father what it was? "It's Paris. It's a big city, you can't see it all from here." "Oh, how big Paris is father, it's as big as Vermanton to Sacy, and Sacy to Joux." "Yes, at least as big. Oh, what a lot of people! So many that nobody knows anyone else, not even in the same neighborhood, not even in the same house. . ."[3]

Here, in three contrasting eighteenth-century perceptions of Paris are the themes of the city's history. Created by a long and turbulent past, Paris presented the stark contrast of two cities on the same site, one beautiful, one squalid, the physical strains of urban hurly-burly, anomie, and a sense of menace. Long after Haussmann imposed new patterns of movement, space, and residence, transforming the city in the name of salubrity and order, commerce and progress, the same historical forces, forced into new channels, would continue to flow. Long before he laid violent hands on Paris, thoughtful men knew something had to be done.

No one knew where the city began or ended. For years the kings had tried to check the growth of Paris, first with walls, then with decrees, milestones, and markers. The city absorbed, overran, or ignored them all. "I marvelled at the way Paris devours its surroundings, changing nourishing gardens into sterile streets," wrote Réstif de la Bretonne. No one knew how many people lived in Paris, including the government, and there was no accurate map of the city. There were proposals aplenty for Paris, and criticism was socially and intellectually diverse. Virtually all the would-be city

planners deplored the existence of two cities and wanted to liberate monumental, public, wealthy Paris from the squalid accumulation of centuries of haphazard growth. In the century before the French Revolution the city itself had recoiled from its own spreading decay and decrepitude. Those who could had been moving westward, leaving behind the old medieval core of Paris.

Among those who observed the city at street level, Sébastien Mercier and Réstif de la Bretonne had a deep affection for Paris despite its horrors. But Voltaire, the most famous of these urban critics, loved with less compassion and sentimentality. Lacking a taste for the underbelly of urban life, he deplored the overcrowding, the danger, the filth that everywhere assaulted his gaze. Paris was ugly, low, vulgar, disorderly. Voltaire lamented the lack of public markets, fountains, regular intersections, theaters; he called for widening the "narrow and infected streets," for uncovering the beauties languishing beneath Gothic sprawl and squalor. "One passes the [east side of the] Louvre and grieves to see this facade, a monument to the grandeur of Louis XIV, to the zeal of Colbert, and to the genius of Perrault, hidden by the buildings of the Goths and Vandals." He excoriated the clutter that hid or deformed classical monuments. The center of Paris, with the exception of a few buildings and streets "that equal or surpass the beauties of ancient Rome," (the Louvre, the Tuileries, the Champs-Elysées) is "dark, hideous, closed in as in the age of the most frightful barbarism." He celebrated Christopher Wren's London and regretted the neighborhoods that had escaped the London fire in 1665.[4]

What was needed was light and air, not more monumental buildings or *places* implanted in the medieval tangle but liberation from urban strangulation. In a passage that became a favorite of Haussmann's, Voltaire pronounced the problem soluble in ten years with the aid of a graduated tax levied on Parisians for beautifying their city, for making it "the wonder of the world."[5] Voltaire concluded a 1749 pamphlet with a prayer:

> May God find some man zealous enough to undertake such projects, possessed of a soul firm enough to complete his undertakings, a mind enlightened enough to plan them, and may he have sufficient social stature to make them succeed.[6]

·VIII·

"The Implacable Axes of a Straight Line. . ."

THE YEAR 1848 MADE MODERN PARIS POSSIBLE. THE REVOLUTIONS had not only swept the board clean, equally toppling kings and pawns, clearing the way for the Second Empire, it was a new *point de départ*. The urgency of urban renewal infused the language of critics and reformers—the discourse of salubrity, cleansing, aerating, movement—with political meaning. Paris was sick, moribund, suffocating:

> The entire central section of Old Paris and the three arrondissements of the Left Bank [wrote the municipal councillor Victor Considérant in 1844]. . .are a sewer, as is the Cité. . .and the neighborhoods of the Gros Caillou, of St. Marcel, and the Ile St. Louis [are] atrophied because of their increasingly wretched isolation.[1]

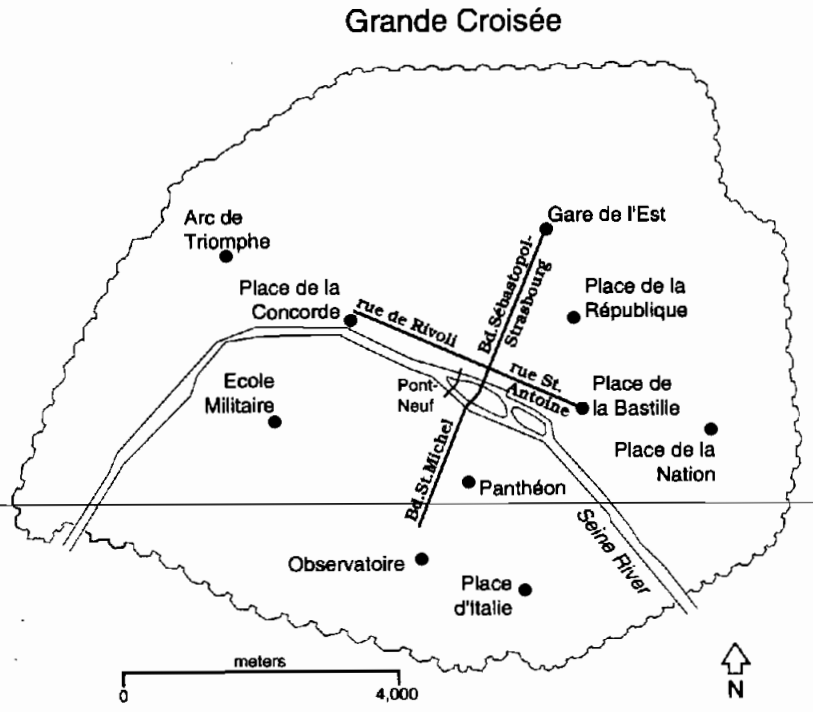
The second wave of cholera that struck the city in 1849 grimly reiterated the diagnosis and made real the metaphor. Louis Napoléon brilliantly recognized and exploited the changed climate. He would heal the wounds inflicted by the Second Republic. The transformation of Paris would establish his authority on a more solid foundation than the dubious one of descent from an upstart, an adventurer, a conqueror. Paris itself, a new capital, would be an irrefutable argument for a healthy authoritarian regime devoted to progress.

First antisepsis. Louis Napoléon unflinchingly supported the massive condemnations, expropriations, and demolitions demanded by Haussmann's transformations. The emperor's urban dreams were no grander or more extensive than those of many a predecessor, but his will was firmer. Completing the Louvre-Tuileries had been considered by virtually every government since François I. Each had flinched, "checked by the necessity of demolishing a substantial neighborhood where the stables of the king, the royal riding academy, and the old hospital of the Quinze-Vingts, were located,"[2] all redolent with history. The riding academy, or Manège, had provided the makeshift home of the Convention Assembly during the French Revolution. It was here that Louis XVI was tried and condemned. Even the Restoration, anxious to purge Paris of the memory of revolution and regicide, had stayed its hand. This was also the neighborhood of the rue Doyenné, which Balzac described as "a ditch." "It was a great satisfaction for me," wrote Haussmann, "to raze all this for my debut in Paris."[3]

The enormous work of transformation had been begun by Louis Napoléon before he summoned Haussmann to power. The prefect's inaugural project, the *grande croisée*, was both symbolic and practical. The great cross was to be the north-south, east-west axes of the new city: respectively the boulevards Strasbourg-Sébastopol and Champs-Elysées–Rivoli (the former continued by the boulevard St. Michel, the later by the rue St. Antoine), and made reference to the Roman foundations of Paris as well as the city's medieval heritage. Myth and reality were loosely mingled. The rue St. Jacques (on the Left Bank) preserved a trace of the old Gallo-Roman north-south road, the *cardo*. There was no archaeological evidence of an east-west road. One had to be invented, an imagined Roman *decumanus* crossing the *cardo*. In addition, the Gallo-Roman city had been on the Left Bank while what was now needed was a great cross on the Right Bank.

Haussmann and Louis Napoléon had no need to reach back to antiquity for a pedigree, although their desire to preserve the myth that their transformations of Paris were generated by the city's original act of foundation is revealing, as is the symbolic echo of antiquity, when the first act of urban foundation was a cross cut into the

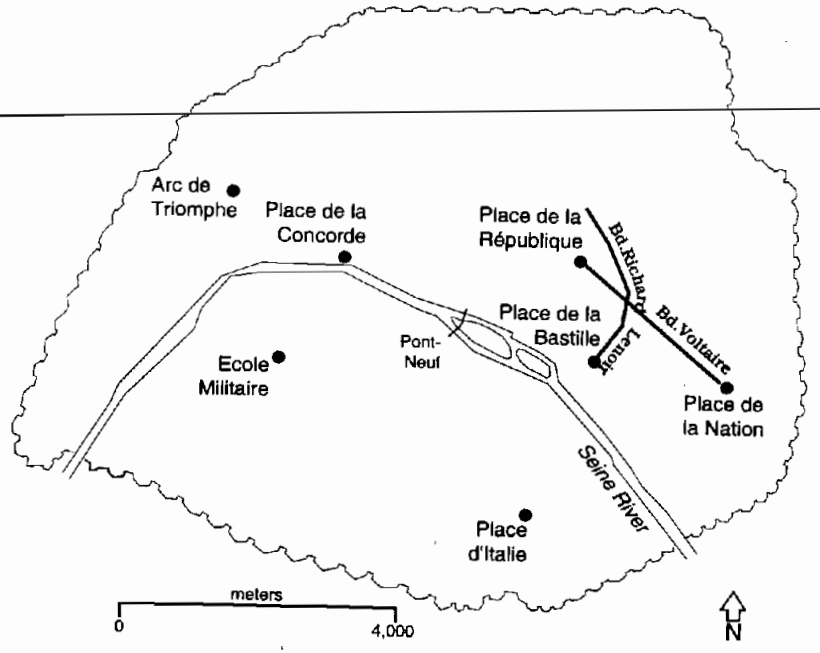
earth. Haussmann preferred a more recent reference: the reign of Charles V (1364–80), when *la Grande Croisée de Paris* was first spoken of.[4] Louis XIV had wanted to build an east-west artery and the Plan des Artistes had boldly proposed such a route (from the Place de la Concorde eastward to the Place de la Bastille). The Artistes had not proposed a north-south axis, apparently unwilling to cut so drastically across Paris. The need, and the logic, of the great cross formed a long history of unrealized plans and failed nerve. Louis Napoléon did not hesitate, as had his predecessors. His map, in both Merruau's and Morizet's versions, shows the Strasbourg-Sébastopol axis, continued on the Left Bank by the boulevard St. Michel. The *grande croisée* would bind the city together: it would be "cut through the middle of the city . . . and bring its extreme limits, at the four cardinal points, into almost direct communication."[5] Paris would radiate out from the great cross as it had once radiated from the Ile de la Cité. The old moribund historical center, now replaced by an artificial great cross, would be transformed from "an



immense obstacle to general traffic movement," Haussmann explained to the General Council of the city, into "the link for all the rest."[6] In fact, he had no desire to revivify the old core of Paris, whatever he told the General Council. New Paris would take its energy from new axes, not the original city. The *grande croisée* was a new act of foundation, abstract and ahistorical. The grand cross was in conflict with two other Haussmann urban schemes: the gutting—"*éventrement*" is Haussmann's stark word[7]—of the Ile de la Cité and the creation of the carrefour of the Opéra. The old center of the city was to be destroyed and a new center created.

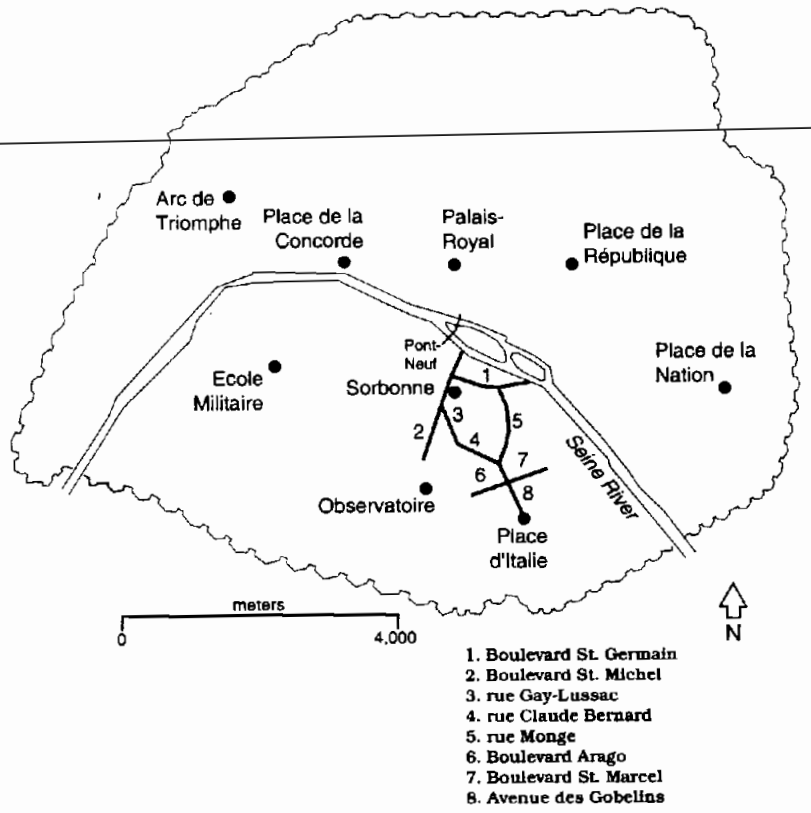
Haussmann's demolitions were purposeful and the emperor's urban vision broadly political, but the cliché that they were chiefly motivated by the desire to insulate Paris from insurrection underrates their achievement. The emperor authorized, and Haussmann built, some purely strategic streets. The boulevard Richard Lenoir, running north from the Place de la Bastille, was one such (G 3). The canal St. Martin, which the new street partly covered, had been one of the important popular strongholds in the June Days of 1848, holding up General Cavaignac's troops for nearly a week. "After much insomnia, brought on by anxiety, the solution came to me," Haussmann wrote. The boulevard Prince Eugène ([G 3–4], now the boulevard Voltaire) cut a strategic swath through the riotous eastern neighborhoods, but there remained the problem of the canal. Haussmann had the city buy the canal in 1861, lower it six meters, and build the boulevard Richard Lenoir over it. Not only did this destroy the natural barricade of the canal, but it provided yet another route "into the habitual center of . . . riots." Haussmann invited the emperor to visit the site. "I have rarely seen my August Sovereign enthusiastic. This time he was unreservedly enthusiastic. . . . one could, if need be, take the faubourg St. Antoine from the rear."[8] When the boulevard Voltaire was completed, the faubourg St. Antoine was encircled. Abandoned forever was the dream of the Bourbon kings to build a great triumphal entry into Paris from the east. Gone too was the emperor's original desire to endow the east end with a cluster of new boulevards. Imperial strategy, interpreted by Haussmann, was to isolate the dangerous neighborhoods.

Boulevards Richard Lenoir and Voltaire



There is a similar imperial intervention concerning the rue de Mazas ([G 4], now the boulevard Diderot), which connects the Place de la Nation to the Quai de la Rapée. The street was transformed into an avenue and was to have been lined with arcaded buildings, imitating the rue de Rivoli. The arcades, expressly prohibited by the emperor, were never built: "The construction of arcades on the boulevard Mazas," he wrote Rouher on December 15, 1857, "would seriously compromise the strategic system of Paris."[9] But there are surprisingly few such directly military projects. Most of the deliberately strategic streets were cut at least a decade after the transformation of Paris began and were certainly not Louis Napoléon's first priority. The rue de Turbigo (F 3), which cut through the 1848 web of resistance around the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers, was not completed until 1867. This street, Haussmann announced, "removed the rue Transnonain from the Paris map,"[10] obliterating any urban memory of the massacre hauntingly commemorated by Honoré Daumier. The boulevards Voltaire,

Rues Gay-Lussac, Claude Bernard, and Monge



Diderot, and Richard Lenoir were completed, respectively, in 1862, 1857, and 1863. The rues Gay-Lussac and Claude Bernard, which neutralized the montagne Ste. Geneviève on the Left Bank, were completed in 1870, while the barracks at the Place de la République, behind the Hôtel de Ville, near the Place de la Bastille, and on the rue Mouffetard (E 5), were similarly delayed. The projects that most mattered to the emperor were those that were highly visible, put thousands to work, and gave the new regime prestige: the Louvre (1857), the rue de Rivoli (1855), the Hôtel de Ville (1855), the boulevard de Strasbourg (1854), and the two Left Bank projects: the rue des Ecoles ([E-F 4], 1853) and the rue de Rennes ([D 4–5], 1853). All had been begun before the empire.

The accusation that Paris was being sacrificed to the regime's fear

of urban insurrection was tempered by the contradictory charge that Paris was being turned into a city for sybarites. The emperor was aware of both criticisms:

> At the present moment [he told Albert Vandam] the opponents of my plans have adopted the cry that I am attempting to do too much at once, and that this attempt is prompted by my wish to hold all Paris in the palm of my hand by means of broad thoroughfares, in which large masses of troops can move freely. . . . Another section of society accuses me of wishing to reduce Paris to a mere city of pleasure and make it the resort of all the profligates and idlers—titled and untitled, rich and poor, honest and dishonest—of the whole world. That, according to the last-named critics, is my method for stifling the nation's aspirations towards a higher standard of political liberty.[11]

The urban plans of Haussmann and his master, the new boulevards and barracks, did not prevent the Communards, in 1871, from holding out longer against the regular army than had the insurrectionaries of June 1848. What Haussmann's destruction of the rabbit warren of streets in eastern Paris had done was transform barricades and urban insurrection from a cottage industry to a substantial and sophisticated undertaking, demanding larger concentrations of both force and resistance. The army was not consulted and at exactly the same time Haussmann constructed a barracks near the Place de la République, he was building the gardens of the boulevard Richard Lenoir. In truth, barracks and gardens were compatible. Once the few strategic streets had been cut, the great boulevards and the august perspectives could exist alongside the habitual squalor and potential political unrest of eastern Paris: in socioeconomic terms, "the most authoritarian public initiative and the greatest individual liberty in questions of building" coexisted. Imperial urban politics was to contain the working-class quarters, not transform them, to preserve private property while assuring the stability of the authoritarian state.[12]

Haussmann conceived of the city as a series of zones defined by their activity and centered on some important carrefour or intersection given significance by a monument. He used the new boulevards

to define these urban zones, simultaneously delimiting and connecting them. The boulevard Richard Lenoir separated a riotous working-class neighborhood from a shabby but stable neighborhood; the boulevard de Strasbourg separated a residential from a commercial zone. Those neighborhoods that the authorities could not adequately control—the Belleville quarter (G-H 2) is an excellent example—were left to their own devices. Belleville became a zone unpenetrated by boulevards or police, unregulated by the government, a neighborhood where "unruly passions and political resentments held the upper hand."[13]

Haussmann denied that Louis Napoléon had any strategic purpose in mind when he traced the boulevard de Strasbourg, which ran, when extended by the boulevard de Sébastopol, from the gare de l'Est to the Seine. But "it cannot be denied that this was the happy consequence of all the important boulevards envisioned by His Majesty to ameliorate and cleanse the old city." Haussmann's conflation is further evidence of the transmutation of the language of hygiene into that of strategy. The prefect was obsessed with urban hygiene, which he understood in social as well as medical terms. Human vermin also needed cleansing. The rurals, who dominated the Corps Législatif of the empire, had to be assured that they were paying for the tranquility of Paris lest they withdraw "the participation of the State in the expense of these onerous undertakings."[14]

The emperor took more direct interest in the Bois de Boulogne (A-B 2–4) than in the military security of central Paris; and architecture was another of the imperial passions. An English visitor, searching for drawings and descriptions of the church of St. Vincent de Paul, then being built, was told at the Bibliothèque Nationale that Louis Napoléon had recently sent for the architect Hittorff's book and several others."[15] His most famous intervention concerns the central markets. The July Monarchy and Rambuteau had already determined to fix les Halles where Philippe-Auguste and Louis VII had originally implanted them, in the midst of the city, a decision that perpetuated medieval Paris and preserved the vitality of the old urban core. The empire and Haussmann carried the plan to completion. Designs for the market were solicited and submitted to the emperor. The first proposals were, uniformly, for stone buildings in the Beaux-Arts style, which Louis Napoléon rejected as unfit for their function. Haussmann later told his American friend, Sherard, that "it was he [the emperor]. . .who first designed with his own hands the plan of the wonderful Central Markets, which were afterwards constructed by Baltard."[16] Haussmann apparently divulged the emperor's inspiration to his friend and school chum Victor Baltard, whose designs of the famous iron and glass sheds for les Halles were ultimately adopted.

The rigidity of iron as a structural material bedeviled architects until the 1870s, when steel, the most characteristic material of industrial revolution architecture, became affordable. Baltard brilliantly solved the problem. The fragile structure of the iron supports were made supple by the use of steel cords, in the form of bars, that were suspended from pulleys. Besides the sheds at les Halles, modern both in conception and materials, the railroad stations are the only other buildings that reveal the use of new materials and methods of construction, incorporating iron into the design, revealing the sinews of construction. Iron was extensively used for strength, but one must look behind the stone facades of Second Empire buildings, which mask the new technology within.

The emperor's eclectic taste ran to historicist buildings, imitative of an earlier style. For Paris Louis Napoléon preferred a style broadly associated with the Italian Renaissance. A building should announce its function, and the emperor associated government and public buildings with French or Italian classicism. Zola described a town house on the parc Monceau as "a miniature of the new Louvre, one of those examples most characteristic of the Napoléon III style, this opulent bastard of all styles."[17] The emperor instructed Haussmann not to try and imitate the old Châtelet (the original home of the law courts in medieval Paris) in building the new Palais de Justice, but "take for a model the Loggia of Brescia, the work of Formentone and his successors, Sansovino and Palladio, which he considered, with reason, as one of the masterworks of the Renaissance."[18] If he favored bogus Renaissance for public buildings, the emperor leaned toward restorations and neomedievalism for private buildings. Haussmann shared only his master's public taste.

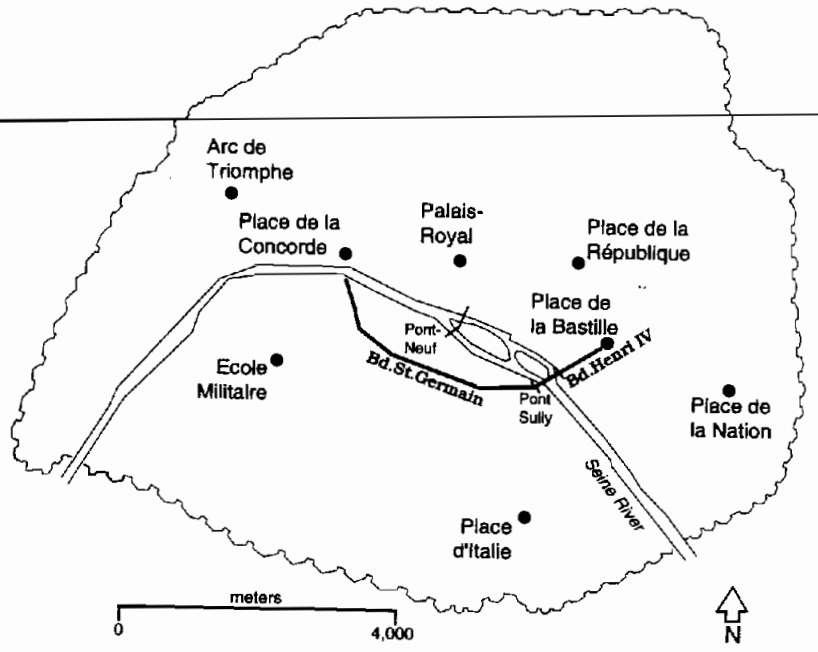
Arguably aesthetic considerations were more important to

Haussmann and the emperor than military strategy. Haussmann's mania for perspective, his need to have each important boulevard either connect two monuments or *places*—as the boulevard Voltaire connects the Place de la Nation and the Place de la République—or appear to connect two monuments—as the boulevard Henri IV seems to connect the Place de la Bastille, with its Column of July, and the Panthéon—involved him in some complicated urban manipulation, as well as some tough negotiations with Louis Napoléon. More often than not the emperor yielded to his prefect. "I want to say," Haussmann wrote, "that His Majesty made concessions to what He called my weaknesses [for perspective], to which a good number of our public ways bear witness."[19]

The boulevard Henri IV was to connect the Left Bank to the Right by continuing the new boulevard St. Germain—not originally proposed by Napoléon—across the Seine to the Place de la Bastille, where it would in turn be linked to half a dozen important arteries (F-G 4). There was no dispute on the usefulness of the new boulevard, but if the boulevard Henri IV crossed the Seine via a bridge parallel to all the others, it would debouch into the boulevard St. Germain with no monument to balance the Column of July. Haussmann discovered that if he built the boulevard Henri IV at a particular angle, it would have the column at one end and the Panthéon dome at the other. The new boulevard would not carry to the Panthéon, which lay atop the montagne Ste. Geneviève and could be reached from this direction only by climbing the hill via an old, winding street. But an optical illusion would be created, giving the boulevard Henri IV termini. To achieve his trompe l'oeil Haussmann had to build it obliquely across the Seine, amputating the eastern tip of the Ile St. Louis and demolishing the beautiful hôtel Bretonvilliers and its garden in the process. The emperor objected that to achieve this perspective the symmetry of the Seine bridges would be destroyed. Haussmann won the argument. The boulevard Henri IV and the pont Sully was his most successful urban illusion.

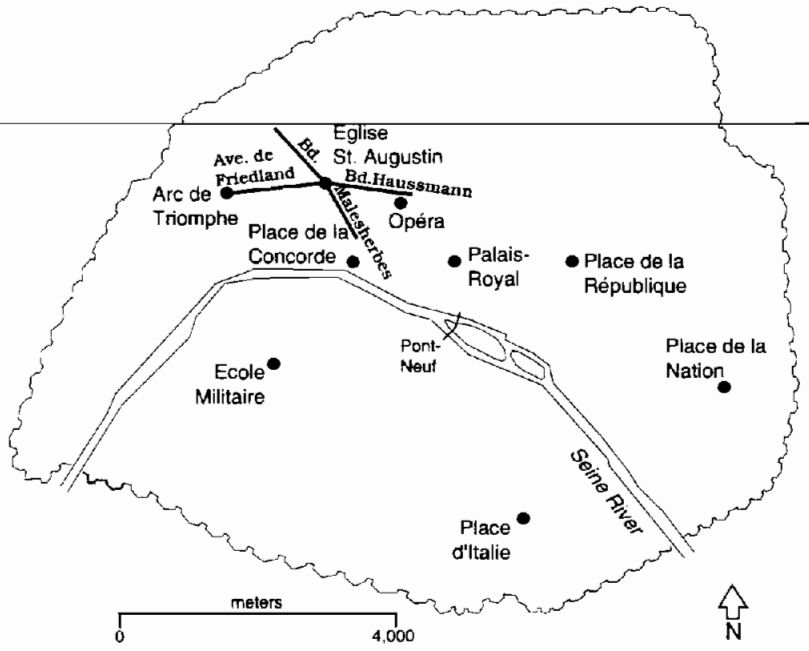
The predominance of aesthetic considerations over military strategy helps explain the apparent discrepancy of purpose between street building in eastern and western Paris, and underlines Haussmann's conception of the city as a whole. In the west, where the majority of

Boulevards St. Germain and Henri IV



the new boulevards were built, there were no military considerations. The dangerous classes did not live in this sparsely populated area; the new neighborhoods were largely residential, with luxury shops for the wealthy inhabitants. Yet the new streets were cut with precisely the same considerations as those in the east: broad, purposeful thoroughfares connecting monuments, radiating from *places*, endowed with uniform architecture, and their perspectives closed at each end by some public structure. The boulevard Malesherbes (1862) runs northwest from the place de la Madeleine (C-D 2). To close the perspective and balance the Madeleine church at one end, Haussmann had Baltard design the church of St. Augustin at the other (D 2). St. Augustin is an eyesore: ridiculously sited, without proportion, crushed beneath an outsized dome. It fully fills an odd-shaped lot created by the intersection of four streets (the boulevards Malesherbes, Haussmann, and Friedland, and the avenue Portalis). Its dome had to be sixty meters high to be visible both from the Madeleine and the boulevard Friedland, where it joins the Arc de

Boulevards Malesherbes, Friedland, and Haussmann



Triomphe as one of the twelve radiating streets of the Etoile. The misshapen church was dictated by the convergence of four streets and Haussmann's obsession with monuments and perspective. The irony that he erected so misshapen a building very near the spot where he was born is lost on most visitors.

Haussmann's most strenuous quest for perspective, however, is connected to the boulevard de Strasbourg. At one end of the new boulevard, which led directly to the old center of Paris, was the gare de l'Est (F 2). Haussmann devised a series of illusions for this important street. The thoroughfare had been begun before he came to power. Had his predecessors moved the street only a few meters, Haussmann lamented, the dome of the Sorbonne ([E 4], on the Left Bank) would have been visible from the boulevard de Strasbourg, providing the perspective he craved. But the July Monarchy was far more utilitarian than he.

Haussmann had to correct the oversight. As with all work in Old Paris the dense urban fabric made planning tricky. Where the rue de

Rivoli intersected the new boulevard de Sébastopol was the place du Châtelet (E 3), which Haussmann now enlarged. All the old tiny streets were destroyed, including the rue de la Vieille-Lantern, where the poet Gérard de Nerval was found hanged in 1855. "I remember . . . especially his pride in having transformed the quarter of the place du Châtelet," Sherard wrote. "'It was a sewer,' he said."[20]

Haussmann then moved Palmier's fountain to the center of the *place*, but the boulevard de Sébastopol did not bisect the enlarged *place*, so the fountain could not close the perspective. He built two theaters here, the Châtelet and the Sarah Bernhardt, to anchor the new *place*, and he linked it with the Hôtel de Ville. Queen Victoria, visiting the Universal Exposition of 1855, was persuaded to give her name to the new street. Nevertheless the place du Châtelet remains a hodgepodge, a half-baked project awaiting a final phase of development. And there was still no monument to close the perspective from the gare de l'Est.

Haussmann conceived of a domed courthouse, the only one in Paris—the Tribunal de Commerce—on the Ile de la Cité. To be visible from the gare de l'Est the dome was built absurdly off-center. Immediately he had another perspective problem. The boulevard de Strasbourg-Sébastopol, when it crossed the Seine, did not line up exactly with the pont au Change. The boulevard du Palais (1858) had, consequently, to be slightly out of line with the pont au Change; and when it crossed to the Left Bank via the pont St. Michel, there was yet another angle before it joined the place St. Michel and the boulevard St. Michel ([E 4], 1855–59), which veered eastward, further disrupting the rectilinear. To continue the illusion that his great north-south axis ran in a straight line through the center of Paris, Haussmann had the architect, Davioud, design the St. Michel fountain, which occupies a triangular space created by the convergence of the boulevard St. Michel and an unimportant street, the rue Danton. One final trompe l'oeil was needed. Looking at the place St. Michel from the Ile de la Cité, one notes that the boulevard St. Michel and the rue Danton seem of equal size and significance. In fact the former is a major new boulevard, the latter a minor little street. Haussmann emphasized the important street by the trees lining the boulevard St. Michel and the

clever use of hierarchical architecture. The whole system works: the individual parts are incoherent.

The gutting of the Ile de la Cité involved no optical illusions. Here we see the complicated knotting of aesthetic, strategic, political, hygienic, and functional concerns that made Haussmann so sophisticated an urbanizer; we see as well the most extreme example of haussmannization as urban renewal by demolition.

Haussmann's treatment of the Ile de la Cité, his razing of the cradle of Paris, has been repeatedly condemned. In place of one of the densest medieval neighborhoods of Paris, containing hundreds of houses and numerous churches on a few acres of land immensely rich in Parisian history, Haussmann left only Notre Dame, the Conciergerie, the Palais de Justice (which he considerably enlarged, amputating one leg of the residential triangle of the Place Dauphine in the process), and the Ste. Chapelle. He replaced the homes of some fifteen thousand Parisians with three major structures: the Hôtel Dieu (designed by Emile Gilbert and A.-S. Diet, which replaced the original hospital of the same name, as well as the hospice des Enfants-Trouvés), the Caserne de la Cité (barracks designed by P.-V. Calliat, which eventually became the prefecture of police), and the Tribunal de Commerce, with its eccentric dome (designed by A.-N. Bailly). The parvis before Notre Dame was enlarged to forty times its original size, and a park was built behind its apse. Numerous streets were suppressed or disappeared. By the end of the century there were only five thousand residents on the Ile. This vast destruction "necessitated the expropriation of all the houses and the disappearance of the ignoble quarter that circumscribed" the old rue de la Cité and the new flower market.[21]

The Ile had suffered centuries of degradation, readily apparent in the expropriations made to build the Palais de Justice. Fifty-three renters were expelled in 1860–61, of whom twenty-four were wine merchants—generally thought a low occupation—and two keepers of houses of prostitution. The last tanners, wretched artisans working in their apartments, were driven from the Ile between 1853 and 1865.[22] The Ile was not notorious for riots and contained no strategically important buildings. In addition the infestation of the historical center of Paris by a nomadic population—Haussmann's habitual

word for the poor working class—defiled the monuments. "Those who have not, as I have, walked, in every sense of the word, through the old Paris of this epoch," he declared with some pride, "cannot form for themselves an accurate idea of it, despite what has survived, for I have neglected nothing in its amelioration."[23] The medieval core of Paris had been transformed into a legal and administrative center. Once the home of king and court, bishop and hierarchy, and the thousands who clung like barnacles to Lutèce, the Ile was now not even a museum. It was a kind of midway filled with public buildings unrelated to one another by style, function, or history. Notre Dame stood like a statue to be admired, not a cathedral to be used. The Ste. Chapelle was hidden in one of the courtyards of the Palais de Justice. The old *Cité* no longer defined Paris.

The nature of this transformation, although not its excesses, derives from the same principles that guided all Haussmann's work. He disencumbered Notre Dame as the July Monarchy had the Hôtel de Ville because he shared the prevailing view that historical monuments should be set apart, as on a pedestal. The church now became a national monument, a central object in the increasingly popular cult of French historical reminiscence, whose scripture was Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris*, published in 1831. He straightened out the streets crossing the Ile and added new bridges and buildings. He centralized the legal functions of the state.[24] The Hôtel Dieu, the new hospital, was the most ambitious, the most incongruous, and the most strenuously opposed of his projects for the Ile. Virtually everyone wanted a simple infirmary. Haussmann had grander ideas. Only in 1865—the Ile was not one of the emperor's priorities—when the demolition work began, did it become clear just what he had in mind. The logic of building a new hospital on the Ile was not so much that it would serve the neighborhood, which Haussmann had destroyed, but that it would be another public building, another monument for the transformed *Cité*. After 1870 Haussmann's Hôtel Dieu, too cumbersome for the site, was lowered by having a story removed.

Haussmann's treatment of the Ile de la Cité is an offense to modern sensibility, and many contemporaries cried out against him. No other neighborhood in Paris was so historically sacred and nowhere

else did he so radically transform a neighborhood through demolition. The Ile was overcrowded, filthy, decrepit, an eyesore, potentially riotous, a disgraceful environment for the cradle of Paris, but radical haussmannization was not the only possible solution to an admitted urban problem. The true center of gravity of Paris was no longer here but to the northwest, which reflected the long leaning of the city westward. It would have been impossible to reconstitute the *Cité*, give it again its medieval importance and vigor, even if Haussmann had believed in historical restoration. The physical isolation of the Ile from Paris allowed him the opportunity, experienced nowhere else in Paris, to transform a neighborhood completely. Haussmann gave the *Cité* a new function: it became the zone of the courts and monuments (with the peculiar inclusion of the Hôtel Dieu). He made the Ile what it remains today: a passage between Right and Left Bank. Only Notre Dame and Ste. Chapelle attract those who do not have specific business on the Ile. At night, when the courts are closed, the only signs of life are around the cathedral and the hospital.

There is something personal in Haussmann's demolitions on the Ile. "I used to cross the Chaussée d'Antin," to go from his home (near St. Augustin church) to school (near the Panthéon),

> and after some detours reach the rue Montmartre and the porte St. Eustache; I crossed the square of les Halles, not then covered, amid the red umbrellas of the fishmongers; then the rue des Lavandières, rue St. Honoré, and the rue St. Denis. The Place du Châtelet was a shabby part in those days. . . . I crossed the old pont au Change . . . then I skirted the old Palais de Justice, with the shameful mass of law cabarets that used to dishonor the Cité on my left. . . . continuing my way by the pont St. Michel, I had to cross the miserable little square where, like a sewer, the waters flowed out of the rue de la Harpe, the rue de la Hachette, the rue St. André des Arts and the rue de l'Hirondelle, where at the end appeared the sign of Chardin the perfumer, like a false note.

From here, this carefully wrought passage continues, he

> launched into the meanderings of the rue de la Harpe, then had to climb the Montagne Ste. Geneviève and arrive, by the passage of the Hôtel d'Harcourt and the rue des Maçons-Sorbonne, the Place Richelieu, the rue de Cluny and the rue des Grés, at the Place du Panthéon at the corner of the Faculty of Law.[25]

Precise and opinionated, contrasting past wretchedness with present cleanliness. One can follow his walk, street by street, on a pre-1853 Paris street map. Virtually everything he describes he himself destroyed or changed, including his house, demolished to make way for the boulevard that bears his name.

This description is informed by passionate repugnance: "shabby," "shameful," "dishonor," "miserable," "a sewer," riveted by the ironic detail of Chardin's perfume shop amid the filth and squalor. His daily walk to school engraved on his mind the foulness of central Paris. The meandering streets and old buildings held no charm for Haussmann. They were repulsive, ugly, vile, unhealthy, characteristics both political and personal for Haussmann. His fastidiousness was deep and obsessive. A sickly childhood, when he was removed from the dirty city for his health, the remembrance of weak lungs, often attributed to breathing fetid air, were perhaps painfully reawakened by his daily walk across Old Paris. He remembered his months in St. Girons as a time of purity, breathing the fresh, clean mountain air, and here it was that he became interested in clean water and the treatment of the insane. His fastidiousness was intimately related to fear—reasonable enough in virtually any French city of the early nineteenth century—a phobia that was a direct connection between filth and disease. Haussmann's was an age of concern for urban hygiene, but his own obsessions betray a personal stake in cleanliness, a deep psychological need. On the Ile de la Cité the catharsis of these childhood sensations issued in destruction.

Where he was less emotionally engaged, less obsessed by the need to cleanse and aerate, when he could look coolly at his maps and not recall the revolutions of his youth, Haussmann's work was more successful, less ruthless. He was able to preserve a good deal from the past and transform it into the needs and sensibility of the present. He saved many of the old streets and quarters of Paris from further rapid degradation, from threatened asphyxiation,[26] by integrating them into his new city. The inner quarters of Paris with their mixture of regular, large new street and narrow, irregular old streets, a complex intermingling of commercial and residential functions,