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RENOVATION AND MODERN VIEWPOINTS ROADS, BRIDGES, AND CITY SPACES

The new European currency, the euro, carries the schematic image of an ultramodern suspension bridge on its paper banknotes. According to the European Central Bank, the bridge symbolizes connectedness and efficient communication between the various members of the European Union—effects the new currency is intended to enhance.¹ In the nineteenth century, bridge building was an important feature of infrastructure creation and improvement. Impressionist images of bridges were common, and whether the bridges were brand-new or simply recent, for railways or for roads, they displayed similar attitudes, though on a national rather than an international scale. In addition to serving social and economic functions, bridge building exemplified modernity in its use of the recent cast-iron technology. Bridges, as well as other types of infrastructure, physically embodied the convergence of innovative elements that were both causes and effects of modern change.

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Progress in bridge construction and urban development was monitored by photographers, sometimes working on state commission but sometimes taking their own pictures of Paris, where their studios were located. For the French government, documentation of industrial progress was a matter of national pride, and a number of exhibitions featured photographs of public works. These images were made possible by the invention of various negative processes, which in the 1850s began to replace the daguerreotype, invented by Louis Daguerre in 1839. The paper negative had been devised around the same time as the daguerreotype by Henry Fox Talbot; the collodion-on-glass (wet-plate) negative process was invented by Frederick Scott Archer in 1851. The daguerreotype produced a highly detailed image etched directly onto a silver-plated surface, but the process was slow and expensive, and its unique image could not be reproduced. Negative processes allowed photographers to work at diverse locations away from their permanent studios, as well as to produce multiple images.

Paris was the site of modernity, the place where modern vision was developed. For students of the nineteenth century, such statements come as nothing new. The pertinent point is that in Impressionism the urban landscape was for the first time at the center of the vision of landscape because that vision sought to represent modernity. And that vision was shaped both by the modernization of the cityscape and by the new photographic technology through which it was so frequently represented. The signs of modernity in landscape were not only new buildings, boulevards, bridges, factories, railroads, and canals but also topoi and points of view that had been unthinkable before illustrated journals and photography revealed a more inclusive artistic horizon than ever before.

Scholars have certainly commented on the obvious economic growth and activity reflected in the Impressionists' urban scenes of the 1870s. For the most part, however, these images have been

considered in relation to leisure or cited as examples of Impressionism's realist specificity, which is often proved by comparison of these images to photographs. From a different perspective, we can consider the role played by urban views and photography in *redefining* landscape to encompass, as Castagnary advocated, the city *and* the country as well as modern ways of seeing. I therefore place urban landscape at the heart of Impressionism's enterprise of representing the modern landscape, just as the poet and critic Charles Baudelaire placed Paris at the center of modernity.

SI(GH)TING MODERNITY

18 In his seminal essay "The Painter of Modern Life," Baudelaire equated modernity with change, the principal characteristics of which were "the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent."² Similar adjectives are often associated with Impressionism. Nowhere were signs of modernity and transformation, such as bridge and road construction or river and rail traffic, more visible than in Paris, where demolition, expansion, and renewal work took over the city for nearly two decades. The protagonist of Baudelaire's essay, the watercolorist and illustrator Constantin Guys (discussed further below), "admires the eternal beauty and amazing harmony of life in the capital cities, a harmony so miraculously maintained amidst the tumult of human freedom."³ The history of the renovations of Paris is well documented, but a summary may be useful here.

Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte (1808–73, r. 1848–70), nephew of Napoleon the Great (1769–1821, r. 1799–1815), had been elected president of France following the democratic revolution of 1848. Prevented by the Constitution of 1848 from reelection in 1852, he seized absolute power in a coup d'état in December 1851. On proclaiming himself emperor, he took the name Napoleon III. Through economic growth and a cultural politics that sponsored public spectacle and grandeur, the new emperor hoped to place France at the forefront of Europe and at the same time to ensure his popularity and power. These goals converged in projects for the modernization of Paris, implemented during the 1850s and 1860s by his Paris prefect, a single-minded bureaucrat of Alsatian origin named Georges Haussmann.⁴ Napoleon III was spiritual heir to the legacy of his uncle, who had begun transforming Paris into an imperial capital. Napoleon I was responsible for thoroughfares such as the arcaded Rue de Rivoli, public spaces such as a redesigned Place Vendôme and the Place Saint-Sulpice, public buildings such as the Bourse (Stock Exchange), and new bridges such as the Pont Saint-Louis, the Pont d'Austerlitz, and the famous Pont des Arts, a cast-iron footbridge that was the first of its kind in Paris.

Under Haussmann, expenditures of more than forty times the city's usual annual budget were lavished on clearing thousands of buildings from congested areas populated mainly by the working classes, who were displaced to less central locations. Haussmann ruthlessly declared that his aim was to "tear open Old Paris, the district of riots and barricades, with a wide, central thoroughfare that would pierce this almost impenetrable labyrinth from one side to the other."⁵ He is said to have considered himself an "artist in demolition."⁶ Many photographs, such as those by Henri Le Secq, recorded this process (Figure 6). In 1860 Paris annexed its surrounding suburbs so that neighborhoods in northern Paris like Les Batignolles (site of Manet's studio) and Montmartre (site of Renoir's studio) became a part of the city's tentacular urban extension. The gigantic whole was intended to function as an efficient centralized machine.



FIGURE 6. Henri Le Secq, *Demolitions, Rue Saint-Martin*, photograph, 1853. From Henri Le Secq, *Album Berger*, 1853. Paris: Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris.

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Haussmann extended the Rue de Rivoli and built many new boulevards; he created public parks such as the Bois de Boulogne, the Bois de Vincennes, and the Parc Monceau. Continuing the projects or plans of previous dynasties, he endowed the city with new sewers, gas lighting, and municipal buildings, including the Halles Centrales (Central Markets), built of cast iron on Victor Baltard's design of 1847. The new cast-iron and glass style of architecture, used heretofore in utilitarian buildings such as railway stations, was also celebrated in the exhibition halls erected for the Universal Exposition of 1855 (see Chapter 5). The most famous of Paris's modern buildings was the new Opéra, designed by the young Charles Garnier in 1861, though not completed until 1874. The photographers Hyacinthe-César Delmaet and Louis-Emile Durandelle documented the many phases of its construction (Figure 7), as well as that of other public buildings.

Progress and modernity were thus clearly identified with Paris, which attracted more and more people, from foreign tourists and aspiring artists to workers anxious for higher wages after years of struggling on provincial farms. The city's population nearly doubled during the Second Empire, placing increasing demands on infrastructure for communication both within the city and with the outside. Even without Napoleon III's visions of glory, sanitary conditions and traffic congestion had so deteriorated that urban renewal was long overdue. Paris had been an impassable warren of dingy and malodorous habitations that bred disease (nineteen thousand cholera deaths in 1847) and crime. Hard as it is to believe today, the grand spaces surrounding the Louvre, as well as almost the entire Ile de la Cité, where government edifices and Notre-Dame Cathedral now have primary place, were once densely packed with medieval buildings. But in addition to a healthy opening up, the renovations of Paris facilitated the takeover of prime city center land from its lower-class inhabitants by real estate speculators and their middle- and upper-class clientele. The long straight avenues, with their imposing perspectives and allusions to the imperial urbanism of Rome, cut right through old neighborhoods. Gas and eventually electric arc lighting contributed not only to security but to the city's reputation for "glitz," as Zola put it, and its moniker as the City of Light. To finance construction, Haussmann granted concessions to builders, who lined the avenues with apartment houses that included shops at street level.

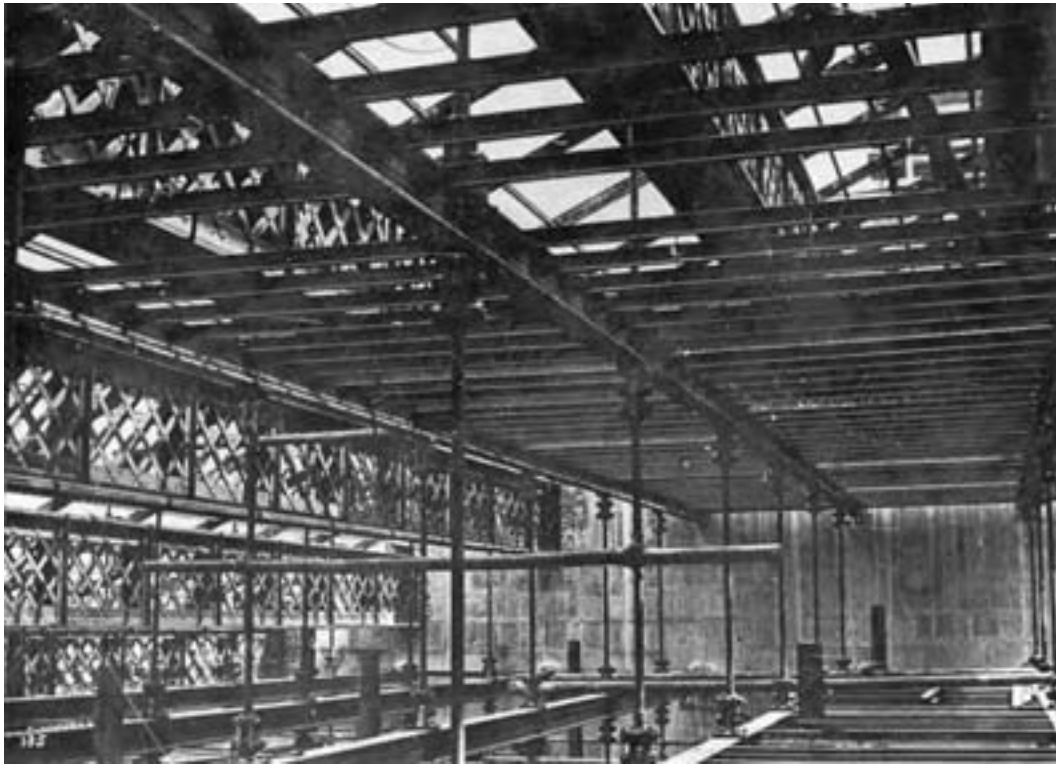


FIGURE 7. Hyacinthe-César Delmaet and Louis-Emile Durandelle, photograph of the construction of the Opéra, 1860s. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

Obviously, only a small percentage of the original neighborhood residents could afford the higher rents, and wealthier families moved into the fashionably bright, airy, and centrally located new flats, as is happening in many of today's cities.

Doubtless the liberal poet Victor Hugo and others were right that the new thoroughfares had deliberately been made too wide for raising insurrectionary barricades and straight enough for artillery to fire easily at protest gatherings. The so-called "dangerous classes"—workers and other disenfranchised folk who tended to take their complaints to the streets—and the squalid living conditions underlying so much political dissent since the 1790s were exiled to the periphery. After all, Napoleon III's regime followed a series of uprisings, from the revolt of July 1830, which led to the abdication of the Bourbon Charles X in favor of Louis-Philippe d'Orléans, to the left-wing revolution of February 1848 that put an end to the monarchy once and for all. Louis-Napoleon could argue that his coup and its authoritarian regime were the needed response to continuing instability, as had been the case for his uncle. Indeed, plans for the new Opéra, built on its separate, easily securable city block, were partly motivated by a bombing attempt on the emperor's carriage that had injured hundreds in front of the old opera house on the narrower Rue Lafitte. What had the potential to serve military and political purposes, however, also introduced freedom of circulation—of air to dispel foul vapors, of healthier waste

drainage, and of commercial traffic enhancing business efficiency and trade. And as an enormous public works program, following the depression of 1847, the renovation employed some 20 percent of Parisian laborers at its height in the 1860s.⁷ It was the engine of a prosperity that temporarily helped smooth over social conflicts and permanently laid the foundation for industrial France. Real estate investors like the Péreire family and railroad barons (the Rothschilds, among others) accumulated vast riches under imperial financing. Even when favoritism and corruption were exposed prior to the regime's collapse under Prussian attack in 1870, fortunes had been made. It was a gilded age.⁸

This teeming but more open, cleaner, and better-lit metropolis is largely the one so admired today. Not only was it the subject of many Impressionist paintings, but the new urban experience it afforded was the context within which key ideas underlying Impressionism arose. Baudelaire's "The Painter of Modern Life" is essential to understanding the relationship of that experience to Impressionist art. Although Baudelaire died in 1867, just as Impressionism was developing its early group identity, and years before it was given its name, he was one of the first to argue cogently that modern life was the only worthy subject matter for the modern artist and that visual art could be its primary expressive medium. He was the first to identify the forms through which its representations would operate, for he saw how rapid execution and informal painterly technique expressed both personal vision and progressive efficiency. No one so deeply understood how the combination of naturalism and subjectivity now taken for granted in Impressionism was grounded in experiences of the modern city.

It is often pointed out that these ideals were embodied in Baudelaire's notion of the *flâneur*. This modern citizen-hero was an indigenous by-product of the new urban society. Baudelaire saw him as an enviable sort of being, a gentleman-dandy whose financial independence allowed him to cultivate the aesthetic and rise above the mere crowd. The *flâneur* was the model for a new kind of vision. He would stroll about the town, through its new parks or along its endless boulevards, without particular direction, for the purpose of enjoyment, as one might do when taking a break from work, except that time off could last all day. Infiltrating society to see up close but maintaining distance as if observing through a spyglass, a *flâneur* would experience in the crowds a strange combination of anonymity and intimacy very similar to the fascinating combination of directness and detachment that one often senses in Impressionist work. For Baudelaire, this detached but inquisitive gaze embodied the modern human condition because it originated in the need to maintain individual integrity against the threat of anonymity in densely populated and democratically accessible urban spaces. Some art historians attribute what is perceived as Impressionist anomie—a sense of randomness and indifference—to the unfamiliarity of these surroundings and the alienating experience that accompanied them. But few paintings are made literally from the *flâneur*'s viewpoint, and many urban views seem to affirm the viewer's power over the environment. Nor can one assume that the *flâneur*'s experience of urban spaces was negative.⁹

The artist through whom Baudelaire exemplified his theories was the illustrator Constantin Guys (1802–92). According to Baudelaire, Guys's rapid, sketchlike style (see *Meeting in the Park*, ca. 1860, Figure 8) embodied both the volatile passion and rapt fascination of the naive observer (one unencumbered by outworn conventions) and the modern ideal of efficiency (the greatest effect produced with the most economy of means). At the time Baudelaire was writing, no painter had yet grasped this connection, although the Impressionists would eventually express it. Baudelaire had for at least a decade

been praising illustrators and authors of the occasional piece—journalists like himself, for that was how he made his own meager living. He knew firsthand, from the writer's point of view, that a certain short, rapid form of article, the *feuilleton* rather than the extended tome or pedantic dissertation, was required by the economic realities of modern publishing. The literate—though not necessarily cultivated—public, which increasingly meant the middle classes, demanded succinct, incisive, and entertaining work. In the best of such writing, Baudelaire admired agile summarization and witty expression, for through them an individual could leave a stamp on mere journalistic reportage that transformed it into art. This, for him, was the manner of modern writing.

22 In visual media Baudelaire sought similar traits, discovering equivalents in graphic works—caricature and outdoor sketching—both of which are directly tied to observation yet express the artist's personal temperament. Baudelaire's attitude was that reality could be only the basis for art, not the substance of it. On these grounds, he abhorred photography and presumably would have disparaged those aspects of Impressionist naturalism associated with its ostensible literalism. In the 1870s the imagery that Baudelaire held to be modern had come to be associated with the urban manifestations of naturalism, but he would have demanded that the temptations of photographic realism be resisted and transcended through the imaginative and aestheticizing means that he admired in graphic and journalistic arts. Photography was anchored in the present. Any painting that echoed photography would be similarly bound to temporality and hence incapable of providing the lift to imagination that Baudelaire required of art. For Baudelaire, the true medium for visual art was color, which had the ability not only to represent the world in a way related to actual seeing rather than conventional training but also to cele-



FIGURE 8. Constantin Guys, *Meeting in the Park*, ca. 1860. Pen and watercolor. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

brate quasi-musically an imaginative interpretation of it. As early as 1846 Baudelaire had urged “colorists” to exercise the “symphonic” effects of their art in portraying the “spectacle of elegance and the thousands of floating existences . . . that circulate . . . in a great city.”¹⁰ By *symphonic*, he was alluding to a kind of direct psychological impact of visual stimuli that bypassed the usual academic narratives, conveyed through sharply delineated forms and burnished surfaces. An art of color, in other words, embodied both a performative process of creativity and the psychological effect of its reception because of its physical stimulus to the act of viewing. Using their brilliant colors to enact their experience of vision, the Impressionists both represented and reshaped the world through new and optimistic eyes.

URBAN LANDSCAPE AND THE NEW PARIS

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The urban landscapes produced by the Impressionists are perhaps the most perfect expressions of the interdependence of leisure and productivity, embodied formally through a technique that conveys both the energies of city life and the leisurely glances of Baudelaire’s flâneur. City views were hardly new in art, but in Impressionism urban landscape emerged as a significant genre. Compared to eighteenth-century views of Rome featuring ancient ruins or the *vedute* of Venice by artists like Canaletto, which appealed to the nostalgia of primarily British patrons for the faraway Mediterranean, Impressionist views dwelt far more on the modern aspects of both city and countryside. Even Jan Vermeer’s famous and ostensibly accurate *View of Delft* (ca. 1662, Mauritshuis, The Hague), with its stillness and relatively few figures, seems to freeze its subject into a peaceful ideal rather than emphasize the transitory elements now associated with the contemporary. Closer to Impressionism in form and in time is *View of the Forum from the Farnese Gardens, Evening* (1826, Musée du Louvre, Paris), by the celebrated landscapist Camille Corot, the Impressionists’ immediate predecessor and sometime mentor, but its focus is a place that is heavily charged with nostalgia rather than somewhere local and contemporary.

One can make similar comparisons between Impressionist and Dutch paintings of country roads, or between Corot’s painting *Route de Sèvres* of 1864 (Figure 9) and Alfred Sisley’s *Route de la Machine, Louveciennes* of 1873 (Figure 10). Although the Corot overlooks Paris from the Sèvres hilltop, the view is suffused in atmospheric perspective. The rustic fence along the road and Corot’s peasants suggest the timeless harmony of the countryside, even emphasizing its nostalgic attraction by placing the city in a sort of ineffable distance. The figure riding on a donkey hardly exemplifies a modern form of transportation. By contrast, Sisley’s painting is notable for its straight, wide stretch of road, which ran toward a local attraction, the mechanical wonder of the Machine of Marly (see Chapter 3). Its newly laid curbstones lend crispness to its geometry, emphasized in the vertical by the freshly planted trees along its edge.¹¹ Whether brand-new or a renovation, the road is a capacious corridor, allowing for speedy coaches and considerable traffic, and its breadth is emphasized by its emptiness. Even Armand Guillaumin’s winding *Route de Clamart à Issy* (ca. 1876, Plate 3) has the specificity of the modern. Its carefully graded S-curve is counterpointed by bordering saplings, evenly spaced. From near Issy-les-Moulineaux, where he sometimes painted with Cézanne, Guillaumin is looking northeast. Western Paris—as yet not fully developed—lies in the distance, identifiable by the dome of the Invalides Church, four or five kilometers (approximately two and a half to three miles) away. The gray shape to

the right, just visible above some trees, is probably the fort of Issy; a house of recent design is at the center of the picture, and a train headed to Montparnasse Station on the Orléans line, for which Guillaumin once worked, crosses from left to right behind it in the middle distance.

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These road scenes contrast markedly with the previous generation of landscapes, located in solitary woodlands, away from all but the most primitive and rustic lanes. For painters of earlier generations, the road, when present at all, was secondary to the picturesque experience of an outlying village, country estate, or geological curiosity. In Impressionism, suburban roads and city streets are themselves places of meaningful activity; however banal they may appear to us today, they usually signified modernity to the nineteenth-century viewer. Even when empty, perhaps especially when empty, as in these images, the road implies the potential for the mobility and access at the heart of the modern economy. Like trains, roads suggest the freedom to travel and expand one's range. In focusing on manmade elements in the landscape, Impressionist paintings imply the extension of human control over nature through the creation of an infrastructure for transportation and commerce over and through it. Although Impressionists seldom portrayed heavily traveled thoroughfares except inside the city, the theme of the road is inextricably linked to these ideas. As relative newcomers to the suburban sites they portrayed, the artists availed themselves of both the autonomy and the anonymity that these public spaces provided. Roads outside town were often unbounded by stone walls or the fences of private property holdings, as well as free from encumbering vegetation. Here the artists could concentrate, relatively undisturbed, whereas in the narrower and more populated streets at the center of the villages their presence would have been more conspicuous. The improved roads not only carried goods to ever-expanding Parisian markets but, as in Renoir's charming *Route de Louveciennes* (1873, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), opened the countryside to the bourgeoisie, giving them access to the expanding weekend commerce of restaurants and recreation spots, as well as safe fresh-air promenades, without losing their connection to the familiar and secure modern urban world.

In city views the specificity of the modern landscape was far more visible and recognizable to the public than in suburban or country scenes, so the former were even better vehicles for redefining

FIGURE 9. Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, *Route de Sèvres*, 1864. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.



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FIGURE 10. Alfred Sisley, *Route de la Machine, Louveciennes*, 1873. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

landscape painting. Armand Guillaumin was a pioneer of urban landscape, in which he very often featured the activity of public workers and infrastructure renovations. Bridge construction and the reshaping of the Seine embankments had been among the imperial improvements to the capital under Napoleon I, who contributed four new bridges across the Seine. Under the Second Empire and then under the Third Republic, further renovations and additions strengthened the investment in infrastructure, advancing plans to open the flow of traffic on both the river and the city streets. Widening of the embankments to provide access to the river as an open space at street level was a high priority in Haussmann's projects. Stairways to lower-level embankments (*les berges*) and to the river itself were also built. Two plates from T. J. H. Hoffbauer's *Paris à travers les âges* compare the Petit Pont and the Place du Petit Pont in 1830 and 1880 (Figure 11).¹² Buildings that had been constructed right to the edge of the river, preventing access other than from cross streets, were removed, and wide streets were built along the river's length. Even the bridges themselves, with their broad central piers, were replaced by far less bulky designs that allowed for more unobstructed river traffic.

Haussmann also added two new bridges, bringing the city's total to twenty-eight. The Pont National (originally named the Pont Napoléon III) to the southeast, one of Paris's longest bridges, and the Pont du Point du Jour with the Viaduc d'Auteuil (replaced in 1966 and now called Pont de Garigliano) to the southwest were added at the extremities of Paris, where new exterior boulevards crossed the Seine. The Pont de Bercy and the Pont des Invalides were both converted from suspension bridges to stone and iron structures in 1854–55. Some of Paris's most central bridges, such as the Pont Saint-Michel, rebuilt in 1857, had to be widened to accommodate Haussmann's plan for a main north-south



FIGURE 11. The Petit Pont and adjacent riverbanks before (ca. 1830) and after (ca. 1880) Haussmann's renovations. T. J. H. Hoffbauer, *Paris à travers les âges*, vol. 2 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1885), plates 4 and 5 (following p. 60).

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axis along the Boulevard Saint-Michel, across L'Île de la Cité to the Pont au Change (rebuilt 1858–59) and the Place du Châtelet to the Boulevard de Sébastopol. The Pont de Solférino (1858–59, replaced by a pedestrian bridge in 1960) was added, and the Pont d'Arcole (1854–55) and Pont Saint-Louis (1861), formerly the Passerelle de la Cité, were reconstructed, using wide cast-iron spans. The Pont Louis-Philippe was replaced in 1861 by a new bridge built of stone immediately next to it on the up-river side, and a new street was cut through the Île Saint-Louis to join with the Pont Saint-Louis.¹³

The majority of these projects took place in Armand Guillaumin's territory, for his studio was on the Quai d'Anjou of the Île Saint-Louis, the smaller and quieter sister island of the Île de la Cité. He made several paintings that record embankment construction and other river activity (see Chapter 3) in these areas of Paris, as well as along the more industrial parts of the Seine near the city limits toward Bercy, Charenton, and Ivry to the east and over by Grenelle and Le Point du Jour to the west. As an employee of the Department of Bridges and Roads (Ponts et Chaussées), Guillaumin took a special interest in and had special access to such places and projects. A painting of *Le Pont Marie* (ca. 1875, SF 108, Musée du Petit-Palais, Geneva) shows digging on the Quai de l'Hôtel de Ville, opposite the Île Saint-Louis. Visible at an angle under one of its arches is the old pedestrian crossing at the end of the Île Saint-Louis. It was replaced by the Pont de Sully in 1876.¹⁴ Several other paintings are set along the embankments of the Île Saint-Louis itself—Quai d'Anjou and Quai de Béthune. Guillaumin's painting of the new Pont Louis-Philippe (*Pont Louis-Philippe with Laundry Boats*, 1875, Figure 12) is one of his most interesting pictures from this general period. The bridge itself, connecting the Île Saint-Louis to the Right Bank west of the Pont Marie, replaced a span of older design that had proven too narrow and whose heavy piers obstructed river traffic. The new construction had been the subject of an album of photographs published by Hippolyte-Auguste Collard in 1862 (Figure 13). Collard's album had been commissioned by the Ponts et Chaussées administration. Guillaumin's location is the Quai Bourbon on the Île Saint-Louis looking west. To the left, buildings from the neighboring Île de la Cité jut out behind the bridge. In his painting, Guillaumin's primary interest is in the activity of the docking and loading area in the foreground. The unusually large and heavily loaded barges in the foreground, with their slatted compartments, are laundry-washing boats, toward which some washerwomen are moving. In this case, the boats seem somewhat far from the embankment, and a worker carrying a large board may indicate that they are being moved or renovated. Although several such craft along



FIGURE 12 (TOP). Armand Guillaumin, *Pont Louis-Philippe with Laundry Boats*, 1875. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
FIGURE 13 (LEFT). Hippolyte Collard, *View of the Pont Louis-Philippe*, photograph, 1861. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.
FIGURE 14 (RIGHT). Hippolyte Collard, *Floating Storage Barges on the Canal de Saint-Ouen*, photograph, ca. 1864. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

the river can be seen in numerous photographs of the Paris Seine, Guillaumin's close-up composition is rare, anticipated only by an unusual photograph by Collard from the 1860s, *Floating Storage Barges on the Canal de Saint-Ouen* (Figure 14). Both images document the new accessibility of the river to such massive vehicles, thanks to the modernization of the Paris bridges.¹⁵

A painting previously misidentified as representing the Pont Marie along the Quai Sully actually shows the new Haussmannian Pont d'Arcole (*Pont d'Arcole from the Quai de l'Hôtel de Ville*, ca. 1875, Figure 15). Here Guillaumin has traveled past the Pont Louis-Philippe along the same embankment from which he painted *Le Pont Marie* and is looking west rather than east. The Pont d'Arcole

(1854–55) was a bridge of bold design that used a single span of cast-iron arches across the Seine. In fact, bridges had been among the first structures to utilize cast-iron elements. The earliest example was erected in England in the late 1770s. A lithograph of 1863 from *Paris dans sa splendeur* shows the Pont d'Arcole span, with a single stone arch on the embankment, as in Guillaumin's painting.¹⁶ Similar spans were celebrated in photographs by Collard, including one from a startling viewpoint showing off the underside of the structure of the Pont de Grenelle during its reconstruction (Figure 16). Collard captured similar views for the Pont Louis-Philippe and others. But Guillaumin never resorted to such visual dramatics, and here he employs a more traditional composition that concentrates on the actual labor of reconfiguring the embankment rather than on the modern bridge behind it. His style in this and other paintings of the 1870s often seems like a compromise between the elegance of Monet and the more laboriously heavy-handed early Impressionist style of Cézanne, with whom Guillaumin had close ties in the late 1860s and early 1870s (see Chapter 3). Nonetheless, his seemingly endless line of horse-drawn wagons ready to remove sand dredged from the river testifies to continuing efforts under the Third Republic to complete Haussmann's vision for modernizing Paris.

In a relatively early work, *The Garden of the Infanta* (1867, Plate 4), Claude Monet gazed out across the Seine to the Left Bank of Paris from a window of the Louvre colonnade—the great museum's famous eastern façade, designed in the seventeenth century by the architect Claude Perrault. This ostensibly simple painting embodies several principles dear to Haussmann and declares the presence of a novel, urban form of landscape painting. For one thing, Monet was quite visibly turning his back on the old master works inside the Louvre. When he entered the museum, undoubtedly with a special artist's permit, as well as his palette, easel, and other equipment, it would have been presumed that he had come there to make study copies of the venerated pictures in the galleries. But *The Garden of the Infanta*, as well as two other pictures he made from the same vantage point, ostentatiously flouts that presumption to look out upon the city in its bright and colorful daylight.

In the immediate foreground of *The Garden of the Infanta* lies the garden itself, named for the Spanish princess who came to France to marry Louis XV in 1721. It has a smooth lawn, manicured flowerbeds, and newly planted trees. Thanks to Haussmann, Paris now had many similar small green spaces, even though this one was not originally of his making. Beyond the garden fence, to the left in the painting, is a tree-lined urban space that Haussmann did create in 1854, enhancing the garden by demolishing buildings across from the Louvre. His purpose was to open up the area between the palace and the Church of Saint-Germain L'Auxerrois in order to create better vistas and to proportion the area in relation to the newly widened and evened embankments alongside the Louvre. All were attractive gathering places for promenades. The church, and even more the islands of trees in front of it, were represented in one of the two other paintings Monet made from this same colonnade perch (*Saint-Germain L'Auxerrois*, 1866, W 84, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin). The widened Quai du Louvre is the subject of the third painting (*Quai du Louvre*, 1867, W 83, Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague), which has the same skyline as *The Garden of the Infanta* but is shown in early spring. All three pictures are similar in size, their principal difference being that the latter two were done in horizontal format.¹⁷ The angle of Monet's view in both *The Garden of the Infanta* and the *Quai du Louvre* is from the Right Bank of Paris looking over to the Left Bank and the Ile de la Cité, where the Cathedral of Notre-Dame is located on the left. In the center of these pictures, on the hill of Sainte-Geneviève, rises



FIGURE 15. Armand Guillaumin, *Pont d'Arcole from the Quai de l'Hôtel de Ville*, ca. 1875. Musée du Petit-Palais, Geneva.

FIGURE 16. Hippolyte Collard, *Pont de Grenelle from Below*, photograph, 1874. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

the Panthéon, where heroes of French culture and democracy were interred. It is framed by the Church of Val-de-Grâce to the right. It seems no accident that the French flag waves proudly on a tall pole on the quay in the middle ground. The new Paris was a matter of national pride, and Monet's picture declares a new genre of painting to celebrate it. Haussmann's planning of new streets and open spaces featured sight lines toward Paris's revered monuments—a perspective thus shared by these paintings.

30 Monet made two paintings of the Boulevard des Capucines (one, shown in Plate 2, at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and the other, W 292, at the Pushkin Museum in Moscow), again essaying both vertical and horizontal formats. The boulevards had special symbolic as well as commercial importance in the new Paris. According to Adolphe Joanne's *Paris illustré*, great cities were known by their gardens, their public spaces, and their promenades. London had its squares and Saint Petersburg its vistas, but Paris had, above all, its boulevards.¹⁸ The Boulevard des Capucines was one of the Grands Boulevards, which run from the Church of La Madeleine to the Place de la Bastille. Like the English word *bulwark* or the German word *Bollwerk*, the term originally referred to the fortifications on the traces of which these earliest grand avenues were built. Even though they are much identified with Haussmann's Paris, the Grands Boulevards were in fact laid out from 1670 to 1680 under Louis XIV, replacing the old city gates and walls maintained under previous reigns.¹⁹ The five-hundred-meter-long (just under a third of a mile) Boulevard des Capucines had been built up from approximately 1685 to 1705 with imposing private residences, most of which were destroyed under Haussmann to make way for what are now considered typical Paris apartment blocks with large stores on the high-ceilinged ground floor.²⁰ Both of Monet's versions of his composition include often ignored figures at the right edge who gaze out upon the crowds from the shallow balconies of such buildings. These residences combined luxury living and landlord profit, offering large apartments on their second and third floors (premier and deuxième étages, by French count) above the commercial locales, with progressively smaller lodgings higher up—the opposite of today's high-rise elevator buildings. Monet's well-dressed observers seem, from their location just above the awnings that protect the ground-floor shopping display windows, to be occupying one of the better apartments. Monet's viewpoint implies a sympathy with theirs. Gazing out upon the urban spectacle, they embody a self-confidence and pride of ownership, facilitated by the rise of such new buildings and access to their balconies.

The most notable feature of the Boulevard des Capucines in Monet's day was the young architect Charles Garnier's daring new opera house, the façades of which had already been revealed to the Parisian public even though its interior was still under construction in 1873–74, at the time of Monet's painting. With the opening up in 1862 of the Place de l'Opéra, which is traversed by the Boulevard des Capucines, Paris's luxury and commercial trade began a pronounced westward migration toward the Boulevard de la Madeleine. Under the Second Empire, stores such as La Maison de Blanc, Aux Trois Quartiers, La Maison Alphonse Giroux, and Auguste Klein de Vienne offered their extraordinary arrays to shoppers.²¹ During the Third Republic, which began in 1871, the Boulevard des Capucines, Boulevard des Italiens, and Rue de la Paix were called the Golden Triangle.²² In the early 1860s, the Compagnie Immobilière de Paris, owned by the Péreire brothers, built the Grand Hôtel on the entire triangular block at the corner of the Place de l'Opéra. It created a sensation and became a fashionable center of café society and dandyism. Writing in 1885, Phillip Gilbert Hamerton stated, with a certain Anglo-Saxon skepticism:

The true lovers of Paris . . . take a keen delight in those broad *trottoirs* [sidewalks] of the Boulevards. They walk upon them for the mere pleasure of being there, till absolute weariness compels them to sit down before a café; and when the feelings of exhaustion are over, they rise to tire themselves again, like a girl at a ball. They tell one that the mere sensation of the Parisian asphaltum under the feet is an excitement itself, so that when aided by “little glasses” in the moments of rest at the cafés, it must be positively intoxicating. These true lovers of Paris are most enchanted with those parts of the Boulevards where the crowd is always so dense that all freedom of motion is impossible; where half the foot-way is occupied by thousands of café chairs and the other half by a closely packed multitude of loungers.²³

In 1867 Alfred Delvau described a boulevard as “a place lined with trees and smiling women.”²⁴ He left unclear whether the women were courtesans or shoppers, but the term *haute bicherie* has been used by one historian to describe this environment.²⁵ Delvau specified that the greatest crowds were out between two and six in the afternoon, then again from nine o'clock to midnight.²⁶ During the day, according to Emile de La Bédollière, from the Porte de Saint-Denis to the Church of La Madeleine, “it is commerce that dominates. . . . In the stores that line the pavement important business dealings are brewing in porcelains, made-to-measure clothing, perfumes, bronzes, rugs, furs, travel accessories, and glass wares.”²⁷ Farther east along the boulevards, theaters and music halls proliferated, although in 1866–68 the Théâtre du Vaudeville was built on Boulevard des Capucines itself on the site of the Duke de Sommavira's former residence at the corner of the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin.²⁸ Such establishments attracted the nighttime crowd, about which Delvau warned: “Watch out, sir or dear foreigner, watch out! Little white-skinned women are watching you; your golden glasses are making them cross-eyed.” He advised those who wanted to observe “this amusing spectacle” to be seated at “one of the numerous cafés with which the genie of Speculation has ornamented our boulevards.”²⁹ Opinions thus agreed in presenting the boulevard as a place of spectacle that was tied to commercial activity. In 1867 Adolphe Joanne expressed a democratic pride in the mixture of social classes that the boulevards attracted.³⁰

In 1868 the Boulevard des Capucines was traversed by approximately twenty-three thousand horses daily.³¹ In Monet's paintings one sees this traffic from an upstairs window rather than a café table. Some pedestrians are flâneurs, to be sure, but most are probably walking with purpose and direction.³² Movement is suggested by the blur of Monet's sketchlike handling, for which the critic Louis Leroy showed distaste by satirically dismissing it as “black tongue-lickings.”³³ Since Monet was painting from Nadar's studio at 35 Boulevard des Capucines, he would have been looking northeast toward the Place de l'Opéra. The critic Castagnary was so sure of Monet's accuracy that he tried to locate his exact optical point of view.³⁴ The street that opens onto the boulevard from the left is the Rue Scribe (after Eugène Scribe, 1791–1861), one of three streets named after composers and librettists built in the Opéra's vicinity by Haussmann.³⁵ The building to the right of it, in the center of the Pushkin Museum painting's horizontal composition and center left in the Nelson-Atkins Museum painting's vertical format, is the recent Grand Hôtel itself. The open space to the right, just above the top-hatted observers, is the Place de l'Opéra. Judging by the relatively long shadow cast halfway across the street in the Pushkin Museum painting, the time is midafternoon in winter. The Impressionist exhibition held

in Nadar's studio was being planned as early as January 1874. Thus it seems likely that Monet would have made his views in winter 1873–74. The Nelson-Atkins Museum painting is a snow scene, and, rare as snow may be in Paris, it is certainly like Monet to portray varied weather conditions, lighting, and times of day, just as he experimented with horizontal and vertical formats.³⁶

By comparison, Auguste Renoir's slightly later painting *The Grands Boulevards* (1875, Figure 17) is more generalized in its representation of both the location and the season. The painter seems to be looking westward down the Boulevard des Capucines away from the Opéra. As is so often the case in Renoir's paintings, the viewer is closer to individual figures than in Monet's work, and there is a greater sense of interaction among them, as shown by the mother with her children in Renoir's foreground. Perhaps the painting is more about the shoppers themselves than about the general topic of crowds or commerce. Bourgeois women were rarely flâneuses because to stroll the city alone was considered improper. Shopping in family or other groups was their pretext.³⁷ More than the Monets, Renoir's picture gives a sense of the boulevards' reputation for light and air, with blurred forms suggesting almost the physicality of the atmosphere itself. Setting their sights, so to speak, to include the bustling scene of carriages and bourgeois crowds, both Monet and Renoir captured the attractive and prosperous life of those same upper middle classes whose leisure permitted their enjoyment of the amenities that Haussmann's renovations introduced. It is in such views that crowds of flâneurs and shoppers appear, evoking the interdependence of commerce and leisure.

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Another neighborhood closely identified with Haussmann's renovations was the Quartier de l'Europe, behind the Saint-Lazare Station and part of the former village of Batignolles, annexed to Paris under the Second Empire. Manet's studio was in the heart of this area, which provided the background for his painting of *The Railroad* (see Chapter 4). In at least three other paintings as well as a few drawings, Manet showed the Rue Mosnier, named for its developer when it was built along the edge of the rail yard in the early 1870s.³⁸ The street was later renamed Rue de Berne, in keeping with the neighborhood's European international theme. In one view of the Rue Mosnier, done from his studio window, Manet depicted workers laying paving stones (*Rue Mosnier with Pavers*, 1878, Figure 18), thus recording actual urban construction and echoing Guillaumin's themes, though not his style. In *Rue Mosnier with Flags* (1878, RW 216, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles), Manet contrasted the sharp clean lines of the new street with a one-legged man on crutches in the foreground. The flags indicate a national holiday, but one cannot be sure that Manet's view is celebratory. Is one to understand modern urbanization as a heartless imposition by a state-sponsored oligarchy over the needs of frailer human beings?³⁹ In an ink drawing from a slightly different angle, Manet showed a new gas lamp fixture and part of a locomotive beyond the fence to the left (*Rue Mosnier with Gas Lamp*, brush with lithographic ink, 1878, Art Institute of Chicago). From this drawing, one may surmise that behind the fence in *Rue Mosnier with Flags*, as in his *Railroad*, steam is rising upward from the tracks.

Gustave Caillebotte created a reputation for himself based on scenes located along nearby Haussmannian streets. His pictures have become much better known over the past twenty years, but they are still considered strange or anomalous within Impressionism unless one considers urban landscape to be at the heart of the modern landscape vision and the shock of the new to be among its sought-after effects, enhanced by innovative viewpoints adopted from photography. Caillebotte's *Pont de l'Europe* (1876, Plate 5) celebrated the complicated intersection of bridges over the Saint-Lazare



FIGURE 17. Auguste Renoir, *The Grands Boulevards*, 1875. Philadelphia Museum of Art.

FIGURE 18. Edouard Manet, *Rue Mosnier with Pavers*, 1878. Private collection

railroad yards (see Chapter 4). Its glaring light on a sunny day heightens the sense of ruthless geometric rigor underlying both the iron trestle structure and the streets that run across it. Recently constructed apartment houses, like the one in which Caillebotte, his mother, and his brother lived (his father had died in 1874), can be seen in the distance. They are also in the background of several of Monet's pictures of the Gare Saint-Lazare (see Chapter 4). In 1866 the Caillebotte family had purchased a parcel of land on the corner of the Rue de Miromesnil and the Rue de Lisbonne, west of the Place de l'Europe and thus behind the viewer. Hence, the male figure to the left in the painting, a self-portrait, is heading homeward, possibly soliciting a lady on his way. At this borderline between a residential area and a railway station, one encounters a mix of individuals, including workers in their smocks, clerks in bowler hats, and women of the world. Similarly, Caillebotte's representation of the built environment reflects the bold new lines of industrial construction and the imposing new housing blocks surrounding it. The painting's rapidly foreshortened perspective pulls the viewer inward, suggesting through spatial dynamism rather than sketchy brushstrokes the rush and movement of modern life.

Caillebotte's *Paris Street: Rainy Weather* (1877, Figure 19) places the viewer among the residential streets seen in the background of *Pont de l'Europe*. According to Juliet Wilson-Bareau, this view, carefully prepared through drawings, which may be tracings of photographs, looks north from the Rue de Turin, in front of the building numbered 16.⁴⁰ In the distance, directly behind the gas lamp in the center of the composition, is the Rue Clapeyron; to the right is the continuation of the Rue de Turin; to the left of the pharmacy on the corner with the Rue Clapeyron is the Rue de Moscou (see Figure 5). Hidden by the corner of the building at the right is the Rue de Saint-Petersbourg, where Manet lived. Descending from the Place de Clichy, it crossed through the intersection and continued, beyond the frame to the left, toward the Place de l'Europe. This was one of those star intersections beloved by Haussmann, the most famous of which is the Place de l'Etoile, which he designed around the Arch of Triumph at what is now called the Place Charles de Gaulle. Although now a pedestrian nightmare, such intersections—the one in Caillebotte's picture being a mere eight streets compared to l'Etoile's eleven grand avenues—gave the city clear-cut focal points and imposing vistas. Caillebotte's painting optically emphasizes this environment's visual impact through its pronounced perspective. Its vast expanse of pavement and seemingly interminable blocks of buildings with uniform elevations surely contribute to a sense of anonymity that upset many of Haussmann's critics. Even the painter Renoir, writing in 1877, complained to the editor of *L'Impressionniste*, his friend Georges Rivière, that Paris's quaint old buildings had been replaced by structures that were "cold and lined up like soldiers at a review."⁴¹ If nothing else, Renoir's comment pays tribute to the rational and ordering impetus of such reconfigurations of the natural environment. If Caillebotte's painting was intended to celebrate such effects, a comparison with Renoir's *The Grands Boulevards* reveals the degree to which the latter had softened their harshness.

There are several picture types within Caillebotte's urban views of the later 1870s, but almost all of them look back to *A Young Man at His Window* (1875, Figure 20). In this painting, Caillebotte's brother René is shown from behind gazing out from the family's third-floor apartment at 77 Rue Miromesnil, on the corner of the Rue de Lisbonne. Prominent in his field of vision is a solitary woman crossing into the Boulevard Malesherbes.⁴² The young man's gaze at her provides a concrete instance of the presiding urban vision of the age—that of the upper-middle-class professionals whose city their



FIGURE 19. Gustave Caillebotte, *Paris Street: Rainy Weather*, 1877. Art Institute of Chicago.
FIGURE 20. Gustave Caillebotte, *A Young Man at His Window*, 1875. Private collection.



confreere Haussmann had delivered to them. Later, following the death of René in 1876 and his mother in 1878, Gustave and his younger brother Martial moved to a fourth-floor apartment on the Boulevard Haussmann just behind the new Opéra. From there the painter executed most of his other urban views.⁴³ They include figures looking down from outdoor balconies—like those at the right-hand edge of Monet's *Boulevard des Capucines*. Some examples are *Man on a Balcony* (1880, B 149, private collection, Switzerland) and *A Balcony* (1880, B 146, private collection, Paris), both of which were done from Caillebotte's apartment overlooking the Boulevard Haussmann. In the former, a gentleman looks up toward the Place Saint-Augustin from the corner behind the Opéra, where the Rue Scribe and the Rue Gluck converge as they enter the Boulevard Haussmann. The latter was painted from a position on Caillebotte's balcony along the Boulevard Haussmann. Through the foliage to the left, one can just make out the Rue Lafayette where it merges with the Chaussée d'Antin as they encounter the Boulevard Haussmann. Although done from higher up than *A Young Man at His Window*, these views embody less of a domineering and anonymous vision, now suggesting a pleasurable participation in the aesthetic enjoyments afforded by clean and leafy thoroughfares.

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FIGURE 21. Gustave Caillebotte, *Rue Halévy, Seen from the Sixth Floor*, 1878. Private collection.



FIGURE 22. Gustave Caillebotte, *Rooftops: Snow Effect*, 1878. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

A comparison between *Rue Halévy, Seen from the Sixth Floor* (1878, Figure 21) and *Rooftops: Snow Effect* (1878, Figure 22) suggests the contrast between new and old Paris visible from servants' room windows on the top floor. The former was done from the corner of the Rue Lafayette and the Boulevard Haussmann, diagonally across from Caillebotte's building, which is on the right.⁴⁴ Carpeaux's rooftop statues on the Opéra are visible beyond it. Rue Halévy, bearing the name of the opera composer Jacques-Fromental Halévy (1799–1862), was one of the new streets surrounding the opera house; like the Rue Scribe, which it parallels to the east of the opera house, it runs from the Boulevard Haussmann to the Boulevard des Capucines. Even though Caillebotte's handling is softer and the effect more atmospheric than in his *Pont de l'Europe* or *Paris Street: Rainy Weather*, the geometric blocks, their shapes emphasized by balcony railings, and the near-monochromatic tonality lend some support to the arguments of those who saw Haussmann's new Paris as impersonal and monotonous. By contrast, *Rooftops* and Caillebotte's similar compositions in this category present a disorganized jumble of buildings, doubtless from the interior streets untouched by Haussmann's wrecking crew. Caillebotte must have worked from a window at the rear of a Haussmann-period building—one that did not overlook a new street or boulevard but was nonetheless higher up than older houses.⁴⁵

