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Walking and Representation in Nineteenth-Century Paris

by

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Introduction

An illustrative map of Paris from 1867, tellingly entitled *Excursions Dans Paris Sans Voitures* (*Excursions in Paris without Carriages*), depicts the city as entirely available to the pedestrian. The artist, Hilaire Guesnu, portrays Paris from an elevated vantage point west of the city. The Arc de Triomphe, towering over western Paris in the bottom-center of the frame, serves as the map's monumental subject—a protagonist of sorts. It looks straight down the Avenue Des Champs Élysées to the Place de la Concorde, the Palais des Tuileries, the Louvre, and at the end of its vista, to the Colonne de Juillet in the Place de la Bastille. The Arc's view of these landmarks is unobstructed, as prominent elements of the cityscape such as monuments, churches, parks and government buildings are the only features of the city included in this representation. The rest of the city—its residential buildings, its slums, its commercial institutions and industrial districts—is absent. As it is portrayed, Paris is a series of remarkable sights, connected by a web of linear streets that weave through swaths of seemingly empty space.

The map evokes a strong feeling of order and tranquility in the metropolis. The interconnected roadways, the parallel bridges crossing the Seine and the inactivity—save a few small boats on the river and quaint trains rolling along the city-limits—all impute a serenity and rationality to the capital. In viewing the map, one's

eyes inadvertently create connections between the various components of the city – the Arc de Triomphe comes into dialogue with the Colonne de Juillet across space, and the Boulevard Haussmann seemingly shortens the span between the Place d'Etoile and the Place de Château d'Eau (now Place de la République) in the east. Because of the aerial perspective and the distorted scale, the whole city can be apprehended at once, as a unified totality. As the map's name suggests, this representation of Paris purports to capture the experience of walking in the city. It conveys the ease and pleasure of moving through Paris on foot, and the imminent treasures that await the itinerant stroller.

In fact, a pedestrian on the streets of Paris in 1867 would have encountered a far different city than the one portrayed in the map. After fourteen years of redevelopment projects under the purview of the autocratic Emperor Napoleon III and his urban planner Georges-Eugène Haussmann – projects which carved long linear boulevards through the dense city-plan – Paris remained indelibly hectic, filthy, and disorienting. The city as represented in *Excursions* is incongruent with the city as perceived in the hypothetical pedestrian's experience.

However, this disjunction between representation and perceptual experience is not a fixed quality of nineteenth-century Paris. During the July Monarchy (1830-1848), the era preceding Napoleon III's reign, the prevailing representations of the city mostly reflected the city as it was perceived in experience. The 1830s and 40s played host to a proliferation of texts about the city, which both informed and were informed by an emerging culture of walking. The dynamic and, I will argue, dialectical relationship between representation and spatial practice (a term I take from Henri Lefebvre's writings on space, denoting the perceptual apprehension of space,

i.e. one's movement through and relation to a spatial context) engendered a codified and scrutinized practice called "flânerie," embodied in the street-figure, the "flâneur."

As imagined and defined in literature of the era, the flâneur is a bourgeois man, whose artistic vocation affords him the financial liberty (and perhaps requires him) to spend his days walking in the city. He strolls aimlessly throughout the capital, but is particularly endeared to the arcades – covered passageways lined with commercial boutiques, built in the early part of the century and popularized during the July Monarchy. Therein, the flâneur perfects his practice, ambling languidly from end to end, peering into storefronts (but never purchasing anything), observing others, and displaying himself. While the flâneur prides himself on his detachment from society – walking alone, disengaged from commercial activity and feigning anonymity – he cultivates his identity through public demonstration. His practice epitomizes the union of spatial practice and identity-formation that flourished in the July Monarchy and the Second Empire (1852-1870), for pedestrians of all types. The flâneur walks to see and to be seen. Being visually recognized as a flâneur by strangers both affirms his status as a flâneur, and informs his sense-of-self. Thus the street-figure actualizes his identity by performing it in his spatial practice – walking as a flâneur, according to the dictates of the practice.

This interpenetration of spatial practice and identity-formation mediated by visual exchange is a fragile dynamic, with numerous contingencies. As the city underwent a radical transformation during the Second Empire, flânerie and the triangulation of walking, vision and identity also changed. Haussmann's sweeping reconfiguration of Paris at once rendered the city more hospitable to walking and made it increasingly difficult to move autonomously in urban space. His

improvements – the creation of wide straight boulevards, the modernization of the sewage system, and the construction of parks, to name a few – were largely underpinned by political agendas. Following sixty years of political instability, including three revolutions in which the city had repeatedly proven instrumental to insurrection, the city-planner and his superior attacked Paris' amenability to subversive activity through imbuing urban space with disciplinary power. In effect, the city became an apparatus of control, a medium through which authority was deployed. One can identify this aspect of the redevelopment in the destruction of historically seditious neighborhoods in the east, the increased visibility of structures of authority such as churches and government buildings, and the safeguarding of boulevards against barricade-construction. The new city was thus designed to regulate and regularize movement in public space. The effect of its functionalized city-plan and its latent ideological content was to repress the articulation of individuality on the streets. Ultimately, the political subtext of Haussmannization worked to diminish the agency of the pedestrian.

On these grounds, a great deal of scholarship on 19th century Paris has located the death of the flâneur in the Second Empire. As it is argued, the city's increasing administration of its inhabitants made the freedom of movement and comportment upon which flânerie was predicated impossible. However, this position does not take into account the ways in which Haussmannization failed to fully realize the politicization of urban space. As a city-planner, Haussmann primarily related to the capital conceptually, through abstract renderings of the metropolis such as maps and blueprints. This position of remove, similar to the aerial vantage point by which Paris is seen in *Excursions*, separated the planner from the city and from the actual urban

experience, thus undermining his efforts to mobilize space in the service of the Empire. The same discrepancy between the city as represented in *Excursions Dans Paris Sans Voitures* and the city as encountered in perceptual experience characterizes the contrasts between the planner's conception of Paris and the Paris he created.

In the gulf between his conceived Paris – itself a representation – and the city as perceived by the pedestrian, there existed the potential for continued agency in spatial practice. In the prose poems of Charles Baudelaire, published as a collection entitled *Le Spleen de Paris* (*Paris Spleen*), one can identify the flâneur of the Second Empire in the poems' uniform narrators. In this incarnation, the street-figure develops a new spatial practice that insulates and protects him from the oppressiveness of city-life. Through his alienation from Paris, the Baudelairian flâneur thrives in it. As a poet, he has the "incomparable privilège" of engaging the city autonomously, plumbing his setting for the content of his artistic creations.[1] In his fusion of flânerie with his artistic practice, the flâneur of the Second Empire becomes an artist-flâneur. Like his predecessor, the Baudelairian flâneur assumes the perspectives of others, not solely to look back upon himself, but to look out into the world with new eyes, a new persona and a new experience. His agile movement through varied perceptual positions is intoxicating. As he engages with the spaces, people and objects of the city, the artist-flâneur imbues them with his imagination, creating new meanings throughout the metropolis. This constellation of personalized signifiers becomes itself a sort of metaphorical urban system – a dream city filled with the content of his own reverie.[2] This dream city is also a representation of Paris, but unlike the predominant and fallacious representation of the city posited by

Haussmann, it reflects and affirms the artist-flâneur's perceptual experience in the metropolis. In this way, the dialectical poles of flânerie remain in productive tension, thereby enabling the flâneur to continue his practice, in spite of the city's inherent hostility towards it.

Towards the end of the Second Empire, Paris underwent yet another major transformation, as modern commercialism instilled itself into the space of the city with the rise of the department store. This development is portrayed in *Au Bonheur Des Dames* (*The Ladies' Paradise*), a novel by Émile Zola, written in 1883 but set in the last years of Napoleon III's reign. The fictional story charts the rise of Au Bonheur Des Dames, a thriving department store in the 2nd Arrondissement. The story is concurrent with the poems of *Le Spleen de Paris*, but the metropolis in which it transpires is vastly different from the one in which Baudelaire's artist-flâneur roams. In Zola's representation, the capital is entirely subjugated to the project of commerce. Octave Mouret, the store's guileful owner, inundates the city with signifiers of his institution, through pioneering techniques of advertisement and display. As the store grows in both profitability and in physical size, the narrative increasingly includes figurative motifs that convey the expansion of the store's range of influence over the city. By the end of the novel, the space of Paris is not simply the platform for Bonheur's activity and self-display, it is intrinsically commercial, reconstituted in the service of the store.

That this formation of urban space disfavors the practice of flânerie is evidenced by the street-figure's hypothetical experience within the department store. Mouret is scrupulous with the configuration of his showrooms, laboring to perfect their conduciveness to financial success. While the interior conveys itself as a

feminine space to the clientele, it simultaneously suppresses individuating qualities such as gender, class and sexuality through the generation of massive crowds, in which customers can neither see clearly nor move freely. Again, the narrative's figurative elaboration of this aspect of Bonheur implicitly suggests an interpretation – the department store is fundamentally dehumanizing, requiring for its success the subsumption of individuals into a mass of consumers. With regard to the flâneur, this reading holds a more nuanced significance: in spaces of commerce, the components of the union of walking vision and identity are not only divorced from one another, they are individually dislocated from an individual's control and administered by the structure of authority. In the crowds of Bonheur, spatial practice is regulated, sight is impaired and individuality is effaced. While the flâneur does not appear in Zola's novel, one can infer his probable dissatisfaction in Mouret's establishment. He could neither move as he wished, nor actualize his identity through visual exchange. The gendered status of the interior rounds off the flâneur's total alienation from the department store, which proves antithetical to his practice in every aspect.

Considering the extension of Bonheur's authority out into the space of the city, it follows that the flâneur is similarly estranged from the streets of Zola's Paris. Whereas the artist-flâneur of Baudelaire's city survives because of the contradiction between his perceptual experience of Paris and the dominant representation of it as posited by Haussmann, in the Paris of *Au Bonheur Des Dames*, both components of the dialectic of flânerie affirm the immutable presence of commerce in the urban center. With the rise of the department store, the space of possibility for the practice is thereby occluded, leaving the flâneur to roam the streets of his irreclaimable city, in which he is now indistinguishable from the crowds.

In many respects, the discourse on nineteenth-century Paris has all but exhausted the subject. The literature, space and history of the city have been conjoined as a subject of multi-disciplinary scrutiny since Walter Benjamin's seminal and unfinished writings thereon, to which my project is greatly indebted. In the almost seventy years since the thinker's death, the study of nineteenth-century Paris has not strayed very far from the texts, events and aspects of the city which Benjamin explored, no doubt because of both the insightfulness and breadth of his work. Balzac's *Le Père Goriot* (*Old Goriot*), Baudelaire's *Le Spleen de Paris* and Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames* have all received ample and illuminating attention from academia, to the benefit of students of the city such as myself.

My own interests in these texts and this subject differ somewhat from traditional inquiries. First and foremost, I am interested in the space of nineteenth-century Paris—how it was produced, reconfigured, employed and experienced—not solely as it existed historically, but also how it is portrayed in literary representation. The flâneur has been central to this investigation, as his experience in the city is well-documented and extensively studied. Primarily however, the paradigm has been useful in theoretical analysis, as a sort of embodied medium through which I examine spatial dynamics within the city. I offer only the most basic of character sketches of this mythic figure.

My literary analyses are similarly specific in their scope and intentions. The literary works that I analyze were chosen because of their intricate and contrasting depictions of walking and of the city. With each work, I look almost exclusively at how the city and the practice of walking are represented and assessed on the levels of

narrative and story (i.e. the position of the narrator in contrast to that of the characters). However, the specificity of my criteria has not prevented me from exploring related issues such as class and gender, to name just two. Indeed, any attempt to understand space without adequate recognition of its numerous contingencies would no doubt fall short. Nonetheless, my engagement of texts on the city is circumscribed, and as such, unorthodox. My hope is that by omitting standard topics of literary analysis, I will be able to offer a more thorough investigation of the complexities surrounding space as represented and experienced.

My study of the discourse's canonical works of literature, and more generally, the interpretative model through which I assess the space of nineteenth-century Paris is greatly informed by the writings of Henri Lefebvre and Michel De Certeau. Their theories on the production, regulation, and makeup of space are foundational to my analysis of Haussmannization, and integral to my overall methodological approach. The places at which I diverge from traditional interpretations of the nineteenth-century city spring from my application of these theoretical frameworks, and point to the relative absence of these thinkers in this discourse heretofore. By infusing them into this area of study, I hope not only to bring new aspects of the subject to light, but also to open the discourse up to new interpretations in further academic inquiries.

Furthermore, the works of Lefebvre and De Certeau have made me aware of certain potentially problematic aspects of my own approach to studying nineteenth-century Paris. After all, literary depictions of the city are in themselves representations, which – like the vantage point of *Excursions Dans Paris Sans Voitures*, as well as Haussmann's conceptual relation to the city – by their nature fall short of fully grasping or conveying the urban experience. It would be tempting to

take these representations as historical artifacts – empirical accounts of what life in the city really was like in the 1800s. Such a tack would render literary representation synonymous with perceptual experience, effectively blurring the line between writing and urban systems.

We see this premise at work in Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson's book: *Paris as Revolution: Writing the Nineteenth-Century City*. As its title suggests, the book considers the city as read and written—the capital as a "vast urban text."[3] Ironically, the scholar justifies this position by citing De Certeau:

> If reading the city has become a commonplace, we do well to remember that we are able to undertake such readings, as Michel De Certeau reminds us, only because of the properties the urban text shares with written or more specifically literary texts. (Ferguson 5)

Ferguson is right in recognizing the theorist's equation of urban space with a kind of textual system, yet according to De Certeau, the very notion that the city can be "read" imputes a comprehensibility, or legibility to urban space that belies and overlooks the city as it is perceived in experience, turning it into "the fiction that creates readers…"[4] In folding the categories of text and city into one another, Ferguson not only reveals her misreading of De Certeau, she also inadvertently aligns herself with apparatuses of power like Haussmann and his team of urban-planners, who saw the city as comprehensible, thus administrable and amenable to the political agendas of the Empire.

To avoid this sort of problematic analysis of space, I take pains in this study to uphold the distinction between representations of nineteenth-century Paris and the city as it was historically, and as it is experienced by literary characters. Despite the historical accuracy of much of the literature, I do not take these works to be fact, nor do I wish to situate their differing representations of Paris on a linear chronology of a

single city. Rather, I will examine the configurations of the city portrayed as a set of shifting urban systems, overlapping on the physical and historical space of Paris, both within temporal history and outside of it. It is my hope that, through carefully maintaining these distinctions, the tension between representation and perceptual experience will animate their interrelation, and create the space for new insight into the nineteenth-century city.

1. Transitional Spaces: *Le Père Goriot*, the Flâneur and the Arcade

During the first half of the nineteenth-century, there were a number of compelling reasons for avoiding the streets of Paris. The urban plan defied navigation, the patchwork sewage system expelled its contents into the streets during light rains, and the uniformly narrow sidewalks forced pedestrians to take their chances amongst the horse-drawn carriages weaving through the streets. City-life was perpetually disrupted by forces of nature, and the remarkably inadequate infrastructure only further aggravated the disorder. In sum, it was not a pleasant place to take a stroll.

In *Le Père Goriot*, written in 1834-1835 and set in 1819, these exasperating conditions are present in the story as a perpetual annoyance to the characters, as well as in the narrative as a number of motifs and metaphors. The novel, part of the series, *Scènes de la Vie Privée* (*Scenes from a Private Life*) from Balzac's *La Comédie Humaine* (*The Human Comedy*), is a bildungsroman that follows the ascent of Eugène de Rastignac, a young law student from the countryside, in Paris' hazardous social world. While, as Balzac often reminds the reader, the setting is essential to the story, its significance is ambiguous for both the narrator and for the characters. Despite its import, Paris in its physical form is all but absent in the novel. When characters walk in the city (and few do so by choice), the public spaces through which they move are

never illustrated in the narrative. The physical city is portrayed only through metaphor, represented alternately as an ocean, a forest, a vast pit of mud and a beehive. Through such tropes, Balzac conveys the degree to which pre-1850s Paris – in its numerous deficiencies – was vulnerable to the forces of nature. The city, disorderly and in a sense uncontrollable, seems less a physical manifestation of civilization than a natural phenomenon in itself. Herein, the basis for walking's marginalized status in the novel becomes clear. In the Paris of *Le Père Goriot*, the practice is not only disagreeable but dangerous, not only avoided but stigmatized.

The narrative disregard for public space in its physical form is put into relief by its overwhelming attention to interior space. Descriptions of interiors often linger on minute physical details: "Opposite the window stood a chest of drawers made of rosewood, one of the old fashioned kind with a bulging front and brass handles representing twisted vine stems bearing leaves or flowers."[5] The disparity between the narrative's consideration of interior and exterior space corresponds to the characters' estimation and use of the two spatial categories—the vast majority of the story unfolds in the privately owned residences of the city's inhabitants. In this representation, Paris is secluded; life takes place indoors. The streets are not only worth avoiding, they aren't worth depicting.

This conception of the street, displayed in *Goriot* both by narrator and by characters, is challenged by the contemporaneous emergence of flânerie—a circumscribed practice of walking in the public spaces of the city. According to Louis Huart's *Physiologie du Flâneur* (1841), a whole subset of Parisians—male, artistic, and of some socio-economic distinction—relished strolls in the city streets, the quays and the parks. The popularity of Huart's text and others like it points to the

public's fascination with flânerie, contributing in turn to the practice's rising appeal. Huart's *Physiologie* reflects some of the pitfalls of streetwalking prominent in *Goriot*, such as mud, rain and carriages. Yet he also writes fondly of a component of the urban landscape that is essential to flânerie – and one that is all but absent from representations and conceptions of the city in *Père Goriot* – the arcade.

Built primarily in the 1820s and 1830s, these boutique-lined glass and iron passageways became immensely popular sites for leisurely promenades, changing the way Parisians thought about the city and moved within it. They provided safe haven from the dangers of the street, and brought individuals into visual contact with a larger, more diverse swath of Parisian society, within a highly-commercialized setting. As a spatial type, the arcade is neither a true interior nor exterior. I will argue that this ambiguous status mirrors the arcade's place in the development of Parisian spatial practice and personal identity formation over the course of the first half of the 19th century. Balzac's novel foregrounds those opinions, practices, and conditions that the advent of the arcade either transformed or rendered obsolete, such as the lopsided preference of the interior, the prominence of natural forces in a city-dweller's conception of the city and quotidian experience, and the marginalization of walking. The flâneur, who owes his existence to this new component of the city, both embodies and performs the transitions it induced—moving through the arcade, out into the streets.

* * *

> There is no city, no urban space without a garden or park, without the simulation of nature, without labyrinths, the evocation of the ocean or

forest, without trees tormented into strange and inhuman shapes. - Henri Lefebvre[6]

Like many of his contemporaries, Balzac was a great admirer of James Fennimore Cooper. The French author was fond of inserting the more colorful content of Cooper's stories – savage natives, virgin forests – into the setting of his own city.[7] Paris' vulnerability to natural forces (specifically climate and disease) no doubt made such musings less fantastic, yet the imagined incorporation of foreign peoples and spaces into the city of Paris also points to an emerging curiosity about and estrangement within a city undergoing rapid, modernizing changes.

Balzac's persistent use of natural metaphors to describe Paris in *Le Père Goriot* is part of this creative defamiliarization, originating both in the anxiety surrounding the unfamiliarity of the changing city, and the assessment of 'old Paris' – still immutably intact – as primitive. While Napoleon I had commenced a number of urban reforms (including the construction of sections of Rue de Rivoli), Paris during the Restoration (1814 – 1830) and the July Monarchy was still very much a medieval city. Simultaneously, it was a city whose population doubled in the span of roughly fifty years (1800 – 1850).[8] For Balzac, Paris was not only amenable to natural metaphors in his writing, but a sort of natural phenomenon in itself, volatile and disorderly.[9]

While the natural motifs convey the turmoil of the city, they are not uniformly negative. A central motif in the novel is the characterization of Paris as a body of water. This theme symbolically points at once to the opportunity for success that the city promises while simultaneously underscoring Paris' many hazards. Early in the narrative, Balzac writes:

> But Paris is an ocean. Throw in the plummet, you will never reach bottom. Survey it; describe it. However conscientious your survey and careful your chart, however numerous and concerned to learn the truth the explorers of this sea may be, there will always be a virgin realm, an unknown cavern, flowers, pearls, monsters, things undreamed of, overlooked by the literary divers. (Balzac 37)

Here the city is portrayed as elusive, always beyond comprehension or possession. As such, it retains a certain virginal quality, both beautiful and grotesque.[10] Enigmatic and thus enticing, the city promises the potential for discovery—both self-discovery and external discovery. Yet, this passage only considers literary engagement with the city (Paris discovered by "literary divers"), pointing to the connection between written representations of the city and comprehension of it. As we will see, this relation becomes increasingly complex during the course of the century, as the city is reconceptualized by authors and reconfigured by the state.

In the case of Eugène, the young and confident protagonist, the motif of Paris as ocean figuratively illustrates his unbounded optimism regarding social and financial success. As he becomes more and more occupied by social endeavors, Eugène adopts a cavalier attitude towards his studies in law, showing up at school only for roll call each morning: "This left him free for fifteen months to sail the Parisian ocean and devote all his energies to fishing fortune from it…" (Balzac 110) At this relatively early point in Eugène's time in the city, Paris and its social world appear navigable, its possibilities limitless and success therein assured.

This perspective is repeatedly dismissed as naïve by Eugène's fellow boarder at the Maison Vauquer, Vautrin. A criminal mastermind endowed with a keen understanding of Paris' complexities, Vautrin serves as the vehicle for another natural motif in the novel, as he often employs images of American woodlands in his analyses of the capital. While advising Eugène on how to make a name for himself in

Paris, Vautrin compares the city to an American forest: "'where a score of savage tribes, the Illinois, the Hurons, struggle for existence: each group lives on what it can get by hunting throughout society.'" (Balzac 133) As Vautrin sees it, the laws that circumscribe Parisian social exchange – the purported pinnacle of civility – are comparable to those ordering a people considered irredeemably barbaric. The described goal in both contexts is survival, achieved through mutual destruction. Unsurprisingly, this motif is often coupled with the language and imagery of violence—Eugène must fight to succeed on the "battlefield of Parisian civilization." (Balzac 100) Just as Vautrin's cynicism counteracts Eugène's optimism, this motif offsets the previous (Paris as ocean) – an alignment of the novel's narrative and story that I will continue to explore.

In another instance of this union, both the characters and the narrative attribute powerful and versatile connotations to the association of the city with filth, specifically mud. In the earliest description of the metropolis, the narrator describes it as "a valley of crumbling stucco and gutters black with mud, a valley full of real suffering…" (Balzac 27) Immediately, mud is integral to the city as it is portrayed, alongside physical decay and human strife. These negative attributes are all situated within a topographical formation that encloses them; they stagnate within the confined city.

For the characters, mud carries a similar symbolic significance. Madame de Beauséant, Eugène's esteemed cousin, articulates her low opinion of Eugène's love interest, Madame de Nucingen, by exclaiming that the latter would "'lap up all the mud between the Rue Saint-Lazare and the Rue de Grenelle if it enabled her to enter my drawing room.'" (Balzac 104) Here, the image of Mme de Nucingen comsuming

mud (situated in the street) symbolizes her shamelessness and lack of integrity. Yet even to inadvertently muddy oneself in the street is a mishap that carries symbolic import. In another counseling speech Vautrin warns Eugène: "'Well, my lad, we have to fork out our little twenty-five thousand francs a year or we find ourselves in the gutter in the mud, and people are laughing at us, and it's good-bye to our career, our success and our mistress!'" (Balzac 173) Considering the motif's parallel use in the narrative, it follows that any engagement with the space of Paris (to which mud is constitutive) will result in failure and humiliation.

As Eugène's experiences in the city lead him further and further into a state of disillusionment, mud becomes increasingly prominent in the narrative. The protagonist's hardships pile up in rapid succession, culminating on the night of Madame de Beauséant's greatly anticipated party. As Père Goriot endures his last painful hours of life in the Maison Vauquer, Eugène fruitlessly attempts to convince Madame de Nucingen to visit her dying father in lieu of attending the event. Disgusted by her callous refusal and unabated vanity, Eugène suddenly "[sees] the world as an ocean of mud into which a man plunged up to the neck, if he dipped a foot in it." (Balzac 271) As the story approaches its climax, the two predominant motifs converge, distilling one and tainting the other. Mirroring the mixture of these two physical properties, this composite metaphor replaces its two constituents in the narrative. The description of Paris in the opening as a valley situated "between the heights of Montmartre and Montrouge" achieves a new significance with this culminating figurative depiction of the city. (Balzac 27) The lasting representation of Paris in *Le Père Goriot* is the city as a valley of murky water—sordid, infectious and unfathomable.

The novel closes with one final natural metaphor for the city. After burying Père Goriot without the financial support of the old man's daughters, Eugène gazes down on Paris from the heights of Cimetière Père Lachaise. He sees it as a "humming hive," and feels "on his lips the sweetness of its honey…" Once again, the possibility for success is tangible to the protagonist, driving him to declare, "'It's war between us now!'" (Balzac 304) Viewed from afar and above, the city conveys only its positive qualities. Despite his disenchantment with the extravagant and unscrupulous bourgeois culture to which he has been exposed, Eugène still hungers for the city's pleasures, hidden "between the column of the Place Vendôme and the dome of the Invalides…" (Balzac 304) Thus Paris is represented in the end of the story as in the beginning—from a position of elevation, as a self-contained valley (rendering the narrative itself a sort of valley). For all its savage, polluted, and elusive qualities, Paris still incites desire in the young law student. The city is irresistible.

Along with their symbolic function in both the narrative and the story, the natural motifs accurately convey the spatio-historical conditions of Paris in the first half of the nineteenth-century.[11] At the time of the books release, the city was vulnerable to the forces of nature, and they were a constant imposition for city-dwellers. The infrastructural deficiencies made mud and filth integral parts of city-life, at times with dire consequences. In 1831, a cholera outbreak claimed the lives of 20,000 Parisians.

This alignment of historical conditions with both story and literary device is in keeping with what Erich Auerbach calls "the spirit of Historism" that permeates the entire *Comedie Humaine*. (Auerbach 477) In all of his works, Balzac demonstrates a

keen sensitivity to the historical circumstances of his subjects; in its complete form, the *Comedie* was to be a composite depiction of nineteenth-century French society. (Auerbach 477) In this sense, the symbol of mud serves both as a figurative trope – evocative in the narrative and significant in the story – and as a reflection of the substance's prominence in Paris through the 1850s.

Similarly, the stigmatization of walking in the novel accurately conveys the qualities of the city that made it unwelcoming to the pedestrian in the first half of the nineteenth-century. As David Pinkney writes on the subject, "The Streets themselves discouraged mobility." (Pinkney 18) While the boulevard culture for which Paris is known was intact to some extent before Haussmann's redevelopment in the Second Empire (1852 – 1870), the filthy streets, inadequate sidewalks and abundance of carriages made walking a hassle. [12]

In the novel, walking is depicted as a perilous activity for these very reasons. Unsurprisingly, mud is very prominent in this facet of the story as well. In one episode, Eugène dirties his shoes despite the utmost precaution while traveling on foot to visit Madame de Restaud (Goriot's other daughter), and is forced to have them polished at Palais-Royale: "'If I were rich,' he said to himself as he changed a five-franc piece that he had brought *in case of need*, 'I should have gone by cab, then I could have thought at my leisure.'"[13] (Balzac 79) The negativity associated with mud in its symbolic role in the text is reinforced by the substance's status in the characters' lives and spatial practices.

The danger posed to the pedestrian by carriages is similarly conveyed in the narrative and story. As Goriot leaves Madame de Restaud's apartment on foot, he is almost maimed by the vehicle of Maxime de Trailles, a wealthy young fixture on the

Parisian social scene: "Old Goriot had barely time to throw himself backward to avoid being run over." (Balzac 80) De Trailles is unremorseful about the encounter, due less to his sense of entitlement than to the carriage's real and fictionalized privilege over the pedestrian on the city streets.

Walking is not only marginalized in the story, it is stigmatized; movement on foot equates to a condemnation of one's worth and socio-economic status. Eugène rapidly internalizes this norm. As he approaches Madame de Restaud's apartment in the same passage discussed above, he "faced the scornful glances of the lackeys, who had seen him crossing the court on foot and had not heard the sound of any carriage driving up." (Balzac 79) The servant's condescension indicates that contempt for the pedestrian is a sentiment not limited to figures of socio-economic distinction. Thus, in an earlier passage in which Eugène remarks to the other boarders on how peculiar it was to see Madame de Restaud walking in a street that morning, his surprise draws from the discrepancy between the connotations of the act of walking and the status of the individual. (Balzac 70) Vautrin demonstrates an awareness of this connection between class and spatial practice, telling Eugène: "'If you get splashed with [Paris'] mud riding in a carriage you're an honest fellow, while you're a rogue if you get dirty on foot.'" (Balzac 72) Here the negative associations of the trope of filth are seemingly reattributed to the act and not the substance, suggesting that mud is only shameful insofar as it indicates time spent in the street.

As the episode with Restaud's lackeys reveals, carriages are the clearest signifier of status in the novel. After Eugène becomes aware of their disdain, Balzac writes:

> He was all the more sensitive to their stare because he had already felt a pang of inferiority when he entered the court and saw a splendid horse in

> rich harness pawing the ground and one of those smart cabs which flaunt the luxury of a spendthrift existence, and imply the possession of all that is desirable in Parisian life. (Balzac 79)

Eugène's modest background prevents him from obtaining this status symbol, a deficiency which plagues him throughout the novel. Vautrin reinforces the significance of the carriage, telling Eugène that to "'cut a dash in Paris,'" one must have "'three horses, a tilbury for the morning and a brougham for the evening, nine thousands francs in all for your conveyance.'" (Balzac 173) The carriage is first on his list of requirements, suggesting its foremost importance. By now, it should be clear that spatial practice in the city's public space is integral closely scrutinized as an indication of status. In Balzac's novel, the sets of signifiers and signifieds (and their inter-relations) are relatively straightforward: walking is base, vehicular motion is refined. In later sections and chapters, I will attempt to show how these relationships between spatial practice and identity become increasingly complex over the course of the century.

Held in contempt by the upper classes, walking is nevertheless a common activity for some characters or in some places in the novel. Unsurprisingly, many are impoverished pariahs, such as Christophe, the servant at the Maison Vauquer, who runs errands and delivers messages for the boarders. His appearances in the narrative primarily occur either immediately before or after he sets out into the city on foot. For characters of a more elevated status, the city parks offer one socially acceptable space in which to walk. Eugène occasionally strolls in the Luxembourg Gardens or in the Tuileries, usually to clear his head or to pass the time until he is expected at a social function. (Balzac 140, 215) At one point, the narrative briefly mentions that Eugène and Delphine walk in the Bois de Boulogne. (Balzac 174) Poiret and

Mademoiselle Michonneau, elderly borders of the Maison Vauquer, spend quite a bit of time walking in the Jardin des Plantes and other parks on the left bank, although their strolls are only hastily recounted in the narrative.

Despite the consistency of his pedestrian deliveries, Christophe's walks are never recounted in the narrative, leaving it to the reader to imagine his daily walks through the city. Eugène's motion in public space is usually noted in the narrative as it takes place, but such passages never include descriptions of his setting. At most, they will note the destination and point of origin. After such information is listed, the narrative usually transitions to describing his thoughts during the walk: "The student walked back from the Théatre-Italien to the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, revolving as he went the most delightful schemes," or: "Walking home under the calm light of the moon, Eugène fell into serious thought." (Balzac 149, 170) Practically every mention of pedestrian motion is marked by the same absence of literal descriptions of space—the story takes place in a setting devoid of perceptible physical attributes. This facet of the novel contrasts the narrative's claims of the city's centrality to the work. In a literary move that we will see repeated in the texts analyzed in subsequent chapters, Balzac repeatedly reminds the reader that *Le Père Goriot* is a distinctly Parisian story. Not only could it not take place in any other setting, it may very well be incomprehensible to non-Parisians. Accounts of the characters' habits, expressions and beliefs are often accompanied by the narrative's assurance of their specificity to Parisian culture. In effect, Paris is both integral to the story and absent from it. Here, the alignment between narrative and story is both upheld and contested. On the one hand, the narrative's lack of consideration of public space

mirrors its denigration by the characters. On the other, the narrative posits the city's importance to the story while largely excluding the city from it.

This tension surrounding the omittance of public space works to amplify the significance of one of the novel's final scenes, in which Eugène encounters Goriot's casket on the cobblestones of the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève:

> …the coffin, barely covered by a scanty black cloth, standing on two chairs outside the wicker gate in the deserted street. A shabby sprinkler lay in a silver-plated copper bowl of holy water, but no one had stopped to sprinkle the coffin. No attempt had been made even to drape the door with black. The dead man was a pauper, and so there was no display of grief, no friend, no kinsman to follow him to the grave. (Balzac 302)

Excluding the narrator's initial description of the Maison Vauquer, this passage marks the first time in which the narrative directly describes an object situated in the public space of the city. The reader is conveyed the image of the casket (concealing the lifeless corpse), framed by the desolate city street. Heretofore, characterizations of this spatial type (the street) have been uniformly indirect; this passage solidifies a single unchallenged representation of the street in which it is overtly associated with death. The ensuing funeral procession through the streets by carriage reinforces this connection, which concludes the novel's literal consideration of the spatial type.

The near-total absence of exterior description is brought into sharp relief by the abundance of interior description in the novel. Balzac devotes a considerable amount of the text to minutely detailed portraits of both luxurious and austere interiors. One such passage follows Eugène's first visit to Goriot's rented room at the boarding house:

> The window was curtainless. In several places damp had made the paper peel away from the walls and curl up, revealing the smoke-darkened plaster. The old fellow lay on a miserable bed with but one thin blanket and a wadded quilt made from the less worn pieces of Madame Vauquer's old dresses. The floor was damp and dirty. (Balzac 151)

The description continues, noting the room's shabby furniture and Goriot's few possessions. The narrative also includes of descriptions of Eugène's repulsion to the space as well as the room's evocation of a prison cell.

Eugène's aversion to Goriot's chamber is due in part to his recent introduction to the opulent apartments of the Parisian elite. Upon the student's first visit to Delphine's residence, the narrative describes the space as "a true banker's house, full of costly showiness, with stucco-work on the walls, and landings of marble mosaic. [Eugène] found Madame de Nucingen in a little drawing-room hung with paintings in the Italian style and decorated like a restaurant." (Balzac 161) He is amazed by such extravagant interior spaces, and develops a taste for them that is eventually satisfied by his new apartment on Rue D'Artois, paid for by Goriot himself. Similar to his adoption of popular opinions of public space, Eugène complies to the normative standards by which an interior's merit is evaluated without hesitation.

In another example of the alignment between narrative and story, the degree of attention to interior spaces in the narrative corresponds to the level of importance such spaces hold for the characters, and more generally for the social world of Paris. The vast majority of the novel takes place inside, either at the Maison Vauquer, Madame de Beausánt's apartment, or the apartments of Goriot's daughters. With the exception of Eugène's walk in the Tuileries discussed below, all of the student's formative moments – his introductions to the Parisian elite, and the successes he enjoys courting women and earning the respect of his peers – take place in interior spaces. As the important events and encounters almost unvaryingly take place inside, so the narrative focuses uniquely on interiors.

Along with the park and the interior public spaces such as the opera, the private interior functions as one of the sole socially acceptable settings in which the city's elite can encounter and engage with each other. Both the mimetic dispersal of fashion, and the visual apprehension of others are limited by the denigration of public space, which restricts spatial practice to the confines of private property. As I will argue in the subsequent sections of this chapter, the restrictions on the relation between spatial practice, identity, and visual exchange are loosened with the advent of the arcade. While *Père Goriot* squarely represents an older model, its subsequent formation is presaged by a passage of Balzac's novel set in the Tuileries. While waiting for the appropriate hour to present himself at Madame de Beauséant's, Eugène walks alone in the park. Almost immediately, he becomes aware of being watched by a number of women, also walking in the park. The narrative emphasizes the importance of this realization in the formation of the protagonist's identity. At once, he "saw himself the center of an almost admiring attention," which lingered on his looks, outfit, and general style. (Balzac 140) The self-reflexivity of the verb ("se voir") points to a development in Eugène's perceptive capacities—he moves between his own visual apprehension of the perceptible world, and the visual apprehension of himself as located by others. His sense-of-self expands to encompass these dual perspectives, resulting in the performance of the external perception's assessment of him in his spatial practice—he walks as the women see him: the handsome, unknown man. With this development, Eugène anticipates the flâneur, who intoxicates himself with the recognition of himself *qua* flâneur, provided by the perceptions of strangers on the street. As the park is the only setting in which walking is socially acceptable in the Paris depicted by Balzac, this interpenetration of perceptible identity and

spatial practice, mediated by visual exchange, does not widely inform Parisian street-life as it will in subsequent historical eras and literary representations; Eugène's experience in the Tuileries is the only of its kind in the novel.

* * *

"O trottoirs, asiles de la boue et des flâneurs, je vous salue…" – Louis Huart[14]

In 1841, *Physiologie du Flâneur*, a short text by journalist Louis Huart, was published in Paris. The original publication was small in size, fitting easily into one's pocket. Its diminutive pages were filled with short blocks of text and illustrations by Honoré Daumier and other well-known French artists of the era. The paperback cost 1 franc. Its back cover advertised other physiologies in the series, all portraits of Parisian character-types. These "literary guidebooks" became immensely popular in Paris during the 1840s. (Ferguson 85) They were a descendant of the *feuilleton*, a gossip section of sorts that appeared in French newspapers in the preceding decades.

In the frivolous text, Huart offers a character-sketch of the *flâneur*. The man—and according to Huart's uniform gendering of the pronoun the flâneur is indeed a man—may hold one of three different vocations: artist, poet, or "petit clerc d'avoué."[15] (Huart 55) Whatever his profession, it provides him with the financial independence necessary to practice his preferred activity: walking in the city. (Huart 14-15) The flâneur walks alone, destinationless, "suivant la volonté du hazard."[16] (Huart 113 123) His most important qualities enable him to reap maximum pleasure from his walks: "Bonnes jambs, bonnes oreilles, et bons yeux…"[17] (Huart 53) The flâneur looks attentively as he walks, taking in the city's spaces, spectacles and inhabitants: "…il aime tellement les spectacles de quelque genre qu'ils soient, que,

pour jouir de cette vue, il oublierait tout dans ces jours mémorables, tout peut-etre meme la galette et la raisiné."[18] (Huart 74) The flâneur's practice (flânerie) operates under the double conceit of seeing (and thus knowing) all ("…il doit connaitre toutes les rues, toutes les boutiques de Paris…"[19] (Huart 120-121)), and being distinct from the crowd. His feigned anonymity belies the importance of being recognized as a flâneur by strangers on the street.

In his writings on nineteenth-century Paris, Walter Benjamin analyzes the literary genre of the *Physiologie*, arguing that such texts were meant in part to familiarize Parisians with the figures they would encounter in the public spaces of the city, "to dispel this uneasiness [with strangers], and render it harmless."[20] By making the city feel smaller and more familiar, Benjamin argues, the genre made social interaction amongst people of different socio-economic positions more comfortable.

Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson offers a somewhat different interpretation of the "literary guidebook" genre in her work, *Paris as Revolution: Writing the Nineteenth-Century City*. According to her, the political entities that came to power after changes of governance and the revolutions of 1789, 1830 and 1848 sought to legitimize and enforce their new dominance by inscribing the history of revolution into the space of the city. To do so, they altered the texts of the city (such as street names), replacing remnants of monarchical France with signifiers of its revolutionary successor. Ferguson argues that the rebranding of the city owed even more to the writers who took up the task of their own volition. Through pamphlets, guidebooks and novels, French writers worked to fill this "void" of representation—the supposed absence of credible and up-to-date depictions of the city. (Ferguson 47) Ferguson writes that flânerie was useful to this literary project: "[it] provided the writers with answers,

with material, and with a persona." (Ferguson 81) Through walking, writers intent on representing the city could evaluate it as it was in the present, and produce texts which circulated their perception of public space. In this way, Ferguson points out, the practice of walking in the city became integrated with writing about the city, or more generally, with representations of the city. The former informed the latter.

It seems equally clear that this relationship worked in the opposite direction as well. As flânerie served writers as a way to draw inspiration from the city for their written representations of it, so the writing served as the impetus for practicing flânerie, and provided Parisians with a conception of the city drawn from the written representation. Of course, some of these people setting out into the streets were artists or writers themselves, set on using the city as the subject of their work. Huart considers himself to be a flâneur. (Huart 75) Any representation they produced therefore comprised both their perceptive experience walking in the city, and the original representation of the city, which compelled them to walk in the first place. Thus the new points to the old, or the old becomes the new.

The other component of this process – the practice of walking – undergoes a similar evolution. If the artist strolling in the city was compelled to do so by a written representation, his spatial practice necessarily incorporates the text's depiction of walking (e.g. Huart writes that to flâner one must be alone, thus the aspiring reader walks alone). The spatial practice comprises both a personal component and a mimetic component, which seeks to replicate the representation. Finally, this new spatial practice leads to a new representation—produced by the walker.

Thus spatial practice in Paris during the time of literary guidebooks gradually developed, in a process parallel to the evolution of representations of the city. Yet, as

I have tried to show, the relation between these two modes of engagement with the city (practice and representation) is not one of mere likeness – each is contingent upon the other for its development. Their interaction is synthesized, becoming flânerie itself, which is made up of the latest forms of walking and representation. In the fluid motion between representations of the city and the spatial practice employed by Parisians, flânerie evolved dialectically. Practice and representation informed each other, propelling an increasingly complex and divergent set of representations and an ever-evolving practice of walking. The state of flânerie relies not only on the individual's ability or desire to walk, but on representations of the city that both inspire and result from that walking. In subsequent chapters, we shall see how the practice of flânerie and its contingencies change.

Published only six years after *Le Père Goriot*, *Physiologie du Flâneur* represents certain aspects of city-life that correspond with Balzac's depiction. Huart writes quite a bit about the hazards of the Parisian street, devoting a whole chapter to the subject entitled "Les Petits Malheurs de la Flânerie."[21] Aside from pickpockets, the homeless and street vendors, the most prominent threat to the flâneur is mud and rain, for mostly the same reasons that they are despised in *Le Père Goriot*. (Huart 85, 87) Yet it is clear that Huart's depiction of Paris as populated by a whole subset of city-dwellers whose primary joy is walking in the streets contradicts the Paris of *Le Père Goriot*, in which public space is avoided, and all Parisians hold a general disdain for pedestrian motion. The contrasts between these representations of the city and their associated spatial practices make it implausible Paris as depicted by Balzac could sustain the practice described in Huart's text.

Indeed, the Paris of Eugène de Rastignac lacks one important spatial type, which – according to Huart – is crucial to the happiness of the flâneur: the arcade: "Enfin, le passage est le séjour préfére du flâneur; c'est là qu'il mène une déliceuse existence…"[22] (Huart 96) The flâneur loves the arcades, he "triumphs" in them. (Huart 93) They are a constitutive element of his spatial practice, just as he is constitutive to their popularity. "Sans les passages, le flâneur serait malheureux; mais sans le flâneur, les passages n'existeraient pas."[23] (Huart 97) Only once in *Père Goriot* are the arcades fleetingly mentioned (Balzac 196); their near total absence from the novel situates the spatial type as the link between these two divergent representations of space and spatial practice in early nineteenth-century Paris.

* * *

The moon and the stars are no longer worth mentioning. – Walter Benjamin (2006 81)

The majority of the Parisian arcades were constructed between 1822 and 1834, in the *Grands Boulevards* neighborhood. (Benjamin 2002 34) They became a popular destination for strolling in the 1830s, and maintained that standing until the Second Empire. (Benjamin 2002 44) These arched iron passageways were constructed at street-level, situated within a single building, or in between two. Those that are not located directly below structures are enclosed by glass and iron skylights which let in natural light. The marble floors are cut into elegant patterns that stretch across the length of the passages. At the entrances, which are often framed by ornate stone engravings, the marble meets the concrete sidewalk, clearly demarcating the transition from street to arcade.

This easy physical differentiation does not reflect a clear status as a spatial type however. Occupying a space normally belonging to residential buildings while serving at least the commercial function of the street, the arcade does not immediately reveal its *raison d'être*, nor its proprietor. Their sides, lined with small boutiques, *magasins de nouveautés*, clothing stores and cafés, evoke the feeling of the street, as does the natural light streaming down through the skylights. Besides the obvious differences between the two spatial types, the arcade sets itself apart from the street in its intimacy, giving it the feeling of a personal residence. In this ambiguity, the arcade breaks from the various forces that order the street, that orders the street (social, governmental, natural, etc.), suggesting the the opportunity for pedestrian agency within.

It is in part this promise that makes the arcade so immensely appealing to the flâneur. The absence of apparent ownership and the ambiguity of purpose make the arcade feel available. As such, the flâneur appropriates the arcade, subsuming it into the collection of Parisian spaces which belong to him: "…il triomphe surtout dans les passages…"[24] (Huart 93) The space's simulated intimacy accords with its purpose for him; the arcade becomes his home. As a result, the spatial type and the street-character become linked to one another, both in practice and in the public's conceptions of the two.

The arcade also serves a practical purpose for the flâneur. In the two representations of the city examined thus far, street-walking is hazardous, due both to the social and natural forces that shape the city. The arcade is one of the first public spaces in which these definitive qualities of the street-experience are absent; one can walk in them without concern for carriages or filth. The effective marginalization of

the forces of nature in the arcade contrasts Balzac's depiction of the city. For the characters of *Le Père Goriot*, mud is the most harrying and symbolically charged quality of the street, and moreover, the omission of literal descriptions of public space in the narrative is compensated for by figurative depictions of the city which persistently invoke the natural world. Simply put, the numerous significances of the natural world in its association with urban space in *Le Père Goriot* retain no relevance in the arcade. Ironically, the architecture of the arcade expresses this point most clearly: nature's presence in the structure is mediated and regulated by the glass and iron ceiling – the arcade's definitive and innovative form, a physical manifestation of modernity.

As Huart's text and its historical accuracy clearly show, the arcade's emerging popularity gave new value to both the city's public space and to the practice of walking in it. While prompted by the advent of the arcade, this development transpired in the dialectical process of flânerie. As the stigmas associated with public space diminish, each mode of relating to the city (conceptually and perceptually) adapts to the presence of the arcades, and informs its modal counterpart.

This increasing comfort of city-dwellers in public Paris is necessary in the successful execution of the greatest change affected by the arcade: the institution of commerce as a stalwart force in both the city's public space and in the quotidian experience of Parisians. Unlike a store on the street, whose exposure to potential customers is limited by the stigmas and dangers of street-walking, the arcade is – despite its self-presentation as social and intimate – a space perfectly crafted to the stimulation and seduction of desire: "a street of lascivious commerce…" (Benjamin 2006 42)

For the characters of *Le Père Goriot* wealthy enough to shop in the arcades, commerce's presence in their lives is limited by the constraints of their modes of relating to the city. For the most part, their movement in public space is restricted to the carriage, which precludes an extended engagement with the objects of commerce, thereby limiting the provocation of their desire to buy. Regardless, or perhaps as such, they seem largely uninterested in commercial offerings; as they travel via carriage, the narrative never describes them as looking out the windows, nor does it list the commercial enterprises they would see if they did look. Public commerce is as absent as physical Paris in *Père Goriot* – both in the narrative and in the lives of the characters.

As noted above, the commercial function of the arcade is veiled to its patrons, for whom the attraction of the space is in large part its social function: a setting in which to see others, and to be seen. In the arcade, spatial practice and identity-formation become fused to one another, in a relation mediated by visual exchange. People go to look at others and to display themselves, both mimetically incorporating that which they perceive into their conceptions of the city and their spatial practice therein—performing their newly-evolved notion of themselves for others.

In this, the arcade clearly recalls Eugène's walk in the Tuileries in *Le Père Goriot*. There, as in the arcade, walking serves as a means of knowing oneself through being recognized as something, and performing that notion of self for others in spatial practice. This inter-personal exchange transpires through the medium of vision. As the arcade loosens the restrictions on modes of relating to the city that make Eugène's experience exceptional, the triangulation of walking vision and identity triad develops unhindered, causing spatial practice to assume a central role in

both social relations and identity-formation in pre-1852 Paris. To walk in the arcade is to learn, develop, and articulate ones simultaneous individuality and recognizable familiarity according to the categories of visual signifiers. This is nowhere more clear than in the experience of the flâneur, whose notion and affirmation of self are utterly dependent upon his spatial practice. Ultimately, it is this aspect of the arcade that makes it so useful to flânerie – both in the practice's dialectical process of development, and for the cultivation of the flâneur's image.

Furthermore, the arcade introduces yet another component to this union of walking, identity-formation and vision, which alters the outcome of their interrelation. Because of the setting and its commercial purpose, the social relations of perception and self-display come to emulate the forms of relations between objective commodities and customers in the arcade. Commodities and identities intermingle and come to reflect one another, and visual recognition of others becomes in itself a form of consumption. As Benjamin informs us, the flâneur's pleasure at being recognized *qua* flâneur resembles the "intoxication of the commodity immersed in a surging stream of customers." (Benjamin 2006 85) The flâneur exemplifies the growing commodification of identity which the arcade fosters. He is, as Benjamin writes, "no buyer. He is merchandise." (Benjamin 2002 42)

As an urban formation of commerce however, the arcade is relatively primitive. In time, the evolution of commerce's presence in the city will radically alter the relation between walking, vision and identity, much to the flâneur's chagrin. Before then however, we will see how modes of relating to Paris are affected by the drastic reconfiguration of the physical metropolis, the achievements of which are

largely due to the arcade's success in luring Parisians from their homes and out into the streets.

2. Concept City // Dream City: Haussmann and Baudelaire

Part One: Against the pedestrian

"Haussmann who, faced with the city plan of Paris, takes up Rastignac's cry of 'A nous deux maintenant!'"[25] – Walter Benjamin (2002 145)

Towards the end of 1853, a pedestrian on the streets of Paris would occasionally encounter tall scaffolding towers that rose well above the roofline. Perched out of sight in these makeshift structures, Georges-Eugène Haussmann and a small group of assistants looked down upon the city. Convinced of the imperfection of city maps, the recently appointed Prefect of the Seine produced new plans that originated in his own observation of Paris. On top of depictions of the city as it was, he superimposed imagined roads, parks and squares – a vision of what the city would, by his own hand, come to be. Soon the towers came down, and in the warm months of 1854 the self-proclaimed *artiste démolisseur* set to work.[26]

Haussmann was appointed June 29th, 1853 by Napoleon III, the recently self-proclaimed Emperor of the Second Empire. Caring little for civil liberties and much for posterity's fond regard, the Emperor gave Haussmann free reign in redesigning the city.[27] The former, intent upon inscribing his legacy into the space of Paris,

worked in tandem with the planner. During his 17 years as prefect, Haussmann "had no superior but the Emperor himself." (Pinkney 43)

Their maps – new representations of the city – depicted a Paris radically altered in appearance and program, including broad thoroughfares, aesthetic harmony and programmatic logic. While the illustrations promised the completion of old projects, such as the extension of Rue de Rivoli east towards the Bastille, most of the maps' features were entirely unprecedented.

Effectively, Haussmann produced something of a new city, both in form and function. Working out of Henri Lefebvre's characterization of Second Empire Paris as "abstract" space, I will attempt to show how the planner instrumentalized the city in the service of the Empire, and how the intentions of this politicization of space – quelling dissent, indoctrinating the populace, and disciplining the pedestrian – were undermined by the inherent contradictions of abstract space.[28] But, as Haussmann primarily engaged the city in a conceptual mode – observing it from elevation, studying representations of it such as maps and blueprints – he was incapable of taking full account of the perceptual experience of the space he would produce. Namely, the planner could not anticipate or fully control what it would be like to walk in Second Empire Paris. As his attention to vistas should make clear, the planner no doubt considered how Paris would look to the pedestrian. Yet the city's continued (although diminished) fragmentation and heterogeneity point to the disjunction between Haussmann's representation of the city as a unified whole, and the perceived experience of the city as fractured. In the contradictions and fissures of Second Empire Paris, I will attempt to locate the continued space of potential for flânerie, despite the various ways in which the new city seemingly precluded the practice.

For the purposes of this study, the construction of long linear boulevards throughout the city was the planner's most significant achievement. Haussmann attacked the dense city-plan, splitting it open with broad throughways. His most notable construction on the right bank was the now entitled Boulevard de Sébastopol, which cuts longitudinally through the old city center. The project was monumental, taking four years to complete. (Pinkney 57) Its creation required the destruction of sprawling central ghettos, forcing thousands of the city's poor to find shelter on the outskirts of the city. For the street's ceremonious opening, a large curtain draped across one end was dramatically removed – a fairly clear demonstration of the administration's penchant for spectacle. (Benjamin 2002 126) Ending to the north at the Gare de l'Est (built in 1849), the boulevard extended across the Île de la Cité (breaking up a notorious slum) and connected to the left bank's Boulevard Saint Michel – another of the planner's creations. With the completion of Rue De Rivoli, the ancient heart of Paris came to be transected by two straight perpendicular thoroughfares.

In the historically affluent west, Haussmann encircled the Arc de Triomphe, a monument commissioned by the Emperor's uncle Napoleon I, with long radial avenues. To complete his vision of the now iconic Place d'Etoile, Haussmann forced the owners of every building on the Place's perimeter to reconstruct their properties in a uniform style of matching building facades, iron fences and anterior gardens. All of the planner's negotiations were marked by this same unwavering obdurateness. Across town, the now entitled Place de la République received similar treatment. Haussmann built a number of converging boulevards on the place (current day

Boulevard Magenta, Boulevard Voltaire, and Boulevard de Turbigo), which justified the destruction of historically seditious surrounding neighborhoods.

Along with his dramatic alterations of the city's roadways, Haussmann overhauled the sewage system, expanding it into previously unsupported areas and improving the city's drinking water. He also created a number of parks in neighborhoods of varying socio-economic demographics. In 1860, Haussmann incorporated the eight peripheral arrondissements into Paris-proper, rounding off his sweeping reconfiguration of the city. By the end of his tenure a decade later, Haussmann had added a net fifty-seven miles of roadways, a figure which does not account for the increased average width of city streets. The city he created was a more beautiful, functional and cohesive place, considerably more hospitable to both pedestrian and vehicular motion. Natural phenomena such as filth and disease were put in check, as was the potential for organized resistance. If the July Monarchy saw a number of new representations of Paris, the Second Empire played witness to a new city entirely.

These physical modifications to the capital were coupled with intangible changes to the city, which altered the very nature of its space. In their work, Haussmann and Napoleon III demonstrated recognition of urban space's amenability to instrumentalization in the service of the Empire. As discussed in the first chapter, previous structures of governance had repeatedly attempted to use the space of the city in support of their rule, yet none affected the broad and penetrating reconfiguration that took place in the Second Empire. Haussmann produced a new city; its efficacy in deploying state interests and agendas had no precedent.

The planner's political instrumentalization of Second Empire Paris exemplifies the theory of the production of space, formulated by 20th century French theorist Henri Lefebvre.[29] Working out of a Marxist conception of society, Lefebvre argues that in controlling the modes of production and technology, a ruling class has the power to create and to qualify the spaces that make up its dominion.[30] Simply considering urban planning's subservience to structures of governance makes this clear, yet Lefebvre is making a deeper claim. The ruling class not only controls space, it generates it—socially, conceptually and materially—and regulates its content, use, and nature. During the Second Empire, Haussmann and his team of scientists, engineers, and cartographers occupied this position of power over Paris. In their work, they imagined, planned and produced the space of the reconfigured city.

As space is produced by a historically contingent entity (technocratic forces), it necessarily reflects its era. Over the course of history, technology and modes of production have evolved with a certain degree of uniformity across Western states. As such each historical epoch played host to a specific formation of space. Lefebvre classifies the space produced in the era of high capitalism as "abstract": "As a product of violence and war, [space] is political; institutioned by a state, it is institutional." (Lefebvre POS 285) For the theorist, Second Empire Paris is a vanguard formation of abstract urban space. In the following pages, I will attempt to elucidate this claim. In order to do so, I will first offer an overview of the foundations of Lefebvre's theoretical framework.

Lefebvre posits three ways in which one apprehends space: perceptually, conceptually, and in "lived" experience.[31] The perceptual apprehension of space, "spatial practice," describes the relation between an individual and his or her physical

context. The flâneur's daily strolls through Paris – his routes, routines and style of movement – equate to a spatial practice. This mode of apprehension is most directly contrasted with the conceptual engagement of space, which Lefebvre refers to as "representations of space." In this mode, one encounters signs and codes in space; it is abstract, described by Stuart Elden as a "mental construct, *imagined* space."[32] "Representations of space" is the mode assumed by urban planners, statisticians and cartographers – in short, by Haussmann and his team. While Lefebvre does not include literature in this category, for the purposes of this study, I would like to underscore their similarities. I will explore this connection in greater detail below.

Finally, one can apprehend space through its symbolic content, in a mode that Lefebvre calls "spaces of representation."[33] Here, space appears to the individual as a complex constellation of latent meanings and ideological signifiers. This final category mediates the way space evokes its socio-political context and history. It is in this mode, for example, that East Berlin may feel inexplicably unusual to an American tourist.

Before Haussmann's work, the city had grown and assumed its form out of necessity, under the authority of many parties with divergent interests; never before had Paris' development been enacted by a single entity with a single set of goals and agendas. The city that Haussmann produced bears traces of this period of unilateral development, and points to the nature of its relation to the planner. Primarily, Haussmann engaged the city on an abstract level, in the Lefebvrian "representations of space." The city that he fashioned reflects this modal disproportion; it is a physical manifestation of itself in abstraction, originating in Haussmann's conceptualization of

it. Herein lies the basis for Lefebvre's characterization of Second Empire Paris as abstract space.

Having established the connection between Paris and the category of abstract space in terms of the relation between city and planner, we may now move on to consider how the city itself fulfills Lefebvre's characterization. First and foremost for the theorist, abstract space is intensely political – not just as a setting, but also as a political object itself. In its abstract form, space is produced "according to the viewpoint of strategy." (Lefebvre 1991 312) Heavily administered, it comprises the spatialization of state interests and agendas. This aspect of the production of abstract space is easily identified in Haussmann's redevelopment of the city. Most scholarship on the subject situates the prevention of rebellion at the center of the Empire's objectives. This goal, no doubt, was warranted by history: "Eight times between 1827 and 1849 barricades had been thrown up in the streets of Paris, always in the crowded eastern half of the city, and on three occasions they had been the prelude to revolution." (Pinkney 36) The width of Haussmann's boulevards, as well as the materials used (asphalt in place of easily removed cobblestones), were clearly informed by to other considerations as well, but such choices nonetheless made barricade-construction considerably more difficult. Haussmann's destruction of vast swaths of eastern Paris, uprooting thousands of the city's working-class inhabitants, can be similarly understood: apolitical justification masked political motivations.

The political content of Haussmannization is even more apparent in the planner's attention to the actual or evoked presence of structures of power, namely the church and the state.[34] To walk in Haussmann's Paris is to be confronted by the overwhelming presence of both. At times, this consideration clearly took precedence

over all others. For example, the planner demanded that the architects of the Tribunal de Commerce on the Île de la Cité offset its dome to the west, so as to make it visible along the length of Boulevard de Sébastopol: "A local asymmetry was created to produce a symmetrical effect at a grander urban scale." (Harvey 100) Another striking example is the Église Saint-Augustin, which is visible almost a kilometer away from the Place de la Madeleine, because of Haussmann's unorthodox decision to bend Boulevard Malesherbes in front of the church.[35]

While these decisions are partially attributable to the planner's affinity for creating impressive vistas, they also clearly reflect his desire to use the city as a signifier of control. The space of Paris connotes power, engendering the sensation of authority's presence in the pedestrian. These meanings are conveyed in the Lefebvrian mode, "spaces of representation." Paris in the Second Empire acquires an unambiguous symbolic content:

> Power is everywhere; it is omnipresent, assigned to being. It is everywhere *in space*…Social relations remain entangled in the constraints, and except in the case of revolt, confrontation or revolution, social space remains that of Power. (Lefebvre, quoted in Elden, 239)

Before Haussmann, whole neighborhoods were known for their amenability to political insurrection. In the Second Empire, the city in its entirety was treated as an instrument of the state.

Yet, Lefebvre argues that the political agendas of the urban environment are subverted by the inherent contradictions of abstract space. These contradictions arise out of the disjunction between the goal of uniformity (or, for Lefebvre, homogeneity) and the fragmentary result. Abstract space posits cohesion in the conceptual realm, while its physical formation is characterized by abstract and physical fissures (e.g. neighborhoods divided along class and race lines; empty lots and abandoned

buildings). In Second Empire Paris, this is most evident in the disparity between Haussmann's goal of aesthetic and programmatic cohesion in the city, and his success therein.

Before the Second Empire, Paris comprised distinct and insular districts; for the most part Parisians stayed in their neighborhoods.[36] Pre-Haussmann Paris was "a conglomeration of small towns, each with its distinctive physiognomy and way of life…" (Dubech and d'Espezel, quoted in Benjamin 2002 129) Haussmann attacked this quality aesthetically, creating unifying vistas, and programmatically, imposing linearity and systemization onto the city plan. The resulting physical continuity required city-dwellers to adapt their conceptions of the metropolis and their spatial practices therein. As neighborhoods were razed, and the dense city-plan was breached by interconnecting boulevards, Haussmann posited a notion of Paris as a single unified entity, a "totality in which different quarters of the city and different functions were brought into relation to each other to form a working whole." (Harvey 111)

While it would be delusory to argue against Haussmann's substantial success in harmonizing and regularizing the spaces of the metropolis, I would like to stress the extent to which Paris nonetheless retained a high degree of its diversity during and after its reconfiguration. Between the broad boulevards lined by identical building facades, there were still isolated districts, labyrinthine street-clusters, and idiosyncratic neighborhoods. In its resilient heterogeneity, Second Empire Paris fulfills Lefebvre's description of abstract space as contradictory; it suggests a "'logic' which misrepresents it and masks its contradictions…" (Lefebvre 1991 308) Haussmann's conception of Paris only partly succeeded in manifesting itself in the

physical city. (In the second section of this chapter, I will show how these contradictions were also evident in perceptual experience.)

Let us recall the image of Haussmann looking down on Paris from the heights of the scaffolding towers. Here one can identify the planner's literal position of remove in apprehending space, reflected everywhere the city he produced. The contradictions of Second Empire Paris, theorized in Lefebvre's notion of abstract space, originate in Haussmann's privileging of the conceptual mode of apprehending space (representations of space) over the perceptual (spatial practice). His reliance on conceptualizing instruments – maps, literal and figurative perspectival elevation – obscured what it was like to walk in the streets. While the planner's attention to aesthetic cohesion demonstrates a certain consideration for spatial practice, as we have seen, the city remained fractured. Ultimately, Haussmann's mode of engagement placed him outside of the city, and above the very people whose experiences in the capital were dramatically altered by his work.

Thus, this modal imbalance that informed the shape of the new city caused Haussmann to overlook the experience of the pedestrian. However, this neglect did not reflect a lack of consideration for walking. In fact, Haussmann held it as a primary goal (and it was a primary achievement) to facilitate both vehicular and pedestrian motion within the city: "The pedestrian, who had fared so badly on many of the city's streets, could by 1896 walk safely on more than 700 miles of sidewalks, and he could enjoy the shade of nearly twice as many trees as in 1852, planted along the boulevards and principal avenues." (Pinkney 70) Moreover, the experience of walking was improved by the work on the sewage system, which reduced overflow

into the street. So unappealing to the characters of *Père Goriot*, the street seemed to be redesigned specifically with the pedestrian in mind.[37]

Unsurprisingly, walking was revalued in the Second Empire, and it was no longer limited to the parks and to the flâneur. The street became a meeting ground for all Parisians, a conduit into once isolated neighborhoods, and a medium for the exchange of ideas, fashions, and trends. As Harvey writes, "…the free play of sunlight by day and of newly installed gas lighting by night underscored the transition to a more extroverted form of urbanism in which the public life of the boulevard became a highlight of what the city was about." (Harvey 113) The secluded and interior way of life in the Paris depicted in *Le Père Goriot* had become outmoded.

Yet, as discussed in the first chapter, the novel anticipates the boulevard culture of the Second Empire, specifically in the passage describing Eugène's experience walking in the Tuileries. In my analysis, I argued that his recognition of the feminine gaze informs his notion of self, which comes to include his imagined assessment of himself located in the observing women. This composite identity is reified by the performance (and fulfillment) of it in Eugène's spatial practice, as he continues his strolls around the park. This same triangulation of walking-vision-identity flourished in the arcades. In that setting, the union is most evident in the experience of the flâneur, who walks up and down the arcade to be seen and recognized as a flâneur by others, thereby affirming his identity and his sense of ownership over the space. Both Eugène's experience in the Tuileries and the flâneur's experience in the arcade are conscribed in space; they transpire only because aimless strolling is socially acceptable in the settings. As the street takes on new value in the Second Empire, the interpenetration of walking and identity – mediated

by visual exchange – take root across public spaces. Parisians came to have a dramatically enlarged platform on which to observe others and to craft and display their own identities. The bond between walking and identity-formation solidified as the city-dweller took to the streets so as to know others, to make himself known, and to know himself.

As their social function was taken up by the streets, the arcade gradually passed into obsolescence during the Second Empire. It was no longer necessary to walk in them to see and to be seen. Moreover, with the improvements to the sewage system, the arcade's protection from street-filth lost its importance. Ironically, this aspect of the spatial type nonetheless became its primary use-value: "The arcade that for the Parisian was a sort of salon-walk, where you strolled and smoked and chatted, is now nothing more than a species of refuge for which you think of when it rains." (Jules Claretie, quoted in Benjamin 2002 121) Until their relatively recent revitalization, they served at least the bourgeois pedestrian as nothing more than a shelter from natural forces.

From a Lefebvrian perspective however, the pedestrian-minded improvements did not in fact make the city more conducive to walking, nor to flânerie. On the contrary, Lefebvre would argue that Second Empire Paris, like all abstract spaces, actively suppressed the agency of the pedestrian. As we have seen, abstract space serves as an instrument for political interests and agendas. The governing structure which controls and administers its space deploys within it a multitude of hegemonic forces, which work towards the ultimate goal of a docile and subservient populace. Haussmann's treatment of the historically rebellious eastern neighborhoods is an obvious example of this. Yet we can expand this quality of abstract space to all of the

public space of the city. The new visibility of structures of power, the rigid and functionalized city-plan, the uniform and state-dictated aesthetics – all of these equate to an imposition of power onto the space of Paris, and all operate in opposition to autonomous and individualistic spatial practice. Thus, Lefebvre argues that spatial practice in the abstract city is subjugated to the forces at work in the other modes of apprehending space. Through "representations of space," the pedestrian is subjugated to disciplinary power, and through "spaces of representation," he is indoctrinated with ideology. Far from the Kantian notion of space as an empty receptacle of experience, Lefebvre depicts space as an "obstacle," prohibiting freedom and requiring conformity. (Lefebvre 1991 57) [38]

It follows therefore that flânerie – which operates under the conceit of total agency (seeing and knowing all) – would be impossible in the space of Second Empire Paris. A Lefebvrian reading would suggest that the city's new homogeneity diminished the possibility of encountering the unexpected (recall Huart's assertion that the flâneur thrives on spectacle), and that its rigid and hegemonic city-plan would preclude liberty and spontaneity in navigating the streets. Thus, from the Lefebvrian perspective, the flâneur necessarily died in the Second Empire. Defenseless against the disciplinary forces deployed in urban space, the flâneur loses his status as a recognizable street-figure. Unable to assert his individuality with any meaning, he joins the faceless ranks roaming the streets in crowds.

This standpoint has gained considerable support in modern scholarship (albeit without the theoretical framework of Lefebvre). Walter Benjamin, in his writings on Baudelaire, muses that the poet inherited a city that "had long since ceased to be home for the flâneur." (Benjamin 2006 79) Keith Tester elaborates on Benjamin's

claim: "Flânerie, of course, is predicated on the possibility that there might be secrets to be imputed to things. Administrative rationality destroyed that possibility…"[39] While Priscilla Ferguson argues that flânerie did not end in the Second Empire but underwent a process of "banalization" as walking became more common, she nonetheless emphasizes the dramatic effects Haussmannization had, writing, "Far from empowering the walker in the street, the altered urban context disables the individual." (Ferguson 33)

While the urban renewal no doubt diminished the potential for free and individualistic movement in public space, I will argue that the city still afforded the pedestrian, and the flâneur, a certain degree of autonomy. Granted, this was a very different type of freedom than that which the flâneur enjoyed in the July Monarchy, as we will see in the following pages. I agree with Lefebvre's argument regarding the inherent contradictions of abstract space, and have attempted to show evidence of these contradictions in Second Empire Paris. Ultimately, they originate in what I have called the modal imbalance that informed the city's reconfiguration. Whereas Lefebvre nonetheless argues against the agency of the pedestrian in such a context, in the following section, I will attempt to prove that flânerie – as a form of spatial agency, in defiance of disciplinary control – could continue in Second Empire Paris precisely because of the contradiction between the planner's conception of the city and the pedestrian's experience of it. This disjunction can be understood as the divergence of the dialectical poles of flânerie: representations of the city on the one hand, and spatial practice on the other. The dominant representation of the city (Haussmann's notion of Paris as an ordered totality) did not reflect the city as perceived in the pedestrian's experience. Yet flânerie never ceased to exist. Rather,

through determinately negating the dominant representation, the conflict between the two is resolved; as representation and practice diverge from one another, the flâneur fills the abstract and tangible chasm between them with a new content that sustains his practice, now in defiance of the city.

* * *

Part Two: For the Pedestrian

"O flânerie, flânerie, ne trouveras-tu donc jamais un poète pour te chanter dignement!"[40]
– Louis Huart (1841 82)

In *Le Spleen de Paris*, a collection of prose poems by Charles Baudelaire published in 1869, two years after his death, Haussmannization is mentioned only once, and rather obliquely. In *Les Yeux Des Pauvres* (*The Eyes of the Poor*), the narrator – a cynical, sarcastic man (perhaps a fair description of the poet himself) – sits with his date in a shimmering new café, which "formait le coin d'un boulevard neuf, encore tout plein de gravois et montrant déjà glorieusement ses splendeurs inachevées."[41] (Baudelaire 2005 83) Subtly, the poet points to the discrepancy between the asserted grandeur of the new street and its actual, or apparent value. In the brief description, one can identify the disconnect between the representation of the street articulated by itself (or by its proprietor, the Empire) and the pedestrian's perception of it. The poems of *Spleen*, suggest throughout that the notion of Paris as a rationally ordered totality posited by Haussmann belies its fragmentation and its

disorder in perceptible form. Here again, we see evidence of the incongruity of the dialectical poles of flânerie in Second Empire Paris.

Yet, as I will argue, Baudelaire's poetry also undermines the conclusion that this disruption precludes the practice's existence altogether, and it demonstrates further that the politicization of urban space under Haussmann did not succeed in entirely repressing free ambulatory movement in public space. Rather, *Spleen* shows fairly clearly that flânerie remains a relevant and prevalent mode of relating to the city if a markedly different one than previous formations of the practice that we have encountered. One can identify Baudelaire's narrators as flâneurs of the Second Empire. They are seemingly the same individual – a male poet who walks through the reconfigured city, shocked and overwhelmed by it. (Considering biographical accounts of Baudelaire's life, it would be tempting to fold author and narrator into one another; however I will maintain the distinction between the two.) In the narrator's walking practice and his hypothetical creation of artistic representations of the city, he can be characterized as a flâneur. I will provide support for this classification throughout the following pages.

Simultaneously repulsed and intoxicated, dependent upon and alienated from the metropolis, the Baudelairian flâneur is plagued by contradictory feelings towards the city that prove irreconcilable. Far from the intimate connection to the city that we have seen in previous incarnations of the street-figure, Baudelaire's flâneur detaches himself from it. He walks against the city, in defiance of his setting. As it is depicted in Baudelaire's poetry, flânerie becomes a way of eluding the repressive forces at work in the reconstituted space of Paris. In developing a spatial practice which deflects disciplinary regulation, this flâneur exemplifies Michel De Certeau's

conception of walking as a form of tactical antidiscipline. According to De Certeau, the pedestrian is capable of evading power precisely because of the disjunction illustrated in *Les Yeux Des Pauvres* between the city as concept – engaged by Haussmann – and the city in perceived experience. This discrepancy manifests itself both physically and abstractly in the city, as gaps and fissures in the urban fabric. Therein, the theorist locates the potential for spatial agency, (re)appropriation of space, and creation. We see this idea reflected in the experience of Baudelaire's flâneur, whose detachment enables him to employ the city as a platform for his own artistic creation. Because of his fusion of flânerie with artistic practice, I will employ the standard characterization of the Baudelarian narrator as "artist-flâneur." The physical city becomes a bare structure on which he projects his own fantasies and daydreams, which constitute a figurative urban system in themselves. What De Certeau calls the "metaphorical city" is in *Spleen* a sort of dream city, created by the artist-flâneur, and superimposed atop the physical metropolis. Itself a representation of Paris, which accords to and springs from his spatial practice, the artist-flâneur's dream city displaces Haussmann's fictitious conception of Paris in the dialectic – a harmonious relation between representation and spatial practice which enables flânerie to survive. Thus, we see that both oppositions to the practice in the Second Empire are overcome: the artist-flâneur's antidisciplinary spatial practice counteracts the repressive, homogenizing forces instilled in the space of Paris, while the dream city he imagines and engenders supersedes the predominant but misleading representation of the capital. In response to the changed city – altered both physically and conceptually – flânerie is reformulated, now indelibly linked to artistic production.

In many ways, the spatial theory of Henri Lefebvre serves as the foundation for Michel De Certeau's writing on cities. Similar to his predecessor, De Certeau conceives of space as a product of "technocratic power," (De Certeau 103) which organizes space "by techniques of sociocultural production." (De Certeau xiv) Here, as in Lefebvre, structures of governance both generate and administer space, according to their means and interests. Moreover, De Certeau also characterizes modern space as amenable to instrumentalization by its proprietor. He portrays the city as a network of repressive forces, disciplinary "grids" which regulate and standardize spatial practice therein. (De Certeau xiv) The space of the city is entirely given over to this purpose, becoming a "totalizing and almost mythical landmark for socioeconomic and political strategies…" (De Certeau 95)

Recalling Lefebvre's notion of abstract space, De Certeau characterizes the modern city (on which he focuses exclusively) as a physical realization of itself in conceptual form. Again, this configuration of space originates in the mode of engagement assumed by the entities which produce it. Echoing the Lefebvrian category of "representations of space," De Certeau writes that structures of governance create a conception of the city in which its variations and multiplicities are compressed and flattened out, enabling comprehension and thus regulation. They create the "concept-city": a "space of visual, panoptic, or theoretical constructions." (De Certeau 93)

According to the theorist, experiencing the city from a position of elevation also constitutes a conceptualization of space. He cites numerous examples of this mode of apprehension, including the myth of Icarus, whose lofty observation

"transforms the bewitching world by which one was 'possessed' into a text that lies before one's eyes." (De Certeau 92) A medieval painting that depicts the town from a perspective inaccessible to its artist, the seeming order and tranquility of a modern metropolis from the vantage of a skyscraper's upper floors, or the maps produced out of Haussmann's careful observation of Paris from his makeshift towers—all of these conceptualizations of space attribute a comprehensibility which belies its impenetrability: "[it] makes the complexity of the city readable, and immobilizes its opaque mobility in a transparent text." (De Certeau 92)

It is precisely because of this 'myth of legibility' that the strategic politicization of space falls short of total control over the practices that take place therein: "The presence and circulation of a representation…tells us nothing about what it is for its users…who are not its makers." (De Certeau xiii) Here, De Certeau breaks from Lefebvre. For the latter, the contradictions of abstract space subvert its intended unification and order, yet it is no less effective in suppressing the agency of the individual on the street. While De Certeau agrees that the pedestrian is "the dominated element in society," (De Certeau xi) subject to myriad forces deployed in space, he argues that the failures of power to fully administer space result in fissures and contradictions, both abstractly and concretely manifest in the city; blind spots of power in which the pedestrian can articulate her autonomy.[42] Lefebvre identifies the contradictions of abstract space, but does not fully examine the implications of their existence with regard to the pedestrian. For De Certeau, these blind spots constitute the space of possibility for spatial agency: "the city is left prey to contradictory movements that counterbalance and combine themselves outside the reach of panoptic power." (De Certeau 95)

Walking operates as a means of exploiting these vulnerabilities of technocratically constructed space. As an individualistic and spontaneous practice, it functions as a "tactic" – a guerrilla-style mechanism of defense against repression. In contrast, structures of governance employ space strategically, as an institutionalized and localized apparatus. (De Certeau xix) By way of this distinction, De Certeau describes walking as a form of "antidiscipline," one of many tactical practices in the city, "which an urbanistic system was supposed to administer or suppress, but which...far from being regulated or eliminated by panoptic administration, have reinforced themselves in a proliferating illegitimacy…" (De Certeau 96) Through engaging urban space in this way, the pedestrian is capable of eluding the disciplining forces of the concept city, creating the possibility for the articulation of individuality in spatial practice: "Increasingly constrained, yet less and less concerned with these vast frameworks, the individual detaches himself from them without being able to escape them and can henceforth only try to outwit them, to pull tricks on them…" (De Certeau xxiv)

Upon first appearance, the narrators that populate Baudelaire's poems hardly fulfill De Certeau's notion of the free and autonomous agent at motion in the modern capitalist metropolis. In fact, they seem rather vulnerable to the various forces at work in the city. However, I will attempt to show that in his alienation from the city, the artist-flâneur develops a form of resistance to it, which enables him to both reject the city in its actualized form and thrive in it on his own terms.

Paris is integral to the project of *Le Spleen de Paris*; the city is unwaveringly present, as a source of creative stimulation and emotional tumult. Despite its

importance, the city in its physical (perceptible) form is not greatly depicted in Baudelaire's writing. In this, *Le Spleen de Paris* recalls Balzac's *Le Père Goriot*, yet the poet's treatment of the city is far more disparaging than his predecessor's. The similarities and differences between the two authors are evident in *Épilogue*, in which the narrator ascends to an elevated point outside of Paris so as to "contempler la ville en son / ampleur…"[43] (Baudelaire 2005 157) In both its content and placement within the collection, the poem evokes the final scene of Balzac's novel, in which Eugène observes the city from the heights of Père-Lachaise. Despite his disenchantment, Balzac's protagonist still sees Paris as a place of opportunity and fulfillment, connoted in the image of a beehive full of honey. For Baudelaire's narrator, the image of the city from above elicits comparisons to institutional and metaphysical places of degradation: "Hôpital, lupanar, purgatoire, enfer, bagne…"[44] (Baudelaire 2005 157) The position of remove does little to abate his strongly negative opinion of Paris; it is immutably and from all perspectives a place of sickness, lewd pleasure, confinement and perdition. Where Rastignac sees opportunity, Baudelaire's narrator sees damnation.

Despite his apparent disdain, the artist-flâneur is bound to Paris. In the same poem, the narrator compares his relation to the city to that of an old man with an elderly prostitute: "Je voulais m'enivrer de l'énorme catin / Dont le charme infernal me rajeunit sans / cesse."[45] (Baudelaire 2005 157) The analogy reveals the extent of the narrator's dependence upon the city—it sustains him. Paris offers not wealth and success signified by Rastignac's honey, but nourishment and the fulfillment of carnal desire. He is both repulsed by the city and helplessly tied to it. These conflicting qualities of the narrator's experience are irreconcilable, leaving him ultimately

ambivalent: "Je t'aime, ô capitale infame!"[46] (Baudelaire 2005 157) The proclamation amounts to a sort of exasperated admission of acquiescence to the city's control.

Of course, the comparison to prostitution also points to the pleasure – at once vulgar and intense – which the artist-flâneur derives from the city. In *Les Foules* (*Crowds*), this sensation – here experienced in the midst of a crowd – takes the form of a state of intoxication. In its potency, it supersedes all other feelings, including love. The language employed in his description of it is both profane, "cette ineffable orgie,"[47] and sacred, "cette sainte prostitution de l'ame;"[48] a mixture of verbal and pictorial signifiers of piety and depravity which seems to mock religious dogma and suggest the experience's transcendence of moral systems. (Baudelaire 2005 40)[49]

In the artist-flâneur's experience, the city is always encountered as an unsurpassable obstruction to his emotional and quotidian stability. In *Le Mauvais Vitrier* (*The Bad Glazier*), this disruptive quality is depicted as a tangible and unavoidable part of the urban environment. The narrator recounts sitting at his window one day, and hearing a cry in the street, which passed through "la lourde et sale atmosphere parisienne"[50] before reaching him. (Baudelaire 2005 32) It is as if all forms of communication are mediated by Paris' oppressiveness and filth. Throughout the collection, Baudelaire similarly evokes the weight of city-life, its squalor and decay.

Elsewhere, the city is not only disruptive, it is invasive and deeply disturbing. In *Un Plaisant* (*A Joker*), the narrator walks alone in the streets during the early hours of New Year's day, encountering the "délire official d'une grande ville fait pour troubler le cerveau du solitare le plus fort."[51] (Baudelaire 2005 19) The madness

which agitates him is directly attributed to the city, as if it were an institutionalized component of it, which targets the solitary walker specifically.

Thus the city is always disconcerting. This is made even clearer in *À Une Heure du Matin* (*At One O'Clock in the Morning*). The narrator is relieved to be home for the night, out of the way of "la tyrannie de la face humaine,"[52] which is implicitly located in the public space of the city. (Baudelaire 2005 34) Later, the poem conveys this characterization of public space more overtly: "Horrible vie! Horrible ville!"[53] (Baudelaire 2005 34) The pains and struggles of existence are synonymous with those of the urban experience. A far cry from the unified, rationalized city posited by Haussmann, Paris as the artist-flâneur experiences it is chaotic, contradictory and violently oppressive.

The variety and intensity of emotional responses to the city are countered by the artist-flâneur's regular boredom. In *Le Mauvais Vitrier*, he recounts waking up, "maussade, triste, fatigue d'oisivete."[54] (Baudelaire 32) This ennui puts the figure into a peculiar state of reverie. Baudelaire lists examples of extremely lethargic friends, whose stagnancy and penchant for day-dreaming often result in inexplicable bursts of energy and action. Thus, Baudelaire posits a causal link between this ennui-reverie provoked by the city, and the capacity for autonomous creation. Here, the connection between Baudelaire's narrators and flânerie makes itself clear. To assuage his boredom, Baudelaire's artist-flâneur takes to the streets. Like Huart's flâneur, he walks alone (e.g. the narrator of *Les Foules*, a poet, aligns himself with "le promeneur solitaire et pensif"[55] (Baudelaire 2005 39)). His solitude creates the sensation of anonymity in the crowds through which he ambles. This position of remove is essential to the Baudelairian practice of flânerie. As he writes in "Le

Peintre de la Vie Moderne," an essay on painter Constantin Guys: "L'observateur est un *prince* qui jouit partout de son incognito."[56] His isolation insulates him from the city, and enables him to reach out to it from a protected position. The flâneur of the Second Empire lives in perpetual contradiction, immersing himself in the crowd while withdrawing from the world. As such, the distinction between being alone and being with others dissolves: "Multitude, solitude: termes égaux et convertibles pour le poëte actif et fecond."[57] (Baudelaire 2005 39) On the streets, the artist-flâneur cultivates a spatial practice which defends him against the city's penetrating and oppressive forces. While this position of remove is clearly not always at work (e.g. *Un Plaisant*), it is capable of being activated. Here we see traces of walking as a form of De Certeauian antidiscipline. Despite all of the ways in which the artist-figure is affected by Second Empire Paris, he nonetheless is able to extract himself from the city's clutches, and engage it dynamically and autonomously.

However, flânerie is still theoretically hindered by the dominant representation of Paris posited by Haussmann, which contradicts the artist-flâneur's perceived experience of the city. To reiterate my conception of flânerie, its rise to prominence owed both to representations of the city (portrayed in literature, posited conceptually in maps, and conveyed in the space of the city itself) and to a particular spatial practice. The products of these two modes of engaging space informed one another, and are synthesized in the flâneur's practice. As Haussmann's conception of the city forcefully prevails in the Second Empire, its inconsistency with the perceptual mode of apprehending the city (spatial practice) posed a threat to the practice of flânerie. This conflict, I will argue, is resolved through the artist-flâneur's

production of his own self-fulfilling representation of the city, created in his spatial practice.

As we have seen, the artist-flâneur's position of remove from the city enables him to derive pleasure and inspiration from it. The poem *Les Foules* demonstrates how this feeling of intoxication is achieved. The narrator describes, with evident pride, his capacity as a poet to assume the perceptual positions of strangers in a crowd: "…il peut à sa guise être lui-même et autrui."[58] (Baudelaire 2005 39) Importantly, it is his status as an artist which affords him the "incomparable privilège"[59] of this figurative inter-corporal and psychic dynamism. In "Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne," Baudelaire stresses that this capacity is unique to the artist : "Non! Peu d'hommes sont doué de la faculté de voir ; il y en a moins encore qui possèdent la puissance d'exprimer."[60] (Baudelaire 1863 10)

Of equal importance to the poet's capacity to move through different perceptual positions is the vacuity of the others in the crowd: "Pour lui seul, tout est vacant…"[61] (Baudelaire 2005 39) They are portrayed as empty bodies, vapid receptacles amenable to his own perceptual colonization. The poet's action transcends the categories of human experience: he moves "[c]omme ces âmes errantes qui cherchent un corps…"[62] (Baudelaire 2005 39) Unlike the July Monarchy flâneur in the arcade – who imagines how he is perceived by others so as to inform his own identity, which he performs in his spatial practice – the artist-flâneur of the Second Empire assumes the perspectives of others not solely for the purposes of self-evaluation and self-actualization, but also to intoxicate himself through the very act of perceptual mobility. As we will see, his movement through perceptual positions also enables him to access the content of his artistic productions.

In *Les Fenêtres* (*Windows*), the poet's ability to insinuate himself into things external to his own perceptual position is portrayed in a different setting than the crowd. The narrator asserts the significance of a closed window, viewed at night from outside: "Il n'est pas d'objet plus profound, plus mystérieux, plus fecond, plus ténébreux, plus éblouissant…"[63] (Baudelaire 2005 115) The ascription of fecundity points to the nature of the windows value for the narrator: it is a fruitful source of both inspiration and material for the narrator's artistic practice.

He goes on to describe the image of an old woman sitting at her window, whose mere appearance, visually perceived by the narrator, enables him to produce an account of her life. The accuracy of this story is irrelevant to him: "Qu'importe ce que peut être la réalité placée hors de moi, si elle m'a aidé à vivre, à sentir que je suis et ce que je suis?"[64] (Baudelaire 2005 116) His communion with the image provides him with a feeling of vitality and of self-comprehension. Left unsaid in this final sentence, but no less deducible, is the function of such an experience for his artistic practice. The very existence of the poem *Les Fenêtres* (whose author is easily aligned with the narrator) demonstrates that the artist-flâneur's movement through the perceptual positions of the city's living and inanimate things enables him to produce artistic depictions of city-life. Indeed, all of *Spleen* may be considered to be a product of this relation between artist and city. In *Les Fenêtres*, the window is meaningful not in itself, but as a medium for his own imagination: "Celui qui regarde du dehors à travers une fenêtre ouverte, ne voit jamais autant de choses que celui qui regarde une fenêtre fermée."[65] (Baudelaire 2005 115) What the artist-flâneur sees in the closed window is his own internal experience, externalized: "je me couche, fier d'avoir vécu et souffert dans d'autres que moi-même."[66] (Baudelaire 2005 115) The

window is synecdochal; in *Le Spleen de Paris* the city in its entirety is an infrastructure on to which the artist-flâneur projects his reverie.

Once again, Michel De Certeau offers a theoretical framework for understanding Second Empire flânerie in Baudelaire. Let us recall what I have called the blind spots of the technocratically-produced modern city: the physical and abstract gaps of disciplinary control, fractures and contradictions in the urban fabric. These blind spots originate in the myth of legibility – the notion that urban space can be fully comprehended and controlled – that informs a structure of authority's engagement of space. As we have seen, it is because of the blind spots that the artist-flâneur can evade the controlling forces at work in the city. With regard to the figure's artistic practice, these gaps serve an equally important function. De Certeau writes, "The surface of this order [the "constructed order" of a story and of a city] is everywhere punched and torn open by ellipses, drifts, and leaks of meaning: it is a sieve-order." (De Certeau 107) These rifts do not remain unfilled however. Rather, the theorist asserts: "Things *extra* and *other*…insert themselves into the accepted framework, the imposed order." (De Certeau 107)

To elucidate this idea, De Certeau writes of the significance of street-names (and other proper nouns signifying in the city) to a pedestrian, arguing that over time, they become dislocated from the physical location which they are meant to signify as they are imbued with a personalized meaning (e.g. the junction of 70th street and Lexington avenue in Manhattan may denote the city's best cheeseburger to a pedestrian). As these private meanings accumulate, they constellate into a figurative urban network: "A strange toponymy that is detached from actual places and flies high over the city like a foggy geography of 'meanings' held in suspension…" (De

Certeau 104) The pedestrian's creation of abstract content adhered to the physical city is not unique to place-names, but transpires throughout the city in numerous mediums, everywhere possible because of power's failure to fully regulate the pedestrian through its instrumentalized space. The city's ubiquitous vulnerabilities present themselves as "liberated spaces that can be occupied." De Certeau continues: "A rich indetermination gives them, by means of a semantic rarefaction, the function of articulating a second, poetic geography on top of the geography of the literal, forbidden or permitted meaning." (De Certeau 105)

While I do not intend to argue that a closed window viewed at night is analogous to an urban entity liberated from the control of the Empire, I nonetheless would like to suggest that the artist-figure's creative engagement of the space of Second Empire Paris is made possible because of the blind spots of power, and that on an abstract level, it transpires within them. Throughout the city, the artist-flâneur heroized in *Le Spleen de Paris* projects his phantasmal musings onto its spaces, objects and inhabitants. In the poems, the city is relatively devoid of physical characteristics, resembling more closely De Certeau's description of the modern city: "a universe of rented spaces haunted by a nowhere or by dreamed-of places." (De Certeau 103) Ultimately, Paris serves as a platform for the creation of this constellation of meanings, which trace back to the artist-flâneur's ennui and reverie—his initial impetus to walk the streets. The origin is reflected in the result; the artist-flâneur creates a dream city, which permeates its physical counterpart. As De Certeau writes: "A migrational, or metaphorical city thus slips into the clear text of the planned and readable city." (De Certeau 93)

Out of the purview of the Empire, the dream city proliferates in functionalized and politicized Paris, in spite of the city and its proprietor. This intangible urban structure not only inspires and substantiates the artist-flâneur's art, but is also the condition of his very existence. Homologous to the physical city as a subjective, abstract configuration of the metropolis, the dream city is in itself a representation of Paris. Originating in and reflecting his spatial practice, this representation is a far more accurate representational counterpart to his perceptual experience in the city. As such, the representation of the city enforced by Haussmann and the Empire looses its relevance and its restrictive power over the pedestrian. The dialectical development of flânerie is thus possible in the Second Empire because of the artist-flâneur's ability to reject the predominant but fictitious representation of the city and create his own conception of Paris, just as his spatial practice allows him to evade discipline deployed in urban space. In such a way, flânerie struggles forward through the Second Empire, bolstered by and in service of artistic creation.

3. The Capital as Commerce: *Au Bonheur Des Dames*

While some of the oldest Parisian department stores have their roots in the July Monarchy, it was only during the latter half of the Second Empire that these monuments of commerce achieved the success that earned them a fixed position in urban centers around the world. Through low prices, the quick turnover of a diverse stock of goods and numerous other innovations, the department stores revolutionized commerce in the era of high capitalism. All of the period's most prominent commercial institutions were located in the western half of the city, and excepting the Bon Marché, all were on the right bank. Many established their flagship locations on Haussmann's large boulevards, which were coveted for their visibility, novelty and convenience. As their profits grew steadily, so to did the physical stores themselves; most repeatedly expanded their properties over the course of years. In their final physical formations, the Parisian department stores were opulent exemplars of 19th century modern architecture, visually dominating their immediate environs. By the time the Communards had taken control of the Paris in 1871, the Bon Marché, the Grands Magazins du Louvre, Samaratine and Printemps were all immutable components of the urban fabric.

Their rise to prominence is reflected in the evolution of Au Bonheur Des Dames – the fictional department store of Émile Zola's 1883 novel of the same name.

Set in the final years of the Second Empire, the story follows Denise – a recently-orphaned girl from the countryside – through her tumultuous but ultimately successful tenure at the store. Over the five years that the story spans, Bonheur increases its revenues exponentially, and grows to the size of a whole city block. The interior space, shrewdly crafted by owner Octave Mouret, is both instrumental in the store's financial success and emblematic of the new commercial model to which it adheres. He employs it strategically, to seduce customers and manipulate desire, through such methods as an intentionally disorienting layout of departments and goods, and the generation of dense crowds. In such a way, the interior space works specifically to target feminine desire, rendering it an unambiguously gendered spatial type. The interior's self-presentation as a place where women "[reign] supreme" facilitates the total subjugation of the female clientele to the control of the store, which, aside from Denise, whose position improves towards the end of the novel, is administered solely by men.

However, Zola complicates the relation between gender and institutionalized commerce in the novel, as the store seems to both play up normative conceptions of femininity and efface individuating classifications such as gender, sexuality and class. Through both figurative and literal thematic devices, the narrative illustrates the ways in which the category of the Individual is dismantled in the space of the store, replaced instead by the collective – a mass of consumers. This effect of Bonheur, portrayed as essential to its prosperity, prohibits the dynamic engagement of spatial practice, visual exchange and identity-formation that flourished in the arcade. In this new urban formation of commerce, one can neither walk freely nor see others clearly – it is a space of undiluted and unrestrained commercial activity. His motion

restricted, his vision incapacitated and his identity obscured, the flâneur is therefore unable to perform his practice or actualize his identity in the space of the department store. Its gendered function and nature completes his total alienation from this new spatial type.

As it appears in the novel, the public space of the city seems equally unsuited to the flâneur's practice. Through numerous narrative devices, Zola depicts the expansion of Bonheur's commercial project out into the city. The store's relationship to Paris is complex and multifaceted. As it becomes more and more self-sufficient and self-contained, the store is increasingly likened to a city in itself, as if the actual city is displaced by the commercial institution. At times, the city almost seems to disappear from the perspective of the store's interior. Yet this phenomenon belies the importance of urban space in the store's prolonged success. Recalling Haussmann's instrumentalization of the city in the service of Napoleon III and the Second Empire, Mouret inundates Paris with signifiers of his store, through original advertising campaigns, and unprecedented techniques of display. This strategic insinuation of the store into the space of Paris precedes Mouret's actual acquisition of it, resulting always in the store's physical growth. The owner's belief in the potential perpetuity of this process of acquisition and expansion is reflected in the advertising campaign enacted towards the end of the story, which depicts the city (from above) as dwarfed by Bonheur. The dialectical poles of flânerie converge in Zola's portrayal of Paris, as the city in perceptual experience is saturated with the project of commerce. By the end of *Au Bonheur Des Dames*, the whole city has been mobilized in the service of Mouret's establishment. Alienated both inside the store and out on the streets, the

flâneur encounters a city no longer hospitable to his practice, and falls in line with the crowds.

To begin, I will analyze the spatial dynamics inside Zola's fictional department store. The interior space receives a consistently high degree of attention in the narrative; the majority of the plot unfolds therein. With Bonheur's repeated reconstructions and the numerous store-wide sales that take place, the interior is in a steady state of flux throughout the novel. Nonetheless, it is always (re)produced with a meticulous attention to gender. Mouret prides himself on his complete mastery of the female mind, and applies this purported knowledge to the creation of an interior space that intrinsically attracts women and persuades them to consume indiscriminately. His pride is satisfied by the repeated successes of the artifices introduced into the space which target women, in the face of which all but the most headstrong female characters are portrayed as helpless.

The program of the gallery floors proves to be particularly useful in Mouret's exploitation of female desire as he conceives of it. Rather than clustering similar departments, which would facilitate navigation and deliberate shopping, Mouret disperses them throughout the galleries. The resulting anti-functionalist plan proves all but impossible to move through with purpose, and increases the customers' exposure to previously undesired goods. Seasoned shoppers lose themselves in this new layout, and inadvertently buy more than they would have as a result.

The store entrances are designed with a similar willful disregard for practicality. Mouret strategically places piles of the cheapest goods – ancestors of today's 'bargain bins' – just within the main doorways, creating large bottlenecks that

extend out onto the sidewalk. Pedestrians are enticed by the image of people lined up outside, and from the perspective of a waiting customer, the store appears to be filled to capacity (regardless of the number of actual shoppers inside). The excitement this causes is amplified by the exasperation of waiting in the crowd; to emerge from it into the space of the store is both a relief and a wish-fulfillment.

Unsurprisingly, the experience within the store is only gratifying for female customers. When men unaffiliated with the store are inside, they are there never to shop, but to accompany a female relation. They are portrayed as uniformly bored by the activity taking place all around them and alienated from it. Not only are the goods primarily for women, but the very nature of the interior space presents itself as created for and dictated by feminine interests.

The lopsidedly gendered nature of the commercial space of the store masks its solid establishment within and reinforcement of a patriarchal administrative structure. Mouret embodies this illusion at work in the store; his seeming empathy disarms women and makes them feel empowered, thereby enabling him to exploit them for personal gain. It is this "aura of enfranchisement," as Rachel Bowlby calls it, which makes the interior so effective in deploying Mouret's agendas.[67]

The artificially induced and heavily regulated femininity of the interior space of the department store points more broadly to the dynamic power which Bonheur wields over gender. In fact, in many passages in the novel, the store seems to administer gender with the opposite intention and effect, effacing it from the identities of characters rather than amplifying its importance. This is true particularly in the experience of the employees, who work so hard that "differences of sex disappeared and nothing remained but opposing interests inflamed by the fever of

business."[68] This quote suggests that interpersonal difference must be sacrificed for the purpose of self-advancement. De-gendered, and conditioned to maintain a relation of perpetual conflict, the employees become less and less distinguishable from one another.[69]

The nullification of gender is mirrored by the destruction of other signifiers of personal identity in the experience of the employees. Several pages after the description of the de-gendering effect of the store, Zola writes (as if continuing the previous passage uninterrupted): "[i]f the constant battle for money had not already wiped out the difference between the sexes, the endless jostle of the crowd, which kept their minds busy and made their bodies ache, would have been enough to kill all desire." (Zola 134) While intra-staff competition causes the loss of gender identity, sexual impulse is eradicated by the frenzy of the customers. The store is similarly flexible in its regulation of both categories—while unvaryingly present in the store's financial, aesthetic, and marketing strategies, sexuality is denied of Bonheur employees, and stripped from their identities.

The dismantling of employee identity is rounded off by the elimination of class distinction amongst the women. Unlike the lower classes in their secure salaried occupations, and distinct from the bourgeoisie in numerous ways, including their nonparticipation in the act of consumption, the female employees occupy a "neutral, ill-defined position, somewhere between shopkeepers and ladies." (Zola 311) Again, one sees the ambiguous gender status in the double sense of the word "ladies;" here the absence of a clearly defined gender identity is linked (perhaps causally) to their marginal status within the dominant class hierarchy. The stratum they occupy

becomes almost a reified socio-economic position in itself, defined by its indistinctness: "they formed an anonymous class apart." (Zola 311)

In destroying three prominent characteristics of its employees, the store renders them homogenous and – unaffected as they are by the dictates of class, gender, or sexual identity – docile to control. According to Rachel Bowlby's lucid analysis, which comes to many of the same conclusions as my own, the suppression of individuating characteristics is necessary to the smooth functioning of the store. (Bowlby 78) The women loose their status as individuals, becoming instead faceless constituents of institutionalized commerce.

The obliteration of existential distinction within the store also affects the customers, in a more elaborate and penetrating process. Primarily, this takes place within the artificially induced crowds. As the volume of shoppers grows with every successive reconstruction and subsequent grand opening, it becomes increasingly difficult to articulate one's own individuality through autonomous spatial practice; customers have no choice but to follow the movement of the crowd, controlled, as we have seen, by Mouret.

Yet the power of the department store crowd extends beyond the ability to conscribe spatial practice; eventually, the store interior prevents the simple act of visually recognizing other human beings. In one passage that illustrates this development, the Individual is not only indiscernible, but seemingly dissected by the forces at work in the spatial dynamics of the store, dismantled to the point of being unrecognizable. The narrative assumes the perspective of Madame Desforges, a regular shopper and sometimes lover of Mouret:

> This sea of multi-coloured hats, of bare heads, both fair and dark, was flowing from one end of the gallery to the other, looking blurred and faded

> against the stunning brilliance of the materials. Wherever she looked Madame Desforges could see nothing but large price tickets with huge figures on them, garish spots standing out against the bright prints, the glossy silks, and the somber woollens. Heads were half cut off from sight by piles of ribbons; a wall of flannel stood out like a promontory; on all sides the mirrors made the departments recede further into the distance, reflecting the displays together with patches of the public—faces in reverse, bits of shoulders and arms—while to the left and right sides galleries opened up further vistas, the snowy drifts of household linen, the dappled depths of the hosiery—lost in the distance, illuminated by a ray of light from some bay window, and where the crowd had become nothing but specks of human dust. (Zola 250)

Desforges' initial recognition of the Human in a mass of heads is tenuous. The image lacks precision; it is "blurred and faded" in contrast to the clarity of the commodity. With its figurative subject and passive verb, the first sentence reinforces the softness of the perceived image. In contradistinction, the second sentence, with its straightforward structure (embodied subject, active verb), conveys the ease with which monetary value is discerned; in fact, it is impossible for Desforges to ignore the price tags. The static relation in the first two sentences between the hazy image of the Human and the sharp image of the commodity (and its value) evolves in the third sentence, taking the form of violent conflict: the perceived head "cut off from sight by piles of ribbons" – decapitated by the commodity. This process of delocalization transforms, perverted into one of mutilation, as Desforges perceives "faces in reverse, bits of shoulders and arms" – fragmentary and disfigured traces only synecdochically signifying the Human. The progression is completed in the total obliteration of the Individual, and the subsumption of its remains, "specks of human dust," into the mass of the crowd, indistinct and all but inhuman. [70]

Thus, within the realm of the clientele, the identity-effacement that characterizes the experience of the employees takes the form of existential-

dismantling. In the figurative narrative portrayal of the store's interior, the customers are not only stripped of personal characteristics such as class, gender and sexuality, they are taken apart, piece by piece, by the objective commodity. With the complex interweaving of humans and commodities, spatial dynamics and visual exchange, all portrayed in varying degrees of abstraction, *Au Bonheur Des Dames* implicitly criticizes the commercial model of the department store. In its exploitation of desire, its fraudulent expression of feminine solidarity, its homogenization of employees and its assemblage of its customers into indiscriminate masses, the department store as depicted in Zola's novel is fundamentally dehumanizing.

As should be abundantly clear by now, the department store is a far cry from its predecessor, the arcade. The differences between the two are perhaps best illustrated by the flâneur's divergent experiences in each. The flâneur felt at home in the arcade, even a sense of ownership over it. As the arcade served both commercial and social functions for its users, the flâneur could admire the goods on display without impeding his primary interest: social exchange. As we have seen, and as will be discussed in greater detail below, the department store amplifies the presence and power of its commercial purpose, thereby obstructing social exchange therein. Sociable strolling without commercial activity is impossible in the department store. Its undiluted commercial function estranges the flâneur.

However, the space's gendered status is even more alienating to him. His sense of possession over the arcade conveys the extent to which the spatial type was undoubtedly masculine – catering to men's interests, and offering a space in which men could perform their gender identity and interact with one another. In fact, one could argue fairly easily that the entirety of the city's public space was similarly

patriarchal. Such a claim is no doubt supported by the uniform gender of the street-walkers we have encountered; in the texts of Balzac, Huart and Baudelaire, it is almost only men who walk in the streets.[71] While produced and regulated by men, the department store is the first semi-public space of the city which not only caters specifically to women, but also actively ignores men. The flâneur's total alienation from the department store throws light on the extent to which his practice and its history are also lopsidedly gendered. Always and everywhere, flânerie presupposed a masculine subject and a masculine context. The department store, a "temple to Woman," therefore actively opposes the flâneur, and excludes his practice.

Taking Benjamin's enigmatic claim: "[t]he department store is the last promenade for the flâneur" as a premise, let us nonetheless imagine the flâneur's experience within the store against my analysis of his experience in the arcade. (Benjamin 2006 85) In the older spatial type, he moved freely, according to the dictates of whim. His ambulation facilitated the observation of others, and the observation of himself by others, who, in recognizing him as a flâneur, affirmed his sense-of-self, enabling him to perform his identity in his spatial practice. In the department store of Zola's novel, the union of walking vision and identity is not only disassembled, each component is individually attacked. The crowds, created by Mouret, regulate an individual's motion, restricting the autonomous spatial practice that has always been essential to flânerie, both in its July Monarchy and Second Empire formations. As the passage analyzed earlier demonstrates, the two other components of the triad (vision, identity) are also obstructed. Madame Desforges' capacities to visually apprehend other people diminish steadily throughout the excerpt, as individuals become indistinguishable in the throngs of people and goods.

In such a spatial context, the flâneur would neither be able to see, nor be seen and recognized by others as a flâneur. Dependent upon strangers for self-actualization, the flâneur would therefore be incapable of performing his notion of self in his spatial practice, which, as we have seen, is already restricted by the crowds. Alienated therefore in every aspect from the space of the department store, the flâneur must return to the street as a last hope.

Having considered the spatial dynamics within of the department store as they are depicted in Zola's novel, I will now examine the relation between the store and the city. As Bonheur grows in size and profit, the narrative increasingly attributes city-like qualities to the store. It becomes a sort of metropolis in itself, enlarged steadily through the acquisition of new property and the insinuation of its name and project into the space of Paris. Through my analysis of the novel, I would like to suggest that with the rise of the department store, public space in Paris became increasingly dominated by the project of commerce, to the detriment of the flâneur's experience on the streets.

In keeping with the place of the city in the literary works I have thus far examined, Zola classifies *Au Bonheur Des Dames* as a distinctly Parisian tale. Immediately, the story is situated "in the midst of the vast city of Paris." (Zola 3) Considering our literary precedent, it is perhaps unsurprising that the reader encounters very little of the city during the novel, as the plot unfolds primarily within the confines and immediate environs of Bonheur. As the novel progresses, Paris is increasingly obscured, diminished and forgotten within the department store. This is most apparent in the retail areas of Bonheur. Therein, the city almost disappears: "By

now the commotion inside was muffling the sounds from the street; the rumbling of cabs and the banging of doors could no longer be heard; beyond the huge murmur of the sale there remained nothing but a sensation of the vastness of Paris…" (Zola 109) Again, Paris is attributed an enormity, but it is more difficult to apprehend; it is only sensorially accessible, as a muted evocation.

Importantly, this quasi-imperceptibility of the city is not characteristic of the city's presence in every part of the store. In fact, the dynamic between Paris and variously functioned interior spaces throws light upon the forces at work in the city-Bonheur relation. Before a certain round of renovations, the cafeteria is located in the store's basement. In a description of the space, the narrator writes: "from the narrow ventilation shaft, opening on the street at pavement level, the daylight which fell was livid, with vague shadows of passers-by ceaselessly going through it." (Zola 163) Here, the city is slightly more perceptible than in the show rooms above. Again however, it is a "vague" presence, a hazy incarnation of the street and the city.

As the narrative account of the meal continues, the presence of the city sharpens, to the point of being oppressive: the employees "had opened the skylight of the ventilator to freshen the stifling, foul-smelling air, but they had to shut it again immediately, for the cab-wheels seemed to be going across the table." (Zola 172) With the skylight opened, the indistinct city becomes an overwhelming and unmediated presence in the cafeteria. In light of the city's evanescence in the galleries, this passage suggests that it is the commercial function of the show rooms that causes Paris to disappear, not the building as a whole.

Just as the city fades away, the store itself takes on certain qualities of a metropolis, "a kind of vast city of commerce." (Zola 38) In its irrational and

disorienting layout, the store almost merits comparison to pre-Haussmann Paris. Yet whereas the disorder of the old city-plan was due to the historic lack of organized and deliberate city planning efforts, the store's confusion is purposeful and meticulously regulated.

The association of the store with a city is not static in the narrative; as Bonheur grows, so to does the size of the spatial configuration of society to which it is compared. Early in the novel, before successive enlargements, Denise sees the store, "bathed in light, like a town, with monuments, squares, streets, in which it seemed she would never find her way." (Zola 49) The analogy not only illustrates Denise's difficulties adjusting to her life at Bonheur, it also points to the intricate and complex spatial formation that the store has already assumed. Much later, when the store occupies a whole city block, Denise and her co-worker and friend Deloche leave their posts to talk privately: "They were in an out-of-the-way corner of the vast world in which the multitudes in the Ladies' Paradise came and went." (Zola 343) In figurative depictions, the store has become a spatial context which encompasses the entirety of human experience; that which is outside of it is all but unknown.[72]

The frequency of this analogy increases as the store becomes more and more self-sufficient. It becomes a "little phalansterian city," in which the employees eat, sleep and socialize.[73] (Zola 272) As Denise gains clout with the administration, she inspires the creation of a number of staff amenities, such as a library, game room, salon, and bar: "Every need in life was provided for, everything was obtainable without leaving the building—study, refreshment, sleeping accommodation, clothing." (Zola 356) The store becomes a society in miniature. For its employees, the city not only disappears, it becomes unnecessary.[74]

Despite Bonheur's seeming detachment from it, the city is instrumental to the store's success. Through a number of techniques, Mouret works to fill the city with Bonheur's presence, to make it ubiquitous and ineluctable. From our vantage point, it is perhaps unsurprising that advertisement is the primary mode in which this is accomplished, but his creativity therein must be acknowledged. His embossing of delivery carriages with large eye-catching advertisements constitutes one innovative technique. The vehicles' daily travels "spread all over the city in a starry radiance the hated name of the Ladies' Paradise."[75] Their motion serves the dual purpose of distribution and publicity; they are an itinerant reminder of Bonheur's success: "They would even go outside the city walls, into the suburbs…[Mouret] dreamed of sending them even further afield into neighboring *departments*; he would have liked to hear them rattling along all the roads of France, from one frontier to the other." (Zola 337-338) For the owner, there appear to be no limits to the range of places which his store can access and infiltrate.

In a similar stroke of ingenuity, Mouret buys 40,000 red balloons bearing the store's name, to be handed out to children during a large sale. Delighted, the children become walking advertisements, their youth and innocence transitively imputed to the store. Again, the narrative imagines the balloons as located within urban space, they are seen: "floating from one end of Paris to the other…" (Zola 266) The whole city becomes a platform on which Bonheur is displayed.

By far, Mouret's most cherished tool for projecting the store onto the space of the city is the display window. Considered "a revolutionary window-dresser," the owner takes devotes considerable time to arranging intricate garish spreads, so striking and seductive that they regularly halt pedestrian motion on the sidewalks.

Most impressive is Mouret's ability to seemingly extend the presence of the displays out into the streets:

> The dummies' round bosoms swelled out the material, their wide hips exaggerated the narrow waists, and their missing heads were replaced by large price tags with pins stuck through them into the red bunting round the collars, while mirrors on either side of the windows had skillfully arranged to reflect the dummies, multiplying them endlessly, seeming to fill the street with these beautiful women for sale with huge price tags where their heads should have been. (Zola 6)

In this particular display (the first that Denise encounters upon arriving in Paris), the anatomical seat of human reason is replaced by a signification of monetary value. These "women" are lifeless and irrational, but their purported worth is corroborated by the ostensible value of their clothes. The end of the passage suggests that it is the women and not the clothes that are for sale—*prêt-à-porter* identities of evident quality and style.

Through the visual trick of the mirrors, they appear to be innumerable, capable of infinite reproduction. Originating in the space of the store, the duplicates extend endlessly into the street, dissolving the boundary between commercial and public space. As depicted in this passage, the effects of the display window exceed those of the advertising methods discussed above. Whereas those facilitated the transitory projection of the store onto the city, through the display window the store seems to instill itself permanently into urban space, territorializing it for its own use through the deployment of its exhaustive resources.

This reading of Zola's novel is supported by David Harvey's analysis of Second Empire Paris. In writing on the character of the new boulevards, he argues that they became "public spaces where the fetish of the commodity reigned supreme." (Harvey 216) Mouret deftly exploits the store's penetration into the street, attempting

to bring the two spatial types into an ultimate harmony: "If he could have found a way of making the street run right through his shop, he would have done so." (Zola 236) In the novel, the street is not only a conduit of customers, but also an appendage of the store in itself, instrumentalized for its commercial project.[76]

The appropriation of urban space is most evident in the area surrounding Au Bonheur Des Dames, the northwest side of the current-day 2nd arrondissement. The neighborhood is filled with small specialized boutiques in various stages of financial ruin due to Bonheur. Zola imbues these stores with symbolic content; they stand in for the dated style of commerce (limited unvarying stock, small space, etc.) which the department store is defying and rendering obsolete. In turn, both the boutiques and their commercial model symbolize pre-Haussmann Paris, which is situated in opposition to the urban renewal taking place in the novel. Thus the triad are symbolically aligned, and uniformly decimated by their homologous modern counterparts.

This opposition, which could be simply as between old and new Paris, is expounded in the narrative in its illustrations of the physical evolution of the store and the neighborhood. In its architecture, Bonheur is exemplary of the modern style of the 19th century, including glass and iron prominently. The surrounding buildings put its innovation in sharp relief. Bourras, a shopkeeper who specializes in finely crafted umbrellas and canes, owns an old and decrepit building which most tellingly embodies the store-neighborhood tension: "it was a hovel squashed between the Au Bonheur Des Dames and a large Louis XIV mansion…" (Zola 20) Literally, the building is situated between the old and the new. Bourras is the last shopkeeper to hold out in face of Bonheur's competition; his dramatic defeat is dramatized by the

physical collapse of his property: "[i]t was like the squashing of a gnat, the ultimate triumph over the bitter obstinacy of the infinitely small; the whole block had been overrun and conquered." (Zola 385)

The narrative elaborates the opposition between store and neighborhood by aligning it with the binary of light and dark. Institutions of 'old Paris' are attributed a lasting obscurity that grows with their decline, while Bonheur radiates an almost blinding brilliance. Through this motif, the store is fully aligned with Haussmannization, a process almost always signified through its epithet of bringing "noise and sunshine" to the city (the noise of construction, and the natural light now able to penetrate the dense urban plan). (Zola 208, and elsewhere) This union of store and redevelopment is present in the plot as well, most obviously in Mouret's acquisition of property on the Avenue du Dix-Décembre – a wide new boulevard then being built – which enables him to expand the store to a whole city block. This final formation of the building includes an imposing façade on the new boulevard, in keeping with Mouret's desire to: "flaunt [the store] before the new Paris, on one of those recently built avenues, where, in full sunlight, all the figures of the modern crowd passed by…" (Zola 313) As depicted in the novel, the burgeoning of commercial institutions and the redevelopment of the city work in tandem, and both affect the destruction of the old neighborhood.

The conflict between store and neighborhood is ultimately resolved in the physical and financial success of the former and the latter's physical decay and financial collapse. The narrative depicts this outcome with the same language of consumption employed in its illustrations of social and objective relations within the store, suggesting the similarities between urban development and consumerism.

Often, the motif of consumption takes the form of using one meaning of the word in a context suited for its other significations: for example, goods are "devoured" by customers. (Zola 240) Elsewhere, the motif appears in descriptions of interpersonal relations: employees "devour" each other for upward mobility, the store 'consumes' its customers, and so on. (Zola 161, 77)

In descriptions of the neighborhood's development, the motif even manifests itself within the story (elsewhere, it is present only on the level of narrative). Baudu often expresses his apprehension regarding the store's growth with the language and imagery of eating, culminating in his exclamation of horror after watching Bonheur-contracted workers demolish his building: "'[i]t's as if they were eating the walls!'" (Zola 201) Here again, the sense of consumption as nourishment is employed figuratively, suggesting the necessity of destroying vestiges of the old neighborhood for Bonheur's continued existence.

I would like to suggest the connection between this relation of store and neighborhood (appropriation), and that which I examined earlier (insinuation). By my reading, the projection of commerce onto urban space through advertisement and display can be understood as a form of spatial colonization preceding the store's total acquisition of it. In the novel, the street is not only an instrument of commerce, it is commerce spatialized. Just as Mouret imagines the boundless range of his advertising vans, so the narrative suggests the potential infiniteness of this process: "…the phalanstery with its proliferating buildings, which were swallowing whole districts as far as the distant woods of the suburbs." (Zola 428) As the physical store and its area of control are divorced from one another in this late passage, it becomes clear that it is the store's underlying precept – the acquisition of wealth through

commercial activity – that has grown so greatly in range of influence. The store remains conscribed in space, yet the store's commercial principle expands out across the city, instilling itself into urban space.

According to Paris's formation in Zola's novel, one can deduce that the flâneur, whose practice is inhibited in the space of the department store, now finds himself alienated even from the city streets. In his perceptual engagement of the city, the flâneur encounters everywhere elements of a practice and a culture from which he is excluded. Spatial practice as a means of eluding discipline – the model employed by Baudelaire's artist-flâneur – is not applicable to the flâneur of the department store age. Unlike his predecessor, he is all but ignored by the force which oppresses him.

Towards the end of the novel, the narrative lingers on an advertisement for Au Bonheur Des Dames pasted onto the window of Au Veil Elbeuf, now closed permanently. The poster portrays the department store as it situated within the space of the city:

> Then there was a bird's-eye view of the buildings themselves, of vastly exaggerated proportions, with their roofs indicating the position of the covered galleries and their courtyards with glass roofs through which the halls could be seen, an endless lake of glass and zinc shining in the sunshine. Beyond Paris stretched out, but a Paris which was dwarfed and eaten up by the monster: the houses surrounding it had the humility of thatched cottages, and were scattered beyond it in a dust of blurred chimneys. The monuments seemed to be melting away: two marks on the left hand side indicated Notre-Dame, there was a circumflex accent on the right for the Invalides, and in the background was the Panthéon lost and shamefaced, no bigger than a pea. The skyline, crumbling into dust, had become nothing but a pathetic frame for the picture, and its distant blurred outlines indicated that it, too, as far away as the heights of Châtillon and the open country, was now enslaved. (Zola 392)

Once again, we see Paris represented from a position of elevation, a vantage-point by which Rastignac, Baudelaire's artist-flâneur, and Haussmann created a distilled meaning out of the metropolis. The signification of the city as depicted in this advertisement is also easily discerned.

Echoing the novel's opening description of Paris, the city is "stretched out," but it is no longer "vast" and intangible; rather, it is diminutive and its boundaries are apparent, in contrast to the "endless lake" of the store. The figurative shrinking of the city in the narrative over the course of the novel is here causally related to the store's growth: Paris is "dwarfed" because the store has "eaten" it.

The narrative's description of the advertisement recapitulates the various binary motifs with which the store-city relation has been illustrated: Bonheur's newness (conveyed here through the buildings innovative architectural components) is contrasted by the "thatched cottages" that constitute the neighborhood, as if the store's physical modernization caused the surrounding buildings to regress in architectural sophistication; and the precise and transparent image of the store stands out against the obscurity of the rest of the city, seen through "a dust of blurred chimneys."

Most tellingly, the monuments of Paris are so insignificant, that in describing them, the narrative extracts itself from the representation of the city, explaining not how they appear, but how they were fashioned by the artist: Notre-Dame is not a building but "two marks on the left;" the Invalides is a mere "circumflex accent." In relation to the department store, they are neither noteworthy landmarks, nor buildings at all.

The language of disgrace is prevalent in the descriptions of the city, as if Paris had suffered some defeat. This implication is affirmed at the end of the passage – the entire region is "enslaved," subjugated to the authority of the store. The "vastly exaggerated proportions" of the buildings are an accurate measurement of the breadth of Bonheur's influence. As I have attempted to show throughout my analysis of *Au Bonheur Des Dames*, the city as depicted by Zola becomes increasingly dominated by the fictive institution of commerce, or more generally, by its commercial principle. In this, Zola's novel accurately captures the history of the city's development. As Harvey argues, after 1862, the development of the city was dictated less by the Empire than by considerations of capital. (Harvey 209) The city in representation and the city in history reflect one another, as was the author's intent.[77]

What's more, both align with the city in perceptual experience. Unlike previous representations of Paris that have shown themselves to conflict with this mode, the advertisement at the end of Zola's novel reflects the pedestrian's experience – as public space has been instrumentalized by the store, commerce is ubiquitous therein.[78] Flânerie is thus subverted as its dialectical components reflect one another in precluding the practice; in both representation and spatial practice, the city is inhospitable to the flâneur.

The harmony of the city in perceived experience and the city as represented explains commerce's success in fully instrumentalizing the city as depicted in the fictional novel, in contrast to Haussmann's partial historical failure. It was the discrepancy between representation and practice (conception and perception) that undermined Haussmann's attempts to control the pedestrian through space. Moreover, it was that incongruity that enabled Baudelaire's artist-flâneur to elude

discipline through spatial practice. In the Paris of *Au Bonheur Des Dames*, a city of pure commercial activity, those fissures are absent. The artist-flâneur would be incapable of evading Au Bonheur Des Dames, as it is everywhere present and everywhere in control. Even the artist-flâneur's dream city, his personalized abstract city, seems to be co-opted by the project of commerce, as Mouret's store constitutes: "the modern realization of a dream-palace." (Zola 249) Whereas the artist-flâneur's representation of the city enabled him to continue his practice, the dream-palace – a fraudulent artifice that subdues and regulates customers – marks the end of his relation to the city. The flâneur's concurrent rise and fall with the arcade demonstrates the degree to which, despite his asserted autonomy from the act of consumption, his existence was entirely predicated upon the urban formation of commerce.

Epilogue

In *Un Homme Qui Dort*¸ Georges Perec's 1967 fictional novella, the unnamed protagonist walks through Paris as a means of dissociating himself from his own existence. Without any apparent impetus or premeditation, the young man quietly extracts himself from his life, not by deliberately eschewing his relations and commitments, but through passive and indifferent relinquishment. His implicit intent – stated by the second person narrative voice – is to shed his social identity, and the dictates and expectations by which it is normatively circumscribed. Coupled with this self-imposed anomie is his reduction of activity and expended energy: "You do not want to see anyone, or to talk, or think, or go out, or move."[79] He slips into a life of near-total inaction, becoming "a mollusk." (Perec 142)

In the unnumbered months that follow this severance, the protagonist spends his time in a half-conscious state of indolence in his *chambre de bonne* on Rue Saint-Honoré (not far from the fictional location of Au Bonheur Des Dames), or else walking alone through the streets. While he regularly attends movies and idles at cafés, for the most part he wanders aimlessly, in a "ceaseless and untiring circumambulation." (Perec 187) In his persistent and extensive movement on foot throughout Paris, as well as the muted satisfaction that it affords him, the protagonist recalls his century-old predecessor, the flâneur. However, as portrayed in this literary representation, the practice and the city in which it transpires are strikingly dissimilar to previous formations. The streets are not a setting for intoxicating movement,

social exchange and personal development. Rather, they facilitate the abandonment of agency and the dissolution of identity. He moves through the crowds, ever-present in the metropolis, but unlike the customer of Mouret's department store, who involuntarily loses her identity as she is forcibly subsumed into the swelling masses, Perec's walker submits to the sway of the multitudes in an expression of his own passivity: "You have no need to speak, to desire. You follow the tide as it ebbs and flows, from Place de la République to Place de la Madeleine, from Place de la Madeleine to Place de la République." (Perec 144) His motion is dictated by the very forces at work in urban space that the artist-flâneur walked in defiance of. Controlled and compliant, the protagonist feels secure; he "slip[s] through the streets, untouchable," insulated from experience by his total acquiescence. (Perec 182) The artist-flâneur's spatial practice was similarly alienating, but from his defended position, he reached back into the city to create personalized meaning therein. "[C]arried along by the crowds, and by the streets," the man asleep experiences a total absence of feeling in the city—it engenders a nothingness. (Perec 161) He remains immutably detached from his setting: "…you are a stranger lost in your own city…" (Perec 201) Space and subject are separated by an unbridgeable gulf.

Like the nineteenth-century flâneur, Perec's protagonist is always looking. Yet in his spatial practice, vision is detached from perception—he sees without recognizing, numb to the meaning of images: "all that exists is your walking, and your gaze, which lingers and slides, oblivious to beauty, to ugliness, to the familiar, the surprising…" (Perec 188) In *Un Homme Qui Dort*, the city is a fractured constellation of detached signifiers, observed but uncomprehended. Conversely, the protagonist imagines himself to be unrecognizable. His "neutral gaze" both perceives

nothing, and informs his imagined imperceptibility. (Perec 145) Neither seeing nor seen, he is completely outside of perceived experience: "Now you wander up and down Boulevard Saint-Michel without recognizing anything, not seeing the shop windows, not seen by the streams of students who pass you by." (Perec 163) The relation between his spatial practice, vision and identity is homologous to that of the flâneur, but antithetical in content. The flâneur walked to be seen, actualizing his identity through visual recognition. While walking, the man asleep is invisible and thus nonexistent. His oblivion to the shop windows further underscores his stark divergence from his antecedents.

On the other side of the chasm, there lies the metropolis in which he roams:

> Putrid city, vile, repulsive city. Sad city, sad lights in the sad streets, sad clowns in the sad music-halls, sad queues outside the sad cinemas, sad furniture in the sad stores. Dark stations, barracks, warehouses. The gloomy bars which line the Grands Boulevards, the ugly shopfronts. Noisy or deserted city, pallid or hysterical city, gutted, devastated, soiled city, city bristling with prohibitions, steel bars, iron fences, locks. Charnel house city: the covered markets that are rotting away, the shanty towns disguised as housing projects, the slum belt in the heart of Paris, the unbearable horror of the boulevards where the cops hang out: Haussmann, Magenta—and Charonne. (Perec 203)

Evocations of former metropolises abound—the filth and decadence of Rastignac's Paris, the evil of Baudelaire's city – the city that shocks and intoxicates, and the cold and dehumanizing capital of Zola's novel. Haussmann is present as a dreadful apparition, embodied in the boulevard which still carries its name. But none of these previous formations come close to the frenzy or disintegration of this Paris. Its divergent and clashing fragments necessitate hyperbole in written articulation – the capital is all but unrepresentable.

The man asleep is unmoved by this city. Insulated as he is from all feeling, it does not shock him. He prostrates himself to its control, and closes his eyes to all

meaning and content. For him, the city is a wasteland: "Your room is the most beautiful of desert islands, and Paris is a desert that no-one has ever traversed." (Perec 161) His quarters, a spatial manifestation of his own alienation, are enclosed within a void—barren and impassable. The protagonist and the city are identical in his perceived experience—both are empty, lifeless and indifferent.

In the end, the protagonist finds this mode of existence to be fruitless and untenable. Despite his repudiation, his engagement with the city during his months of solitude is no less significant within the tradition of walking in Paris. In his practice, flânerie is a medium for complete apathy and total disengagement from society and the city. The man asleep constitutes an anti-flâneur, or perhaps the flâneur of the twentieth-century city. The extent of their similarities and their differences points to the uniqueness of the nineteenth-century practice, and the fragility of the dynamic of space and representation in which it was possible. More importantly, the man asleep considered next to the flâneur reveals the numerous ways in which walking constitutes more than just movement, and underscores the vast potential for divergence within experience of an urban system. Still the multiform city is shifting, both with and against the rhythm of pedestrian footfalls.

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Notes

Introduction

[1] Charles Baudelaire, Le Spleen de Paris (Paris: Éditions de la Seine, 2005) 39. I will use my own translations for Baudelaire's poems.

[2] Dream City is a term occasionally used by Benjamin, to denote the dialectical content of the nineteenth-century city, manifest in the arcade's displayed commodities, which evoke both the future and primal history. (See Convelute K, The Arcades Project (Trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002)) As I will show, my own use of the term differs from Benjamin's.

[3] Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, Paris as Revolution: Writing the 19th-Century City (Los Angeles: California UP, 1997) 2.

[4] Michel De Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life (Trans. Steven Randall, Los Angeles: California UP, 1988)

1. Transitional Spaces: *Le Père Goriot*, the Flâneur and the Arcade

[5] Honoré de Balzac, Old Goriot (Trans. Marion Ayton Crawford, New York: Penguin, n.d.) 151.

[6] Henri Lefebvre, The Urban Revolution (Trans. Robert Bononno, Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 2003) 26.

[7] Walter Benjamin, The Writer of Modern Life (Trans. Howard Eiland, Edmund Jephcott, Rodney Livingston and Harry Zohn, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2006) 73.

[8] David H. Pinkney, Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1958) 33.

[9] My claim of Balzac's anthropomorphization of the city fits with into the author's conception of human society as paralleling the hierarchy of the animal and plant kingdoms. As he writes in the Avant-Propos to *La Comédie Humaine*: "For does not society modify Man, according to the conditions in which he lives and acts, into men as manifold as the species in Zoology?" (Balzac 28) Erich Auerbach refers to this facet of Balzac's outlook as "his view of human society (typical man differentiated by his milieu) by biological analogies…" (Erich Auerbach, Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature (Trans. Willard R. Trask, Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003) 477) Just as the author sees society as a human taxonomy, so the city itself is analogous to both undeveloped natural settings and forces of nature.

[10] This description of Paris as comprising both poles of quality is foundational to the author's outlook on urban centers. In the Avant-Propos to the *Comédie*, Balzac writes that in large cities, "the extremes of good and evil meet." (Balzac 34)

[11] By 'spatio-historical conditions,' I am referring to the physical configuration of the city at specific historical moment; here it is pre-1852 Paris.

[12] The difficulties surrounding walking in the city are conveyed by yet another metaphor Balzac employs in describing Paris: the city as labyrinth. Part of Eugène's education is to "map the windings of the Parisian labyrinth…" (Balzac 55) Beauséant agrees to take him under her wing in order to "help you thread this labyrinth." (Balzac 104) This motif conveys not only the difficulties of navigating Paris, but the difficulties of knowing Paris, of understanding its intricacies, both social and spatial.

[13] Author's italics.

[14] Louis Huart, Physiologie du Flâneur (Paris: Lavigne, 1841) 75.

[15] "a law clerc"

[16] "following the will of hazard."

[17] "good legs, good ears, and good eyes…"

[18] "…he so loves any type of spectacle, whatever it is, that, to enjoy the sight of it, he would forget everything from his memorable days, even perhaps the galette and the raisiné."

[19] "…he must know all the streets, all the boutiques of Paris…"

[20] Walter Benjamin, The Arcades Project (Trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002) 477.

[21] "The Little Misfortunes of Flânerie"

[22] "Finally, the arcade is the favorite sojourn of the flâneur; it is there that he leads a delicious existence…"

[23] "Without the arcades, the flâneur would be unhappy; but without the flâneur, the arcades wouldn't exist."

[24] "…above all, he triumphs in the arcades…"

2. Concept City / / Dream City: Haussmann and Baudelaire

[25] "It's between us now!"

[26] demolition artist

[27] David Harvey describes the Second Empire as "a deadly serious experiment with a form of national socialism—an authoritarian state with police powers and a populist base." (Paris, Capital of Modernity (New York: Routledge, 2006) 98)

[28] I use the word discipline in the Foucaultian sense: a means of controlling a group of people's actions and conduct, through a number of mediums, including architecture and urban planning (cf. Michel Foucault, Discipline & Punish: The Birth of Prison (Paris: Galimard 2007)).

[29] See *The Production of Space* (Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, Malden: Blackwell, 1991), and *The Urban Revolution* (Trans. Robert Bononno, Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 2003).

[30] Henceforth, I will occasionally use some formulation of the word "technocracy" in referring to the combination of governmental and technological forces.

[31] I will refer to this triad as the modes of apprehending or engaging space.

[32] Stuart Elden, Understanding Henri Lefebvre: Theory and the Possible (New York: Continuum, 2006) 190.

[33] Here I deviate from Nicholson-Smith's translation, who translates this term as "Representational Spaces," which I find unnecessarily confusing.

[34] My use of the word power adheres to its meaning in Marxist discourse: a multifaceted and versatile instrument of a society's ruling body, used to impose its will and reinforce its domination.

[35] Haussmann not only rendered such buildings more visible, he built more of them all around the city. It is because of the city planner that modern Paris has a mayor and central municipal building in every arrondissement.

[36] See Ferguson's discussion of Zola's *L'assomoir* in *Paris as Revolution: Writing the Nineteenth-Century City*.

[37] His devotion to creating parks is notable as well in its consideration of the pedestrian. A far cry from the "savage forests" imagined by Balzac, Haussmann's parks were heavily manicured, and planted local trees and shrubbery.

[38] As 19th century cultural historian J.J. Honegger writes:

"Having as they do, the appearance of walking-in a massive eternity, Haussmann's urban works are a wholly appropriate representation of the absolute governing principles of the Empire: repression of every individual formation, every organic self-development, 'fundamental hatred of all individuality.'" (J.J. Honegger, quoted in Benjamin 2002 122)

[39] Keither Tester, The Flâneur (New York: Routledge, 1994) 14.

[40] "O flânerie flânerie, won't you ever find a poet to sing your praises!"

[41] "…formed the corner of a new boulevard, still full of debris, already gloriously showing its unachieved splendors."

[42] To clarify, I offer some examples of abstract and concrete manifestations of these contradictions: a space whose intended use is displaced by its actual use (e.g. a town square which becomes a locus of drug use and exchange); a space given over to a non-state supported purpose (e.g. a long-standing shanty town under a freeway overpass). These are patent examples of De Certeau's idea. However, as we will see, pedestrian agency is possible throughout the city.

[43] "to contemplate the city in its fullness…"

[44] "Hospital, brothel, purgatory, hell, prison…"

[45] "I wanted to intoxicate myself on the enormous harlot, whose infernal charm ceaselessly rejuvenates me."

[46] "I love you, oh infamous capital!"

[47] "this ineffable orgy"

[48] "this holy prostitution of the soul…"

[49] For Benjamin, this pleasure was comparable to the experience of the commodity. "The flâneur is someone abandoned in the crowd….The intoxication to which the flâneur surrenders is the intoxication of the commodity immersed in a surging stream of customers." (Benjamin 2006 85)

[50] "the heavy and dirty Parisian atmosphere"

[51] "official madness of a large city, there to disturb the mind of even the strongest solitary."

[52] "the tyranny of the human face"

[53] "Horrible life! Horrible city!"

[54] "Sullen, sad, tired by idleness"

[55] "the pensive solitary walker"

[56] "The observer is a *prince* who takes pleasure in his incognito." Charles Baudelaire, "Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne" (Litteratura). <http://baudelaire.litteratura.com/peintre_vie_moderne.php> 1863) 9.

[57] "Multitude, solitude: equal and exchangeable terms for the active and fruitful poet."
[58] "…at his wish, he can be himself and others."
[59] "incomparable privilege"
[60] "No! Few men are endowed with the capacity to see; there are even less who possess the power of expression."
[61] "For him alone, everything is vacant…"
[62] "like those errant souls looking for a body…"
[63] "There is no object more profound, mysterious, fecund, dark or dazzling…"
[64] "What does it matter what reality can be outside of myself, if it helped me to live, and to feel that I am, and that which I am?"
[65] "[h]e who looks through an open window from outside sees never as much as he who looks at a closed window."
[66] "I go to sleep, proud to have lived and suffered in others and not myself."

3. The Capital as Commerce: *Au Bonheur Des Dames*

[67] Rachel Bowlby, Just Looking: Consumer culture in Dreiser, Gissing and Zola (New York: Methuen, 1985) 71.
[68] Émile Zola, The Ladies' Paradise (Trans. Brian Nelson, New York: Oxford, 2008) 112.
[69] The store's regulation of gender reaches both inside the store and out. As Geneviève – the daughter of Monsieur Baudu, whose boutique is in financial ruin because of its neighbor Bonheur – becomes increasingly ill, she shows her body to Denise, her cousin, lamenting: "'[y]ou can see I'm no longer a woman.'" (Zola 366) Because of her relation to the old commercial model which Bonheur outmodes and destroys, Geneviève is portrayed as a human victim of the department store's success. Like with its customers, Bonheur reaches Geneviève through her gender. Yet, whereas a female customer feels appreciated and empowered as a woman, Geneviève's loss of vitality is concurrent with the effacement of her femininity.
[70] As Benjamin writes: "[f]or the first time in history, with the establishment of department stores, consumers begin to consider themselves a mass." (Benjamin 2002 43)
[71] For an analysis of female street-walkers in relation to the tradition of flânerie, see Susan Buck-Morss "The Flâneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore" in *Walter Benjamin and The Arcades Project* (Hanssen Ed.)
[72] Denise's relation to the city exemplifies this unfamiliarity with it. She is "full of curiosity about Parisian life, about which she knew nothing….she tried to guess at things, conjuring up pictures of the pleasures which were always being described in her presence—the cafés, the restaurants, the Sundays spent on the water and in *guinguettes*. Afterwards she was left spiritually exhausted, filled with desire mingled with lassitude; she felt as if she was already tired of these amusements which she had never tasted." (Zola 133-134)
[73] A phalanstery is a self-contained utopian community imagined by 19th century French thinker Charles Fourier.
[74] To a lesser extent, the same becomes true for the customers, with the introduction of a public reading room and refreshment area: "'I know some women who pass the whole day here, eating cakes and writing their letters.'" – Mouret (Zola 254)
[75] "hated" from the perspective of to Baudu, owner of "Au Veil Elbeuf."
[76] One can identify a similar relation between store and city in the way the administration thinks about the staff and the customers. In one exchange, Bourdoncle, Mouret's closest assistant, justifies firing one-third of the employees during the off-season to a department

head: "'You can take on more in October, there are enough of them hanging about the streets!'" (Zola 153) Elsewhere, Zola describes Paris as "a city so enormous it would always provide customers." (Zola 109) Like its space, the city's population seems to be entirely at the service of the store.

[77] Yet, in assuming a position of dominance over the city, commerce does not displace previous entities of control so much as it seems to replace them. For example, the comparison of Au Bonheur Des Dames to religious structures is persistent in the novel: "[i]t was the cathedral of modern business, strong and yet light, built for vast crowds of customers." (Zola 234) Bonheur "was producing a new religion; churches, which were being gradually deserted by those of wavering faith, were being replaced by his bazaar." (Zola 427) The commercial enterprise becomes a holy site, the consumption of goods a ritual of commodity-worship.

[78] In the novel, the store almost seems to be inescapable on foot. After being fired near the middle of the story, Denise tries to walk away from the store, only to inadvertently return: "[s]he wandered about the neighborhood, retracing her steps, always coming back to the only spot she knew well. Suddenly she came to a stop, amazed, for she was once more outside the Ladies' Paradise…" (Zola 181) The city plan, unmediated by conscious navigation, always leads to the store.

Epilogue

[79] Georges Perec, Things: a Story of the Sixties, with, A Man Asleep (Trans. David Bellos and Andrew Leak, London: Collins Harvill, 1990) 140.