Supplemental Readings and Information

Our faculty presenters have suggested supplemental readings designed to provide you with background information related to their presentations. Bibliographic information for the readings is listed below. The full text of the readings and descriptions of each location we will be visiting can be found on the following pages.

Françoise Meltzer—Baudelaire in Haussmann’s Paris: Poetry of the Street


Thomas Christensen—Tour of the Palais Garnier Opera House


Background Information on Retreat Locations
Supplemental Readings Suggested by Françoise Meltzer
David P. Jordan

“Haussmann and Haussmannisation: The Legacy for Paris”

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Haussmann and Haussmannisation: The Legacy for Paris

David P. Jordan

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

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

¹ David P. Jordan, Transforming Paris: The Life and Labors of Baron Haussmann (New York, 1995), reproduces this portrait, between pages 328 and 329. The French historical tradition, so rich in invention, philosophical acumen, and erudition, has not much cultivated the biographical form, so highly evolved in the Anglophone world. There are two recent biographies of Haussmann in French: Michel Carmona, Haussmann (Paris, 2000), and Georges Valance, Haussmann le grand (Paris, 2001). Neither breaks new ground, and both may be read for the details of his life and an account of his work. Nicolas Chaudun, Haussmann au crible (Paris, 2000), is biographical in approach, although less detailed than Carmona and Valance.
Boulevard Haussmann—there was a rancorous debate in the Chamber of Deputies about thus honoring him—was the only major street cut, or rather completed, between 1920 and 1940. The city’s debt for his massive urban renewal was retired only in 1929.

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

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

**Haussmannisation during the Second Empire**

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

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

3 Haussmann’s transformations can be quantified—he greatly enjoyed making careful enumerations in his *Mémoires* of meters of sewer pipe and roadway and of chestnut trees planted, for he was always comfortable with the arithmetical component of administration—but just how much he accomplished may be seen most clearly in a simple *bilan* of the major streets cut when he was prefect. I count fifty-three, which includes every major artery in Paris save the Champs-Élysées.
sans take a more analytical view. It was, writes Pierre Pinon, “a precise response to a specific problem: opening up [dégage] the historic center of Paris by cutting new streets.”

Haussmann’s preeminent concerns were “to cut [streets], align, embellish, and monumentalize the city by regularizing all the façades.”

No section of Paris was untouched by these transformations, although much of the Left Bank was relatively unaffected, and some neighborhoods, notably the Marais, were cut adrift from the city and continued their slide into decay. Yet “most of the projects from the end of the [nineteenth] century until World War I completed projects either launched or planned by Haussmann.”

The uniform look of the new city was created as much by the buildings lining the new, obsessively straight streets as by the streets themselves. The striking regularity of the typical Haussmann building—in the Beaux-Arts manner, its height fixed by decree depending on the width of the street, with balconies (their depth regulated) and ornamental ironwork—was achieved with surprisingly vague general regulations. On the Boulevard Saint-Germain, for example, “owners and their neighbors should arrange between themselves to have, in each construction îlot, the same height for each floor in order to continue the principal lines of the façades and to make the entire îlot a single architectural ensemble.”

The architects of the day shared a common vocabulary and needed no additional coercion to produce a homogeneous cityscape.

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

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

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

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

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

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8 This is the argument in Van Zanten, Building Paris.
His most unconventional and innovative ideas—moving the cemeteries out of the city, for example—were rejected. It was the new streets, especially the boulevards, that were universally admired. Haussmann’s shortcomings as a city maker were perpetuated by virtually all the successive governments through the Third and Fourth Republics, indeed well into the 1960s. The scope of his transformations was enormous.

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

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

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

opera house, was not completed until 1875.\textsuperscript{11} The Boulevard Saint-Germain, another unmistakable Haussmann street, was completed only in 1878. Pierre Lavedan points out that 126,000 new buildings, many along Haussmann’s new streets and all in Second Empire style, were erected between 1879 and 1888. Even today these neo-haussmannien buildings make up a substantial part not only of the look of Paris but of the city’s housing stock.\textsuperscript{12} The “type haussmannien d’immeuble,” as well as the streets on which those buildings are constructed, lived into the twentieth century. Without looking at the carved name of the architect and the year of construction set into hundreds of Paris apartment houses, even the knowledgeable flaneur often cannot distinguish a Second Empire building from one built twenty years later.

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

\textbf{Haussmann’s Legacy during the Third Republic}

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

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 379.
\textsuperscript{13} David Harvey, “Monument and Myth: The Building of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart,” in \textit{The Urban Experience: Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanization} (Baltimore, Md.,...
the Cinéma Rex came a bit later, as did the brick buildings that sprang up around the city and formed an architectural necklace made of new materials where the fortifications of the “zone” had recently stood. Each of these structures is, arguably, outside the aesthetic tolerance of haussmannisme. Yet the façades of the Gares Saint-Lazare, d’Orsay, and Lyon, built during the same period, along with the Métro (both underground and elevated), which spread throughout the city the iron structures hitherto isolated at Les Halles and the railroad stations, are within the canon. The grands lycées of Paris mostly date from these years, as do the buildings of the Sorbonne, although their deliberate historical references belie the fact. There were also new commercial buildings, notably the grands magasins, which proved that Paris architecture was not condemned to endless repetition. Gustave Eiffel and Louis Charles Boileau were involved in the design of the Bon Marché (1876), and Paul Sédille designed the new Printemps (1881). The new capitalist enterprises adopted the introduction of art nouveau, which found dramatic expression in the Galeries Lafayette building (1898) and Frantz Jourdain’s Samaritaine (1905). The point is that individual buildings did not change Haussmann’s city any more than had Garnier’s or Baltard’s exquisite structures. Despite all this innovation, Paris remained solidly haussmannien. The bulk of the building that went on in these years was familiar, traditional, and conservative. New and important forms, the brilliant buildings that catch our eye, appeared in the Paris cityscape as sui generis. So they remain: unique gems (or magma) set among row upon row of type haussmannien structures.

To change the overall look of Paris, innovation was needed on a scale that could compete with Haussmann’s transformations. On the eve of World War I there was a clamor for variety and beauty, but it resulted only in a few unique and striking buildings. Imperial Paris remained largely unchanged. The very titles of books published in these years are eloquent: La beauté de Paris by Paul Léon (1909), Des moyens juridiques de sauvegarder les aspects esthétiques de la ville de Paris by Charles Magny (1911), La beauté de Paris et la loi by Charles Lortsch (1913).
These lovers of the city, who were born and came of age during Haussmann’s original transformations or in the long twilight of his influence, imagined another Paris: less uniform, less imitative, less staid, and less controlled by administrative fiat. None of these critics suggested replacing Haussmann’s city, but there was a growing concern to preserve those parts of Paris that antedated the Second Empire. Cutting streets and erecting similar and harmonious ranks of apartment houses had far less appeal in the new century than a generation earlier when it was obvious to all that the old Paris was buckling under the weight of its population. A new sensibility about the city was emerging.

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

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

18 It is worth noting that the criticism was first made during the Second Empire. Then, as at the end of the century, it was an aesthetic judgment and had nothing to do with the misleading cliché, still much repeated, that Haussmann’s transformations were made for strategic reasons, to prevent or destroy urban insurrection. Haussmann himself spoke of the Boulevard Richard Lenoir as deliberately strategic, providing military access to the neighborhood around the Place de la Bastille that had held up General Cavaignac’s troops for a week in 1848. See Mémoires du Baron Haussmann, 3 vols. (Paris 1890), 2:318. The cliché that the underlying purpose of Haussmann’s boulevards was to create clear fields for artillery fire and room for cavalry charges has been perennially argued, most brilliantly by Walter Benjamin. In fact, the prefect’s motives were aesthetic, bureaucratic, and economic. See Gaillard, *Paris, la ville*, 67ff., for the careful distinctions made between rich, less rich, and poor neighborhoods. The only other project with a strong strategic component—the system of streets on the Left Bank that surrounded the Panthéon neighborhood—was the Third Réseau, the last of Haussmann’s transformations, and its purpose was to quarantine a potentially dangerous neighborhood rather than to attack the insurgents.
emerge.” For the first time façades were to be regulated not by measuring specific elements of design, but in reference to an overall spatial envelope, or *gabarit*. “Within this *gabarit*, the architect was to have a new freedom in composing the façade, with the permissible degree of overhang related to the width of the street.” Here was a deliberate, but only partial, rejection of the *type haussmannien*.

Loosening the restrictions on façades let the genie out of the bottle. When the extension of the Rue Réaumur was opened (1897), the Municipal Council of Paris sponsored a competition with prizes for the best façades, hoping to give the street distinction and architectural prestige. The following year the competition was extended to all of Paris, and six prizes were awarded annually from 1898 until 1914. Paul Léon and his friends, who had sounded the call for urban beauty and some relaxation of restrictions, were soon lamenting the excesses. They found the buildings on the new Rue Etienne-Marcel, for example, completely disproportionate to the Place des Victoires, the last *place* built by the monarchy before the Revolution. Now was heard the first sneering invocation of other cities as the antithesis of Paris (and beauty). “We would hope,” Lavedan elaborated and embellished in 1975, “that the natural look of Paris remain Parisian, that it not become a replica of Moscow or New York.”

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

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20 See Evenson, *Paris: A Century of Change*, 149, esp. n. 38, where she gives the specific details of the new restrictions.
21 See *Les concours de façades de la ville de Paris, 1898–1905* (Paris, 1905) and subsequent years.
23 The word does not come into English, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, until 1930. *Le Robert* gives 1910 as the date for the earliest French usage: “Spécialiste de l’aménagement des espaces urbains.” Prior to the need for a new coinage, *urbaniste* had the exceptionally specialized and long obsolete meaning of an adherent of Pope Urban VI, the first pope elected after the Babylonian captivity. *Urbaniser* came a bit earlier (1875), *urbanisation* later (1919).
or unwilling to solve remained (and still exist) to plague the city. He has been castigated for not having anticipated the automobile, and the most radical urbanists and architects, from Hénard to the present, have sought to remedy this myopia. Ultimately, getting from here to there in historical Paris was and is enormously difficult. Some thoroughfares could be cut through Paris; others could not (except in Hénard’s, and later Le Corbusier’s, imagination).

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

Haussmann had been defeated by historical Paris. The chief instrument of haussmannisation, the street, was trumped by old architecture. Fortunately for those who love the city as a historical monster, so too would be all those impatient or angry transformers who followed the great prefect. The unmovable monuments he yielded to still thwart those who would cross the city, especially from south to north. Two of the most prestigious structures in Paris make it impossible to connect the banks of the Seine in the middle of the city: Le Vau’s Institut de France on the Left Bank and the Louvre-Tuileries across the river. No major Left Bank street connects to the Ponts Neuf, Carrousel, Royal, and Solférino. Haussmann had wanted to carry the Rue de Rennes from the Gare du Maine and the Gare Montparnasse across the Seine, repeating the pattern, which he had used for all the railroad stations, of connecting the terminals with major arteries into the center of the city. Extending the Rue de Rennes would have meant destroying the Institut. Haussmann demurred. Across the river the massive Louvre-Tuileries and its gardens effectively blocks a huge chunk of the Right Bank. The
Right Bank roadway along the *quai*, both at and below street level, is a twentieth-century attempt to get around the Louvre-Tuileries blockade. Moreover, the Boulevard Saint-Germain, which runs like a slack rope from the Pont Sully to the Pont de la Concorde, essentially turns its back on the river, because there is no convenient crossing, and continues the orientation of the Left Bank to the south rather than the north. Even the Left Bank road proposed in the 1960s, which would have straightened out the Boulevard Saint-Germain, contained no provisions for linking the two banks of the Seine.

Hénard had wanted more *haussmannisation*. He was virtually alone in the early twentieth century in his praise of the prefect’s work until Le Corbusier, in 1925, added the prestige of his name: “Haussmann did nothing more than replace sordid six-story buildings with sumptuous six-story buildings, wretched neighborhoods with magnificent neighborhoods.”

24 Le Corbusier’s Plan Voisin (1925) proposed cutting broad highways across Paris and lining them with massive skyscrapers to solve the transportation and housing problems simultaneously.

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

times because the energy generated inside the fortress exploded the old carapace. But the broad outline [of the city] remains the same.”

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

Just as its physical form and problems persist, so too do the politics and mechanisms of urban change. With Haussmann the political power of the state was incessantly focused on Paris, not for a project or two but for every project during a seventeen-year period. Behind his authority and the massive urban renewal was the emperor. Someone once quipped there have been many Haussmanns (or would-be Haussmanns) but only one Napoléon III. The state has remained central to all Paris projects. “From the Hundred Years War to the Commune, including along the way the Revolution of 1789, the people of Paris have found themselves enmeshed in national politics, and often in a brutal way.”

In mechanical terms, the system of lotissements that created units of land for development, both new (in the case of vast stretches of western and southern Paris hitherto undeveloped) and renewed (usually acquired in the name of public utility), was the necessary instrument and unit of state intervention. The size and shape of lots determined the form of urbanization by controlling what could be built on the newly available land.

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

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26 The suggestion is familiar. Louis Bergeron, “Paysages de Paris,” in Bergeron, Paris: Genèse d’un paysage, 270, has most recently reiterated it.
turies later, when land was divided into lots fit for the gorgeous town houses of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The confiscations of the French Revolution were often severed into smaller lots and auctioned off, as were the pieces of available land created by Napoléon I’s demolition of ecclesiastical buildings. By the Second Empire the most important stretch of hitherto undeveloped land was in western Paris, on the Right Bank, where the emperor’s uncle had built his Arc de Triomphe. Much of this was owned by the Péreire brothers. This land was now also broken into lots, following Haussmann’s new boulevards, on which apartment buildings would be built, with a few lots bordering the Parc Monceau and lying along the boulevards designed for the urban palaces of the imperial elite.

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

Beyond Haussmannisation in the Parisian Banlieue

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

29 It was not until 1955 that the state was once again able to expropriate and resell land (Lacaze, Urbanisme d’État, 77), and then only under the regulations of the ZAC (Zone d’Aménagement Concerté), codified by a 1966 law. Once again the state could regularly recoup, directly and rapidly, the added land values created by urban improvement undertaken at public expense.
extend his personal authority. The northeastern suburbs had supplied the insurrectionists of 1848, especially around the Saint-Martin Canal (the last barricades captured by the army), with men and matériel that passed easily in and out of the city. This particular annexation was one of the few strategic aspects of his transformations. Gaillard is persuasive, but Haussmann also had a sense of the need and capacity of Paris to grow. The Second Empire was the first government not to try to check the size of the capital.

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

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

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

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

The urban projects Haussmann had proposed and overseen, which gave precision to the emperor’s vague visions, social enthusiasms, and architectural tastes, were driven by increases in the population and by enormous internal migrations from the countryside to Paris. So too were the projects after about 1950. But if the phenomenon continued, its content veered sharply from what Haussmann knew. He imagined that the immigration patterns he had observed would continue. Impoverished provincials, mostly of rural origin, have given way since World War II to provincials who are often better off than many already living in Paris. And this wave of internal migration pales in the face of foreign immigration. Recent population figures are revealing. In 1975, the Ile-de-France had 9,877,000 inhabitants, or 18.76 percent of the total French population (52,655,000); in 1982, 10,073,000, or 18.54 percent of the total (54,335,000); and in 1990, 10,661,000, or 18.83 percent of the total (56,614,000). Nearly one in five French men and women lives in greater Paris, and the nature of this enormous urban growth is different from that of the nineteenth century. Not surprisingly, there are shortages in housing and office space, municipal services and infrastructure are stretched beyond their limits, and traffic is a nightmare. There is no relief in sight. Even by the end of World War II, Haussmann’s city was reeling under the pressure exerted by a growing population on aging buildings.

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


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

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

About 30 percent of the housing stock dated from 1851–80, another 33 percent from 1880–1914. Barely 10 percent had been built between 1915 and 1942.\(^3\) Massive efforts were needed, but how, where? Money, land, and political will were essential for the next phase of urbanization, as they had always been. The three components came together in the 1950s. The “time of uncertainty and amalgamations,” as Roncayolo and Bergeron call the period from 1870 to 1950, was about to end, and with it Haussmann’s Paris would itself be transformed. Important, innovative, and often idiosyncratic projects were accomplished in these years, but they remained isolated: Paris was weighed down by enormous conservatism. It might be argued that the long doldrums and the city’s good fortune not to have been bombed in World War II saved enough of Haussmann’s work (and the urban heritage he himself had preserved) that nineteenth-century Paris began the Trente Glorieuses relatively intact.\(^3\) Old Paris would survive the projects between 1950 and 1990, but deeply wounded. “Cupidity and stupidity, now allied, had at their command unprecedented mechanical muscle.” The remarkable economic recovery and prosperity of postwar France would prove “one of the most stunning periods of French vandalism.”\(^3\)

**The Trente Glorieuses**

In 1977 Louis Chevalier, the doyen of historians of Paris, published *L’assassinat de Paris*, his most passionate, polemical, and personal book.\(^4\) This history of Paris from about 1955 to 1968 is a funeral oration, its long lamentation culminating in the decision taken in 1962 to move Les Halles out of Paris, tear down Baltard’s wonderful iron and glass sheds, and build high-rise office buildings on the site. The story has a bittersweet end, recounted below.

Others have told the melancholy story, although perhaps not so

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\(^3\) The figures are from Bergeron, “Paysages de Paris,” 268.

\(^3\) There is an ironic pun involved in this expression. The *Trois Glorieuses* refer to the three days of the Revolution of 1830 that drove the Bourbons, in the person of Charles X, from the throne and inaugurated the July Monarchy. The Revolution, memorably celebrated by Eugène Delacroix’s painting *Liberty Leading the People*, is usually remembered as the last time a united Paris expressed its will in insurrection. The *Trente Glorieuses* were the years of economic prosperity France enjoyed from about 1945 to 1975, and they were punctuated by political and social unrest as well as by considerable controversy about urban transformation.

\(^3\) Michel Fleury and Guy-Michel Leproux, eds., *Histoire du vandalisme: Les monuments détruits de l’art français* (Paris: Bouquins, 1994), 928. “The state,” continue Michel Fleury and Guy-Michel Leproux, the editors who brought Réau up to the 1990s, “renouncing its role as protector, became entwined in building by way of the nationalized organizations which were often peopled with its technocrats, the local organisms that [might have] created bottlenecks, and political parties that had to finance increasingly costly electoral campaigns.”

\(^4\) Translated into English by David P. Jordan as *The Assassination of Paris* (Chicago, 1994). Alas, Chevalier died on 3 August 2001. He was in his ninety-first year.
well. What only Chevalier has done and could have done is to won-
der and mourn that Pompidou, his friend of many years, a lover of
Baudelaire’s poetry (and presumably of Baudelaire’s Paris), and a col-
league at the Collège de France, became the most important political
figure in the “assassination” of the city. Chevalier lived most of his life in
Paris, beginning with his student days at the Lycée Henri IV. For many
years he had an apartment on the Rue du Cardinal Lemoine, with a
splendid view northward of Paris. Smack in the middle of his view was
the Beaubourg, which more than any other building is identified with
Pompidou, carries his name, and was, for Chevalier, one of the _horreurs_
inflicted on his beloved city.41 “Look at that,” he once said to a visitor,
pointing out his windows to the Beaubourg. “Paris is blue, and Paris is
gray,” not red and blue.

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

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

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

42 Réau, _Histoire du vandalisme_, 828–29, bitterly quotes one of Frantz Jourdain’s jeremiads: “With troglodytes as with the members of the Commission du Vieux Paris, there is nothing to be
done. It’s not even worth trying. Let’s ignore their whining. Tear up the prehistoric regulations
about streets. Give builders the freedom to erect buildings that respond to the aspirations of the
twentieth century.” Jourdain goes on to suggest that pick and shovel are not efficient enough:
“Let’s use dynamite or bombs!”
removing the old restrictions. The municipal checks on state interference were bypassed. Paul Delouvrier, a politically important and forceful personage with direct connections to the Elysée Palace, was appointed to head the Paris District in 1961. The next year came the decision to transfer Les Halles. The “vertical urbanization” (the expression is Pinon’s) began at the same time, with the Croulebarbe and Keller towers in the thirteenth arrondissement. The so-called Orgue des Flandres project in the nineteenth arrondissement was begun in 1963. The Maine-Montparnasse tower, the tallest of all at fifty-six stories (and the only skyscraper in the old core city), had first been proposed in 1958. Work was begun in 1969. It became the symbol of a new urbanism out of scale and style with Haussmann’s Paris.

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

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

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

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

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

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

It was not its ruthlessness that distinguished the destruction of the

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

The French language, ever able to provide the right combination of description and judgment, has yielded the formula l’urbanisme de dalles—slab urbanism. A dalle funéraire is a tombstone: an unmistakable death knell is sounded. The Front de Seine (fifteenth arrondissement) as well as the Rue de Flandre and the Rue de Belleville (nineteenth and twentieth arrondissements, respectively) suffered a similar urbanisme.

“The recent evolution of the Rue de Flandre, the Rue Belleville, and the Rue Nationale,” writes Bernard Rouleau, “is . . . significant and disquieting. In all three cases the destruction of an entire urban environment built along the old streets, under the pretext of renewal . . . destroyed the very pedestrian paths for so long inscribed in the city, and at the same time made everything that rendered these places alive completely disappear.” It was, however, the assault on Les Halles in the very heart

46 See Jordan, Transforming Paris, 198–200, 201–3, for the psychological motivations of Haussmann’s destruction of the Île de la Cité.
47 Pinon uses the phrase. I do not know if he coined it.
of Paris that stirred souls. There had been markets there since the reign of Philippe Auguste. Now they were destroyed. The putative reasons were insalubrity and inconvenience, hygiene and traffic flow.

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

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

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

When Valéry Giscard d’Estaing became president in 1974, he prohib-

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51 One pavilion was saved, number 8, which had originally been reserved for the sale of eggs and poultry. It was moved to the town of Nogent-sur-Marne and declared a classified historical monument. Some of the original ironwork that had surrounded the pavilion was also preserved. Soon afterward, when the Gaumont-Palace movie house was demolished, its organ was moved into the Pavillon, which has now become a cultural center for concerts and exhibitions.
ited construction of any high-rise buildings on the emptied site of Les Halles, which had become le grand trou, one of the most visited, albeit unintentional attractions in Paris. In his public pronouncements Giscard d’Estaing spoke of concern for the “quality of life,” and by 1976, at his instigation, a new plan was produced. Few were pleased with it, but a substantial chunk of what had been the old market was eventually made green. A new shopping center, the Forum des Halles, was buried underground.

The struggle to save Les Halles ended in defeat, but it launched a new sense of historical preservation. Since Haussmann, there had been no overall urban plan. The history of Paris after him was a story of piecemeal, improvised, opportunistic development, sometimes public, sometimes private, and always uncoordinated. Slowly but inexorably, the planners and developers chiseled away at the city. By the 1960s, having witnessed the attack on Les Halles, those who cared about Paris saw their city threatened in a more organic way. It was not a particular historical building that was endangered, but an environment. A spirited defense of the neighborhood around Les Halles now began, not because it contained buildings of architectural distinction, for it did not, but because the charm of the market quartier was said to depend on “an ancient urban fabric which determined the prevailing land allotment, street patterns which conform to the historical way of the capital, sequences of facades filled with fantasy and harmony, forming a refined and elegant urban décor.”

It should be saved because it was a neighborhood, tout court. The new sensibility that Paris was a city of historical neighborhoods that, taken together, constituted urban beauty and were the essence of the city would spare even the îlots insalubres. Any demolition subtracted from the city an irreplaceable part of its material past. Filth and wretchedness could be ameliorated. Destruction could not be reversed. This view too marks an end to haussmannisation.

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

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

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

The Presidential Projects

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

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

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

55 He has written extensively on Paris and was, in the last generation, a conservative yet very audible voice defending Paris against its destroyers. Nouvelle Histoire de Paris: Histoire de l’urbanisme à Paris (Paris, 1975) is perhaps his best-known work.
in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the Saint-Germain quartier was built), long ago laid down a template that continues to distinguish the two banks of the river. The unique relationship between the rulers of France and their capital has also persisted. François I’s decision to build the new Louvre and Napoléon III’s urban visions are but two among dozens of fateful decisions imposed on the city from above. The most recent frenzy of monumental building in Paris, driven by Mitterrand’s passions, tastes, and needs, is another such imposition. The state’s power manifested by the president’s will is irresistible.

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

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

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

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

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

A New Paris?

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

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58 Pinon, Paris: Biographie d’une capitale, 300–301 (and his notes), deplores the phenomenon and loathes the architects who make a living doing this work.
mired and imitated, and for so long a place of secular pilgrimage, has lost much. The boulevards, the most characteristic aspect of *haussmannisation*, are little loved today, and visitors now seek out the few remaining pockets of pre-Haussmann Paris. For those nostalgic for the old city, it is worth remembering that the Beaubourg, and especially the large esplanade that sets it off—arguably anti-Haussmann in conception—is the most visited tourist attraction in Paris.

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

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

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

“À une passante”
(“To a Woman Passing By”)
Selected Poems of Charles Baudelaire, 1974

“Le Cygne” (“The Swan”)
The Flowers of Evil, 1954
À une passante

La rue assourdiante autour de moi hurlait.
Longue, mince, en grand deuil, douleur majestueuse,
Une femme passa, d'une main fastueuse
Soulevant, balançant le feston et l'ourlet;

Agile et noble, avec sa jambe de statue.
Moi, je buvais, crispé comme un extravagant,
Dans son œil, ciel livide où germe l'ouragan,
La douceur qui fascine et le plaisir qui tue.

Un éclair... puis la nuit! — Fugitive beauté
Dont le regard m'a fait soudainement renaitre,
Ne te verrai-je plus que dans l'éternité?

Ailleurs, bien loin d'ici! trop tard! jamais peut-être!
Çar j'ignore où tu fuis, tu ne sais où je vais,
Ô toi que j'eusse aimée, ô toi qui le savais!

— Charles Baudelaire

To a Woman Passing By

The deafening road around me roared.
Tall, slim, in deep mourning, making majestic grief,
A woman passed, lifting and swinging
With a pompous gesture the ornamental hem of her garment,

Swift and noble, with statuesque limb.
As for me, I drank, twitching like an old roué,
From her eye, livid sky where the hurricane is born,
The softness that fascinates and the pleasure that kills,

A gleam... then night! O fleeting beauty,
Your glance has given me sudden rebirth,
Shall I see you again only in eternity?
Somewhere else, very far from here! Too late! Perhaps never!
For I do not know where you flee, nor you where I am going,
O you whom I would have loved, O you who knew it!


**Le Cygne**

À Victor Hugo

I

Andromaque, je pense à vous! Ce petit fleuve,
Pauvre et triste miroir où jadis resplendit
L'immense majesté de vos douleurs de veuve,
Ce Simoïs menteur qui par vos pleurs grandit,

A fécondé soudain ma mémoire fertile,
Comme je traversais le nouveau Carrousel.
Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville
Change plus vite, hélas! que le coeur d'un mortel);

Je ne vois qu'en esprit tout ce camp de baraques,
Ces tas de chapiteaux ébauchés et de fûts,
Les herbes, les gros blocs verdis par l'eau des flaques,
Et, brillant aux carreaux, le bric-à-brac confus.

Là s'étalait jadis une ménagerie;
Là je vis, un matin, à l'heure où sous les cieux
Froids et clairs le Travail s'éveille, où la voirie
Pousse un sombre ouragan dans l'air silencieux,

Un cygne qui s'était évadé de sa cage,
Et, de ses pieds palmés frottant le pavé sec,
Sur le sol raboteux traînait son blanc plumage.
Près d'un ruisseau sans eau la bête ouvrant le bec

Baignait nerveusement ses ailes dans la poudre,
Et disait, le coeur plein de son beau lac natal:
«Eau, quand donc pleuvras-tu? quand tonneras-tu, foudre?»
Je vois ce malheureux, mythe étrange et fatal,
Vers le ciel quelquefois, comme l'homme d'Ovide,
Vers le ciel ironique et cruellement bleu,
Sur son cou convulsif tendant sa tête avide
Comme s'il adressait des reproches à Dieu!

II

Paris change! mais rien dans ma mélancolie
N'a bougé! palais neufs, échafaudages, blocs,
Vieux faubourgs, tout pour moi devient allégorie
Et mes chers souvenirs sont plus lourds que des rocs.

Aussi devant ce Louvre une image m'opprime:
Je pense à mon grand cygne, avec ses gestes fous,
Comme les exilés, ridicule et sublime
Et rongé d'un désir sans trêve! et puis à vous,

Andromaque, des bras d'un grand époux tombée,
Vil bétail, sous la main du superbe Pyrrhus,
Auprès d'un tombeau vide en extase courbée
Veuve d'Hector, hélas! et femme d'Héléneus!

Je pense à la négresse, amaigrie et phtisique
Piétinant dans la boue, et cherchant, l'œil hagard,
Les cocotiers absents de la superbe Afrique
Derrière la muraille immense du brouillard;

À quiconque a perdu ce qui ne se retrouve
Jamais, jamais! à ceux qui s'abreuvent de pleurs
Et tètent la Douleur comme une bonne louve!
Aux maigres orphelins séchant comme des fleurs!

Ainsi dans la forêt où mon esprit s'exile
Un vieux Souvenir sonne à plein souffle du cor!
Je pense aux matelots oubliés dans une île,
Aux captifs, aux vaincus!... à bien d'autres encor!

— Charles Baudelaire

The Swan

To Victor Hugo

I
Andromache, I think of you! — That little stream,
That mirror, poor and sad, which glittered long ago
With the vast majesty of your widow's grieving,
That false Simois swollen by your tears,

Suddenly made fruitful my teeming memory,
As I walked across the new Carrousel.
— Old Paris is no more (the form of a city
Changes more quickly, alas! than the human heart);

I see only in memory that camp of stalls,
Those piles of shafts, of rough hewn cornices, the grass,
The huge stone blocks stained green in puddles of water,
And in the windows shine the jumbled bric-a-brac.

Once a menagerie was set up there;
There, one morning, at the hour when Labor awakens,
Beneath the clear, cold sky when the dismal hubbub
Of street-cleaners and scavengers breaks the silence,

I saw a swan that had escaped from his cage,
That stroked the dry pavement with his webbed feet
And dragged his white plumage over the uneven ground.
Beside a dry gutter the bird opened his beak,

Restlessly bathed his wings in the dust
And cried, homesick for his fair native lake:
"Rain, when will you fall? Thunder, when will you roll?"
I see that hapless bird, that strange and fatal myth,

Toward the sky at times, like the man in Ovid,
Toward the ironic, cruelly blue sky,
Stretch his avid head upon his quivering neck,
As if he were reproaching God!

II

Paris changes! but naught in my melancholy
Has stirred! New palaces, scaffolding, blocks of stone,
Old quarters, all become for me an allegory,
And my dear memories are heavier than rocks.

So, before the Louvre, an image oppresses me:
I think of my great swan with his crazy motions,
Ridiculous, sublime, like a man in exile,
Relentlessly gnawed by longing! and then of you,
Andromache, base chattel, fallen from the embrace
Of a mighty husband into the hands of proud Pyrrhus,
Standing bowed in rapture before an empty tomb,
Widow of Hector, alas! and wife of Helenus!

I think of the negress, wasted and consumptive,
Trudging through muddy streets, seeking with a fixed gaze
The absent coco-palms of splendid Africa
Behind the immense wall of mist;

Of whoever has lost that which is never found
Again! Never! Of those who deeply drink of tears
And suckle Pain as they would suck the good she-wolf!
Of the puny orphans withering like flowers!

Thus in the dim forest to which my soul withdraws,
An ancient memory sounds loud the hunting horn!
I think of the sailors forgotten on some isle,
— Of the captives, of the vanquished!...of many others too!

Supplemental Readings Suggested by Thomas Christensen
Fiamma Nicolodi

“Italian Opera”

*The Cambridge Companion to Grand Opera*, 2003
19  Italian opera

FIAMMA NICOLODI

Grand opera and opera-ballo

The formative phase of post-Verdian grand opera spanned more than twenty years. Among its earliest notable works was Mefistofele by Arrigo Boito (1868): provocative and iconoclastic, this opera swept away many rules or ‘formulas’ (as its composer disparagingly called them) of traditional opera. This explains why its first performance at La Scala, Milan was a complete failure. However, Italian assimilation of French grand opera had already matured as a result of three factors: aesthetic discussions in the press, vigorous publishing and promotion policies by the firms of Ricordi and Lucca, and various theatre managements open to new European products. This assimilation can be traced back several decades. The writing of ‘grand operas’ continued into the early 1890s, as shown in Table 19.1. The last of these works are contemporary with the first attempts at a new genre, one which was to be an antithesis in many (but not all) of its attributes: ‘verismo’ opera. Verismo’s dramatic norms were instead based on narrative concision, unobtrusive structure and the absence of dance.

Among the last Italian grand operas were Cristoforo Colombo (1892) by Alberto Franchetti, based on the adventures of the discoverer of the New World; and I Medici (1893) by Ruggero Leoncavallo, actually the first part of an unfinished operatic trilogy on the Italian Renaissance entitled, with deliberate Wagnerian echoes, Crepusculum. In Cristoforo Colombo the grandiose scale, with crowd scenes, dances and pezzi concertati in Acts III and IV, was prompted by a particular festive occasion: the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America. It reveals, however, a utopian rather than a triumphal spirit: indeed, the message of brotherhood between races and peoples was commonly found in many works at the end of the century. I Medici was conceived by Leoncavallo as an epic ‘national poem’, something imbued with ‘Italian-ness’ (Italianità). It was also an early example of the aestheticising taste for citing ‘ancient’ music: there are citations of late sixteenth-century dances by Fabritio Caroso, while the libretto was inspired by Renaissance poetry, referring to ballate by Angelo Poliziano (1454–94) and canzoni a ballo and other poetry by Lorenzo the Magnificent (1449–92).

An ‘obituary’ of grand opera published in 1898 by the Turin critic and composer Ippolito Valetta referred to verismo opera as the opposite pole of
Table 19.1 List of operas discussed in Chapter 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Librettist</th>
<th>Composer</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Date of première</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Romeo e Giulietta</em> (4)</td>
<td>Marco Marcello</td>
<td>Filippo Marchetti</td>
<td>dramma lirico</td>
<td>1865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mefistofele</em> (prol., 5)</td>
<td>Arrigo Boito</td>
<td>Arrigo Boito</td>
<td>opera</td>
<td>1868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ray Blas</em> (4)</td>
<td>Carlo D'Ormeville</td>
<td>Marchetti</td>
<td>dramma lirico</td>
<td>1869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Il Guarany</em> (4)</td>
<td>Antonio Scalvini and D'Ormeville</td>
<td>Antônio Carlos Gomes</td>
<td>opera-ballo</td>
<td>1870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Fosca</em> (4)</td>
<td>Antonio Ghislanzoni</td>
<td>Gomes</td>
<td>melodramma</td>
<td>1873, rev. 1878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I Lituani</em> (prol., 3)</td>
<td>Ghislanzoni</td>
<td>Amincare Ponchielli</td>
<td>dramma lirico</td>
<td>1874, rev. 1875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Salvator Rosa</em> (4)</td>
<td>Ghislanzoni</td>
<td>Gomes</td>
<td>dramma lirico</td>
<td>1874</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Mefistofele</em> (prol., 4, epilogue)</td>
<td>Boito</td>
<td>Boito</td>
<td>opera</td>
<td>1875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Gustavo Wasa</em> (4)</td>
<td>D'Ormeville</td>
<td>Marchetti</td>
<td>dramma lirico</td>
<td>1875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>La Gioconda</em> (4)</td>
<td>Boito</td>
<td>Ponchielli</td>
<td>dramma lirico</td>
<td>1876, rev. 1876, 1877, 1879, 1880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Maria Tudor</em> (4)</td>
<td>Emilio Praga, Boito and Angelo Zanardini</td>
<td>Gomes</td>
<td>dramma lirico</td>
<td>1879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Don Giovanni d'Austria</em> (4)</td>
<td>D'Ormeville</td>
<td>Marchetti</td>
<td>dramma lirico</td>
<td>1880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Il figliuol prodigo</em> (4)</td>
<td>Zanardini</td>
<td>Ponchielli</td>
<td>melodramma</td>
<td>1880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Elda</em> (4)</td>
<td>D'Ormeville</td>
<td>Alfredo Catalani</td>
<td>dramma fantastico</td>
<td>1880 rev. 1890 (q.v.)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Deianice</em> (4)</td>
<td>Zanardini</td>
<td>Catalani</td>
<td>dramma lirico</td>
<td>1883</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Le vili</em> (1, rev. 2)</td>
<td>Ferdinando Fontana</td>
<td>Giacomo Puccini</td>
<td>leggenda drammatica, rev. as opera-ballo</td>
<td>1884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Marion Detorne</em> (5)</td>
<td>E. Golisciani</td>
<td>Ponchielli</td>
<td>dramma</td>
<td>1885</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Amadè</em> (4)</td>
<td>Fontana</td>
<td>Alberto Franchetti</td>
<td>leggenda</td>
<td>1888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Lo schiavo</em> (4)</td>
<td>Rodolfo Paravicini</td>
<td>Gomes</td>
<td>dramma lirico</td>
<td>1889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Loreley</em> (3) [see Elda, above]</td>
<td>D'Ormeville, Zanardini</td>
<td>Catalani</td>
<td>azione romantica</td>
<td>1890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Cristoforo Colombo</em> (4)</td>
<td>Luigi Illica</td>
<td>Franchetti</td>
<td>dramma lirico</td>
<td>1892 rev. (3) 1923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I Medici</em> (4)</td>
<td>Ruggero Leoncavallo</td>
<td>Ruggero Leoncavallo</td>
<td>azione storica</td>
<td>1893</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a genre now judged to be outmoded. It offers a good standpoint from which to view grand opera’s demise:

Public interest is flagging. Long, inflated operas with dances and grand marches, descents into Hell and more or less fantastic apotheoses are no longer regarded as valuable on the theatrical stock-market. A performance of two hours or so is perfect enough. One is no longer ordinarily obliged to suffer those five long acts, in the course of which every visual and mechanical device must pass before the astonished eye of the spectator.4

In order that confusion over the terms ‘grand opera’ (seldom used in Italy) and its Italian version opera-ballo (literally, opera with dance) may be avoided, a brief clarification of terms is needed. In comparison with French grand opera, the corresponding Italian genre shows some differences, attributable to the influence both of French music-theatre and of Wagnerian music drama.5 It does not display a preference for historical subjects but, rather, offers a variety of themes, drawn equally from legend and from history, to which were added fantastic make-believe and magic at the end of the century. The commonly used term opera-ballo highlights precisely the component not found in traditional Italian opera: dance integrated within the action. Dance was demanded in one or more divertissements among the set pieces but did not necessarily tend towards the grandiose. On the other hand, Italian grand opera, drawing on historical dramas and constructed on a grand scale, did not consider dance an essential requirement, even if it contained large choral and ensemble scenes with at least one pezzo concertato, elaborate scenery, and ‘characteristic’ pieces to the full6 — in other words, adhering to all the other components of French grand opera. To cite rect antecedent of Amilcare Ponchielli's La Gioconda (1876), on account of the emotional extremes traversed by the protagonist. It utilises many of the formal and constituent elements of grand opera: a picturesque setting, some ‘characteristic’ pieces such as the second-act wedding march accompanied by organ, many (if not prominent) choral episodes, a pezzo concertato in the finale to Act II, and so on. Even then, it cannot be regarded as an opera-ballo since it contains no dance. The same might be said for Don Giovanni d’Austria (1880) by Filippo Marchetti: a grand opera, but not an ‘opera with dance’. Romeo e Giulietta (1865), also by Marchetti, is called opera-ballo in several editions published by Lucca, but simply on account of one piece in Act I ‘Ballabile’ (i.e. ‘suitable for dancing’). Other editions omit this Act I ‘Ballabile’ in favour of a Gb major ‘Valzer’ (Waltz) especially written for the tenor Italo Campanini (but without the explicit participation of the corps de ballet). Whether or not it may be seen as an ‘opera with dance’, Romeo e Giulietta is not, however, a grand opera, since it lacks the specific
requirements of the genre such as local colour and an imposing setting. On the other hand Marchetti’s *Gustavo Wasa* (1875) may justifiably be considered as both a grand opera and an opera-ballo on account of its ‘Ballabile’ in Act III, as well as its marches, hymns, popular songs, ballads, ensembles and pezzi concertati.

This range of differences from French grand opera reflects, on the one hand, cultural issues specific to Italy, such as the reluctance to welcome balletic episodes, and, on the other hand, the creative approaches of individual composers; for example, Marchetti’s style was always felt to be intimate rather than monumental.

In general, application of the adjective ‘grand’ to post-Verdian opera by both public and composers (even if it never appears in the scores) requires a variety of elements variously mixed together. (Fuller details of works mentioned below may be found in Table 19.1.) First there was a structure on a substantial scale, usually in four acts. Exceptions are Boito’s *Mefistofele* in its 1868 version (prologue and five acts) as well as its 1875 version (prologue, four acts and epilogue); and Franchetti’s *Cristoforo Colombo* (four acts and an epilogue). Secondly there were large choral and ensemble scenes with at least one musically elaborate pezzo concertato, usually positioned in Act III but occasionally found in Act II (as in Gomes’s *Il Guarany*, 1870). Thirdly there was a subject based on history, but also, as we have seen, possibly derived from legend or fantasy. There would be elaborate scenery and ‘characteristic’ pieces. The inclusion and design of divertissements was variable: for example a short divertissement occurs in *Ruy Blas*, Act III, whereas lengthy ones are found in *Il Lituan*, *La Gioconda*, *Il figliuol prodigo* and *Il Guarany*. For purely orchestral dances, we have the ‘Bacchanal’ in Maria vocal type of divertissement is represented by the ‘Ballabile delle Almee’ in *Il figliuol prodigo*, Act II. Such episodes may be either dramatically related to the action or (as in the majority of cases) purely ornamental; or else completely absent (*Don Giovanni d’Austria, Marion Delorme*).

But combinations of different operatic types (e.g., opera-ballo, verismo and symbolist opera) are frequently found in Italian opera and often occur out of apparent chronological order. Yet even when novelty was introduced there was a structured adherence to tradition. Thus if opera-ballo came to an end at the close of the nineteenth century, this does not mean that some of its components were not present in opera after 1900. This is particularly the case in those verismo operas based on historical subjects, with their corresponding emphasis on more flexible vocal styles, leading towards the abandonment of closed forms. In turn, verismo elements were anticipated in earlier grand operas, particularly those containing exaggerated, immoderate or otherwise eccentric characters or gestures. Although the device was
not new, the number of suicides on stage increases: Fosca poisons herself, following in the footsteps of Selika in Meyerbeer’s L’Africaine; Corrado in I Lituani drinks a ‘poisonous substance’; Gioconda and Dejanice stab themselves to death. We also find fits of violence: in Fosca, Act III scene 4, ‘pirates brutally drag Delia across the rocks, leaving her alone and bewildered’; Maria Tudor, called ‘Bloody Mary’, ‘grabs her rival by the arm’ and ‘drags her by force’, as in the original play by Victor Hugo (1833). In La Gioconda, Act IV, Barnaba spies on Gioconda while she prays, and later, when she feigns self-adornment for his benefit, he reveals (in an aside) his craving lust. The increasing emphasis on violence, cruelty and morbid extremities—masochistic, sadistic and voyeuristic—shifts the concept of ‘shock’ typical of grand opera from external action (as in the French model) to the inner psyche. It also disrupts that process of audience-identification with the character on stage that was the aesthetic basis of early nineteenth-century opera.

Such characters and actions are far removed from the tragic dimensions of traditional opera with its moral code based on the archaic values of father, family and religion. They display states of emotional excitement and pathological sensuality also found in late nineteenth-century ‘positivist’ studies on the human psyche and on behaviour. Stereotypes of treacherous, dissolute individuals are to be found in certain baritone characters who do not just limit themselves to the pursuit of evil, but threaten the female protagonist by means of devious manoeuvres. Examples include the pirate Cambro in Fosca, Philip II of Spain in Don Giovanni d’Austria, the Assyrian adventurer Amenofi in Il figliuol prodigo, and the satanic Barnaba who, in the grand guignolesque finale of La Gioconda, rages at the already dead protagonist, shouting in her ear that he has drowned her mother. Not surprisingly, neither Scribe’s libretto Le Fils prodigue (see Chapter 10) nor Victor Hugo’s play Angelo, tyran de Padoue, from which these two libretti are derived, contains any trace of such actions. Fosca, Gioconda and Dejanice are femmes fatales and sinners after the style of the maudite literature favoured by the Scapigliatura, the bohemian circle of writers (including Boito) and other artists active in Milan in the 1860s and 1870s, who ‘exhibited a taste for morbid and macabre subjects’. Undecided whether (or how) they should kill their rivals, or else themselves as an act of sacrifice for their beloveds, they reveal more complex psychological states and neuroses than were known to the monolithic heroines of earlier opera. The excesses of the text are rarely matched in the music, though exceptions do occur. It would be left to verismo to exploit violent, exaggerated musical gestures, such as the stabbing opening bars of the aria ‘Suicidio’ in La Gioconda, Act IV, with anacrases and a fortissimo descending octave leap, sustained by hammerblows on strings and horns over a chord of F# minor. Verismo
Table 19.2 Sources of Italian operas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opera</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Il Guarany (1870)</td>
<td>José Martiniano de Alencar, O Guarani (1857)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Lituani (1874)</td>
<td>Adam Bernard Mickiewicz, Konrad Wallenrod (1827)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvator Rosa (1874)</td>
<td>Eugène de Mirecourt, Masaniello (1851)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Gioconda (1876)</td>
<td>Victor Hugo, Angélo, tyran de Padoue (1835)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maria Tudor (1879)</td>
<td>Hugo, Marie Tudor (1833)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il figliuol prodigo (1880)</td>
<td>Eugène Scribe, L'Enfant prodigue (1850)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le villi (1884)</td>
<td>Alphonse Karr, Les Willis (1852)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marion Delorme (1885)</td>
<td>Hugo, Marion Delorme (1831)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lo schiavo (1889)</td>
<td>Alfredo d'Escagnolle de Taunay, Scenas de viagem (1868) and La Retraite de Laguna (1871)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

would also reintroduce certain theatrical effects used by its predecessors, as in the ‘quasi parlato’ phrase ‘Enrico mi fai ribrezzo!’ uttered by Margherita before her death in the third act of Mefistofele, or the ‘suppressed shout of anger’ of Barnaba in the final moments of La Gioconda.

Grand opera continued in Italy along three different paths. The first comprised works by French composers performed in Italian theatres and circulated in Italian versions by the two principal music publishers. Lucca published Roberto il diavolo, Gli Ugonotti and L'Africana by Meyerbeer, L'ebrea (La Juive) by Halévy and Faust by Gounod, while Ricordi published La muta di Portici by Auber and Il profeta by Meyerbeer. The second group comprised works by Italian composers initially staged abroad, usually in Paris, and revived for the Italian stage in reworked forms. These include Rossini’s Mosè and Guglielmo Tell (originally Moïse et Pharaon and Guillaume Tell); Donizetti’s La Favorita, Poliuto and Don Sebastiano (originally written for St Petersburg), I vespri siciliani and Don Carlos (written for Paris), and Aida (originally for Cairo). In the third group were works belonging to the genre of opera-ballo by Italian composers originally intended for the Italian stages, of which the best known were shown earlier in Table 19.1. We can see their predominantly non-Italian literary origins from the selection in Table 19.2.

All the Italian works in Table 19.2 were inspired by the Paris operas of Meyerbeer and others, which were still performed in the early twentieth century. But they were not themselves performed at the Paris Opéra, with one exception, Mefistofele in 1912. These works enjoyed an immense success in their time in Italy, for all that they are little known today. They appeared late compared with their French counterparts, and coincided with the strong French spirit of nationalism emerging after 1870, which contrasted with the cosmopolitanism that had predominated within that country until the middle of the nineteenth century.
Performance history

1840 saw the first appearance in Italy of grand opera, with Meyerbeer’s *Robert le Diable*. Between then and the end of the century, when the taste for the genre died out, its fortunes involved a shift away from an elitist public towards the social pretensions of the post-unification middle classes. The bourgeoisie sought social advancement by way of cultural discourse and exchange, and also by looking beyond their own geographical boundaries. The genre achieved success not only with the public at large, but also with musicians, some of whom were committed followers of Meyerbeer (though not all admitted it), including Verdi, Boito, Ponchielli and Gomes. Performed in Italian, as was the practice at the time, Meyerbeer’s grand operas became the first non-Italian genre ever to establish itself fully in the repertory of Italian theatres, precisely at the time (during the 1850s) when one could start to speak of a regular operatic repertory. (Almost no Italian opera before *La sonnambula* and *Norma* (both 1831) had constituted any sort of ‘repertory’.)

Grand opera in Italy was praised on account of its masterly fusion of the historical and the dramatic, the proper balance between unity and variety, and the universality of its message: in 1864 the writer Filippi would refer to Meyerbeer’s works as ‘an encyclopaedia of euphony’.12 They sparked off debates centred on the categories and attributes of Romantic music, whether the ‘philosophical’, the supernatural, the ‘fantastic’ or the colouristic, that had begun with the Italian premieres of Rossini’s *Guglielmo Tell* in Lucca and Florence (1831), and of Auber’s *La muta di Portici* in Trieste (1832).

Florence in fact staged the Italian premières of three Meyerbeer grand operas: *Roberto il diavolo* on 26 December 1840, *Gli Ugonotti* (but with the title *Gli Anglicani*) on 26 December 1841, and *II profeta* on 26 December 1852. In the course of the 1850s interest in the genre spread through other cities. For example, *L’Ebrea* (*La Juive*) by Halévy was performed at the Teatro Carlo Felice in Genoa in 1858; Gounod’s *Faust* was given at La Scala, Milan in 1862; Meyerbeer’s *L’Africana* was staged at the Teatro Comunale in Bologna in 1865; and Massenet’s *Re di Lahore*, described on the bill-boards as an ‘opera-ballo’ and partially adapted to Italian taste by the composer himself, was staged at the Teatro Regio, Turin, in 1878. The Italian peninsula, set apart from Europe by both cultural and geographical differences, also revealed an internal diversity as regards musical reception, with north-central Italy more sensitive to northern European innovations – grand opera included – and south-central Italy (from Rome downward) being slower to follow the trend. In the twenty years between 1860 and 1879 the grand operas of Meyerbeer prompted rave responses in the chief theatres of northern Italy (thirty-one different productions, not counting revivals), while the interest demonstrated in the south was less developed.13
Together with a lack of uniform reception that is attributable to geographical factors, any history of opera-ballo must take into account certain norms in regard to performance practices in Italy. Being less aware of the incorporation of dance into traditional operatic forms, and being more accustomed to the provision of a dance at the conclusion of an opera, the Italian approach was casual. It made no attempt to preserve the unity of form present in some works. In the performance history of grand opera (which for the most part has yet to be written), several constant factors emerge. If a work’s first performance was more or less faithful to its original design, subsequent performances often experienced alterations. Complete acts (along with their divertissements) were often dropped in favour of dances in a different style or with different dramatic content, patched together by musicians who specialised in choreography. Arbitrary approaches, wholly detrimental to the original dances, were often adapted in the period 1850–60 and did not completely disappear in succeeding decades. Indeed, the alterations characteristic of provincial theatres (those without a corps de ballet or a competent choreographer) also became evident in some leading houses. In the 1870 and 1890 seasons at the Fenice in Venice, isolated acts of Roberto il diavolo were presented along with the ballet Brahma (music by Costantino Dall’Argine, choreography by Ippolito Monplaisir). In 1871, entire acts of both Gli Ugonotti by Meyerbeer and Ruy Blas by Marchetti were lost to the ballet La Camargo (again with Dall’Argine’s music and Monplaisir’s choreography). In 1875, only the first three acts of Gomes’s Il Guarany were performed, so as to make room for the ballet Satanella (music by the ballet composers F. L. Hertel and Cesare Pugni, choreography by Paul Taglioni adapted by José Mendez). In that same Venetian season, theatre directors and operatic composers were well aware of the Italian public’s scant interest in the divertissements of opera-ballo, which had become obligatory extras. Their presence gave rise to at least two celebrated examples, the triumphal ballet in Aida, Act II scene 2, and the ‘Dance of the Hours’ in La Gioconda, Act III scene 6. Yet there was no compunction in dropping them if necessary. As early as the second La Scala performance of La Gioconda, Ponchielli saw several of his ballet movements cut out; and aware of the choreographical difficulties involved in his most monumental work, Il figliuol prodigo, he retained the second-act dances but made those in the third act optional and replaceable by a chorus.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the experience of hearing grand opera coincided with a maturing of Italian musical taste and a growing interest in symphonic and chamber music. During the 1860s the Società del Quartetto and the first symphony orchestras were formed. Within theatres, performance standards increased in terms of both music and staging. The
modern figure of the conductor was established in this period, bringing together the previously separate roles of musical director and concert-master, and this produced great advantages with regard to coherence and teamwork. Similarly, the duties of the choreographer ‘for the dance music’ (‘per i ballabili’) of an opera became separated from those of the choreographer ‘for the ballets’ (‘per i balli’). The figure of the ‘stage director’ emerged, similar to today’s régisseur, with responsibility for the visual aspects of the performance, the organisation of crowd scenes, and so on.17

The workings of the theatre industry during this period contributed to the demise of the impresario in favour of the economically powerful figure of the publisher, whose position was consolidated by a new law concerning authors’ rights promulgated on 25 June 1865.18 The opera composer of the late nineteenth century was influenced by market forces, which led him to write works that would have public appeal. If an opera proved unsuccessful, then its most contentious passages were rewritten in accordance with the advice of the critics, and in the light of its reception in the theatre. For example, as already noted, the too forward-looking first version of Mefistofele was an utter failure in 1868; its morality was considered decadent,19 and its score was felt to be characterised by anti-vocal melodic complexity and an over-enthusiasm for ‘symphonic’ effects. Therefore the composer-librettist provided a more acceptable second version in 1875, whose central focus on the love elements restored the themes and styles more typical of Romantic opera (e.g., Faust was cast as a tenor, not a baritone as in 1868). Ponchielli rewrote I Lituani twice (Milan, 1874 and 1875), and after the Milanese premiere of La Gioconda in 1876, he altered that opera no fewer than four times (Venice, 1876; Rome, 1877; Genoa, 1879; Milan, 1880). The Brazilian vatoire, produced two separate vocal-score editions of Fosca (Milan, 1873 and 1878) and considered altering the unsuccessful Maria Tudor (Milan, 1879) through the addition of cabalettas.20

Stylistic aspects

Those aspects of opera-ballo which might have met with the approval of a more informed public can be broken down into seven categories. The first was effective orchestration. This might involve using solo instruments, for example the bassoon in the Prelude to Act IV of Ruy Blas, the viola in the Prelude to Act IV of Fosca, or the oboe in the overture to Lo schiavo. But it could extend to symphonic music sometimes provided as an introduction, such as the two-part overture to I Lituani which has an Allegro con fuoco in sonata form, or else to descriptive character-pieces. For the latter,
examples include the ‘intermezzi’ which were normally situated towards the opening of the penultimate act of a five-act work: there was the ‘Pastorale’ in *Il figliuol prodigo*, in F major, 6\(^8\), inspired by the land of Judea, and the local colour of *Lo schiavo*, Act IV scene 4, representing a Brazilian dawn complete with bird-songs, blazes of trumpets and cannon-shots, anticipating the triumphant ‘Inno del sole’ (Hymn to the sun) in Mascagni’s *Iris* (1898).

Second was the use of more free-flowing, discursive musical forms avoiding cadential articulations in favour of the more active conversational style with which Verdi had already experimented. Third was the use of declamation, which opens up and expands musical numbers. One example is the ‘tumult’ scene in *La Gioconda* Act I, in which the sound-level increases as the characters arrive on stage and the musical tempo accelerates; this is almost completely built up in ‘parlante’ (spoken) style, with the orchestra providing thematic support for the vocal line. 22 The fourth element was harmonic subtlety originating in more frequent chromatic modulations and enharmonic passages. A case in point is the Act I duet for Cristopher Columbus and Queen Isabella in Franchetti’s *Cristoforo Colombo*, based on tonal ambiguity between the use of sharp keys in the orchestra and flat ones in the voices. Fifth was the combination of high and low styles (polystylism).

Sixth in our list of stylistic aspects of *opera-ballo* was the structural unity obtained by using recurring motifs. Of this the most extensive example, deriving from its careful dramatic design, is to be found in *Mefistofele*. The luminous tonality of E major for the chorus of Celestial Hosts in the prologue recurs at two crucial points in the drama, at the deaths of Margherita and of Faust, respectively at the centre and at the conclusion of the opera.

Wagnerian manner, but originated instead in the graphic or pictorial techniques of French opera. Recurring motifs might symbolise, pre-announce or recall one or more characters, objects, feelings or events. Examples of the first are the rhythmically threatening motif of Barnaba in *La Gioconda*, and the rugged, diatonic theme of the pirates heard in the Prelude to *Fosca*. As for objects, one could mention the rosary of La Cieca in *La Gioconda*. Musical motifs of feeling were most commonly associated with ‘love’, as ‘L’amor come il fulgor del creato’ (‘I love him as the splendour of all Creation’) in *La Gioconda*, Act II scene 7 and Act III scene 2, or as in ‘O dolce voluptà’ (‘Oh sweet voluptuousness’) in *Ruy Blas*, Act III. And as for motifs representing events, we have the death of the tenor hero as anticipated in the Andante, E major, 3\(^4\) section of the overture to *I Lituani*.

*Opera-ballo*, finally, saw the incorporation of self-contained numbers within increasingly lengthy scenes. Publishers continued to print the latter separately, simply for commercial reasons, compensating for the
conventional final cadence by means of imaginative titles such as ‘Baptism Scene’ (Scena del Battesimo) (*Il Guarany*), ‘Chorus of Accusation’ (Invettiva-Coro) (*Fosca*), ‘Ironic Short Scene’ (Scenetta dell’ironia) (*Maria Tudor*), ‘Grand Gambling Scene’ (Gran scena del giuoco) or ‘Snakecharmer’s Scene’ (Scena dell’ammaliatore di serpenti) (*Il figliuol prodigo*).

Cultured listeners doubtless appreciated more experimental aspects as well, such as the stereophonic effects of the ‘Prologue in Heaven’ in *Mefistofele*, whose fanfares and choruses emanate from different theatrical spaces, creating a sonic representation of the angelic hierarchy; or the chorus of soldiers and women whose voices fade into a pianissimo at the conclusion of a fierce battle near the start of Act III of *I Lituani*. The less informed public, however, might have concentrated on the simpler, more easily remembered elements. In the second half of the nineteenth century the latter type of public attended the theatre frequently, partly as a result of various practical policies: price controls promoted by theatre managers and local councils; enlargement of auditoria (in the principal theatres the last row of boxes was dismantled in order to make way for the more popular ‘gallery’); and building of multifunctional and reasonably priced theatres. The middle- and lower-middle-class public looked for a more immediate type of involvement.

Six main features might particularly have attracted them. First was the suppleness of the melodic line, achieved by regular, symmetrical phrase-structures. This was a dominant feature of the opera-ballo, notwithstanding the orchestral enrichments introduced by some composers. Second were scenic effects, such as the burning and sinking of the ship Hecate in *La Gioconda*, Act II, or the exploding of the castle and the church at the end of *Il Guarany* and *Salvator Rosa*, both of which recall the finale of *Le Prophète*. Third were the *coup de théâtre*: for example, in the third act of *La Gioconda*, during festive celebrations in a hall in the Ca’ d’Oro, Alvise shows his guests the lifeless body of his wife Laura, laid out on a catafalque. Fourth was highly dramatic expression, projected over the footlights in powerful declamation, for example in monologues where singers were able to model their interpretation on the acting styles of contemporary spoken theatre. Fifth was the abundant presence of ‘characteristic pieces’ and ‘stage music’, identifiable by their clearly historical or geographical ‘colouring’, which aided the process of popular acculturation and is evident in so many operas of post-unification Italy. And sixth was the presence of lively dance rhythms (the waltz, galop, or mazurka) even outside those parts of the score specifically intended for choreography; such music diverted listeners with echoes of operetta and ‘light’ or popular music. We see an abundance of waltzes in Puccini’s *Le villi*, and in the ‘Saturnal’ of *Il figliuol prodigo* the Allegro is a galop in $\frac{2}{4}$, followed by a waltz marked Molto moderato. The ‘Passo
delle freccie’ (Dance of the Arrows) of *Il Guarany* contains an Allegretto in the form of a triple-time mazurka, while the canzonetta ‘Mia piccirella’ from *Salvator Rosa* could be mistaken for a Neapolitan street-song, and the recurring theme from *Ruy Blas*, ‘O dolce volutta’, appears to be a homage to the waltz-king Johann Strauss.25

**Vocal forms**

Wavering between respect for tradition and desire for innovation, the Italian composers of grand opera modified past forms, adopting a number of solutions already put forward by Verdi to place the vocal numbers within increasingly large-scale scenes. Among the ensembles, great importance was accorded to the multi-sectional central finale, deploying soloists, supporting singers and chorus, which remained the point of greatest musical and scenic impact: witness the grand scale and variety of effects in the finales of *Il Guarany* (Act II), *Maria Tudor* (Act III), *I Lituani* (Act II), *La Gioconda* (Act III) and *Il figliuol prodigo* (Act III). In his finales Ponchielli was the inventor of a highly effective idea: the repetition of a theme already sung by the tenor or soprano in the cantabile section, but now with full orchestra, *fortissimo*, at the end of the whole ensemble. Made popular in *La Gioconda*, this peroration effect, calculated more for musical reasons than for dramatic ones, may well have influenced a long line of opera composers of the ‘Giovane scuola’ (Young School): Mascagni in *Cavalleria rusticana*, Leoncavallo in *I pagliacci*, Puccini in *Le villi*, *Edgar, Manon Lescaut, La bohème*, *Tosca, Madama Butterfly* and *Turandot*, and Cilea in *Adriana Lecouvreur*.

the quartets in *Ruy Blas*, Act I, *Fosca*, Act IV, *Salvator Rosa*, Act IV and *Don Giovanni d’Austria*, Act II, and the quintet in *Ruy Blas*, Act II). However, the structure of duets and trios became more varied. In order to conform and adapt to the dramatic content, they sometimes broke off midway, as with the duet between Pery and Gonzales in *Il Guarany*, Act II or that between Salvatore and Masaniello in *Salvator Rosa*, Act III. Sometimes they continued without a pause into the contrasting *tempo d’attacco* of the following scene, as when the tense duet between Laura and Alvise passes through a short recitative into the joyful ‘Serenata’ in *La Gioconda*, Act III. Other duets transformed the usual cantabile section into a *parlante* style, entrusting the thematic passages to the orchestra. This occurs in the Andante cantabile, G major,4 ‘Contro il poter sovrano’, during the ‘Dialogo’ in *Salvator Rosa*, Act I scene 8. Sometimes they consisted of only two sections, *tempo d’attacco*—cantabile, or cantabile—cabaletta; or included cabalettas that incorporated the chorus. Some repeated the cabaleta at the expense of the cantabile
(which was omitted), as in the duet ‘O grido di quest’ anima’ between Enzo and Barnaba in *La Gioconda*, Act I.

Cabalettas, if used, also reveal some innovative ways of avoiding outworn conventions, even if they remain melodically expansive moments in which the voices move in thirds, sixths or octaves. The final section of the piece was rarely repeated; two exceptions to this are (once again) ‘O grido di quest’ anima’, and the duet ‘L’accento dell’amor’ between Isabella and Salvatore in Act II of *Salvator Rosa*. Final sections did not even necessarily retain the fast tempo of the traditional cabaletta: in the duet ‘Lontano, lontano, lontano’ in Act III of *Mefistofele* the tempo remains Adagio, while in the Act II duet of *La Gioconda*, ‘Laggiù nelle nebbie remote’ (which is modelled on the aforementioned piece), we have a lulling Andante in $\frac{9}{8}$ time.

For the most part, vocal solos conformed either to the shorter structure of the instrumental *Lied* form, ABA$^1$, or to that of the ballad, popular song or *romance* in strophic form. An example of ABA$^1$ form can be seen in *Mefistofele*, Act I: Faust’s ‘Larghetto’ ‘Dai campi, dai prati’ in F major, $3^4$, with the middle section in the relative minor followed by a shortened reprise. (Ex. 19.1) Other solos follow some kind of continuous form. Great success was enjoyed by the bipartite structure initiated by Verdi, in which the first, agitated section in a minor key was followed by a more expansive second part in the tonic key or the relative major. Such examples include ‘E da tre mesi io soffro’ from *I Lituani*, Act III, ‘Suicidio’ from *La Gioconda*, Act IV, and ‘Del corteo funeral’ from *Il figliuol prodigo*, Act III.

**Dramatic elements**

In its dramatic use of the orchestra, grand opera continued to employ the gestural formulas of early nineteenth-century opera which were well known to the Italian public – tremolos and diminished sevenths to convey fear, horror, shock; high violins or the dotted rhythms of the funeral march for either a sublime or a mundane death; and agitated staccato figures to indicate conspiracies or uprisings. However, the range of dynamic and expressive instructions became more varied and exhilarating, seen for example in *I Lituani*: ‘allargando’, ‘animando il tempo’, ‘cantando con espressione’, ‘affrettando con calore’, ‘stringendo’, ‘incalzando’, ‘con anima’, and so on.

The subjects dramatised in *opera-ballo*, in keeping with those of the early nineteenth century, were influenced both by the literature of northern European Romanticism (Scott, Schiller, Byron, Hugo) and by its Italian counterpart (Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi (1804–73), Tommaso Grossi (1790–1853) and Defendente Sacchi (1796–1840)). The same subjects were also given visual expression by a school of painters whose standard-bearer
Example 19.1 Boito, *Mefistofele*, Act I: ‘Dai campi, dai prati’: ‘I return from the fields, from the meadows flooded by night, and from quiet paths: I am filled with deep calm, and sacred mystery.’
Italian opera

was Francesco Hayez (1791–1882). Historical subjects were preferred, albeit deviating from history by reason of the Romantic accretions that were usually found in such librettos. As the nationalistic themes dear to the Risorgimento – crusades, foreign invasions of Italy – disappeared, so too did the music soften its patriotic fervour. Gomes’s *Salvator Rosa* is to some extent an exception to this, being based on an episode in the life of the eponymous painter who joins his friend Masaniello in the Neapolitan insurrection against the Spanish régime. (See Chapter 9 for Auber’s treatment of this historical event.) Here the martial overtones of the duet in Act I scene 4 and the fervour of the second-act ‘March and Chorus’ (supplemented by a stage band) strongly recall the politics of the 1848 Revolution. Nevertheless, post-Verdian Italian opera differs from French grand opera in that the latter is richer in socio-political implications, and also in religious conflicts which impinge upon individual faith, as well as in the juxtaposition of public and private. Italian works, on the other hand, prefer to utilise history as a neutral, interchangeable back-drop. History is useful only to fuel the passions of the love-triangle, to create the space necessary for the inclusion of vigorous choruses and ensembles (including parades, marches, processions, conspiracies and uprisings) and to allow for the introduction of lavish scenery and costumes.

Ricordi published the *disposizioni sceniche* (staging-manuals) for *I Lituani, Salvator Rosa, Mefistofele, La Gioconda* and *Cristoforo Colombo*, and Lucca issued a similar publication for *Il Guarany*, furnished with advice to producers by Gomes himself. These were based on the French *livrets de mise-en-scène*, described earlier in Chapter 4. It had been very different in 1836, when Giuseppe Mazzini was deploring the currently limited and as a useful means of providing individuality and allowing music to communicate on the level of truth and social purpose. But *opera-ballo* abounds with generic ‘characteristic’ pieces on the French model. Amongst these we find a ‘Madrigal’, an unaccompanied chorus in the second act of *Maria Tudor* sung by singers from Avignon; a ‘Brindisi’ in *I Lituani* and another in *Il figliuol prodigo*, each in Act II, conceived in the traditional style of the drinking-song; and a ‘Ballata’ (ballad) for mezzo-soprano in the second act of *Ruy Blas*, set in the form of a strophic aria with a Spanish flavour in A minor/major, reminiscent of Eboli’s ‘Chanson du voile’ (Veil Song) in Verdi’s *Don Carlos*. The Venetian lagoon which provides the setting for *La Gioconda* is musically painted with the colours of its second-act ‘Marinaresca e Barcarola’ (Sailors’ Song and Barcarolle), while the second-act tarantella of *Salvator Rosa* signifies Naples. This brilliantly rhythmic dance is also found in *La Muette de Portici* by Auber (set – not by chance – in the same city, in the same year, 1647) as well as in Verdi’s *Les Vêpres siciliennes.*
Using a coloratura soprano or mezzo-soprano for ‘page’ roles en travesti, a tradition so successfully continued by Verdi with the part of Oscar in *Un ballo in maschera* (1859), goes back to French grand opera, as in the role of Jemmy in Rossini’s *Guillaume Tell*, or Urbain in Meyerbeer’s *Les Huguenots*. Such light, high roles, focusing on virtuoso embellishment, compensated for the general lack of vocal virtuosity in the second half of the nineteenth century. Thus they lighten the tone of otherwise ponderous works. For example, lively, festive elements are present in Gennariello’s ‘Canzonetta’ ‘Mia piccirella’ in the first act of *Salvator Rosa*: because of its mandoline accompaniment (actually played on a harp) it is referred to in Act IV as a ‘Serenata’. The novice monk Pablo’s ‘Ballata’ in Marchetti’s *Don Giovanni d’Austria* and the narrative ‘Canzone’ for Lelio in the third act of Ponchielli’s *Marion Delorme* are similar responses to this tradition.

Following the success of Meyerbeer’s *L’Africaine* as *L’Africana* in Bologna in 1865, and also that of *Aida*, exoticism once again became fashionable. Recent colonial exploits provided interesting and unusual settings: in 1885 Italy had begun its own ‘dash for Africa’. Such settings sometimes even included pagan ceremonies and blood-curdling rituals, such as the cannibalism of the Indian tribe Aimoré in *Il Guarany*, Act III scene 3, or the torture of an old Indian by Spanish soldiers in *Cristoforo Colombo*, Act III scene 1. But in general the subject matter was faithful neither to history nor to the principle of verisimilitude. As Catalani confessed to his librettist Ghislanzoni, in a judgement with which many other composers would have concurred, his priority with regard to exotic settings was emotional expression: ‘in my opinion all countries are good’, wrote Catalani, ‘it isn’t that I don’t give importance to local colour: on the contrary. But I put it in second place.’

Less than on authentic folklore sources, then, musical exoticism was based on pictorial musical ingredients tinged with generalised ‘modal’ or ‘Iberian’ colours, using normal generic forms. Ponchielli portrays the land of Judea in *Il figliuol prodigo* by a pentatonic motif above a bare fifth pedal, while the adventuress Nefte strikes up a ‘Ballata’ in the first act which sounds more Spanish than Assyrian. The principal musical motif of *Il Guarany* has a modal flavour which can be heard at the opening of the ‘Grand March and Bacchanal of the Indians’ (‘Gran Marcia–Baccanale indiano’: see Ex. 19.2) and in the ‘Invocation of the Aimoré’ (‘Invocazione degli Aimoré’), both in Act III. This opera, set in Brazil in 1560, has for its subject the love of a white woman for the noble savage Pery, and is also based on the conflict between rival ethnic groups, depicted in a manichean fashion. But these groups each also contain their opposites: the Indian tribes count among their number the civilised Guarany people plus the primitive Aimoré, while the Europeans comprise both good Portuguese and evil Spanish mercenaries.
Exotic or archaic instruments were in general rarely used – they would become more common in the ‘aesthetic’ theatre of the early twentieth century – but one should note the eccentric appearance of *inubie* and *maracá*; these bellicose instruments from South America occur in both operas by Gomes on Brazilian subjects, *Il Guarany* and *Lo schiavo*.

The evocative power of local colour is better demonstrated in the primarily decorative divertissements in *opera-ballo*, where one is able to distinguish four categories of dance. The first is formed of those stylised dances referring to specific national types. Examples of this are the ‘Chorea’ (a Greek dance) in *Mefistofele*, Act IV; the ‘Dance of the Greek Slaves’ and the ‘Dance of the Andalusian Slaves’ in the second act of *I Lituani*; and the aforementioned tarantella in *Salvator Rosa*. The second category comprises bacchanales or March and Bacchanal of the Indians’ in *Il Guarany*, the Bacchanal in *Maria Tudor*, and the ‘Sacred Orgy’ and *Saturnale* in *Il figliuol prodigo*, all found in the third act of their respective operas. The next group comprises those dances associated with exotic rituals: examples are the ‘Wild Dance’ (‘Passo selvaggio’) and ‘Dance of the arrows’ (‘Passo delle frecce’) in the third act of *Il Guarany*. Lastly, one can find dances of allegorical character, referring to the time of day, as in the third-act ‘Dance of the Hours’ in *La Gioconda*, or to the seasons, for example ‘The Four Seasons’ in Verdi’s *I vespri siciliani*.

In the ballets, music, choreography, lighting, scenery and costumes all vie to contribute to the effect, and the presence of ballerinas could create an extra element of visual seduction. Although the dances in *Il Guarany* left the public cold at the première (they were judged ‘cacophonous’, partly as a result of poor performance), choreographic episodes devised by Angelo Zanardini met with great – and above all erotic – enthusiasm on the part of the audience. These included the ‘Ballabile dell’etère’, or dance of the
courtesans, in the third act of Catalani’s *Dejanice*, where ‘a group of very beautiful young girls shrouded in multi-coloured floating veils enters and presents the most voluptuous dancing’, after which ‘the courtesans abandon themselves to a frenetic dance’. The same librettist placed dances in the Temple of Ilia in Ponchielli’s *Il figliuol prodigo* in Act III: ‘Priests and priestesses, Assyrian youths and courtesans linger on the side steps. Female dancers in voluptuous attitudes and poses surround them.’ These were derived, if in much simplified fashion, from the more daring scenes in *L’Enfant prodigue* written by Scribe for Auber, which were considered permissive even by the French.35

No works are based on classical mythology, the mainstay of opera of preceding centuries. Instead, the *opera-ballo* made use of legendary and fantastic elements alongside historical themes: they were frequently presented in terms of ambivalent dualities (human/divine, angelic/diabolical) which can easily be identified with the Decadent movement. To this group of operas belong Boito’s ‘operatic legend’ *Mefistofele* (derived from Goethe’s *Faust* as well as from other sources), Catalani’s ‘fantastic opera’ *Elda* (1880) set ‘on the banks of the Rhine, about the year 1300’, whose protagonist is the Loreley (celebrated by Heine, amongst others), and Puccini’s *Le villi* (1884), on the theme of the spirits of betrayed girls (i.e. the Wilis, popular with the Romantics and the Scapigliati). Earlier, in 1874, Ghislanzoni and Ponchielli had also made use of this theme, including an artificial ‘Chorus of Wilis’ in the finale of *I Lituani*.

The chronological spread of subjects covered in the *opera-ballo* was as extensive as its geographical one. It spanned the period from ancient biblical times to the seventeenth century. *Il figliuol prodigo* re-creates the biblical

*Dejanice* is set in Syracuse ‘Four hundred years before the Christian Era’; *I Lituani* is located in the early Middle Ages in Germany; *Fosca’s* setting alternates between Venice and the Pirate Haven at Pirano (Istria) in 944; *Gustavo Wasa* takes place in Stockholm in the first half of the sixteenth century; in *Maria Tudor* the heroine lives out her unhappy love for her favourite Fabiani in the London of 1554; both *Don Giovanni d’Austria* and *Ruy Blas* are set in Spain (respectively in 1557 and 1698); *La Gioconda* is set in seventeenth-century Venice; and in *Marion Delorme* the eponymous heroine resides in the France of 1638.

**Librettos and poetry**

The librettists specialising in grand opera (see Table 19.1 above) counted amongst their ranks three of the poets most in demand amongst the
Scapigliati in Milan: Arrigo Boito (whose La Gioconda was written under the pseudonym Tobia Gorrio), Antonio Ghislanzoni and Emilio Praga.\textsuperscript{36} Angelo Zanardini was in addition a well-known translator of foreign operas (Wagner’s Ring, Bizet’s Carmen, Massenet’s Le Roi de Lahore and Herodiade, Saint-Saëns’ Samson et Dalila). Carlo D’Ormeville was a versatile individual who combined the roles of dramatist, stage manager and theatrical agent. Their verses in some cases tend to resemble prose, in a manner quite unlike that of earlier librettos. They were inclined to juxtapose different metres in the same piece (i.e. polymetre), which was also a characteristic of the first Italian verse translations of the grand operas of Meyerbeer.\textsuperscript{37} All this was particularly exceptional in a context where, traditionally, there had always been a close matching between poetic and musical structures, with the latter determined by the former.

Symptomatic of all this was a tendency towards variety in operatic monologues, forcing composers to break away from standard forms. Mefistofele’s first-act aria in F minor, ‘Son lo spirito’, is given a two-part musical structure by Boito, with three sub-sections to each part (ABC/A’B’C’). But in the libretto this same monologue is made up of three sections, as shown below: first a quatrains of eight-syllable lines (ottonari piani and tronchi\textsuperscript{38}), then a quatrains of ottonari plus a four-syllable line, and lastly a sequence of mixed-length lines (piani and sdruccioli\textsuperscript{39}) ending with an odd six-syllable line. The music ignores the metre in order to create greater fluidity, slowing down the pace and also breaking the link between poetic and musical structure. Not for nothing does the end of the music’s A section fail to coincide with the first quatrains of text, instead ending on the antepenultimate syllable of line 5:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(A) Sono lo spirito che nega} & \text{sempre, tutto, l’astro, il fior.} \\
& \text{Il mio ghigno e la mia bega} \\
& \text{turbam gli ozi al Creator.} \\
& \text{Voglio il Nulla e del Cre-(B) ato} \\
& \text{la ruina universal.} \\
& \text{E’atmosfera mia vital} \\
& \text{cio che chiamasi peccato, } \\
& \text{Morte e Mal!} \\
\text{(C) Rido e avvento – questa sillaba:} & \text{‘No’.} \\
& \text{Strugo, tento,} \\
& \text{ruggo, sibilo,} \\
& \text{‘No’.} \\
& \text{Mordo, invischio,} \\
& \text{fischio! fischio! fischio!}
\end{align*}
\]

This monologue has no precedent in the poetics of the earlier nineteenth-century libretto, and its contrivances (internal rhymes, alliteration, etc.) prefigure many passages in the same author’s later Falstaff in 1893. Boito also exploits the sonic and gestural implications of the whistle (fischio),
which are explicit in the stage direction at the end of the aria: ‘[Mefistofele] whistles forcefully, with his fingers between his lips’. Finally, there is the punning use of the tritone (the old diabolus in musica), an omnipresent motto in the opera, which also underlines the word ‘fischio’ whenever it is pronounced by the devil.

In general, one can see that in this period composers did away with clear-cut musical forms, preferring instead to articulate more clearly dramatic situations, in ways that contrast with mid-century opera. Likewise, poetic forms tend to allow for flexibility within traditionally metrical frameworks, also adding unexpected variations. These permit the melody to break the bounds of fixed musical cadences and symmetrical phrase-structures.

The middle- and lower-middle-class public, emerging from the unification of Italy, had thus found a type of theatre perfectly suited to its social aspirations: old-fashioned, but not too much so; innovative, but not too radical.

Translated by Deirdre O'Grady and Tim Carter
Penelope Woolf

“Symbol of the Second Empire: cultural politics and the Paris Opera House”

*The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the symbolic representation, design and use of past environments, 1988*
Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography

Series editors: ALAN R. H. BAKER J. B. HARLEY DAVID WARD

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THE ICONOGRAPHY OF LANDSCAPE

Essays on the symbolic representation, design and use of past environments

Edited by

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The design on this page is taken from the Lindisfarne Gospels, a manuscript written for the abbot of Lindisfarne Abbey on the Farne Islands, off the north-east coast of England, in 716-719 by the monks of the monastery. It was written by Eadfrith, a monk who became bishop of Lindisfarne in 721 and died in 748. The manuscript was probably written in Ireland and then carried back to England. The design was devised by Henry VIII in 1534. The University has printed and published continuously since 1594.

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Preface

Except for those by Harley and Woolf, the following essays were originally presented as papers to a conference, Iconography in Historical Geography, convened by the volume editors for the Historical Geography Research Group, at the University of Nottingham in July 1984. Thanks are due to the HGRG for financial assistance with some of the illustrations in this volume.
Symbol of the Second Empire: cultural politics and the Paris Opera House

PENELOE WOOLF

The essential character of a period can generally be deciphered from its architectural façade, and in the case of the second half of the nineteenth century... that façade is certainly one of the most wretched in world history. This was the period of eclecticism, of false Baroque, false Renaissance, false Gothic. Wherever in that era Western man determined the style of life, that style tended toward bourgeois constrictions and bourgeois pomp, to a solidity that signified suffocation just as much as security. If ever poverty was masked by wealth, it was here.

Hermann Broch, *Hugo von Hofmannsthall and his time*¹

In 1874 *Le Pays* made the following statement about Charles Garnier's Opera House: 'son gai et splendide édifice répond parfaitement à l'idée qu'on se fera un jour de l'époque impériale'.² A century later, Robert Hughes, reconsidering the Beaux-Arts architectural tradition, said of the Opéra: 'no building could have been more symbolic of the Second Empire: quilted with wealth and power, lush of surface, ritually ordered'.³ Garnier's Opera House was already interpreted by contemporaries as a self-conscious expression of Second Empire Parisian society. A hundred years later, it continues to be viewed as a window on that age. Although work on the Opéra commenced in 1862, following Garnier's success in the 1861 opera house competition, the building was not inaugurated until January 1875, four and a half years after the fall of the Second Empire (Fig. 1).⁴ Despite the fact that it was constructed as an expression of his times, the Opéra was never used by Napoleon III. This has not altered the entrenched belief that Garnier’s Opéra symbolizes fully the nature of Second Empire Parisian society, that in this monument the richness and diversity of lifestyles at this time found their most perfect expression. This particular view crops up time and again not only in histories of late nineteenth-century architecture, but in guidebooks and historical accounts even today.

The belief that the Opéra mirrors Parisian life between 1852 and 1870 is but one of a number of long-established views about that important episode in the making of modern France which turn out, on closer inspection, to be generalizations and simplifications obscuring complicated historical processes. A large part of our received wisdom about the Second Empire requires more detailed investigation. Alain Plessis' judgement that modern research reveals 'a period astonishingly rich in contrasts' lends credence to Theodore Zeldin's warning that we should be wary of being misled by the hasty and often ill-informed generalizations of contemporaries.⁵ Subsequent reports of the actions of historical agents often lack the richness of the historical circumstances surrounding their agency. Zeldin makes this point about one particularly vocal social group, the intellectuals:

not only have intellectuals played a leading part in these conflicts, but they have also interpreted and labelled them in such a way as to influence all subsequent thought about them... Their generalizations became accepted truths, to the extent that they shaped events, for new controversies were fitted into categories they had devised.⁶

In this revisionist mood, I shall examine the received wisdom about the Paris Opéra, not through strands of disembodied evidence floating across the decades from 1861 to the present, but in the historical and social context in which the Opera House was built and viewed by contemporaries. I shall locate this monument in the well-known and ambitious scheme for the rebuilding of Paris devised by the emperor Napoleon III and his Prefect of the Seine, Baron Haussmann. This will lead us to examine ways in
which some common assumptions about the relationship of the Paris Opéra to its social and historical context distort the kinds of relationship that actually did then exist between Parisian society and its new Opéra.

Symbol of the Second Empire

The general background to considering the Opera House as a type of social message is the knowledge, amply documented, that the design of imperial Paris was explicitly conceived by planners, architects and engineers as a way of conveying in the built environment an image of those aspects of French society that were highly valued by these professionals and by the emperor himself. The urban landscape of Second Empire Paris was intentionally charged with carefully considered and skilfully articulated social meaning. Urban morphology was not simply the translation of architectural theory into architectural practice, rather it constituted architectural practice mediated by extra-architectural factors – the pressing demands of social and political interest. Buildings, bridges, roads and open spaces in the city conveyed a distinct sense of social order, and a confident belief in historical destiny.

It is impossible to provide a hard and fast definition of this historical sense, but it was informed by the romantic view that creative human endeavour was also a projection of historical consciousness. Variously conceived as the ‘spirit of the age’ or *Zeitgeist*, the life of the city was believed to be revealed by the historical circumstances of particular monuments. Architecture was part of the social, economic, political, religious and cultural fabric which lent to an age its defining characteristics.

Dating from about 1850, but most prominent from the last quarter of the century, the common coin of celebratory histories of Paris was the use of monuments as touchstones to immediate historical comprehension. The author of an 1867 guidebook, R. de Corval, used monuments as historical witnesses: ‘étudier les monuments d’une ville, c’est d’étudier son histoire dans ce que les siècles passés ont laissé de vivant et de palpable’. In the same year Alfred Normand, architect and director of *Le Moniteur des Architectes*, wrote a conference report in which he quoted a M. Hermant as having said: ‘l’art de bâtir est un art essentiellement appelé à manifester les idées générales, les tendances morales et intellectuelles des sociétés’. Fine buildings were like exemplary lives: a model and a microcosm of the larger social and historical context.

Just as the past informed the present through the medium of existing monuments, so the future could be informed of the present through the construction of new monuments. Furthermore, with careful planning, monuments could be used to convey certain messages to future generations. Architecture was recognized by the emperor as a way of communicating with posterity. The Second Empire would be remembered less for its politics, he prophesied, than for its architecture. But as the emperor well knew, it was not always possible or desirable to separate the two. The built environment could be crafted in such a way as to embody, and pass on, political messages.

The purveyor of the message was understood to be the architect. In Haussmann’s scheme, the architect was concerned with individual buildings, while the engineers, the members of the Grands Corps, were responsible for the coordination of city planning (Fig. 2). The relationship of the architect to the building was seen as corresponding to that between a historian and his text. Buildings were described as historical documents. In his *Traité d’architecture* (1858), François Reynaud called architects the interpreters and chroniclers of the age. The influential editor of the *Revue générale de l’architecture et des travaux publics*, César Daly, described the architect as ‘la trompette sonore dans laquelle passe le souffle puissant d’une nation; il résonne alors des vibrations qui sortent des poumons de tout un peuple’. Whether he had actively invented the role, or was speaking lines that others had written for him, the architect assumed a star role in the drama of history.

In the same way that a page in a book conveyed a sense of historical narrative, so a building captured a moment in time. Charles Lucas wrote that the history of architecture conveyed the spirit of French civilization. Monuments were also claimed to reveal the nature of the political system in which they were built. An English reviewer of Daly’s *L’Architecture privée au XIXe siècle sous Napoléon III* published in *The Builder* (1864) stated that ‘all that has been recognized as characteristic of France politically, will be found to extend to its architecture’. An anonymous article in *La Fédération artistique* (1877) made monuments the autobiography of a generation: ‘plus que l’histoire, l’architecture est un miroir fidèle des époques qu’elle traverse’.

As a monument, the Opera House in particular would inspire a sense of pride and achievement and testify to the pace of social progress under the Second Empire. The Academy of Music and Dance, or Opéra, was the traditional home of grand opera. Grand opera was a lavish spectacle, a ritual, an escape. A visit to the opera house was an elaborate social occasion. As Paul Lang claimed: ‘The new aspirations and political and social preoccupations, the invasion of the bourgeois spirit, the pursuit of money and pleasure, abolished the sincere atmosphere of the first fervours of the romantic movement. The bourgeois spirit found great satisfaction in two genres of art: the pseudo classic drama and the grand opera.’ Grand opera was a spectacle in which all the arts – music, dance, painting, architecture – participated. There was thus an intimate link between the architecture of the building and the activity that it was constructed to house.
Grand opera embraced tradition and novelty, theatrical expertise and great expenditure. It was a mirror for the innovations of the age and a reflection of its prosperity. Because of this, Garnier’s Opéra was intended to establish as historical orthodoxy the radical modernity of its age.

One particular novelty of the Opera House, and certain other modern Parisian theatres, was the expectation that they should cater explicitly to the ever-increasing desire for luxury and comfort. Under the Second Empire these were not only expectations but deemed necessities. To the extent that they satisfied these social demands opera houses and theatres acted as barometers of social progress. People judged that if they could not ‘vivre là comme on vit dans un foyer familier’ then the building had failed.\(^\text{15}\)

The Opéra house joined banks, market halls, and currency and commodity exchanges as an indicator of opulence and prosperity. Daly ranked opera houses together with churches and railway stations as the most architecturally conspicuous indications of the increased wealth and technological advance issuing from the industrial revolution.\(^\text{16}\) He hoped that the Opéra would signify not only wealth, but the sophisticated cultural achievement and refined artistic taste of Second Empire Parisians.

Twentieth-century studies have reinforced this interpretation. A 1941 textbook *Notre France. Son histoire* illustrated the Opera House opposite the title page of the chapter dealing with material progress under the Second Empire (Fig. 3). From *École Primaire to Terminale* whether in the form of a crude black and white print or a painstakingly detailed sketch, the Opéra was often the only monument to figure graphically in texts relating the rebuilding of Paris. This view survives to the present. The Opéra is ‘the pièce de résistance, the symbol of the whole programme of works, and even of the Empire itself with its unashamed, extravagant bad taste’;\(^\text{17}\) and ‘l’édifice le plus parfait et le plus représentatif du Second Empire, le symbole d’une époque brillante, entreprenante et sereine; or ‘an architectural reflection of the gaudy splendour of the Second Empire’.\(^\text{18}\)

But these more recent reactions reveal a shift in opinion. The association of monument and Empire has turned sour. This is not an entirely new phenomenon, for nineteenth-century critics had already attacked the emperor or the government through the medium of the Opera House. What has happened in the twentieth century is that heterodoxy has become orthodoxy. The Opéra suffered the stigma of the typical. It fell from crowning glory to ‘une des créations caractéristiques du Second Empire’.\(^\text{19}\) Not quite banal but no longer a sublime sign of social equipoise, the Opéra became a window on the conspicuous expenditure and corrosive waste of Empire and empire building.

The hostility which many historians have harboured towards the Second Empire and the twentieth-century distaste for ostentatious Beaux-Arts architecture go some way towards accounting for modern tirades against
the Opera House. The modernist scythe of rational architecture epitomized by Le Corbusier and his disciples robbed Garnier’s creation of architectural significance. The rational vision of functional architecture pared of historical purpose and commitment made the Opéra seem an indulgent luxury. Le Corbusier called the building an ‘art de mensonge’. The ‘événement Garnier est un décor d’enterrement’ he declared. In 1941 Sigfried Giedion dubbed Garnier’s conception merely transient: the perfect expression of the short-lived glories of the Second Empire. How, he argued, could such a trifle, a decorative trinket, make a lasting contribution to the progress of architectural theory which, surely, consisted in solving the problem of the best fit of form to function?

Despite such modernist criticisms the power of the Opéra as a social statement remains undiminished. Criticisms of the building have been levelled either at Second Empire society, stressing the decadence of its aesthetics as evidenced in this monument; or at the Opéra as an incoherent conglomerate of styles. The fundamental idea that the Opera House articulates a given society has rarely been subject to sustained historical scrutiny. It survives through force of sheer repetition, its strength and frequency of utterance.

Recently, some revisions to this idea have been made. Monika Steinhauser argues that far from symbolizing a unitary Second Empire society, the Opéra conveys an impression of one small segment of it. She calls the Opéra the contrivance of an assertive and ambitious bourgeoisie, working in association with the emperor to further their own class interests. ‘En fait, l’Opéra symbolise une tentative de création d’un style nouveau, répondant à la volonté de prestige de Napoléon III et aux ambitions de la bourgeoisie … Aucune autre création architecturale contemporaine ne reflète autant le “contentement de soi” du Second Empire.’ The aim of what follows is to investigate and amplify received wisdom about the Opéra in the light of this revisionist argument.

The Opera House and the transformation of Paris

In order to understand why the Opera House was chosen to crown the reconstruction of Paris we need to consider the qualities that had been attributed to opera houses in Paris ever since they were first introduced from Italy in the late seventeenth century; qualities such as prestige, splendour and glory. A brief consideration of the association between opera and the Baroque period, an association that was later picked up in the choice of Neo-Baroque as a style for many nineteenth-century opera houses, will help to answer the question of what it was about the reign of Napoleon III that made an opera house such an important symbol.

Cultural politics

The use of opera as an art form bestowing cultural prestige has long been exploited politically. This has affected not only the construction of opera houses, but the choice of music and the set designs within them. The importance of the Baroque period (in France the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries) for opera and theatre cannot be overestimated. To simplify greatly, in this period a building was conceived less as an edifice than a drama. The walls, columns, interior and exterior all figured in the creation of spectacle. Each element was itself a form of expression subordinate to the whole. Opera was at this time considered a decorative art whose appropriate style was characterized by maximum decoration and the interplay of light and shade. Large, complex spaces and a sensuous, decorative style are recognized as typically Baroque.
There was not only a special relationship between opera and Baroque architecture, but also between that architecture and townscape. The sheer size and magnificence of Baroque buildings required that they be viewed from a distance. This conception of city planning and architecture — straight roads connecting monuments — originated in sixteenth-century Italy and Pope Sixtus’ commission for the redesigning of Roman streets. This principle of perspective planning in the grand manner led to the culte de l’axe (intersecting axes) which dominated nineteenth-century planning in France and is particularly evident in Haussmann’s transformation of Paris.

The early association of opera and court life is captured in the word palais which is still used to refer to Garnier’s Opéra. In the Baroque age, the court was the place where cultural and spiritual activities were secularized. People were brought together at concerts, grand operas and at the theatre. Hence the Baroque conception of secular theatrical cities and the rivalry between the court theatres of Paris and Vienna. From the seventeenth century, champions of the construction of a new Paris opera house emphasized the glory that such a monument would bring to the reign in which it was built. This argument received a new impetus after the Opéra House at the Palais Royal was destroyed by fire in 1781. Although a temporary replacement was built in the rue Le Peletier in 1821, the demand for a new permanent Opera House continued unabated. Following government investigations into the structural soundness of the temporary Opéra in the 1840s, it was condemned by the press as a dangerous liability. The theatre could collapse at any time, it was argued, injuring not only people inside it but also those who lived in the neighbouring buildings. An equally powerful source of scorn was that this theatre was architecturally unworthy of Paris. By the time the competition for a new opera house was announced in December 1860, most critics were agreed that the former Opéra was an anachronism, a disgrace to a city internationally respected as the queen of the arts.

Paris’ future as an artistic centre was questionable, it was claimed. Edmond Duponchel, the author of a counter-proposal to the official choice of site, architect and more than once director of the Opera House wrote: ‘La reconstruction de notre scène lyrique est donc avant tout une question d’art qui, grâce au bruit qui s’est fait autour d’elle, prend les proportions d’une question politique. L’amour national s’y trouve sévèrement et légitimement engagé, et il doit recevoir une complète satisfaction.’ The success of the Opera House project was thus directly linked to national self-esteem. The debate over the new theatre was politically charged. The new monument had to be capable of inspiring Frenchmen with pride and foreigners with envy. No one would deny that through the Opera House France would be judged all over the world for her ability to create great works of art and stage magnificent theatrical performances.

Size and magnificence were the criteria by which the new Opera House would be judged. It had to be the largest theatre in Europe, still more exquisite than the new Opera House being built in Vienna. In 1884 F. de Donville reported that ‘son aspect rappelle vaguement celui du Colisée de Rome’. The size of the building has been a constant theme in guidebooks over the last hundred years.

The emphasis on a central location

The symbolic importance of the Opéra, and its role as a social centre, were to be emphasized through its geographical location. This in itself was not new. Throughout the nineteenth century many projects for a new opera house sought acceptance for their designs by choosing locations in central Paris. F. Grille offered a design for the Place Vendôme in 1847, and Joseph de Filippi selected the Passage Sandrié in 1858. What lent more credence to this idea after 1852 was the fact that centrality had become an important concept in Haussmann’s scheme to modernize Paris. The culte de l’axe gave paramount importance to the centre. The city was redesigned as a network of focal points and radiating arteries. These focal points deployed buildings, fountains, statues — anything that would give prominence to a particular site. The perspective along orthogonal towards monuments became the city’s aesthetic code.

In September 1860 the official choice of the Chaussée d’Antin as the site for the Opéra confirmed the rumour that this district was to be graced with the monument. Commonly known as the grands boulevards (Fig. 2), it was at the centre of aristocratic Paris and was regarded by contemporaries as the heart of Parisian life. In 1856 Théophile Gautier explained its attraction: ‘la vie de Paris s’est de plus en plus transportée de la Seine au boulevard, à mesure que l’argent a dominé la noblesse et que la Chaussée d’Antin a vaincu le faubourg aristocratique’. Gautier explained that migration to the area was linked to the rise of capitalism and to the changes in value that accompanied the creation of a market economy. He, and many others, referred to the Opéra as the ‘cathédrale mondaine de la civilisation’, thus emphasizing a shift from religious to secular values. As Hermann Broch wrote of Richard Wagner: ‘He knew that the age he was born into would choose the operatic as the form for its representative total expression; he saw how the new bourgeois cities were seeking a community center that would replace the cathedral and how they strove to raise the Place de l’Opéra to that honoured status’. By locating the Opéra at the centre of a district that was itself the heart of Paris, just as Paris was the artistic capital of France, Europe and even the world, the imaginative power of the monument would rest on layer upon layer of symbolic meaning.

Contemporary and subsequent writers have seized upon the location
The question of style

The radical modernity of Napoleon III's reign was to be expressed in more than merely the location of the Opéra. Throughout the nineteenth century many architectural writers were preoccupied with the problem of creating a new style to give fresh impetus to art and reflect the achievements of the century of progress. It was hoped that the new Paris Opéra would finally launch the new style. This was what the architect J. Belliol seems to have had in mind when he wrote that this monument would be l'édifice lyrique et grandiose qui manque à Paris et qui devra enfin être le point de départ d'une architecture en quelque sorte nouvelle.²²

Most critics were confident that Garnier had realized this aim. He was lauded for having created a monument that was not only typical of his age but also characteristic of the whole nineteenth century (Fig. 5). Jules de Précy described modern art as realistic, a response to a materialistic, individualistic era.³³ Gautier believed that Garnier had understood this for these were the qualities that the Opéra displayed. This was "une architecture élégante, fleurie, coquette et même un peu chargée d'ornements".³⁴

Modern Paris was to proclaim and project the imperial planners' belief in progress. Modernity was to be expressed through the medium of monuments and in the plan of the city, with the Opéra as the supreme embodiment of the values of Second Empire Parisian society. This in turn was linked to the role of Paris as an artistic centre and a city of pleasure both French and international.

The myth of Paris

It was a well-established tradition that opera houses be used to enhance Paris' reputation as a cultural capital. What changed in the nineteenth century, and became a principal reason for using the Opera House as the supreme symbol of Second Empire society, was that Paris had indeed become the capital of pleasure. Its entertainment was not confined to the stage; the city itself was on show. Herein lay its legendary attraction for writers, musicians and artists. The poet Heinrich Heine, who made Paris his home, wrote of his adopted city: 'Paris is not simply the capital of France, but of the whole civilized world, and the rendezvous of its most
brilliant intellectuals.35 Heine’s friend, Heinrich Laube, echoed his enthusiasm referring to Paris as ‘the capital of the universe’.36

In an article entitled ‘Paris, mythe moderne’, Roger Caillois defines the mystique associated with Paris: ‘Il existe ... une représentation fantasmatique de Paris, plus généralement de la grande ville, assez puissante sur les imaginations pour que jamais en pratique ne soit posée la question de son exactitude’.37 Both he and Ellen Taylor-Huppert conclude that the myth of Paris was loosely connected to the transformation of Paris from a medieval city to the capital of a modern state.38 In Taylor-Huppert’s opinion the physical changes, as narrow and crooked medieval streets were replaced by large, open boulevards, corresponded to social changes, with new classes and families replacing traditional communities. The myth was related to the political and social importance of Paris within France.

What is most pertinent to a study of the Paris Opéra as a symbol is the modern dimension to the myth which depicts Paris as a city of pleasure and, integral to this, the idea of Paris as a vast open-air theatre. In his book on Manet T. J. Clark writes about the emergence of Paris as a unit, a spectacle in itself, something that developed in the latter part of the nineteenth century.39 He considers the 1860s an epoch of transition in which public and private life had not yet been completely separated. The spectacle was disorganized and still mixed up with old forms of sociability. It was almost a cliché for writers in the second half of the nineteenth century to call Paris a stage. They were evoking life on the new boulevards, the displays in shop windows, the cafés, theatres and bars (Fig. 6). Paris had become an international arena in which to parade new clothes and fashions and to display goods which owed their existence to mass production and industrialization. Culture was on show and it attracted an international audience. Contemporary guidebooks described theatres as typically Parisian, characteristic of this phase of Parisian life.40

The key to an explanation of why opera flourished at certain times in history, a clue to why the Opera House was chosen to symbolize the Second Empire, can be found in this idea of a society on show, in the concept of a theatrical age.41 Gilbert Durand attempts to explain the links between culture and society, and to discover why opera thrived at a particular time.

Durand identifies periods of ‘socio-cultural intensification’. Opera became a significant socio-cultural fact when it was controlled by a small number of powerful decision-makers. Opera was popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and again in the second half of the nineteenth century: ‘Ces deux moments culturels que signent la souverainété de l’Opéra sont les points culminants de deux sociétés de l’apparat: les ors et les marbres du palais Garnier font écho à ceux de la Scala di Piermarini en 1776 et un siècle plus tôt à ceux de Versailles’.42 Opera at these times was the symbol of a society that valued appearance above all: ‘Mais rien
caused moral outrage, it was taken as a sign that Bonapartism was at an end. Music and dancing were the cachet of the Second Empire.

The two ideas, of Paris as a theatre, and of society as spectacle, come together in many contemporary descriptions of Paris. Louis Véron, director of the Opera House between 1831 and 1835, called Parisian society a great opera and Théophile Gautier, speaking about the rebuilding of Paris, said that the city was being adorned for foreigners.45 Tourists were the audience for this great spectacle of change and were sufficiently distanced not to feel implicated in the plot. Just as the concept of the centre was significant because it worked on a number of levels, so too that of the stage embraced a multiplicity of meanings. There was the performance and audience in the Opera House. This audience was itself part of the spectacle of the monument as people paraded their finery during the interval, catching a glimpse of themselves in the large mirrors which returned an image of their own self-importance. Paris was a stage which attracted visitors from all over the world. In the Opera House, we are led to believe, the spectacle of Paris was acted out in miniature.

The divided city

Not everyone has accepted the uniform picture of society conveyed by the Opera House. In the unfinished Passagen-Werk Walter Benjamin used the built environment as part of an attempt to construct what George Steiner has called a complete ‘material and psychological inscape’ of a society at a given moment in time.46 Benjamin argued that far from acting as accurate statements on the lifestyle of Second Empire Parisians, the new monuments of Hausmann’s Paris were only the symbolic expression of people’s desires. They attributed an air of wealth and prosperity to the city and yet most people did not share in these riches. Benjamin’s argument was voiced by contemporaries. In 1872, E. Fribourg described the new cafés and theatres: ‘cependant tout cela n’était qu’illusions, ombres trompeuses, masquant l’âhme vers lequel s’acheminait en évevelée la société toute entière’.47

In Émile Zola’s Rougon-Macquart novels, the metaphor of Paris as crumbling city becomes a moral statement on society. Just as the feasting and revelry which he associated with the Second Empire could not go on for ever and people would be forced at some stage to face up to their responsibilities, so Zola believed that the squalor hidden behind the new apartment blocks would eventually break through. The façades were cracking, the Opéra itself was crumbling because these buildings concealed the revolutionary potential of so many Parisians. To Zola, the Opera House was a deceit because its severe façade proclaimed a society of upright, dignified men when in fact the reverse was true. The façade hid the revelry and joviality that filled the building. Rather than reflecting contemporary life, the Opéra deceived in two ways. It was misleading because of what went on inside it and because it spoke for a small part of society.48

The question of the segregation of Paris into affluent west and destitute east is vital to the revised thesis that far from articulating the whole of Parisian society, the Opéra speaks for a small minority. Opinion varies as to whether the rebuilding of Paris accentuated the split between east and west, or whether it helped to reverse this process. The balance of critical opinion weighs more heavily on the side of those who believe that an increased segregation occurred between 1852 and 1870. Workmen were forced out of the central areas and were prevented from returning when the building work had finished by the inevitable increases in rent. As the rich migrated to the north-west of the city they abandoned the inner eastern area to the poor. The Opera House, built at the centre of fashionable western Paris, was accused by the press of being constructed for the rich. The government was criticized for wasting money on luxurious monuments rather than attending to the needs of the less well-off by building food markets or hospitals. That this was a sensitive topic is demonstrated by the letter that Napoleon III sent to the city administration in July 1864. He urged that the Hôtel-Dieu be completed before the new Opera House because of the adverse publicity that the government would suffer if a prestigious monument was seen to take precedence over buildings for the sick and the poor.

Not only does the idea that the Opéra conveys a homogeneous society not bear close scrutiny, but much of the received wisdom on the Opéra is either inaccurate or incomplete. Myths have been perpetuated in the histories and guidebooks that bear scant relation to the events that took place.

The forgotten history

One example of such a myth is the idea that Garnier failed to adapt his plans to the restrictive nature of the site (Fig. 7). The architect is depicted as a spoilt child obstinately refusing to see reason. One of many similar comments is Philip Gilbert Hamerton’s claim that Garnier failed to tailor the Opera House to a space that had been purposefully created for it.49

What Hamerton’s and other accounts fail to mention is that the site was planned by Charles Rohault de Fleury and Henri Blondel in 1858, not for Garnier’s creation at all but for Rohault de Fleury’s Opera House. The latter was the official architect of the new Opéra between 1858 and 1860 and was the man to whom everyone turned for the production of a successful design. If it was only when the competition was launched in December 1860 that Rohault de Fleury lost his commission. The detailed
these were never carried out. Somewhat bitterly, he vented his feelings: ‘c’est alors que j’ai maudit et le préfet et les financiers, qui, sans pitié pour l’Opéra, l’enfermaient comme dans une grande boîte’. A closer look at the evidence vindicates Garnier and shifts the blame for the misfit between the monument and its vicinity to the administration, or, more accurately, to the lack of communication between national and local government. The State was in charge of the construction of the Opera House because this was deemed to be a national concern whereas the City of Paris dictated what was constructed around it.

Inaccuracies relating to the location of the Opéra, though important, do not have the same evocative power as the myth of infinite spending. In an 1886 guidebook Living Paris and France, we read that Garnier was given carte blanche. Cassell’s guide to Paris (both 1884 and 1900 editions) stated that ‘the new building was constructed regardless of expense, with the evident intention of endowing Paris with the finest theatre in the world’. Similarly in the ‘Almanach-Album’ (n.d.) we read: ‘ainsi des millions ont-ils été prodigués à l’artiste afin qu’il peut entasser selon sa fantaisie, toutes les richesses de tous les arts à la fois’.

These statements are not borne out by Garnier’s careful accounts of his expenditure which can be consulted at the Archives Nationales. These records tell a story of financial struggles, cuts in budgets and of the architect’s sadness and disappointment at being forced through lack of money to eliminate some works of art from his plans for the building.

Once implanted, the myth of infinite spending seems to have proliferated, manifesting itself in different ways. It appears in another guise in relation to the use of coloured materials on the exterior and in the interior of the monument. Garnier’s use of polychromy has been interpreted as a sign of prodigious wealth, the very impression that it was intended to convey. In Le nouvel Opéra de Paris, we learn how Garnier bartered with two Italian craftsmen and how he succeeded in persuading them to reduce their original estimate for the use of coloured materials on the central arch and the two domes from 3,000 fr. to 162 fr. Narratives that inform us that Garnier sent for marble from every corner of Europe without a moment’s thought for cost have a hollow ring once the documents concerning polychromy have been consulted. Authors of guidebooks, keen to emphasize Paris’ attractions, have unwittingly contributed to the success of the imperial planners who wanted us to believe that no expense was spared on the Opéra.

Conclusion

In the light of the evidence, we can consider the imperial planners’ aim of forging a link between the Paris Opéra and Second Empire Parisian
society to have been successful. Yet a closer examination of the social, historical, political and economic context in which the monument was constructed reveals some of those contrasts noticed by Alain Plessis. The wealth of the Paris Opéra, and the lifestyle that it symbolized, were restricted to a very small percentage of the Parisian population. In the words of Guy Chauvin-Nogaret: ‘Si les beaux quartiers, la population luxueuse ou aisée, les magnifiques monuments, la vie mondaine et culturelle entrentiennent le mythe de la plus belle ville du monde, la misère, le crime et la peur planent comme une gangrène sur le corps purulent de la capitale’.36

An analysis of the Opera House in its historical context allows us to redress the balance of the image of Second Empire society that has been passed down to us over the last hundred years. Through an analysis of the links between theatre, opera, the reign of Napoleon III and the rebuilding of Paris we can come to a better understanding of a monument and its epoch and to begin to appreciate that it was ‘no wonder an epoch filled with the insatiable desire for decoration sought and found its representation precisely in the opera’. For, ‘in the truest sense, or the most correct double-sense of the word, the theater became the showground of the epoch’s poverty, masked by wealth’.37

NOTES

2 ‘Revue Dramatique’, Le Pays (5 October 1874), Bibliothèque de l’Opéra, Fonds Garnier Pièce 372C (‘his bright and splendid building blends perfectly with the image we will one day hold of the imperial age’).
4 The selection of five competition winners in January 1861 led to a further competition in May 1861.
6 Zeldin, France, p. 1.
7 R. de Corval, Paris monumental, artistique et historique (Paris, 1867) (‘to study a city’s monuments is to study the palpable and living record of its past centuries’).
8 A. Normand, ‘Société Impériale et Centrale des Architectes. Conférences Internationales. Première Séance. Compte Rendu’, Le Moniteur des architectes (1 August 1867), p. 134 (‘the essential responsibility of the art of building is to make manifest the general ideas, the moral and intellectual tendencies of a society’).
10 C. Daly, L’Architecture privée au XIXe siècle sous Napoléon III (Paris, 1864), p. 11 (‘the sonorous trumpet through which the strong breath of a nation passes; he [the architect] thus resonates to the vibrations emerging from the lungs of an entire people’).
13 ‘Le Nouvel Opéra de Paris’, La Fédération artistique (9 September 1877), Bibliothèque de l’Opéra, Fonds Garnier Pièce 372C (‘more than history, architecture accurately mirrors the passage of time’).
15 Loirette, ‘Des Boulevards et des Théâtres de Paris. Emplacement du nouvel Opéra et de l’Opéra Italian’ (15 July 1859), Archives Nationales F21 830 (‘to live there as one lives in the family home’).
16 C. Daly, ‘Concerts pour le Grand Opéra de Paris’, Revue générale de l’architecture et des travaux publics, 19 (1861), p. 79.
19 L. Dubouch and P. d’Espézel, Histoire de Paris (Paris, 1926), p. 411 (It fell from crowning glory to become ‘but one of the characteristic creations of the Second Empire’).
20 Le Corbusier, Almanach d’Architecture Moderne, Collection de L’Esprit Nouveau, Charles Eliot Norton Lectures 1928–9 (Paris, 1955), p. 120 (‘a lying art, the Garnier movement is a décor of the grave’).
23 Ibid., p. 11 (‘In fact, the Opera symbolizes an effort to create a new style, both a response to Napoleon III’s desire for prestige and to the ambitions of the bourgeoisie … No other contemporary architectural creation so accurately reflects the Second Empire’s self-satisfaction’).
25 E. Duponchel, Déplacement de l’Opéra. Contre-projet par M. Edmond Duponchel (Paris, 1860), p. 2 (‘The rebuilding of our great lyric theatre is thus primarily an artistic question, which, because of the publicity surrounding it, has taken on political proportions. National pride is properly and seriously at stake and patriotism must be satisfied’).

28 In A. Dumas et al., *Paris et les parisiens au XIXe siècle*. Moeurs, arts et monuments (Paris, 1856), p. 155 ('Parisian life has moved ever closer to the boulevards from the Seine, following the increasing power of money over nobility and the rising popularity of the Chaussée d'Antin compared to the aristocratic districts').

29 T. Gautier, quoted in *Petite encyclopédie illustrée*, p. 17 ('the worldly cathedral of civilisation').


32 J. Bellioli, Letter to Comte Walewski, 1 March 1861, Archives Nationales F21 830 ('the great lyric building which Paris lacks and which will ultimately become the originating point of a new form of architecture').


34 T. Gautier (1861) quoted in *Petite encyclopédie illustrée*, p. 28 ('elegant, fancy, coquetish architecture, even a little too ornamental'). The description recalls the Baroque style.


37 R. Callois, *Paris, mythe moderne*, *Nouvelle revue française*, 284 (1 May 1937), p. 684 ('There exists ... a phantasmagorical representation of Paris, more so of the great city in general, which exerts so powerful a hold on our imagination that, in practice, we never question its accuracy').


40 Paris since the war (1873), p. 11.


42 Ibid., p. 14 ('Those two cultural episodes which mark the Opera House's supremacy are the culmination of two societies, devoted to appearances: the palais Garnier's gold and marble recalls that used by Piermarini for La Scala in 1776 and that of Versailles a century before').

43 Ibid., p. 16 ('Nothing marks the socio-cultural intensification of opera in the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, and again during the Second Empire, quite as well as its effects on what one might call the 'infrastructure': the theatre').

Background Information on Retreat Locations
Musée du Louvre

Afternoon guided tour on Thursday, 16 May

As one of the world’s largest and most acclaimed museums, the Musée du Louvre’s modern-day prestige is well documented. Before it became a cultural institution welcoming nearly nine million annual visitors, it was the Palais du Louvre, the seat of the French government from the early twelfth century through Louis XIV’s departure for Versailles in the late fifteenth century. Originally constructed as a fortress by King Philippe-Auguste, the Palais du Louvre was rebuilt in the mid-sixteenth century as a royal residence and subsequently converted into a national museum in 1793 by the Revolutionary Convention. Today the museum’s focus is on Western art from the Middle Ages to about 1848 as well as works from ancient civilizations, including Assyrian, Etruscan, Greek, Coptic, and Islamic art and antiquities. The items in the Louvre’s collections, along with the private archives accessible to scholars, have provided the primary source material for numerous publications by University of Chicago students and faculty members. Most recently, the Musée du Louvre opened its new Islamic art galleries in late 2012, which are topped with an elegant golden “flying carpet” roof designed by Italian architects Mario Bellini and Rudy Ricciotti.

Further Reading Suggestions:


Louvre collections database: www.louvre.fr/en/moteur-de-recherche-oeuvres?tab=3#tabs
Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs

Evening reception on Thursday, 16 May

The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (in French, the Ministère des Affaires étrangères et européennes, or MAEE), is the site of France’s foreign-relations activities and the governing body for a number of administrative offices and domestic cabinets. The building was constructed in the mid-nineteenth century by the architect Lacornée, with statues by the sculptor Henri Triqueti added around 1870, and the interior features paintings, tapestries, and sculptures from a number of nineteenth-century artists. The MAEE is located near the National Assembly of France on the quai d’Orsay, a riverfront location on the Seine named after the seventeenth-century Provost of the Merchants of Paris that is the subject of many French paintings of urban scenes.

Further Reading Suggestion:

Hôtel de Talleyrand

Welcome dinner on Thursday, 16 May

Built between 1767 and 1769, the Hôtel de Talleyrand was designed by two of Louis XV’s architects, Jacques-Anges Gabriel and Jean-François-Thérèse Chalgrin, whose work exemplifies the aesthetics of the French Enlightenment. It originally served as a residence for the Comte de Saint-Florentin before it was purchased by Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, a French diplomat who was appointed under Louis XVI, continued working through the French Revolution, and went on to collaborate with Napoléon I, Louis XVIII, Charles X, finally serving as ambassador to the United Kingdom under Louis-Philippe. Upon Tallyrand’s death, the home was sold to James Mayer de Rothschild, whose family owned it until the US State Department’s acquisition in 1950. Under American ownership, it was the site of the Marshall Plan’s administration as well as the home of the Consulate of the American Embassy in Paris until 2008. Today is used by the World Monuments Fund Europe for receiving guests at diplomatic meetings, receptions, conferences, and cultural events, and is also home to the Jones Day law firm.

Further Reading Suggestions:


Full text available online: www.statehahn.com/concorde.pdf

The Paris of Georges-Eugène Haussmann

Morning walking tour on Friday, 17 May

In 1852, the population of Paris had reached nearly 1.5 million and Emperor Napoléon III feared another revolution if the city was unable to manage its growing number of residents. Motivated by an impulse of civic efficiency—as well as the desire to facilitate military movement through the streets—Napoléon selected the city’s superintendent, Georges-Eugène Haussmann, to redesign and rebuild Paris. Haussmann’s innovations included new water and sewer systems, street lighting, and residential and commercial buildings, as well as long, expansive boulevards that provided spectacular views of landmarks but also required the demolition of the ancient and medieval architecture that had previously defined the city. Haussmann’s modern Paris had a profound impact on the City Beautiful movement in the United States, most notably influencing Daniel Burnham’s 1909 Plan of Chicago and inspiring the creation of the diagonally running streets that still exist today.

Further Reading Suggestions:


The University of Chicago Center in Paris

Lunchtime presentation on Friday, 17 May

The University of Chicago Center in Paris is the University’s European hub for research and teaching, serving a thriving intellectual community of faculty members as well as both graduate and undergraduate students. Established in 2004, the Center is located between the French National Library and the newly expanded campus of the University of Paris VII and houses an undergraduate teaching facility for the nearly 200 students in the College who study in Paris each year. The Center in Paris also supports graduate studies in their advanced studies, serving as a home base for their research activities. Currently a dozen UChicago graduate students are studying at the Center, enjoying private research offices, fortnightly scholarly workshops, and the rich resources of Parisian and other French archives such as the National Library and the Louvre. The Center is also home to a series of prominent conferences, documented in the ongoing *Cahiers Parisiens/Parisian Notebooks* series published by the University of Chicago Press.

Further Reading Suggestions:

The University of Chicago Center in Paris online:
centerinparis.uchicago.edu/about (background)
centerinparis.uchicago.edu/living (travel tips and neighborhood information)
Opéra de la Bastille

Evening performance on Friday, 17 May

The Opéra de la Bastille opened its doors in 1989, more than a hundred years after the initial proposal to create a modern Parisian opera house to supplement the Palais Garnier. Built of opaque blocks of stone and lined with sheets of glass, it was designed by Uruguayan Canadian architect Carlos Ott, whose proposal was selected in an international competition with nearly two thousand entries. The building project was part of then-President François Mitterrand’s program of creating new monuments to symbolize France’s ongoing cultural prominence at the conclusion of the twentieth century. The Opéra Bastille features nearly three thousand seats that offer a consistent acoustic experience; exceptional staging facilities; workshops for the creation of scenery, costumes, and accessories; and extensive rehearsal spaces.

Further Reading Suggestions:


Palais Garnier
Opera House

Evening guided tour on Saturday, 18 May

The Palais Garnier is the thirteenth home of the Paris Opera since it was founded by Louis XIV in 1669, although since the creation of the Opéra Bastille it is primarily used to stage ballet performances. The opera house was commissioned by Napoléon III in conjunction with Haussmann’s civic reconstruction project; built between 1861 and 1875 and named for its architect, Charles Garnier, it remains an iconic Parisian building. The original splendor of its exterior has been restored by recent renovations to the main façade, while the interior displays an array of artworks that include ceiling paintings by Paul Baudry and Marc Chagall. The Paris Opera library-museum, housed in the same building, is part of the French National Library system and contains records of the Opera’s history dating back more than three centuries. Among its many other cultural associations, the Palais Garnier is perhaps best known as the setting for the 1910 novel The Phantom of the Opera, which Andrew Lloyd Weber famously adapted into a long-running musical.

Further Reading Suggestions:


L’Opéra Restaurant

Dinner and drinks on Saturday, 18 May

L’Opéra Restaurant, established in 2011, is known for its innovative design and brilliantly executed seasonal cuisine. Located in the Palais Garnier, it fulfills Charles Garnier’s original aspirations for a restaurant situated in the theater’s rotunda. French architect Odile Decq created the interior to seamlessly blend with the opera house, integrating the restaurant within this historically significant landmark without interfering with or even touching the preexisting structure. The multi-level restaurant features an upper mezzanine, providing patrons with an extraordinary view of the opera house below.

Further Reading Suggestion:

Odile Decq’s description of her design:
www.opera-restaurant.fr/en/#/architecture/phantom
Le Meurice

Brunch on Sunday, 19 May

Le Meurice was founded in 1815 by Charles-Augustin Meurice, then the French Postmaster, with the explicit aim of providing English tourists with unprecedented luxury on the Continent. Also known as the Hotel of the Kings, it is considered one of France’s great hotels, with a prime location in the First Arrondissement adjacent to the Tuileries Garden. It has hosted many prominent individuals throughout its history, including Salvador Dalí, King Alfonso XIII of Spain, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Elizabeth Taylor. Le Meurice has also served as a backdrop for several films, most recently Woody Allen’s Midnight in Paris. The interior décor was inspired by the Château de Versailles, with a recent update by noted French designer Philippe Starck. Its amenities include a mezzanine-level spa and a three-star Michelin restaurant (“Le Meurice”), whose chef also runs the hotel’s Restaurant Le Dali and Bar 228.

Further Reading Suggestion:

Musée Carnavalet

Afternoon guided tour on Sunday, 19 May

Dedicated to the history of Paris, the Musée Carnavalet opened in 1880 at the recommendation of Baron Haussmann. Today, it contains around 600,000 exhibits displayed across two adjacent mansions: the Hôtel Carnavalet, which housed the original museum, and the former Hôtel Le Peletier de Saint Fargeau, which was annexed to provide room for the museum’s rapidly expanding collection. The Carnavalet’s holdings include decorative building elements, scale models of ancient monuments, signs, portraits of prominent Parisians, and an extensive collection of materials related to the French Revolution. Many of its exhibits are designed to give visitors a glimpse of historical Paris, such as its recreation of the room where Marcel Proust wrote *La Recherche du Temps Perdu* (In Search of Lost Time or Remembrance of Things Past in earlier translations). It also houses a major archive of drawings, etchings, photographs, posters, and coins.

**Further Reading Suggestion:**

Hôtel Lutetia

Hôtel Lutetia, located in the Saint-Germain-des-Prés area of the Sixth Arrondissement, is one of the Left Bank’s most celebrated hotels and the first to be designed in the Art Déco style. From its founding in 1910, the Lutetia was a gathering place for eminent artists and writers, including Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and André Gide. However, it is perhaps best known for the historic role it played during World War II. First serving as a haven for refugees fleeing conflict areas, it became the local headquarters of the Abwher, Germany’s military intelligence agency, following the German occupation of France in 1940. After the liberation of Paris, Hôtel Lutetia served as a hospital and relocation center for survivors of Nazi concentration camps. Today, the Lutetia recalls its early days as a cultural touchstone by paying homage to noted contemporary artists Arman, César, Philippe Hiquily, Perrin, and Thierry Bisch in its interior design while preserving its Art Déco façade and period furnishings.

Further Reading Suggestions:


Additional Further Reading Suggestions:


