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Symbols of a Bourgeois Empire: The Intersection of Class and Government during Paris's Transformation into a Middle-Class Capital

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Symbols of a Bourgeois Empire: The Intersection of Class and Government
during Paris's Transformation into a Middle-Class Capital

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Table of Contents

Chapter One:

Paris before the *Grand Travaux*: The Factors that Prepared the French Capital for Renovation during the Second French Empire..... 1-17

Chapter Two:

Napoleon III and His New Bourgeois Government..... 18-30

Chapter Three:

Haussmann: The Beneficiary of Bonapartist Meritocracy..... 31-47

Chapter Four:

The Palais Garnier and the Avenue de l'Opéra: Constructing a Public Palace and a Bourgeois Neighborhood..... 48-72

Concluding Remarks..... 73-78

Bibliography..... 79-80

Chapter One:

Paris before the *Grand Travaux*: The Factors that Prepared the French Capital for Renovation during the Second French Empire

The Paris of 1850 was in the perfect condition to receive a massive urban restructuring due to its political structure, social situation, and financial system; all of these factors would contribute to produce what is known as the Haussmann renovation of Paris during the Second French Empire. “If half of Paris burned, we would rebuild it superb and practical...such an enterprise would make the nation’s glory, bring immortal honor to the city of Paris.”¹ As François-Marie Arouet, better known under his pen name Voltaire, alludes to in this quote, cities throughout history have been faced with rebuilding after disaster or war. London and Chicago, to name two, faced devastating fires in 1666 and 1871 respectively, yet rebuilt on the ashes of chaotic dirty neighborhoods to create modern, planned urban centers. In 1755 Lisbon was struck by an earthquake measuring 8.5 on the Richter scale, killing tens of thousands and razing the Portuguese capital; the city soon rebuilt in a bold plan of wide streets and stable stone apartment blocks². Lisbon became an inspiration for urban philosophers across the continent as an ideal of the planned, sanitary, and modern city. One hundred years later, this served as an inspiration for Louis Napoleon, the future emperor of the French, and Georges-Eugene Haussmann, the Prefect of the Seine, both credited with the largest urban renovation in Parisian history.

For Paris, history had not afforded the “opportunity” of destruction; any large-scale renovation of the city would have to be accomplished by bold decision on the part of the city’s leaders. History had left Paris a large medieval core of crumbling, dirty buildings laid out in haphazard maze of winding, dangerous alleys. However, over a span of twenty years during the Second French Empire in the mid-nineteenth century, the city would be transformed into the

marvel of modernism and urban beauty that exists today. This paper will examine the extensive overhaul of Paris under Emperor Napoleon III and Prefect Georges-Eugene Haussmann by looking at the construction of the Paris Opera and the Avenue de l'Opéra as a case study within the larger scope of the Haussmann renovation of Paris.

Paris before the renovation was a wholly uninviting and unhealthy place in many parts of the city. "Dark houses, passages without air, the sun nowhere, thieves in every street, hungry wolves at each city gate...black, filthy, feverish city, the city of darkness, of disorder, of violence, of misery and of blood!"³ This is just one description of the state of the French capital by the start of the nineteenth century. Many others tell similar stories of the old city of Paris, about its narrow dangerous streets and the slums that surrounded the Louvre or Hotel de Ville creating a mess of disorder and disease that constituted the city center. For centuries, Parisians has pontificated on renovating the crowded city. However these collapsed in the face of hierarchical negligence or revolutionary insurrections. By the nineteenth century, Prefect of the Seine Claude-Philibert Barthelot, Comte de Rambuteau lamented that the city was dotted with magnificent buildings such as the Louvre or the Tuileries but on the whole was "dark, hideous, closed in as in an age of the most frightful barbarism."⁴

This crumbling mess created another problem, traversing the city center was a time consuming and confusing feat for a local Parisian and virtually impossible for a foreigner. Paris had no main streets to act as arteries penetrating the city center, either north-south or east-west, that the populace could use to freely travel, only narrow byways that created a stale and diseased atmosphere.⁵ Planners and architects in Paris had long planned for wide modern, aerated streets to open up the city, but those that had been build, such as the Champs-Elysees, were on the periphery of the city and did not penetrate into the nest that the city's core had become. Despite a

glorious history and scattered monuments and palaces, Paris in the first half of the nineteenth century “...did not resemble the capital of a country that fancied itself the most refined and sophisticated in the world.”⁶

The city could tolerate its tangled and diseased medieval core for centuries due to the fact that the city expanded to the east, west, and south, and since power in France had shifted to Versailles; Paris became less necessary for the French government. However, as France entered the Industrial Age, Paris began to swell with migrants from the country, straining the existing infrastructure, housing, and utilities. In 1700 Paris had approximately 515,000 inhabitants, in 1800 that had increased modestly to 547,000, yet only fifty years later the population stood at 1,170,000.⁷ To accommodate this massive increase, the city began to build upon itself, adding additional stories onto existing structures, contributing to the crowding of the haphazardly built medieval core until the city reached its saturation point.⁸ This mess of overpopulation and chaotic housing in the city center created extremely unsanitary conditions that led to devastating Cholera outbreaks from 1832 to 1849, leaving deep scars in the city’s memory.

Provincial France was draining into the capital seeking work in the burgeoning factories and attracted to the cheap rents in the neighborhoods that the wealthy were simultaneously fleeing in favor of the more affluent western sections of the city. Before this period Paris had not experienced the degree of neighborhood inequality that has become common in the modern day. However the flight of the elite from the city center alarmed many politicians and essayist. “It was feared that Paris might in effect become two cities, with the old center simply left to wallow in its squalor while the march of progress continued in the new neighborhoods.”⁹ By the middle of the nineteenth century, due to a swelling population and neglect, Paris was lacking adequate

housing, modern utilities, and a sanitary city center; but one thing the Paris has never lacked is self-confidence.

For centuries Paris has fancied itself as the capital of Europe, a center of arts and education for the world to marvel at. One individual contributed particularly strongly to this assertion, Napoleon Bonaparte I, under whose rule Paris did become the de facto capital of the continent. Napoleon was the first leader in many years to dedicate much attention to Paris, as the past generations of kings had locked themselves in Versailles ignoring the decaying city at their doorstep. Under Napoleon, however, the city saw a new burst of energy; he had visions of turning "...the city of half a million souls at the time into a city of two million, a worthy capital of his empire."¹⁰ During the roughly sixteen years of his rule from 1799 to 1815 the city saw new construction from the embankments of the Seine to the foundations of the Arch de Triomphe.¹¹ However, his plans to transform Paris into a grandiose capital of Europe would crumble as his empire collapsed and he was eventually exiled by his enemies. One of Napoleon's most enduring accomplishments in Paris was to restore the capital as the primary city in the nation; every succeeding monarch, emperor, or president has resided in the city and Paris has been the focal point of France ever since. The idea of Paris as the glory of France and the ambition to embellish the city was passed down from Napoleon I to his nephew Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte.

Later styled as Emperor Napoleon III, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, born in 1808 in Paris, was the son of Napoleon I's brother Louis Bonaparte who briefly reigned as King of Holland. Through Louis Napoleon the Bonaparte legacy was carried on and the ambitions for Paris carried out. "The Napoleonic ideas that fueled so much of Louis Napoleon's political and urban thinking were as grandiose and extravagant as those of his uncle..."¹² Louis Napoleon felt that Paris was the showcase of France and thus its prominence in name must be reflected in appearance and

order. The two Napoleon's aspirations for Paris may have been similar, but their actions on constructing this dream were very different, "Whereas Napoleon I's projects were dots on the map – a building here, a monument here – Napoleon III's approach was a comprehensive vision of how the city worked as a whole. His obsession was not monuments, but new streets that would connect, irrigate, and open up the city."¹³ This approach was the strength of Louis-Napoleon's designs for Paris, his goals were to overhaul the city in its entirety, instead of scattered construction site; Louis Napoleon's ambition was to create a new Paris. As he stated while still exiled in London, "I want to be a new Augustus, because Augustus made Rome into a city of marble."¹⁴ Allusions to Augustus by both Napoleons occurred frequently and are well documented; this sense of grandeur is one of the most enduring legacies passed down in the Bonaparte lineage. Louis Napoleon had lofty dreams for Paris and the ambition to carry it out, but he did not have the political power or influence to achieve them as he was forbidden from entering France following the Bourbon Restoration. This would change in the wake of the revolutions of 1848, culminating in the toppling of the monarchy in France and the founding of the Second Republic.

In 1848, Republican opposition of the Orleanist monarchy under Louis-Philippe, established in 1830 and popularly known as the July Monarchy, was gaining ground when a crackdown by the king led to insurrection in Paris resulting in the shooting of protesters and ending with Louis-Philippe's flight from France.¹⁵ In the wake of the ensuing confusion, the Second French Republic was founded with a provisional government establishing universal male suffrage and abolishing the monarchy permanently. Many of the leaders of the former government under Louis-Philippe came to power in the nascent Republic such as Alphonse de Lamartine and Adolphe Thiers; the new Republican led coalition formed a presidential

democracy that began to take control of the country. In this political reshuffling of France Louis Napoleon saw his opportunity for a triumphant return and an opportunity to gain a foothold in French politics; this began by sending his friends to Paris to build up his network and quietly winning an off cycle election to the National Assembly.¹⁶ Always a controversial figure, Louis Napoleon's potential return to Paris sparked argument throughout the government ultimately culminating in the revocation of his banishment, which had been in place for all Bonapartes since the Bourbon Restoration in 1814.¹⁷ Upon his arrival in the French capital in April of 1848, Napoleon began laying the groundwork for his long desired rise to political power, with his eyes set on the presidential election in December of that year.

Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, despite being a political outsider and controversial figure to most of the French public, had one asset which would propel him to victory, a recognizable last name. While this had hurt him in the past as elite politicians in Paris felt threatened by his parentage, this election was open to all Frenchmen, both in Paris and the countryside, where the name Bonaparte evoked bygone days of grandeur and power. In the early autumn of 1848, Louis Napoleon's gained another valuable political asset; he received the nomination of the Party of Order, a major French political party, led by Adolphe Thiers.¹⁸ Thiers, an established political leader, desperately wanted to be president, but his association with the regime of Louis-Philippe meant his chances of an electoral victory right after the collapse of the July Monarchy were slim. So Thiers sought a placeholder he could manipulate that would serve a term and hand him the election easily in 1852.¹⁹ This was how Louis Napoleon gained the full support of Adolphe Thiers and his political backing, though in private Thiers would claim, "I have much studied the Prince [Louis Napoleon] from near and far, and he is absolutely good-for-nothing."²⁰ Louis Napoleon had no illusions of Thiers goals and opinions of him, but with the backing of his

political “ally” and armed with a message of order and a return to prominence for France, he led a spectacular campaign throughout the autumn of 1848.

On December 10 1848 France went to the polls and overwhelmingly chose Louis Napoleon Bonaparte by 74 percent of the vote. General Cavaignac trailed far behind in second place, hurt by his association with the violent repression of the June Uprising in Paris a few months prior.²¹ One year earlier, the new president elect had been living in exile in London; now he rode into Paris as the French head of state. However the politics of the Second Republic, led by Adolphe Thiers and Jacques-Charles Dupont constrained. Any powers that Louis Napoleon would have wished to exercise.

The Prince-President, as Louis Napoleon was styled, rode a landslide victory into office due to his immense popularity with the recently enfranchised poor and rural vote, but faced serious opposition in the French government. Despite the Prince-President’s executive win, the Assembly in Paris retained a large majority against him and thus Louis Napoleon’s actions during his first years as President consisted of attempts to “...gain the upper hand over an Assembly that had no chosen him and distrusted his popularity. Universal suffrage, they learned, is unpredictable.”²² For weeks after his inauguration, the ministers of the Assembly would often hold meetings without the Prince-President and exclude him from issues even when he fell under his constitutional prerogative.²³ After a period of stalemate and exclusion, Louis Napoleon pursued a different route to achieve his goals, “He perceived that France had entered the era of mass politics and that...a strong bond with the people would be essential to his political longevity.”²⁴ The Prince-President kept up a rigorous schedule of public appearances and travels throughout his term so as to endear himself with the French people, along with frequent visits to

the military and time spent with its leaders; this all earned him unwavering popularity with the voters and army.

In Paris and in the larger French bureaucracy, Louis Napoleon sought out loyal followers and devotees to his reformist Bonaparte ideas. By October of 1849, the Prince-President felt confident enough to dismiss the entire government under him and replace them with men loyal to him; including appointing the then little known Georges-Eugene Haussmann to several prefect posts throughout rural France and selecting Jean-Jacques Berger as the new Prefect of the Seine in the hopes that he would carry out Louis Napoleon's long sought renovation of Paris. In the wake of this gradual control, the Prince-President began to implement some of the changes he envisioned for his capital: building the Rue de Ecoles in October 1850, the complete redesign and enlargement of the Louvre starting in the summer of 1851, and the extension of the Rue de Rivoli from the Louvre to the Hotel de Ville in 1851.²⁵ The end goal of many of Louis Napoleon's projects and appearances was to build so much popularity that the Assembly would be forced to allow him to win a second term as president, at the time illegal under the constitution of the Republic. This constitutional amendment would prove impossible, as the Assembly was entirely full of Anti-Bonapartists fearful of the Prince-President's questionable loyalty to the democratic system. However the dysfunction that would grip the Second Republic in the later years of Louis Napoleon's presidency would do more to further his goal than any schemes could.

As 1851 came to a close the Prince-President was losing his battle against the Assembly but felt confident with his popularity among the people. He sought to discredit the Republican led legislature and blame many of France's problems on its lack of loyalty to the president, "If my government has been unable to achieve all the improvements it intended, we need to look to

the maneuvering of factions that paralyze the goodwill of even the assemblies and governments most devoted to the public good.”²⁶ This was a successful strategy, by 1851 much of the French public had turned their backs on the Assembly and only saw it as a place for political hopefuls to waste time and argue. Louis Napoleon was sure of his backing among the people and thus on the night of December 1 1851 the Bonapartists put into motion a plan they had auspiciously named Project Rubicon, referring to Caesar’s overthrown of the Roman Republic, a common allusion by the Bonaparte family. Assembly members were arrested in their homes, uncooperative military leaders were placed in custody, posters proclaiming the dissolution of the Assembly and soldiers were placed on every street corner in the major cities.²⁷ Over the next few days France would see scattered skirmishes and a few hundred deaths, but much of the population was unconcerned due to the immense popularity that Louis Napoleon enjoyed and the high disapproval of the Assembly. The new government, solely in the hands of Louis Napoleon held a plebiscite to affirm the dissolution of the Assembly and granting the Prince-President a ten-year term; the referendum passed with a questionably high 92 percent.²⁸

Power was firmly in the hands of Louis Napoleon and the Bonapartists Party, and, as evidence of this, in 1852, one year after the coup d’état, another plebiscite was held on the reestablishment of the empire. The measure passed by astounding rates and Louis Napoleon marched into Paris under the Arch de Triomphe and was crowned Napoleon III Emperor of the French. In the months following the coup d’état Napoleon III assembled a government, “His strategy was to give something to each faction and much to men of influence who would set aside any scruples and serve him unquestioningly.”²⁹ In this pursuit Napoleon III found extreme success, he surrounded himself with capable men who had all been raised in the days of the First French Empire and longed to build a glorious regime of their own. By the early 1850s political

power had been concentrated in Paris all under the tutelage of Napoleon III and all were eager to accomplish the reformist and imperialist goals that the Bonapartist Party stood for. In this way, Paris gained the political structure conducive for the massive overhaul that the city required in order to accomplish such a feat. Paris now had the will and the way to renovate its decaying core; the will from the imperialist Bonapartists aspirations of Napoleon III and the way in the form of the highly concentrated and streamlined power structure that the Second Empire afforded. However there were a number of other, less dramatic, factors that played an important role in preparing Paris for a renovation of the magnitude that gripped the city for sixteen years.

Second Empire France had inherited a generous legal code with respect to eminent domain, or the appropriation of private property for public use such as to build streets or parks. Modern French eminent domain law originated in 1807 as part of Napoleon I's reforms to the legal code, this law put on books the process and stipulations for the French government's acquisition of private property and was often used by Napoleon I in his monument building. In 1841 the July Monarchy revised eminent domain practice and greatly expanded the definition of what could be expropriated for public use; this law was primarily used as an instrument for expanding the burgeoning railroad system throughout France.³⁰

However, there was an issue that Napoleon III found with the current state of eminent domain laws following his rise to power. The law stipulated that the government could only appropriate land directly used for the public use itself and any residual property would be retained by the original owner. For example if the city of Paris built a boulevard through a dense neighborhood, any land abutting the street would be retained by the landlord of the property and thus leave room for the haphazard and poor standard buildings to remain.³¹ This would make a renovation in the scope that Napoleon III wished for very difficult as it both did not provide any

neighborhood restructure with respect to property value or building standard and simultaneously did not allow for the government to resell the plots along to new streets as a way to offset the massive costs incurred from construction. Thus one of the first orders to come out of the Hotel de Ville following the 1851 coup was to alter eminent domain law to allow for the acquisition of “all properties which will be touched by the *percement* and to resell the properties which remain beyond the alignment [of the street] by lots for the construction of well-aerated housing.”³² With this alteration to the existing eminent domain law, the legal groundwork was laid that would allow for the reconstruction of Paris on the scale and grandeur that Napoleon III demanded. However this system of property acquisitions and resale was only possible due to the expanding Parisian financial markets which were reaching modernity in this era.

For generations the French financial system was dominated by a select few banking families, most notably the Rothschild family, their institutions funded a diversified set of assets, yet all of these institutions operated on the idea that, “banks should be self financing. Having recourse to outside sources of funding was unheard of.”³³ However, by the mid nineteenth century banking institutions that were highly leveraged and could float tradable securities began to form. These entities would be allowed to issue obligations that were ten times as large as their assets, creating over 600 million francs per institution; these funds would be used to finance projects from the rail network expansion to the Suez Canal.³⁴ These institutions became extremely popular and profitable as, “In French Society, the currency of wealth had begun to shift from landholdings to securities.”³⁵ The French financial system, largely being modeled after its American and Anglo-German counterparts, had entered the modern age and was freeing up millions of francs.

Those high up in Napoleon III's government saw the potential that these banks provided as lending institutions that could free up funds for the Emperor's project without relying entirely on tax payer money or the old banks. Accessing funds from these new entities solved an issue that Napoleon III had been dealing with for some time, the Bonaparte conflict with the traditional and powerful aristocracy. The *haute banking* system was dominated by old aristocratic families who had been tied to the monarchy and distrusted the disruptions that the Bonapartists usually caused.³⁶ These young and energetic new banks allowed Napoleon III to move away from these largely anti-imperialist old money families and to encourage new reformist enterprises that the empire was fostering all over France.

The Minister of the Interior, Victor de Persigny, described the value of these banks for the long dreamed of renovation of Paris in a statement to the then Prefect of the Seine Jean-Jacques Berger, "[W]here these establishments exist they have the effect of decreasing property costs, reducing interest rates, developing agricultural productivity, stimulating economic activity of all sorts, and increasing the revenues of the State."³⁷ Many in Napoleon III's government agreed and helped to foster growth in these new industries by funding and enlarging government projects using this new capital source. "The alliance between public and private investment, all accomplished under the intimidating intervention and symbols of imperialism made Haussmann's work possible."³⁸ The Second Empire chartered a number of these banks early in the regime, Credit Foncier de France founded in May 1852 and Credit Mobilier founded in November 1852 being the two most prominent. By the early 1850s France had a booming financial sector ready to fund construction on the scale required for Napoleon III and Haussmann's goals. But, Paris also had a more intangible factor contributing to the eventual renovation of Paris, a social will.

Paris has always been a center for arts and architecture; the city has created and exported everything from painting movements to literary genres to building styles. Russian tourist, Nikolai Gogol, described Paris as, "...the vast showcase of everything produced by arts and crafts right to the last talent hidden away in some lost corner, the familiar dream over twenty-year-old men, the bazaar, the great fair of Europe."³⁹ Paris by the mid nineteenth century was a mecca for anyone seeking *haute culture*, a status it has maintained to the current day. This preeminence of art and architecture has seeped into the very fabric of Parisian society, resulting in an enormous amount of importance placed upon artistic disciplines, from the wealthy who often commissioned artworks to the poor artisans who filled the laboring neighborhoods. "The tremendous energy devoted to art in all its forms defined important societal values. Despite production of inconsistent caliber, there predominated an environment of fervent respect for all things artistic.... Equally significant, the social importance accorded to art would play an essential role in shaping the buildings, avenues, and squared of the city itself."⁴⁰ This artistic atmosphere was exactly what Napoleon III and Haussmann found among Parisians and it would manifest itself as a hunger for the beautification and modernization of the city on the part of the upper and bourgeois classes. After the renovation it would be manifested in the enormous number of artists, such as the Impressionists, that would flock to the city to paint the new scenes of daily life. Paris had the social will to renovate the city by the middle of the nineteenth century and were inspired by the imperial aspirations that the Bonapartists had for Paris, but, almost more importantly, Paris had the way to accomplish this lofty goal.

As discussed above, central and eastern Paris were the poorest areas of the city and though these neighborhoods were the area most targeted during the renovation under Haussmann, they provided one of the most valuable assets for the construction, the artisans. "By

the early nineteenth century the east side was overcrowded, increasingly populated by artisans who filled the gaps left by fleeing elites.”⁴¹ Paris had long had huge numbers of artisans; world-class laborers attracted from all over the continent in order to satisfy the leonine appetite of the city for places, paintings, and any other form of artistry. David Harvey, author of *Paris, Capital of Modernity*, has done extensive research into the subject of the poor and laboring classes in Paris in the nineteenth century and concludes that close to 40 percent of the workforce of Paris comprised of these artisans.⁴² Breaking this number down into the groups that would be most relevant for the renovation of Paris, a plurality of these workers, 12.7 percent, were employed in the building sector from street cobblers to stone masons; this would be the group most consistently employed by Haussmann during the Second Empire. Other sectors of this artisan labor market that would be mobilized by the states construction projects would be art and graphics workers, fine metal workers, and skilled carpenters, all 11.8, 8, and 5.3 percent of the craft workers in Paris respectively.⁴³ Often forgotten among the annals of European history, these laboring artisans turned others’ dreams into reality; they were the instruments by which cities and palaces were built, and were the sweat and backbone that literally built Paris anew; though the famous renovation bears the names Napoleon III and Haussmann their work would make the projects possible.

The urban renovation of Paris during the Second French Empire by Haussmann is a large and complex historical topic that touches on almost any issue and genre of nineteenth European history. This paper will not try to encompass the Haussmann renovation in its entirety, but will observe the urban redesign through a case study of the construction of the Paris Opera also known as the Palais Garnier and the Avenue de l’Opéra. The opera of any city became the most important public building during the eighteenth century, “Not only was it an institution now open

to a general public and consequently a freestanding structure outside the chateaux of the nobility, but its very function necessitated a transformation of the immediate neighborhood.”⁴⁴ Gaining popularity as a place where the masses could assemble legally, the theaters of Paris were meeting grounds for the elite and artistically inclined commoner as well as a location for discussion ranging from sophisticated to everyday.

The main opera of Paris was a floating entity that had not had a permanent home since 1821. Building a permanent and magnificent structure to act as the official opera of Paris was one of the main goals of Napoleon III. The construction of this project would be the most expensive of any building built by the Second Empire; the entire neighborhood was remodeled in the prevailing neoclassical “Haussmann” style and a major avenue, the Avenue de l’Opéra, was built through some of the thickest slums to connect this center of the arts to the palace of the Louvre. The opera project, constructed from 1861 to 1875, is a perfect example of the greater story of the Haussmann renovation of Paris from the slums the theater replaced to the ideas that the building represented within the context of Bonapartist imperialist France.

This chapter has sought to explain why the massive renovation of Paris undertaken by Napoleon III and Georges-Eugene Haussmann did not occur in Stockholm or Madrid and why this was only possible in the middle of the nineteenth century. Many different factors all coalesced in Paris by 1852 to make this this the perfect time and place for a major urban renovation. The medieval core of the city was crumbling away after centuries of neglect from the monarchy and inefficient bureaucracy. Industrialization was causing a rapid population swell in Paris as the city reached its saturation point when the populace soared from roughly 500,000 to 1,000,000 in only fifty years. These pressures on the system pushed the city to its breaking point and stressed to the government that drastic and sweeping action was needed. At the same time,

Napoleon III had created a political scene in which large projects, such as that required to solve the city's issues, were not bogged down in the formerly factionist Assembly, but could be dictated and carried out efficiently. To fund these large enterprises was a fully formed and energetic financial sector that had reached its maturity by the middle of the nineteenth century and could pump millions of francs into the city's hands. Finally, not only was Paris the center of artistic talent in Europe, representing a society that placed a huge importance on art and architecture, but Paris also had a veritable army of artisans, comprising some 40 percent of the city's workforce, to carry out and sustain years of constant construction. Paris in 1852 stood at a watershed moment, the circumstances that all fell into place by this year would allow Napoleon III and Georges-Eugene Haussmann to propel Paris into a new era of beauty and prosperity that would have fascinating and lasting social and financial implications, eventually culminating in the city of lights that we know today.

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Chapter Two:

Napoleon III and His New Bourgeois Government

Louis-Napoleon was born a prince, the son of King Louis of Holland, the Bonaparte installed king of the French satellite state in the Netherlands, and Hortense de Beauharnais, the step-daughter of Napoleon I by his first wife Josephine de Beauharnais.¹ The lineage that Louis-Napoleon claimed was as prestigious as it was controversial. When he was seven years old, the future leader of France was cast into exile along with the entire Bonaparte family by the newly restored Bourbon monarchy for fear that he would take up Napoleon I's mantle. The Bonaparte name was a strong symbol to many French for decades following Napoleon's defeat and exile; a name that was associated with both French glory and reform of the Ancien Regime. Due to this unsavory association for the aristocracy, the newly reinstated Bourbon king, Louis XVIII, felt it better to exile the entire former imperial family. This is the beginning of a systematic reinstitution of the former aristocratic system to France during the Restoration period; a similar shift back to conservatism was happening all across the continent following the Congress of Vienna.

Louis-Napoleon and his protective and ambitious mother spent the next decades in all the grand capitals of Europe, Munich, Geneva, Rome and finally London; all the while bearing resentment against the regime that had banished him. On two occasions, once 1836 and another in 1840, Louis Napoleon attempted to personally invade France and raise dissent from within to overthrow the monarchy. Both incursions resulted in the death of his few compatriots and his imprisonment, from which he eventually escaped in 1846 to return to London.² While in exile, Louis-Napoleon developed the urbanity that would characterize his regime, "he mixed with dukes and lords, belonged to exclusive clubs, and was in contact with the likes of Disraeli and

Dickens.”³ He familiarized himself with the booming English Industrial Revolution and *haute bourgeoisie* that were riding its tails to success, all the while imagining bringing this prosperity to France. Louis-Napoleon, despite his failures at instigating a revolt, still sought to return to power and supplant the ruling monarchy, he felt, “...that the monarchy that had ruled France for more than three decades had failed to lead the nation to meet the challenges of the modern era.”⁴ He believed himself to be the man to lead France into this glorious new progressive future, but he was one man, albeit with a famous name, on the wrong side of the English Channel from accomplishing his goals.

While Louis-Napoleon was musing about his aspiration for power, France was being ruled by the restored Bourbon monarchy. The Congress of Vienna and the victorious European powers had proclaimed Louis XVIII, brother of Louis XVI, as king of a constitutional monarchy; where he was the head of state, supreme commander of the army and navy, and appointed all government posts. While the Bourbon Restoration, as the period has come to be known, took a staunch conservative outlook, France did retain some of the changes brought about by the Revolution. The aristocracy no longer had the rights they once had over the land and the peasants; the wealthy classes brushed aside the enlightenment flirtations of the eighteenth century and became the backing for the conservative movements. Many of these elite filtered into the government; despite the loose merit based employment system established by Napoleon I, the son of a lord always found choice positions. Another major change in France was its centralization; Paris was now and would remain the center of France politically and culturally, supplanting Versailles as the seat of government. Beyond this, the administrative network established under the First Empire that divided France into departments and prefectures, all appointed from Paris, was retained. The nation had been irrevocably changed by the Revolution

and First Empire, but the Bourbons largely tried to set French society back to what it had been, though without their Absolutist tendencies. Reformists in France did not disappear with the fall of the Empire, nor did they stop seeking change, but they did find an option they could throw their support behind, the Duke of Orleans.

The main royal line of the Bourbons had a junior branch descending from Louis XIV's younger brother styled the Dukes of Orleans. This branch had always been more progressive than the royal line and, as the Bourbon kings popularity sunk to new lows, the Duke of Orleans, Louis-Philippe, became an attractive alternative. By 1830 discontent had reached a new high and after protests turned bloody, a small group of wealthy Parisians with ties to the legislature, led by Adolphe Theirs, declared Louis-Philippe King of the French, not King of France. This began the new Orleanist monarchy, though more commonly known by historians as the July monarchy as it was founded in the bloody July revolution. This is one of the first major moves by the bourgeoisie in Paris, as many of those who orchestrated the overthrow of the Bourbons and installed Louis-Philippe were wealthy newspaper owners or industrialists angered by Charles X's economic policies.⁵ The bourgeoisie were flexing their muscles and exercising power over the aristocratic ruling system as a way to enact change. However, despite the reformist hopes on the part of the Orleanists, Louis-Philippe failed to pull France out of the vestiges of the Ancien Regime.

France was still dominated by the old ruling families; one of the Orleanists main financiers was the powerful Rothschild family and almost all of the minister appointed were from the nobility such as Claude-Philibert Barthelot, the Comte de Rambuteau who served Prefect of the Seine. By 1830, 70 percent of the prefecture positions in the Department of the Interior were occupied by individuals of noble birth. By 1847, on the eve of the revolution, this

figure had increased to 85 percent.⁶ “Young job seekers with the right family connections saw the Napoleonic promise of careers open to talent disappear.”⁷ Resentment at poor policies and economic downturn that harmed growth in Paris compiled until revolution broke out yet again: barricades went up, the militia battled protesters, and the king fled the capital. No one at the time knew for sure, but 1848 was the last time a king ever ruled France and marked the final end of the almost three hundred year old French Bourbon dynasty. This time the bourgeois leaders chose to forgo monarchy altogether and established the Second French Republic and granted universal suffrage to all French men. The Orleanist promise had failed to bring substantial change to France and reformers sought a new progressive candidate in the wake of the 1848 revolution.

Louis-Napoleon had spent the years preceding the revolution and his rise to power crafting a political platform he could promote, this evolved into Bonapartism. This platform was a vague mix of democratic values and reformism though being careful never to pin itself to one side of an issue too strongly. The promotion of democracy ironically appears frequently throughout Bonapartist rhetoric, as the regime was in practice very authoritarian. However, Louis-Napoleon felt himself a champion of democratic values and often sought to align himself with the newly enfranchised electorate. “More attuned to the temper of the 1840s than were the oligarchical Orleanists, Louis-Napoleon asserted that any government foolhardy enough to ignore the democratic direction of history was simply building on sand and would surely tumble.”⁸ This socio-political assessment led to Bonapartists incorporating a largely democratic tone in their literature; claiming that Louis-Napoleon can better represent the French than the gridlocked Assembly. Bonapartism stressed the relationship between Louis-Napoleon and the people as the link of the Empire, with no room for an assembly to exercise any independence.

The establishment of the Empire under Bonapartist principles meant that, at least for the first years of Napoleon III's reign, the assembly was barely an advisory council to be filled with allies of the Emperor and a few token dissenters.⁹

The tangible practices of democracy suffered severely during the early years of Bonapartist rule. However, despite loud Republican authors lamenting the death of the Republic, the majority of Frenchmen welcomed the new Empire. Many feared the chaos that republics had brought in the past and similarly resented the crushing gridlock of the Second Republic. More importantly chaos disrupted business, as Thomas Sankara, a Francophone African revolutionary, would claim in the twentieth century, the bourgeoisie would not rise to protect the rights of all but would shrink away at a revolution and protect their business interests.¹⁰ The Empire, with its martial security and dedication to reform, represented the safety that the bourgeoisie was seeking in the turbulent times following the 1848 revolution. Marx would even comment in 1851 that Louis-Napoleon's coup was simply the scum of bourgeois greed showing their strength over the just democratic institutions of the Second Republic.¹¹

The complaints from the likes of Karl Marx and Emile Ollivier, a prominent French Republican politician, that the Second Empire primarily represented the crushing of democratic values can be seen as false for the very fact that it was extremely difficult to tell what the Empire or Bonapartism actually did represent in the first place. The government's vagueness when it came to policy goals was one of the strengths that made it able to fit into much of French society and be supported by many different factions. Following the 1848 election, Louis-Napoleon, then styled as the Prince-President, dissolved the Bonaparte political party, "Not absolutely identified with any particular traditional party, the regime was open to public pressures. This allowed for a flexibility that Orleanism never attained."¹² Louis-Napoleon would often pivot on issue and

refuse to be held down to one opinion for fear that it would turn into the partisan woes of the Republic.

What the government lacked in decisive policy points it attempted to make up for it in grandiose speeches and strong rhetoric. This is evidenced by the Prince-President's speech following his coup d'état, "I hope to assure France's destiny by establishing institutions that will respond to both the democratic instincts of the nation and the expressed universal desire for a strong and respected power."¹³ This vague, stately language marked many of the public appearances; though a common concept through Bonapartism was the nineteenth century belief in the idea of progress. Faith that progress was a tool for national self-betterment, a concept Louis-Napoleon came to embrace as it swept Victorian London, would drive many of his political goals. He put forth this progressive view in his early speeches as Emperor Napoleon III, "Today the reign of castles is finished.... To govern is no longer to dominate the people through force and violence; it is to lead them to a better future of progress and order, by appealing to their reason and their heart."¹⁴ The vague politics that Bonaparte ideology represented was one of the great assets that the Napoleon III employed to govern such a diverse nation and, despite its indecisiveness, it was one of the reasons that the Second Empire lasted through the immense social change happening in France during the mid nineteenth century.

France was no longer a socially polarized country, of wealth and poverty or nobility and peasantry. All over the country, but in Paris especially, the middle classes were rising in importance both economically and politically. By 1840 social theorists in Paris were writing on this class's exponential growth and composition stretching to include industrialists, bankers, lawyers and doctors.¹⁵ The "middle class" of the Second Empire was very stratified in its own right, typically divided into three categories: grande or haute bourgeoisie composed of the

wealthiest industrialists or bankers, the *moyenne bourgeoisie* composed of academics, lawyers, doctors, small landowners, etc., and the *petite bourgeoisie* who were shopkeepers, clerks, artisans, or minor government officials. These gradations of society were firmly establishing themselves in this time and, "...the Second Empire was a period of opportunity, during which substantial upward mobility seemed possible."¹⁶

As stated in the previous chapter, Paris swelled with hundreds of thousands of peasants from the countryside seeking opportunity in the growing capital, and this is true as well for the middle classes. As France began the process of industrialization, urban centers reached a new importance. This phenomenon, coupled with the political centralization under the Bonapartists, led Paris to become the most desired destination for the upwardly mobile classes. However, this was also occurring all over France, in Lille, an industrial city near the northern border with Belgium, the approximately twenty years of the Second Empire saw the *haute bourgeoisie* increase from 1.5 percent of the population to 6 percent. Similarly the middle and lower middle classes in Lille increased from 20.2 percent to 32.9 percent.¹⁷ This growth was largely facilitated by the comparatively spectacular economic prosperity that France experienced in the mid nineteenth century as it entered the industrial age.

Napoleon III often spoke loftily of the progress that France would need to make to propel itself into the modern era and, although his words were vague, the actions and policies of his government directly helped foster this progress. Many policies put in place by the Bonapartists spurred the economic growth that made the massive middle class expansion possible. One policy is the government subsidies to help grow the French rail and transportation networks. During the Second Empire, the government adopted in force a policy of rail expansion that had been flirted with during the July Monarchy. By 1870 all the major train stations that service Paris today had

been constructed and three of them had been completely rebuilt during the Second Empire. During the reign of Napoleon III all the major regions of France saw massive rail construction with connections to Britain and Germany and laid the foundations for the modern transportation network. This helped to facilitate massive amounts of goods, people, and money to flow into Paris and revitalize everything from mercantile businesses to tourist industries.¹⁸

Bonaparte officials also signed hundreds of permits to found new department stores all over Paris, fueling a massive increase in middle class consumption and a societal importance placed on materialism. By the end of the Second Empire, Paris may not have had the industrial output to rival London, but it was global center for consumer and luxury goods. This era also saw France industrialize fashion as it never had before; French textile mills churned out men's and women's fashions at an industrial level, supplying all of Europe with the latest Parisian styles in mere weeks.¹⁹ Education reforms under the Second Empire turned national education into a government affair whereas previously the Church or private institutions had primarily governed in this regard, especially in the countryside. By 1865, after a massive expansion in the network of schools across France, the government spent twenty-eight million francs a year on just secondary education.²⁰ This massive education campaign gave France one of the most educated populaces by 1870, though still lagging behind Germany and Great Britain. All of these policies were spearheaded by the Bonapartists and helped to create the conditions for economic growth and the large expansion of the middle classes, who would forever onward be a major factor in French political and social life.

Under the Empire's guidance and patronage, another old and aristocratic institutions was revolutionized and "democratized", the French financial system. This process began during the July Monarchy, when the currency of the wealthy began to flow from land holdings, traditionally

the safest and most lucrative investments, to securities and bonds.²¹ By the middle of the 19th century money was flowing into the cities from all over France and was a major early source of funding for the burgeoning railroad industry. In the 1840s, in an attempt to modernize French government finances, the monarchy adopted German style bond practices, creating the five percent bond as the benchmark for all securities to measure themselves.²² The banking sector at this time was very conservative and controlled by a few entrenched families that had controlled lending in France for centuries. The structure of these banks were rigid and operated largely as they had two hundred years previously, “For the bankers of the French *haute banque*, banks should be self-functioning. Having recourse to outside sources of funding was unheard of.”²³ The most prominent and conservative of these banking institutions was run by James de Rothschild as the head of the French branch of the Rothschild family. Rothschild was the leading lender to the July Monarchy and a major opponent to the Second Empire’s reformism as the liberalization of practices posed a threat to his financial empire. By 1850 the financial institutions were in the early processes of modernizing and the inflow of money was a huge store of potential to be tapped.

The individuals who were the first to realize this massive opportunity were the Pereire Brothers who would establish Paris as a great center for international banking. Emile and Isaac Pereire were born in Bordeaux to a poor Jewish merchant family of Portuguese origin; by 1822 they had moved to Paris to work in the banking industry and in 1848 they had secured the rights to the Northern French rail line connecting Paris to Lille.²⁴ The Pereire brothers had seen success with rail and mining investments, but they had a larger dream to break into the investment banking industry and wrest control from the conservative banking clique. “The Pereire brothers were critical of [the traditional banking] model, which they considered an inefficient way to

gather and deploy capital. The idea that occupied the Pereire brothers and their friends was to capture funds from a much wider base...to create a bank that could float tradable shares.”²⁵ This innovative investment bank would be a private entity that would issue interest-bearing obligations insured by the industrial, transportation, or real estate assets held by the bank that the proceeds of the securities sales would help to develop further. However, the innovation that the Pereire brothers brought to France was that their new bank would issue obligations up to ten times the value of its assets, eventually amounting to issuances equaling 600 million francs backed by sixty million francs in assets.²⁶ This was the modern investment banking system that had turned the United States and Britain into global financial centers but had been shunned by the conservative French bankers for fear of the massive exposure.

The Pereire brothers had convinced the Minister of the Interior Charles-Auguste de Morny, the illegitimate half brother of Louis-Napoleon by his mother, of the opportunity that this banking model posed for France, and de Morny in turn convinced Louis-Napoleon to authorize the banks founding. In 1852, despite vociferous complaints from the existing banking community, Credit Mobilier was founded by the Pereire brothers as the first such institution of its kind in France. Over the next few years this financial model would spring up all over France, pulling in money from investors and real assets as leverage and provide inflated issuances to fund large investment enterprises

The French government immediately saw the benefits of this reformed financial system. Now the government did not need to front the capital for its ever-increasing projects; they could have the private sector fund construction with the French government promising payment with interest in the future, while still retaining the land as public. For the private sector this meant a promised flow of money from the most credit worthy institution in the country, whereas all they

had put up was the leveraged stock. Over the next few decades, railroads, mines, real estate, utilities, and colonial infrastructure would expand exponentially in scope of construction and value as a result of this freeing up of capital. Most famously the Suez Canal, finished in 1869, was financed and constructed almost entirely using the leveraged banks of Paris as a concession of the Foreign Ministry.²⁷ The financial revolution served many of the goals that the Bonapartists had for the Second Empire; firstly it made the ambitious modernization plans that Napoleon III had promised, and France so desperately needed, a possibility by providing massive amounts of capital once thought impossible. And secondly, it served to move the French government away from its dependence on the aristocratic lending families that had so long controlled government expenditures. Now the government of Napoleon III could, literally, bank on the ingenuity and success of the new financial institutions whose goals were very much in line with the Empire's ambition, and dilute the influence of powerful families, "...whose ultimate loyalty to the Empire was not above question."²⁸

Ultimately the explosion of financial and speculative activity in France during the Second Empire served as a massive boon to the economy and modernized and liberalized one of the most historically conservative institutions in France. "The *Grands Travaux* of the Second Empire, at the scale at which they occurred, would quite simply have been impossible without this new capitalist infrastructure."²⁹ This democratization of credit is one of the biggest examples of how the Second Empire, through its policies and projects, supported the middle class and fostered its major expansion during the middle of the nineteenth century. Other policy action by the Bonapartists government contributed to this growth, such as investment in industry, infrastructure, and education reform. France, and particularly Paris, flourished during this time and reveled in the progressive atmosphere that the Louis-Napoleon ushered in. One

contemporary even noted that “the French bourgeoisie, ordinarily so parsimonious, almost instantly became imprudently prodigal.”³⁰ While the bourgeoisie had previously languished under rapidly changes regimes and uncertain economic times, the Second Empire, through its ambitious growth projects and reformism, provided the security and encouragement that the middle classes needed to thrive and throw off their conservative inclinations. In this period, government policy directed at modernizing and propelling France into the modern age largely had the effect of lessening the influence of the aristocratic few on French politics and increasing the scope of the middle classes in society.

¹ Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn: Napoléon III, Baron Haussmann, and the Quest to Build a Modern City*. New York, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2013, 27

² Baguley, David. *Napoleon III and His Regime: An Extravaganza*. LSU Press, 2000, 3

³ Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 30

⁴ Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 28

⁵ Baguley, David. *Napoleon III and His Regime*, 14

⁶ Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris: The Life and Labors of Baron Haussmann*. New York, NY: Free Press, 1995, 53

⁷ Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris*, 53

⁸ Campbell, Stuart L. *The Second Empire Revisited: a study in French historiography*. Rutgers University Press, 1978, 3

⁹ Campbell, Stuart L. *The Second Empire Revisited*, 4

¹⁰ Price, Roger. *People and Politics in France, 1848–1870*. Cambridge University Press, 2004, 120

¹¹ Baguley, David. *Napoleon III and His Regime*, 63

¹² Campbell, Stuart L. *The Second Empire Revisited*, 22

¹³ Campbell, Stuart L. *The Second Empire Revisited*, 12

¹⁴ Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 29

¹⁵ Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 21

¹⁶ Price, Roger. *People and Politics in France, 1848–1870*, 123

¹⁷ Price, Roger. *People and Politics in France, 1848–1870*, 125

¹⁸ Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 11

¹⁹ Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 16

²⁰ Campbell, Stuart L. *The Second Empire Revisited*, 26

²¹ Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 99

²² Van Zanten, David. *Building Paris: Architectural Institutions and the Transformation of the French Capital, 1830-1870*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 14

²³ Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 99

²⁴ Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris*, 232

²⁵ Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 99

²⁶ Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 101

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- ²⁷ Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 101
- ²⁸ Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris*, 231
- ²⁹ Van Zanten, David. *Building Paris*, 16
- ³⁰ Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 104

Chapter Three:

Hausmann: The Beneficiary of Bonapartist Meritocracy

One of the most lasting impacts of the Second French Empire was its establishment of a meritocracy, the system of government where talent and ability determine appointment not birth or reward for past favors. This has had lasting impacts on the governance of France and the success of qualified individuals. “We do not sufficiently realize how many recourses France holds and how rich and powerful France would be if she were well governed and, especially, well administered!”¹ France was and still is a wealthy nation in almost any respect: arable land, coalfields, culturally wealthy cities, ample seaports on three major bodies of water, and many other regards. Often times the shortcomings of the nation, famine, poverty, underdevelopment and others have stemmed from ineffective regimes and poor administration. From time immemorial positions of leadership and, more specifically, government in France have been the domain of the wealthy and well-connected classes. State offices were almost exclusively selected from a pool of nobles in favor at court, not always accounting for skill or ambition; some posts were even hereditary. Far and few between are examples of low born individuals serving in powerful posts by rising through the ranks on merit alone before the Revolution.

The Revolution of 1789 tore down the Ancien Regime over ten bloody years and attempted to dismantle the nobility centric government system, but ended replacing it with chaos and hopes. Napoleon I’s coup in 1799 and subsequent regime did enact a massive liberalization campaign within the government and established for the first time in France a true meritocracy. The idea was revolutionary and is partly responsible for the brief but substantial success of the First French Empire, “...the idea of careers open to talent was precisely what attracted so many men from the Third Estate to the Empire.”² This system was impactful on French society that,

even after the Bourbon Restoration, the idea of a meritocracy would live on and be a policy point of the liberal parties for decades until the Second Empire. The Restoration largely tried to reverse the meritocracy established by Napoleon I; in this era middle class Frenchmen saw the opportunity of merit based careers slip out of the realm of possibilities. This was frustrating to those who had embraced the ideas of the Empire and caused severe resentment towards the restored Bourbons on the part of the educated classes. The administrative obstruction compounded with a number of other factors such as poor harvests, economic downturn, and stringent pro-Catholic regulations.

Fifteen years after the monarchy was restored the senior branch of the Bourbons was overthrown in 1830, largely by middle class participants favoring the more progressive Orleanist Branch. "...the Revolution of 1830 was in no small way 'a revolution of frustrated careerists.'"³ Louis-Philippe, Duke of Orleans was crowned King of the French by the middle class reformers who had chafed under the Bourbon regime. However, the promises that the July Monarchy would make the necessary overhauls that France so desperately needed eventually proved to be hollow and France continued to stagnate. As previously mentioned, by 1848, 85 percent of the prefects and appointed administrators within the Department of the Interior, one of the largest branches of government, hailed from the aristocracy or gained the position through elite connections.⁴ The government was still dominated by the sons of the nobility; the revolution that the careerists had fought for had failed. This same frustration at the Bourbons would overthrow the Orleanists in 1848 and propel Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte to power.

Bonapartism was committed to restore the promise of the First Empire that talent would always be rewarded over birth. This platform won Louis-Napoleon support from the educated middle classes and, along with a call for a modernized and energized France, helped him gain

close to 80 percent of the electorate in the 1848 presidential election. Once in power, Louis-Napoleon began to establish the meritocracy that had been begun by his uncle almost half a century earlier. Many qualified and energetic men joined the Second Empire in its twenty-year span, but none left their mark quite like Georges-Eugene Haussmann. The career of this future Prefect of the Seine is a perfect example of the broken employment system of the Orleanists and how a talented and ambitious man could rise to power during the Second Empire. This section will examine how the career of Prefect Haussmann exemplifies the Bonapartists promise of a meritocracy.

Georges-Eugene Haussmann was born in Paris in 1809 to a middle class Protestant family of Alsatian origin. Due to their religion, the family was barred from holding any official office under the Ancien Regime and thus they turned to mercantile pursuits. By 1700, the Haussmanns were some of the most successful cloth merchants in Alsace. In the mid eighteenth century, Haussmann's paternal grandfather, Nicolas Haussmann had moved the family of cloth merchants to Paris so as to sell their printed fabrics at Versailles.⁵ When France erupted in revolution, the Haussmanns became active supporters, "As a bourgeois and as a Protestant, and as a man of some idealism, [Nicolas] became an active participant in the French Revolution and was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1791."⁶ During the Empire this branch of Haussmann's lineage became avid supporters of Napoleon I and both of Nicolas's sons served in the imperial army. After the Bourbon Restoration, Nicolas was exiled from France for having served in the Legislative Assembly when the king was executed, despite not having been present for the vote. Haussmann's maternal grandfather, Georges-Frederick Dentzel, similarly rose to prominence on the tails of the revolution and the Empire. Dentzel was also a German Protestant in France; he served in the king's army and fought in the Battle of Yorktown. During the

revolution Denzel also served as a representative in the Legislative Assembly and then became a prominent military figure in the imperial army. Dentzel served in Napoleon I's personal staff and was appointed governor of Vienna during its occupation by the French. For these services he was granted the title of baron, which Georges-Eugene Haussmann would use later in his life under Second Empire.⁷

A story that Haussmann would frequently tell about his grandfathers was that when the future prefect was a small child, Baron Dentzel took him for a walk in the Tuileries Garden. While strolling they ran into the emperor Napoleon I and Haussmann, as a child, asked the emperor if he could enlist in the imperial army so as to serve France, to which Napoleon responded "Hurry up and grow and learn how to ride a horse, then enter the service."⁸ This story is of dubious origin as Haussmann would have to have been a very small child and at this time it was likely that Napoleon was serving in European campaigns. The story is recounted in Haussmann's memoirs where many of the accounts were embellished, but it does speak to his relationship with his grandfather who he claims was a special influence on his life. Haussmann used this story of meeting the Emperor and his grandfathers service to the Empire to claim that he has been a Bonapartist since the cradle and was born with a fierce loyalty to the Empire.

Haussmann grew up in rue du Faubourg-du-Roule neighborhood of Paris in a house that he would later tear down when constructing the Boulevard Haussmann. He attended one of the most prestigious secondary schools in Paris, the Lycee Henri IV, and graduated near the top of his class. While at school, Haussmann made a connection that would shape the rest of his career, he befriended Ferdinand-Philippe, the eldest son of Louis-Philippe the Duke of Orleans. This association was an invaluable connection for a young, ambitious man to make and was necessary for any prominent career during the restoration.⁹ After graduating from the Lycee Henri IV,

Hausmann enrolled in the Paris School of Law to get his law degree. In 1830, Hausmann's scope of opportunity drastically increased due to the Revolution of 1830.

The Bourbons were overthrown and the father of Hausmann's former classmate became the new reformist king. "The revolution of 1830 opened entire new avenues for a young Protestant."¹⁰ As the July Monarchy was in its infancy, Hausmann solicited a meeting with the now prince of France and Duke of Orleans, his former classmate. Hausmann was interested in entering government service, but the best the young prince could do was to recommend that Hausmann apply for prefectural corps.¹¹ After nine months of writing the various Ministers of the Interior and clumsily claiming that the prince was advocating for his appointment, Hausmann was made the general secretary of the prefect of the Vienne department, a region halfway between Paris and Bordeaux. One cannot understate the importance of connections in this time; Hausmann would not have been able to enter the field that would define his life if he had not made a chance friendship in school. This was the state of politics before the Second Empire, though roads had been opened to Hausmann by the Orleanists that had not existed before, he still relied on the prince to be his guarantor.

Hausmann did not stay long in the Vienne department and was soon moved to Yssingteaux in the countryside near Lyon; over the next sixteen years Hausmann shuffled between one provincial backwater to the next. His longest post during this period was as under sub-prefect of Nerac in the Gironde department; this region was where he spent much of his time before his appointment as Prefect of the Seine. "Hausmann was smart, hardworking, and ambitious...but his high opinion of himself, his brusque and autocratic manner proved to be significant encumbrances to career progression in civil service."¹² Hausmann was hardworking and very good at his job as an administrator. In every department that he worked, he improved

the quality of life whether it was through agricultural reforms, sanitation projects, bolstering education infrastructure, or suppressing crime rates. However, despite this activity, Haussmann's official dossier filled with letters of complaints from his superiors. They claimed he was insubordinate, impatient, and difficult; someone who was entirely unwilling to work within the usual chain of command, a complaint he would face again while Prefect of the Seine. This was one of the main reasons that Haussmann languished in the countryside, "digging sewage canals and approving mayoral elections"¹³ Another reason his career stalled was the untimely death of his only significant connection; Ferdinand-Philippe the young Duke of Orleans died in a carriage accident in 1842. Following this tragic event, Haussmann was stuck in a career with little opportunity for advancement for a difficult minor government official with no powerful or influential friends. However, Haussmann had sought to make connection in the Gironde region that would serve him during the time his career was stalled.

The Gironde region of southern France is notable for the port city of Bordeaux and the many vineyards that mark the countryside. The powerful in this region were the old planter families and the merchants of Bordeaux, and the only way to truly enter this class was to marry into it. That's exactly what Haussmann did; in 1838 he married Louis-Octavie de Laharpe of a well off protestant merchant family in Bordeaux. The match was, in Haussmann's own words, "eminently reasonable and advantageous."¹⁴ This marriage brought Haussmann into the cadre of the influential of Bordeaux and served him well; on top of this, the marriage was, by all accounts, a happy one. Curious, though, is that in Haussmann's memoirs he rarely mentions his family life besides that he and his wife had a happy and industrious marriage. The births of his two daughters amount to a few sentences combined. Haussmann's marriage into the Bordeaux elite saw him gain wealthy friends, property and vineyards, and important business connections.

By the end of the July Monarchy, Haussmann career was stuck in a rut; he was placed in small mountain towns near the Spanish border ostensibly to deal with refugees fleeing over the border from the Carlist Wars raging in Spain at the time.¹⁵ In this period, Haussmann seriously considered leaving public service and gaining a job in his father-in-law's lucrative mercantile business as he saw no further path to success in government. However, the chaos wrought by the 1848 revolution and subsequent election in favor of Louis-Napoleon was just the opportunity that Haussmann had been waiting for.

The revolution of 1848 followed a similar pattern as the revolution of 1830: the masses protested a set of laws put in place by the king, the militia panicked and fired on them, barricades went up, and the king abdicated and fled. The major difference was that the bourgeois leaders of the Assembly did not pick a royal to lead the nation; they decided to establish the Second French Republic. In quick order, Louis-Napoleon arrived in France and won the general election on a high tide of Bonapartist support, not least of which came from Haussmann. The wealthy in the Gironde department had no love for the Bonaparte's, "Napoleon and the empire, for the *Bordelais* [residents of Bordeaux], had meant the Continental System, with its blockades, commercial ruin, and the loss of the colonies."¹⁶ However, the new Republic established universal male suffrage, breaking the electoral hold of the wealthy in southwest France; the rural peasants responded en force for Louis-Napoleon's calls for reform and glory. The bourgeoisie of Bordeaux were more ambiguous with their feelings towards politics of the time; they had not real love for the monarchy but it had meant stability, the Republic shattered this and left them unsure if their privileges would be swallowed up by the peasants and radical republicans. In this regard they supported the Bonapartists calls for peace and order, something the nation desperately needed.¹⁷ Thus, Haussmann had no trouble ensuring that the majority of voters in the Gironde

supported the Bonapartists in the 1848 presidential election and then used this pretext to request a meeting with the leaders of the new government.

In early January 1849 Haussmann traveled to Paris to meet with the new Minister of the Interior, the head of the prefecture food chain, to discuss his future and ambition. Shortly after this, Haussmann met with Louis-Napoleon himself, who was eager to meet with senior civil servants who would be loyal to him and the Bonapartists ideals that his new government was trying to implement. After the meeting, Haussmann would claim that, "...there was a certain complacency between the two men."¹⁸ The meeting was successful; Haussmann once again had the powerful benefactor that he had lost with the death of Ferdinand-Philippe, and he did not have to wait long to reap the benefits. Shortly after leaving Paris, he received his long awaited promotion; he was appointed Prefect of the Var.

Today the department of the Var is one of the wealthiest in France, situated on the Cote d'Azur and dotted with wealthy estates from Marseilles to Saint-Tropez, but in 1849 this region was a hotbed of republicanism and opposition to Bonapartism. Haussmann was to crush any opposition and militancy that the radicals would put forth against the Prince-President's regime. Haussmann accomplished this in short order: abolishing fraternal organization, outlawing large meetings, throwing opposition leaders out of office, and tripling the police force. In 1850, after proving himself capable in quieting the usually unruly department, Haussmann was appointed Prefect of the Yonne. The Yonne, though a minor department, had a few advantages, it lies close to Paris and had a strong Bonapartists current having voted twice for Louis-Napoleon during the election cycle. Haussmann's job as prefect of this department was to ensure that republicanism stayed out and that the Prince-President could rely on this region's support. Haussmann was not enthusiastic, claiming that the Yonne was "hardly worth the difficulty and annoyance of moving,

except that it was close to Paris.”¹⁹ While stationed in Auxerre, the capital of the region, Haussmann had the pleasure of welcoming the Prince-President twice as he embarked on good will tours of France. In this capacity, Haussmann again proved his ability to execute official events without a single flaw and impressed Louis-Napoleon, “Haussmann was gaining a reputation as a highly effective representative of the government in political and police matters.”²⁰

In 1851, Haussmann was finally awarded the position that he felt he deserved after toiling in the backwaters of France or acting as the problem solver for the Prince-President, he was appointed Prefect of the Gironde. This department was one of the most high profile appointments in France as it is centered on the wealthy and influential port city of Bordeaux. For many years this appointment was as far as his gaze had reached: he knew the region well, his family lived there, and he had significant investments in the department. His appointment solidified Bonapartists control over the Department of the Interior, “It was the end of the Orleanist hegemony in Bordeaux.”²¹ Haussmann, though achieving a major personal goal, did not sit back and relax; he embarked on major infrastructure and modernization campaigns. These included an update to the sanitation network, reformed the postal service, repaired the ailing port, and bolstering the rural education sector.²² Haussmann’s industriousness and energy further garnered him the support of Louis-Napoleon, similarly, Haussmann’s repression of opposition in the Gironde following the coup d’état in 1851 assured the Bonapartists of Haussmann’s loyalty.

This prompted the Prince-President to inform Haussmann of his presidential tour of the nation; a trip to test the waters of France to see if the country was ready for the reestablishment of the empire and one that would conclude in Bordeaux. Haussmann grasped the gravity of the situation, if all went well he would prove to Louis-Napoleon his dedication and to show off the

works he had wrought in Bordeaux were all in line with Bonapartist rhetoric. “The visit to Bordeaux, organized by Haussmann personally, was perfect, with cheering crowds and fireworks.”²³ This all was the ideal backdrop for the Prince-President to announce in his speech at Bordeaux that he would seek to reestablish the empire of his uncle. Immediately following his departure from the Gironde, Louis-Napoleon issued a plebiscite to the people of France on whether or not to abolish the Republic and found the Second Empire. The measure passed with an implausible high rate of 97 percent and on December 2, 1852 the empire was formally reestablished with Louis-Napoleon passing under the Arch de Triumph as he entered Paris to become Emperor Napoleon III. Haussmann and his loyal dedication for the Bonapartists government was not forgotten; six months after the speech in Bordeaux Haussmann was informed that he was officially appointed to the highest prefecture in the nation with immense power over the operation of the French capital: the Seine. In the summer of 1853 Haussmann packed up and moved his family to Paris to assume his new post as Prefect of the Seine.²⁴

The prefecture of the Seine was the most important in France and whoever held it had the power to reshape Paris. In the past, the position had been held by many important and influential figures. Under the July Monarchy Claude-Philibert Barthelot, comte de Rambuteau had held the position for almost fifteen years. Under Rambuteau’s leadership Paris began to take small steps towards renovation. Contemporaries have claimed that Haussmann’s overhaul of the city was just a continuation of Rambuteau’s own vision. The dynamic prefect had built a few wide streets, added sidewalks, oversaw the first train stations servicing the capital, and implemented the first public streetlights in Paris.²⁵ Rambuteau was an excellent prefect of the Seine and was a personal role model for Haussmann as prefect when he was carrying out his own modernization campaign. However, Rambuteau was hampered by the political landscape of the day; he could

not spend and build as he wished due to the conservatism of the Orleanists and their unwillingness to agitate the people of Paris. The prefect also hailed from the landed aristocracy and many of the ideas that he first implemented, such as tree lined streets, all stemmed from his own construction or forestry projects on his Burgundy estate. The 1848 revolution ended Rambuteau's career as prefect just as it ended the July Monarchy, but the ideas that were put forth on the modernization of Paris were taken up by the Bonapartists and by Haussmann.

The next man to hold the position was Jean-Jacques Berger, an early supporter of Louis-Napoleon and who had helped garner a large show of support for the Bonapartists in Paris. As a reward he was given the Prefecture of the Seine and was entrusted to carry out the Prince-President's ambitious goals for the city. In this regard, Berger was a failure for the Bonapartists, he was, as Haussmann put it, "...incapable of properly understanding and implementing the task at hand...and essentially a local Parisian politician who did not have the stature commensurate with his post."²⁶ Any project that Louis-Napoleon wished to be done or street to be overhauled would be faced with complaints from Berger about a lack of funds or the difficulty of passing the measure through the local facets. By 1853, Napoleon III had become entirely dissatisfied with the scale and pace of construction in Paris, and thus authorized Victor de Persigny, the Minister of the Interior, to search for a new Prefect of the Seine.²⁷ Haussmann was on top of the list of candidates for the position and due to his proven loyalty and drive; he was appointed as Berger's replacement in June 1853.

Berger's appointment as prefect had represented the clientelism that had marked the system of government before the Second Empire. Berger had helped Napoleon III on his rise to power and was rewarded with a position that he was later found to be unsuitable for. However, Haussmann's appointment represents the shift towards meritocracy that the Bonapartists

government implemented. Though the emperor was essentially Haussmann's patron, the latter did earn his appointment by proving his loyalty to Bonapartist ideals in progress, past record of success, and ingenuity. "[Haussmann] deeply believed in the sanitization, beautification, and reconfiguration of the city as a part of a holistic project of building a better society. Politically, he wholeheartedly adhered to Napoleon III's vision of progress and modernity for France."²⁸ The main difference between the Haussmann and his predecessor, and what helped to earn Haussmann the trust of Napoleon III, was that the former recognized that Paris was in desperate need of modernization. "Where Berger saw no pressing need, Haussmann saw the defining challenge of the age."²⁹ Haussmann and Napoleon III were very much in the same line of thinking when it came to the modernization of Paris and this alignment helped to secure Haussmann the position as Prefect of the Seine. On top of this, Haussmann's building energy had been proven, "In Auxerre and Bordeaux, Haussmann had already shown his appetite for building, modernizing, and restructuring the territories under his responsibility."³⁰ Haussmann had the drive and vision that Napoleon III was looking for in his prefect, but he also had something that Berger did not have, which made him an amble candidate for the job, ingenuity.

Haussmann's predecessor had failed to renovate the city due in part to his lack of creativity when it came to finance and completing the projects before him. Haussmann, however, saw the potential for new ideas such as "productive expenditures." This is the idea that the government should spend money to stimulate growth and progress simply because they can spend. This began a major shift in how the French government looked at borrowing and debt, "Until then, borrowing appeared to all as an accidental event, provoked by rigorous necessity. Starting in 1852, it took an entirely different aspect: it became the rule, a system of government."³¹ This was completely antithetical to the July Monarchy and Berger who felt that

the government budget should be managed and carefully balanced; that the Ancien Regime had been reckless in building up war debt or from lavish lifestyles. However, the Bonapartists and Haussmann, "...felt that this timid thinking was holding back growth and progress in France in an increasingly competitive international economic environment."³² Under Haussmann's leadership the city did run up debt in the hundreds of billions of francs; a sum that was not actually paid off completely until 1929.³³

Haussmann also made ample use of the new liberalized financial system that Napoleon III had instituted; letting the government build the streets and then have the banks and real estate institutions invest in the now valuable land. The Bonapartists and Haussmann saw the benefit that railroads and transportation infrastructure could bring to Paris; thus he actively incorporated the rail stations spread throughout the city in his plans for new streets and boulevards. Through extensive lobbying and ample proof of the benefits that the city could gain from the renovation, Haussmann was also able to push through massive spending bills in the Assembly and Paris Office of Ministers. The ingenuity that Haussmann showed in securing finances paid off and made the massive renovation that Napoleon III and the Bonapartists had dreamed a reality. This creativity was one of Haussmann's main qualifications for the prefecture and helped to make his career a success.

One other main factor that helped to qualify Haussmann for the job and ensured that he could do what his predecessors could not, was that his view of Paris was radically different from many politicians in the city. Berger was a classic Paris politician who "...was concerned first and foremost with his popularity."³⁴ Berger was anchored in the Parisian politics of the past, that nothing happens quickly and to make sure never to upset the people, which led him to be pragmatic and compromising. Since the Revolution of 1830, Parisian politicians had been afraid

of inciting the people for they had three examples of mobs overthrowing a delicate government; thus change was slow to affect the city, despite the proliferation of literature on how the city needed to remake itself. Haussmann on the other hand was "...a pure product of France's administrative apparatus, used to working without public accountability."³⁵ Haussmann did not care if he was unpopular with the people of Paris because he believed in the vision for progress that Napoleon III had laid out and felt that the voice of the people was fickle and constantly prone to changes of heart. The Bonapartists and Haussmann did not even view Paris as a city in many regards, "Paris is not a municipality; it is the Capital of the Empire, the collective property of the entire Nation, the 'city of all the French.'"³⁶ Comparisons can be drawn to Washington D.C., where the capitol of the United States is not treated as a city, but managed as federal property. Until 1977 Paris did not even have an elected government, but was appointed by the head of state.³⁷ Paris was the showcase of the Empire, as Napoleon III saw it, the pride of France. Haussmann saw Paris as an asset to manage and increase, as a revenue base from which he could fund his projects, and did not even notice the outcry against him as his construction cut wide swaths of the city apart.

One last quality of Haussmann that certified him to carry out the massive renovation of Paris was that he had no love for the city as it was. "There is nowhere in Haussmann's makeup any of the romanticism or nostalgia for the old, for ruins, for decay that infected so many of his generation."³⁸ Many nineteenth century Parisians reveled in the old winding streets of Paris, where one could feel connected to the past; the city that Voltaire would be able to recognize a century after his deaths. Haussmann on the other hand was repulsed by the old neighborhoods of Paris, and despite being born and raised in the city, he felt that it should be gutted like the sewer it was. "Recalling the walk, [Haussmann] evoked the shabbiness and squalor, the smells of the

meandering little streets, ‘the miserable little square [of St. Michel] where, like a sewer, the waters flowed out of the rue de la Harpe.’”³⁹ Haussmann loved straight lines and the cleanliness of modernity and sought to bring this to Paris as the portents of a new age.

Despite Haussmann’s Parisian upbringing, he did not find in Paris the charm that had been evoked by Balzac and Victor Hugo, but was repulsed by the city’s filth. “He loved Paris best after it had been cleansed and its streets straightened.”⁴⁰ This lack of sentimentality was another main reason that Napoleon III appointed Haussmann; he would not be afraid to tear down the old or the familiar. This is evidence by the fact that Haussmann ordered the destruction of his own childhood home in the eighth arrondissement when laying out the rout of Boulevard Haussmann claiming that he was expunging the old in Paris for the new. This was very much in line with Napoleon III and Bonapartists ideology; the emperor had fled Paris as a baby and was raised in the capitals of Europe. Napoleon III had read and studies the city of Paris and its landmarks, but never saw them until 1848 when his exile was rescinded. The emperor had no nostalgia for a city he was never raised in and only saw the shortcomings that needed to be reformed within the capital of his empire. The lesson of Berger would imply that it would have been very difficult for the renovation of Paris to have been carried out by local Parisians. Thus, Haussmann’s lack of sentimentality to the old of Paris was one of his biggest selling points to Napoleon III.

The appointment of Haussmann as the Prefect of the Seine during the Second Empire shows the shift towards meritocracy that Napoleon III was instituting in France. For the entire history of the nation before the mid nineteenth century, except for a brief time during the First Empire, France had operated under a strict clientelist system when it came to government rule. Those in favor with the leadership or of noble extraction found easy jobs in civil service, but this

avenue was closed to everyone else, be they peasants, pretty bourgeoisie, Protestants, the unconnected, or foreigners. This was true for the prefecture of the Seine; Rambuteau was an energetic and dynamic prefect, but was only able to hold this office due to his noble birth; Berger had served Napoleon III well in the 1848 election and was rewarded by being appointed as prefect of the Seine. Haussmann's appointment shows the break from the past, he proved his ability and loyalty in his decades in the backwaters of France. Haussmann showed his capabilities and was awarded Prefect of the Seine based on these capabilities. This is one of the clearest examples of the success that flows from a meritocracy; those who are able candidates are given positions that will allow them and the nation to thrive. Haussmann's career exemplifies the shift that the Second Empire represents in French history: a move from catering to the nobility and clientelism to one that promotes the educated bourgeoisie and meritocracy.

¹ Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn: Napoléon III, Baron Haussmann, and the Quest to Build a Modern City*. New York, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2013, 76

² Bergeron, Louis. *France under Napoleon*. Princeton University Press, 1981, 63

³ Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris: The Life and Labors of Baron Haussmann*. New York, NY: Free Press, 1995, 53

⁴ Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris: The Life and Labors of Baron Haussmann*, 53

⁵ Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 75

⁶ Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 75

⁷ Cremona, Michel. *Haussmann: His Life and Times, and the Making of Modern Paris*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002, 12

⁸ Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris*, 47

⁹ Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 76

¹⁰ Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 77

¹¹ Cremona, Michel. *Haussmann*, 24

¹² Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 77

¹³ Georges-Eugene Haussmann quoted by Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris*, 63

¹⁴ Georges-Eugene Haussmann quoted by Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris*, 71

¹⁵ Cremona, Michel. *Haussmann*, 38

¹⁶ Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris*, 72

¹⁷ Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris*, 89

¹⁸ Georges-Eugene Haussmann quoted by Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 78

¹⁹ Georges-Eugene Haussmann quoted by Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris*, 124

²⁰ Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 78

²¹ Cremona, Michel. *Haussmann*, 63

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- 22 Cremona, Michel. *Hausmann*, 91
- 23 Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 78
- 24 Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 73
- 25 Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris*, 24
- 26 Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 74
- 27 Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 73
- 28 Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 79
- 29 Cremona, Michel. *Hausmann*, 120
- 30 Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 79
- 31 Anonymous writer quoted by Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris*, 53
- 32 Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 80
- 33 Cremona, Michel. *Hausmann*, 187
- 34 Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 79
- 35 Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 79
- 36 Napoleon III quoted by Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 81
- 37 Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 81
- 38 Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris*, 49
- 39 Georges-Eugene Hausmann quoted by Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris*, 50
- 40 Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris*, 51

Chapter Four:

The Palais Garnier and the Avenue de l'Opéra: Constructing a Public Palace and a Bourgeois Neighborhood

In the summer of 1853, Haussmann assumed his position as Prefect of the Seine and knew exactly what he was expected to do, "Broad streets would be cut through the city core, 'eviscerating the neighborhoods of the center'...Paris would be rebuilt for a future of development and prosperity, an era of technology and modernity."¹ There was one area of the city's core that was to be totally demolished and rebuilt; standing as an example of all the public works of the Second Empire, the Opera neighborhood. Today the Place de l'Opéra is a wealthy and popular square filled with expensive shops and tourists. However, in 1850 the area was a large slum stretching from the city limits to the Louvre.

There had been designs to transform this neighborhood for many years; in 1847 Prefect Rambuteau had selected this area to house the main opera house of Paris.² Unfortunately, due to revolution and politics, the plans fell off and it wasn't until 1854 that Napoleon III resurrected the plans to build a grand opera house in this neighborhood. Haussmann initiated the regeneration of this area in his third network of renovations with a 180 million franc concession from the national legislature. 1859 was perfect to initiate the grand plans that the Bonapartists had for their opera neighborhood, "There was now a perfect alignment of the political, financial, and practical requisites."³ The building of such an opera fell directly into Bonapartists rhetoric and belief structure.

The construction of a new opera house would be seen as the culmination of the renovation of Paris and announce that the city had entered the modern age, "The new opera house would anchor the neighborhood, fix the Grand Boulevards as the city's

entertainment center, consecrate the development of the area, and encourage the further growth of prosperity.”⁴ The opera neighborhood was beginning to be crisscrossed by elegant boulevards such as Capuchines, Italiens, Haussmann, and the Avenue de l’Opéra, the last of which this chapter will also cover as part of the renovation of this neighborhood. However, despite this early construction, the area was still a tight maze of slums and poverty. Napoleon III and Haussmann had dreams to create this as the entertainment hub of the city and cleanse the area in a fervent campaign of regeneration and urban renewal. This chapter will look at the projects carried out in this neighborhood between 1860 and 1875 as quintessentially representative of the urban renovation of Paris carried out by the Second Empire and Haussmann. “The Opéra neighborhood is emblematic of the urban intentions of the Second Empire. ‘It is perhaps the only place where the theory of Haussmannism – that of the urban transformation to which the prefect lent his name- was applied in all its rigor.’”⁵

The construction of an opera house was perfectly in line with Napoleon III’s conceptions of his empire and of his own artistic inclinations. Despite admittedly not understanding artwork, Napoleon III fancied himself a patron of the arts and sought to foster cultural and artist growth in his empire. The opera was wrapped up in the Victorian era ideas of progress and cultural growth that so captured Napoleon III’s notions of what a modern state and capital required. The decision for the Second Empire to build an extravagant opera is very telling of the class leanings of the state and what differentiated it from previous regimes. “Louis-Napoleon did not spent this fortune on an imperial palace for himself but on an opera house, which, along with railroad stations, were the urban extravagances of the nineteenth century, the defining structures.”⁶ The Bonapartist regime

didn't opt to drain France's resources on vast palace structure for personal playgrounds, but built public palaces for the arts such as an opera or a palace to modernity and industry such as the grand rail stations of Paris.⁷ The Paris opera, known today as the Palais Garnier, for the architect who designed it, was the crowning achievement of the Second Empire and a permanent monument to the grandeur and glory of France that Napoleon III wished to usher in. The building is emblematic of the shift in French government towards supporting the middle classes as it promotes artistic appreciation that any and all are welcome to enjoy, provided they can afford a ticket. "Napoleon III might reign because of peasant votes, but he declared his triumph, his modernism, his culture, the humanity of his reign, with an opera house."⁸

Napoleon III announced as early as 1854 his intentions to construct a grand opera house in the 9th Arrondissements area, so far as attaching the well-known architect Charles Rohault de Fleury to the project at the behest of his conservative Minister of Finance Archille Fould. By 1858, an imperial announcement came from Napoleon III confirming the location and architect of the new opera. In 1860, Rohault de Fleury presented a number of finalized designs to the emperor; a magnificent structure with large central body composed of curved wings on either side. Rohault de Fleury was also commissioned to design the facades of the surrounding buildings in the Place de l'Opéra so that the neighborhood would appear harmonious.⁹ However, to Rohault de Fleury's extreme disappointment, his crowning achievement was to be stripped from him. In 1860, Archille Fould, the minister pushing for the opera designed by Rohault de Fleury, was dismissed by Napoleon III over disagreements on financial reforms and replaced by Count Walewski.

Rumored to be Napoleon I's bastard son by a beautiful Polish countess, Count Walewski had slowly earned Napoleon III's confidence and was surprisingly appointed as Minister of Finance in 1860.¹⁰ Surrounded by competing designs for the coveted project, Walewski took the burden of the decision off himself and announced that there would be an open competition to decide the design. In December 1860 the announcement went out that a competition would be held: the committee in charge received 171 designs, five finalists were chosen, and after a few weeks, to everyone's surprise, a little known architect named Charles Garnier beat out Rohault de Fleury and Empress Eugenie's favorite Viollet-le-Duc for the commission of one of the most prominent buildings in Paris.

Charles Garnier was raised in the working class neighborhoods of east Paris as the son of a blacksmith and lace maker. He was gifted with an incredible drawing ability and by the age of fifteen he was working as a junior draftsman in the service of Hippolyte Lebas, a famous architect during the July Monarchy.¹¹ By the time he was seventeen he was admitted to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, the most prestigious artistic school in the country. In 1848, while France was in chaos following the establishment of the Second Republic, Garnier entered the Prix de Rome, one of the most prominent competitions in the art world and won first place. Garnier would spend the next five years traveling around the Mediterranean, exploring the ruins of the ancient world and refining his architectural style. However, despite this early success and educational pedigree, when Garnier returned to Paris in 1853, he found it very difficult to find work. For years he languished as a minor architect of petty apartment buildings; suffering through severe bouts of depression.¹² Garnier never questioned his devotion to his career, "There is no hesitation to be had between the arts and myself. One must be God, or else an architect."¹³ This stagnation of

Garnier's career ended in 1860 when he entered and eventually won the competition to build the new house of the Paris opera. In the coming years, Garnier would become the most well-known and commissioned architects in Paris during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Almost immediately after the announcement of his selection as the architect, Garnier set out exploring the area where he would build his opera and set up a small wooden shed to act as his studio. The structure was two floors with the first floor covered in bits of antiquity to inspire his design and the second floor with a balcony overlooking the construction so the architect could view every step of the process.¹⁴ In this small studio, Garnier squeezed in his team of supporting architects and draftsmen who would help make the design a reality, as well as receiving visits from the imperial family themselves. After a few months of perfecting the original design, Garnier officially presented it to Napoleon III and Empress Eugenie. The Empress, openly hostile to Garnier as he had beaten her favorite architect during the competition, abruptly asked, "What kind of style is it? It is not a style! It is neither Greek, nor Louis XVI, nor even Louis XV!" Garnier, in a moment of irritation, sharply retorted, "It is Napoleon III, yet you complain!"¹⁵

Empress Eugenie had a point, the style of the opera was a confusing combination of several styles mixed together, and, though as Garnier alluded to in his comment, this was also true of the Second Empire itself. Garnier's design, though literally resting on modern practices such as iron rebar in the support structure, showed no sign of modern architectural practices; all the iron was covered with carved stone and the building in its totality, "...harkened back to French classicism."¹⁶ As pictures of the opera show, the building is an imposing structure with a south side face looking out over the Avenue de

l'Opéra and exquisitely decorated with friezes, statues, an arcade on the first floor, and an embellished attic face.¹⁷ The main ramp-way is on the west side where grand curved ramps lead up to the main floor.

Inside the atrium is a spectacular and ornate four-story Grand Escalier full of statues, commissioned painting, and an open roof with a stained glass ceiling. The Grand Escalier, as seen in a lithograph by Garnier, was an open space that was meant to draw the individual up and provide adequate entry into the opera.¹⁸ This all led to the main theater hall laid out in the classic Italian inspired horseshoe shape; the auditorium has five floors of seating and boasts a capacity of close to 2,000 people.¹⁹ This whole style is the complete embodiment of Second Empire architecture, with its heavy reliance on neo-classicism while incorporating the opulence and excesses of Ancien Regime design. The opera, just like the Second Empire regime itself, is composed entirely of modern structural pieces, but covered in a veneer of imperial grandeur.²⁰ By 1861 the design was completely finished and given the go ahead to begin construction.

In September 1861 the cornerstone of the opera was laid and the foundation was completed in short order. Over the coming years the building would slowly rise in the square, though covered with scaffolds and busy workers. The stone and many of the other materials were imported from Southern France or Italy and brought using the newly constructed freight rail lines.²¹ As the opera was commissioned by the French state, the official client was Napoleon III who frequently requested updates and plans for the project, though rarely ever intervened in the construction.²² The construction workers and architectural crew of Garnier worked ceaselessly over the course of construction to ensure no delays for the opening. One method that they used to increase efficiency was that when

they laid the stone for the façade, the workers would place rough stone and completely cover the building. After this was done then the masons would carve the wonderful intricacies of the façade into the building, this process was called *ravelement* where the masons would literally reveal the beauty underneath the stone's rough surface.²³

Garnier had worked with Napoleon III on one piece of the construction, but the unveiling of the south façade in 1867 in time for the International Exposition held in Paris. Visitors to the Opera neighborhood during the Exposition were able to marvel at the beauty of the front façade that had been freshly completed. Theophile Gautier, a reporter for a French newspaper wrote on the unveiling, "The Opera is the temple of modern civilization, it is the culmination of art, luxury, elegance, all the refinements of the *haute vie*....It must be both charming and grandiose, coy and pure, fashionable and classic; the problem is not an easy one to solve; M. Garnier has succeeded in this almost impossible task."²⁴ By 1870, almost ten years into the project there had already been 1,107,632 workdays done on the project, 311 men had been injured, and ten had been killed during construction.²⁵ The building would not be completed for another five years; though much of the drama around the building would not be during construction, but around the politics of the building itself.

The physical construction of the building went smoother than most projects undertaken at the time, but the complexities of building the opera were felt in the politics around construction. Garnier would originally report to a committee of ministers, some of who did not agree that such sums should be spent on an opera. This led to several periods of embattlement where Garnier had to fight for funding to continue the project. Since the project was organized by the state and not Paris itself, Haussmann officially had little say in the construction. However, despite this, Garnier did rely on the Prefect for aid in

maneuvering the bureaucracy of the Second Empire.²⁶ At Haussmann's recommendation, Garnier pushed for the founding of Conseil des Batiments Civilis, a committee intermediary between Garnier and the ministers; this organization would lobby on behalf of the opera's construction and allow Garnier to wholly invest in the construction and not the petty red tape, "...the members of the Batiments Civilis were the only government functionaries who really knew, and understood, what was going on at the construction site."²⁷

Over the course of construction Garnier had to deal with much political upheaval and commentary on the construction of the opera. The building wasn't officially finished until 1875, five years after the fall of the Second Empire. While Napoleon III reigned there was never any serious call to defund the opera. However, after the Third Republic was founded, there was much discussion on whether the republic should continue an imperialist project. After 1870, many felt that it was inappropriate for the Republic to continue to build a monument to Napoleon III, which was how many saw the opera. This all forced Garnier to assert that the building transcended political regimes and was for the glory of France, "...despite [Garnier's] protests, the history of France had turned the Opera into a political symbol."²⁸ Though many politicians philandered about the "excessive opera" Garnier did always receive the funding he needed and eventually convinced the ministers of the Third Republic that it would be in the national interests of France to complete the opera. "Political upheavals, with all their attendant wars, revolutions, and social unrest, are generally inimical to an architect's practice of his profession, which depends on peace, economic prosperity, and a stable labor force. Garnier and the Opera were no exception to this rule."²⁹

One section of the Opera is emblematic of the politics and social theory around its construction and the building's ties to the Second Empire, the Grand Escalier or grand staircase. A social theorist at the time commented that the staircase was, "a monumental enfilade of spaces whose processional sequences could easily be read by the public."³⁰ When one buys a ticket to the opera one must ascend the grand staircase regardless of class or birth. Those you could afford better seats climbed less stairs and those with cheaper seats climbed higher, but there was no distinction purely on class or birth simply on material wealth. This is how social distinction operates in a capitalist bourgeois system and was completely opposite to previous regimes that gave preference on name and rank alone. "The democratic-authoritarian politics of Bonapartism are present. Everyone of whatever social rank ascended the Grand Escalier to reach his or her seat."³¹ This meant that the staircase acted as a melting pot of various factions of French society to meet and intermingle all with a shared appreciation for the arts. This was the ultimate dream of the Bonapartists and the vision that Napoleon III held for the Second Empire, despite the fact that he never was able to attend an opera in the house he commissioned. "The Grand Escalier was 'a vast, spontaneous theater where the public performs to itself.'"³²

The opera officially opened on January 5, 1875 and hosted a lavish gala attended by the elite of France and foreign royalty. Garnier handed off the 1,942 keys for the opera to the company's director and went on to receive a standing ovation from the attendees of the opera and cast for almost five minutes.³³ All together the opera took fifteen years to complete and cost the state over thirty three million francs, by far the most expensive single project undertaken by the French government during the Grand Travaux. Originally the projected cost was ten million francs to acquire and clear the land for the project and

another fifteen million francs to construct the opera. However the price ballooned to twenty five million francs to construct, spending over four million francs in the last year alone.³⁴ “...no building so symbolized what Paris had become after midcentury as Garnier’s Opera.”³⁵ Contemporaries viewed the Opera as the embodiment of Paris after its renovation, a thing of opulence, modernity, a celebration of progress and new social order. It did not take long for Garnier’s masterpiece to become the most famous opera house in the world inspiring other constructions and even Gaston Leroux’s novel *The Phantom of the Opera*. Originally named the Academie Imperial de Musique under the Second Empire, the Third Republic had Garnier change the name to the Academie Nationale de Musique. However, during the construction, a satirical journalist hostile to the vast amounts of money spent on the opera called it Palais Garnier or Garnier’s Palace. The name stuck and to this day the opera bears the name of a man who was born in obscurity and, through hard work and vision, was able to painstakingly transform his vision into the magnificent structure we see today.

Just as the main auditorium of Garnier’s opera has the Grand Escalier to lead into it, so too does the Palais Garnier have the Avenue de l’Opéra, “The splendid urban carpet that conducted spectators to and from the Opéra...”³⁶ There had always been a plan to build an accompanying avenue that would act as the framing point for the Opera. Napoleon III had worked personally with Haussmann to plan and execute an avenue that, “...provided the necessary grandeur for the procession, a triumphal yet civilian route.”³⁷ The neighborhoods of the 9th Arrondissements were a nest of winding, dirty streets before Haussmann eviscerated the area. The Prefect claimed that the city must build the new avenue through the center of the neighborhood instead of working with existing streets as,

“It is easier to cut through the center of the pie than through the crust.”³⁸ After discussion of where the road would run and through which areas of the city, Haussmann’s machine for building a grand boulevard sprang unto action.

By 1860, when the Avenue de l’Opéra was first being designed, Haussmann had perfected his process for building his boulevards. This began by having the expropriation plans drawn up where draftsmen would painstakingly draw out the existing buildings with notes on how many people lived there and who owned them. The map would then be colored to show there the rout of the road would be and all the buildings marked for appropriations shaded in pink. Once this plan was completed it would start an administrative chain of notifications, appraisals, and appeals that would ultimately end with the city expropriating the buildings, compensating the owners, and exiling the residents to some other section of Paris. “Dozens of lives were overturned with each line of the table. This, with all its painful human consequences, was the concrete reality of the old Paris giving was to the new dreams of urban grandeur and modernity.”³⁹ Some of the upheaval that the construction caused is depicted in a political cartoon by Honore Daumier entitled, *Locataires et Propriétaires*. This cartoon shows the displaced families carrying their belongings down a street of carts labeled demolition. Their faces of bewilderment, anger, and concern represent how the expropriated felt at being forced to leave the neighborhood they called home. Many felt they were wandering around a city that no longer knew or no longer cared what happened to them.⁴⁰

In the early days of the Grand Travaux expropriation costs were small as many of the landlords were happy to be rid of the falling apart structure in exchange for a fair price. However, as the process continued, more and more landlords were angry at the high levels

of expropriations. Thus the Assembly passed legislation that a jury composed of landlords was to determine the prices of the expropriation; all of whom could easily have found themselves being expropriated and were thus often sympathetic to those being expropriated. This led to the cost of acquiring the land to skyrocket and a large cottage industry spring up around the legal structure of expropriation to get the landlords the highest prices for their newly expensive property. A common story of the day in Paris was: "Upon seeing a newly rich man, a friend asked, 'How did you make your fortune?' The reply was, 'I was expropriated.'"⁴¹ As in any case when money is flowing, those who are connected seem to reap the most benefit. The individuals who knew where the new boulevards were to be built would quickly buy up the property along the route so that they could gain from the expropriation process. Octavie Haussmann once naïvely stated, "Every time a new avenue is decided, it seems we have a good friend who owns land in its path and has to be expropriated."⁴²

Once the land was set to be bought, Haussmann's elaborate structure of funding would kick in. Haussmann financed his renovation in several ways, the most straightforward was the portion of the Paris tax revenue that he received. While this was substantial, it was nowhere near enough to cover the cost of the construction. In theory the resale of the newly expensive property along the boulevards should cover the costs of construction, but in practice the resale of land often only covered about 20 percent of the cost of building the street.⁴³ To cover the discrepancy, Haussmann, with the backing of Napoleon III, established the Caisse des Travaux. This was a lending organization that would front the money for expropriation and construction and take in the revenues from resale, but the beauty of the organization to Haussmann was that it operated outside of the

city's budgetary discussion and could be completely under the thumb of Haussmann.

Overall, the Caisse des Travaux, between 1859 and 1869, took in 365 million francs and paid out 1.2 billion francs, with Paris covering the difference.⁴⁴

Another example of Haussmann's ingenuity when it came to funding his project was his restructuring of the system of payment to contractors. Originally the contractors hired by the city would front all costs to build the road and then Paris would reimburse them after the road was completed. However, the issue arose that there were few contractors who could front the large expenses and as a result the city would need to intervene and advance payment. Haussmann had the idea of giving the contractors vouchers at the start of the project that would appreciate at 5 percent instead of payment at the end. The beauty of the system was that the contractor could sell these vouchers to a third party and have the necessary funds to complete the road quicker. Since the vouchers were backed by the city, there were many firms waiting to buy them up. By 1867 the voucher debt had risen to 463 million francs and 86 percent of it had been bought by Credit Foncier, conveniently run by Haussmann's childhood friend Louis Fremy.⁴⁵ This structure was set in place by the time the Avenue de l'Opéra was set to begin construction. Overall the cost to the city for this one street was sixty-six million francs including expropriation and construction costs, not including building the houses on either side.⁴⁶

Once Haussmann had hired a contractor, construction could begin in earnest, "Hundreds of houses were destroyed, whole neighborhoods were cleared away, and the familiar urban landscape was remodeled day by day."⁴⁷ The construction began with destruction; all of the houses that had been bought up were torn down in quick order. Many Parisians came to see the opera area as a city of ruins as if the neighborhood had

been bombed out during war. Theophile Gautier wrote on the destruction of the houses: “It is a curious spectacle to see these open houses with their colored or flowered wallpaper still showing the shapes of bedrooms, their stairs that no longer lead anywhere, their strange declivities and their violent ruins.”⁴⁸

A photograph by Charles Marville, an English photographer who traveled to Paris to capture the disappearance of the old city, shows the construction of the Avenue de l’Opéra. Houses are partially torn down and stay in a state of semi-ruin while workers dig an enormous trench into the earth with pickaxes and wheelbarrows. In the shot alone, there are close to fifty men working on the project though undoubtedly many more were involved. Another of Marville’s image shows the street half completed with the photographer standing near completed streets and buildings and viewing the ruined houses to be torn down in short order. Dozens of men stand on the building soon to be demolished and carts are already in motion carrying away the rubble.⁴⁹ Construction companies took on a new role of prominence during this period. Contractors flourished and men poured in from the poor countryside to take part in the dismantling of Paris. Barges carrying stone on the Seine were a regular sight and Parisians would often have to step over piles of rubble on their daily commutes.⁵⁰ After the buildings were dismantled and the debris cleared, work on laying the new street could begin.

The work of creating the actual road was laborious and complex; it began with digging twenty-foot deep trenches along the side what would be filled with sewer pipes and granite slabs that would shore up the sidewalks. Next the area was filled in with a mixture of sand, earth, and gravel at a slightly convex gradation so that rain would drain to the sides and not pool in the street.⁵¹ The most prestigious streets would be covered by a

process invented by the Scottish engineer John Loudon-MacAdam where walnut sized stones were laid on the street and rolled over with heavy cylinders until they formed a solid mass that was then covered with a fine sand material and packed down. This technique has fallen out of use and few remember its origin, but it has had a lasting impact on Paris, as the word for the surface of the road in Parisian French is *macadam* in honor of the engineer who invented the technique.⁵² This process made for a smooth ride, but was very expensive as it required constant upkeep. Thus, only the main thoroughfares got this treatment and the smaller roads were covered with stone pavers that, though more expensive in the short term, were cheaper in the long run as they required less maintenance.

After the roads had been built, workers would install long flat slabs of granite along the sides at an elevated level. This created broad sidewalks that could accommodate many pedestrians walking down the avenue safe from the mud or sludge of the street. Overall, the streets were designed with the pedestrian in mind, "It was in the Second Empire that broad sidewalks with lines of trees were systematically included in major arteries, together with carefully designed street furniture, such as benches, lanterns, and columns for posting advertisements."⁵³ The Avenue de l'Opéra was completed in 1867 and had the last houses build along the road completed in 1876. However, today the street has lost some of the touches that Haussmann planned. In 1955 the road was widened, erasing the tree-lined lawns and shrinking the sidewalks so that an individual leaving the Opera does not have the same vantage that Haussmann and Napoleon III had so painstakingly planned.⁵⁴

The construction of these broad new boulevards were a controversial topic during the Second Empire; some felt that they were the march of modernity and that the clearing

out of the old neighborhoods was a supreme benefit. Others, however, lamented the old Paris and felt that these new identical boulevards had replaced the character of Paris with monotony. Haussmann, as one would expect, felt the Grand Travaux was the most beneficial event to happen to Paris in its long history. "Haussmann, who considered [old Paris] 'dirty, putrid, and unsanitary,' was delighted to see [it] disappear."⁵⁵ The general population of Paris, who were not affected by the expropriations, were favorable to the Grand Travaux projects. Many were not the literary pontificators who appreciated the wistful Paris of Balzac over the filthy realities. "Parisians were keen for the center of the city to receive the improvements everyone knew were long overdue and to finally see a solution to their practical problems of simply getting around."⁵⁶ Some, however, loudly decried the destruction of old Paris as burning away the charm of the city and destroying the world of the past.

The most famous of these opponents were Victor Hugo, a prominent politician, writer, poet, and philosopher, and Charles Baudelaire. Both vociferously attacked Haussmann and his lack of humanity when bulldozing over the city they so loved. Baudelaire wrote that, "Paris changes, but nothing in my melancholy had moved."⁵⁷ Despite this lament for the lost Paris, even Baudelaire agreed that some of the improvements were beneficial to the city. For example, he despised the mud of the streets and hailed the elevated sidewalks as a supreme benefit to the pedestrian. Whatever the opinion, the avenues did do the jobs they were intended to do, erased the old Paris off the map; thousands of homes and hundreds of old streets ceased to exist in this period. "The buildings and streets lost to haussmannization are only abstractly regretted by the few who today even know where they once stood."⁵⁸ Gaspard-Félix Tournachon, the famed French

photography who used the pseudonym Nadar, captured the sentiment that many felt towards the new city, “ I am like a traveler arrived yesterday in a foreign city. I find myself isolated and new in this place where everything was familiar. ”⁵⁹

The old houses had been bulldozed, the old streets wiped off the map; now there stood a broad flat street with very valuable land on either side. How the Haussmann apartment blocks were build was the great intersection of public and private industry during the Second Empire. The system that allowed for the rise of the affluent apartment building was referred to as the “Haussmann system.” The city would buy up the land and create the street, then reorient the plots alongside the street to create new frottage lots that would then be sold back to the private sector.⁶⁰ In the Opera neighborhood the Pereire brothers, who ran the largest real-estate corporation, bought up almost all of the plots along the new Avenue de l’Opéra. Their company them hired contractors and architects to build lavish new apartment blocks all along the road, greatly increasing the property values of the neighborhood; thereby forcing out any other residents who’s homes had not already been expropriated.⁶¹ The average Parisian passing by the construction was struck by immense curiosity on what the new road would bring; the finished streets aroused such enthusiasm that many claimed, “Who would have suspected that two rows of houses, decorated with colonnades of encrusted marble and sculptures, would have arisen as if by magic above the eddies of dust and heaps of rubble...”⁶² All together the cost to construct the houses along the Avenue de l’Opéra was around thirty-three million francs, a sum that was entirely fronted by the private sector.⁶³

A visitor to the Avenue de l’Opéra and any other main street in Paris is struck by the uniformity of the buildings and the similar grand style of architecture. This similarity is due

in most part to the fact that over 100,000 houses were built between 1852 and 1870 when Second Empire architectural style was in vogue.⁶⁴ The typical Haussmannian apartment, as the style became known, had a broad front of at least fifty feet and was generally six or seven stories tall. The windows were usually rectangular with the second or third floors having larger windows and wrought balconies. The top story was an attic underneath a sloped slate roof. Haussmann did not instruct the private sector which apartments to build, and besides placing vague height restrictions, was not involved in the design of the buildings in any way.

The typical Haussmannian apartment building is depicted in the 1852 *Cross Section of a Parisian House* by Edmund Texier. In this drawing Texier shows the class distinctions of the apartments with the wealthy on the second and third floors, the well-off bourgeoisie on the upper floors, and the servants living in small quarters in the attic apartments.⁶⁵ This was the model that was carried through almost all of the apartments lining the Grand Boulevards. Visitors to Paris often note that many of the buildings do follow general rules; this is unusual as many were built by many different men. This uniformity is due to what the architects referred to as a “cultural consensus” to keep floors and windows between buildings in line so as to create a street as a harmonious unit.⁶⁶ Over the years, the apartment buildings built in this time have received the name “Haussmannian.” However, this is a misnomer as the Prefect had little to do with the style and has more to do with the fact that the style appeared during the Haussmann restructuring of Paris.⁶⁷ The uniformity of the buildings, such as the carved stone façade or iron wrought balconies shared by almost all of the houses, are less a result of Haussmann’s control and “...were a direct result of the mass availability of industrially produced building elements.”⁶⁸

Before the Second Empire, Paris had been full of petty tenement buildings, but during the renovation a new apartment, the *maison a loyer*, or formal rented building, exploded in popularity. These became the norm throughout the city as many neighborhoods gentrified and real-estate firms began to accept them as a profitable investment. This popularity posed an interesting new experience for most architects; they had to design houses for people they would never meet and needed to anticipate what the customer would want. This began the era of mass-producing housing for the bourgeoisie that was designed and set years before a family would ever see the house or its layout.⁶⁹

The proliferation of affluent apartments along the new avenues caused large amounts of money and investment to flow into neighborhoods wholly unaccustomed to such attention. This caused a phenomenon that is still familiar in modern cities today, the rents increased. This increase was most pronounced in the Opera quarter and along the Avenue de l'Opéra, this neighborhood saw average rents shoot up to 1,000 to 2,500 francs per square meter. To give perspective on this, the former rents in this area before the construction had average 150 francs per square meter. Even for the newly created boulevards, the Opera quarter was expensive; the average Grand Travaux apartment was around 950 francs per square meter.⁷⁰ Many critics at the time claimed that Haussmann was simply building for the wealthy and expropriated the poor out of Paris. However the Prefect would reply that he was not building any houses himself and that the real-estate firm's construction of affluent building was due to a real and prevalent demand for them.⁷¹ Over the course of the Grand Travaux, eighty-five miles of new streets were built, four hundred and twenty miles of sidewalk laid, 32,000 lamps installed, and over 96,000 trees

planted.⁷² These streets greatly increased the pedestrian's quality of life and speak to the intentions of the Second Empire.

Napoleon III remarked during the height of construction, "[I]n London, they are concerned only with giving the best possible satisfaction to the needs of traffic.' In Paris there was a much broader approach to the design of streets, the continuation of an urban tradition of creating streets as places where people could promenade."⁷³ Second Empire officials put painstaking efforts into planning the perfect street for the bourgeoisie to stroll and window shop. "Everything had been thought of: elegant gas lighting made the streets safe and festive at night; rainwater was captured in the gutters and streamed away; the sewers below carried away the city's filth unseen. These newly finished avenues truly were a marvel of engineering and art."⁷⁴ Haussmann set decrees that any of the buildings built along his boulevards must have commercial space on the first floor, leading to an uninterrupted stream of capitalist investment at street level all over the city. In this period the idea of shopping by strolling and viewing window displays was popularized as the avenues provided ample commercial interest and a variety of options. "The new stores abandoned the old city for the new and added the 'impersonal dialogue of their display windows with the pedestrians. Like cafés that set up their tables on the sidewalk under awnings...they offered the spectacle of their showcases to an anonymous public whom they hoped to make their clientele."⁷⁵ The new bourgeoisie flocked to these new boulevards as it provided for their every need and allowed them to be seen.

One very concrete way that the Second Empire and Haussmann provided for this middle class was their approach to public transit. The most popular way to get around if you could not afford to rent a private coach was to ride the Omnibus, a fifteen-seat coach

driven by four horses and functioned largely as buses do in the modern day. This invention dated back to 1828 and after the creation of the Empire the Omnibus owners responded by creating the Omnibus Imperiale that featured an open roof where passengers could take in the sights and sounds of the city. By 1850 the Omnibus system had ballooned to dozens of confusing lines each run by different companies and denoted by a different color that each had a monopoly on a certain route. By the 1855 Paris Exposition these companies were transporting over thirty-six million people a year on over 350 buses pulled by 4,000 horses.⁷⁶

After Haussmann took control, he temporarily nationalized the Omnibus and combined all the companies into one organization called the Compagnie Generale des Omnibus (CGO); over the years this would morph into the Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens (RATP), the modern public transit system of Paris. Eventually the CGO was re-privatized and established as the main form of public transportation for the middle classes of Paris.⁷⁷ Certain routes were too expensive for the poor to use frequently and the wealthy would hire their own coaches to get around; thus the Omnibus became a hallmark of bourgeois life in Paris. This act by Haussmann regarding this issue of mass transit is a clear example of the Second Empire catering to the exploding middle classes of Paris and shaping the renovation to accommodate their lifestyles.

The most vivid and iconic representations of the middle classes flocking to the Grand Boulevards comes from the outpouring of artistic representations of Paris by the new artistic movement, Impressionism. The Impressionists, Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Gustave Caillebotte, and, most importantly, Camille Pissaro, descended on Paris just after the completion of the Grand Travaux and show some of the most striking

representations of bourgeois life along the boulevards. Two paintings by Pissaro, the *Boulevard Montmartre a Paris* and the *Avenue de l'Opéra* depict a bustling city of ordered apartments and busy streets. These paintings show the famous tree-lined avenues with storefronts surrounded by eager shoppers and multi colored awnings. The roads are full of orderly carriages and Omnibuses transporting people down the flat, straight thoroughways.

78

Jean Beraud painted the iconic piece, *Paris Kiosk*; this painting depicts pedestrians observing a kiosk on the Boulevard des Capuchines near the Palais Garnier. These individuals, dressed in quintessential middle class nineteenth century clothing, are looking at the posting for plays that are coming to the area. The painting depicts an average scene of life along the boulevards punctuated by the bright colors of the posters on the kiosk in contrast to the dark clothing of the pedestrians.⁷⁹ The kiosk was a new novelty that Haussmann introduced to the streets of Paris as he hope that posters would accumulate on them and not proliferate on the trees or street lamps. Jean Beraud's work depicts the classic intersection of Haussmann's urban planning and the conveniences of modern city living. Finally, Gustave Caillebotte's painting, *A Balcony*, is a classic representation of bourgeoisie life in the modern apartments that thrived along the avenues. This painting depicts two well-dressed men on the balcony of a Haussmannian apartment overlooking the tree-lined street below.⁸⁰ People watching became a sport in Paris at the time and it became common for those living in the apartments along the boulevards to sit on their balconies and watch the traffic on the orderly street below. What is also striking about Caillebotte's painting is that the street looks almost like a park due to the prominence of trees, combining the ideas of traffic convenience with strolling in a park. The

Impressionists “...show the highly ordered architecture of the buildings, the broad streets with their bustling traffic, the sidewalks with the streetlights, newspaper stands, and alignment of trees. Scenes of the vibrant, living city...have become the definitive images of timeless Paris in the collective unconsciousness.”⁸¹

Between 1852 and 1870 some 27,000 houses were torn down with 100,000 built in their place and over 350,000 people were displaced by the Grand Travaux, more than 20 percent of the population of Paris.⁸² The destruction and reconstruction of the Opera neighborhood stands out as a classical example of the upheaval and rebirth that Paris underwent at the hands of Napoleon III and Haussmann. “...despite the fact that it was realized late in the Second Empire, [the Opera neighborhood] is the very model of the regeneration of urban centers to which the nineteenth century aspired.”⁸³ The Palais Garnier and the Avenue de l’Opéra work in concert to provide the citizens of Paris the best possible experience in the urban landscape from the former’s promotion of the higher arts as a “temple to civilization” and the latter’s adherence to the needs of a booming middle class and their requirements in a modern city. To these ends, the Second Empire delivered on its promise to bring the portents of progress and modernity to Paris by rebuilding the city to the needs of the bourgeoisie. “Movement and theater, expressed under the intimidating symbolism of the authoritarian state, which determined the pace and purpose of urban mobility, is the essence of the new Paris, so sumptuously and brilliantly embodied in the new Opéra and the new *quartier* of the Opéra.”⁸⁴

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² Kirkland, Stéphane. *Paris Reborn*, 188

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- ⁵ Cremona, Michel. *Haussmann: His Life and Times, and the Making of Modern Paris*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002, 336
- ⁶ Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris*, 207, 208
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- ⁸ Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris*, 207, 209
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- ¹⁰ Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 191
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- 48 Theophile Gautier quoted by Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 134
- 49 Marville, Charles. *Percement De L'Avenue De L'Opéra*. 1867. National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.
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- 55 Haussmann quoted by Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 91
- 56 Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 113
- 57 Charles Baudelaire quoted by Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 136
- 58 Cremona, Michel. *Haussmann*, 341
- 59 Gaspard-Félix Tournachon quoted by Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 135
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- 65 Texier, Edmund. *Cross Section of a Parisian House*. 1852. Tableau De Paris.
- 66 Mead, Christopher Curtis. *Charles Garnier's Paris Opéra*, 165
- 67 Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 140
- 68 Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris*, 206
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- 72 Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 133
- 73 Napoleon III quoted by Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 132
- 74 Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris*, 207
- 75 Gaillard quoted by Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris*, 207
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Concluding Remarks

The renovation of Paris by Georges-Eugene Haussmann under the Second French Empire is important today as it marks a defining transition point in European social history, defined an architectural era that, not only characterizes France today, but was reproduced all of the world, provided a substantial economic boon that fueled the French economy throughout the rest of the nineteenth century to today, and exemplified the urban planning craze that swept the Western world during this period that still shapes urban construction today. Studying and understanding this massive overhaul of Paris is relevant to understand many aspects of European history and the current realities of the French capital. This construction occurred over a relatively short period of time, only 20 years, but the effects are still visible today.

The Revolution of 1789 is one of the seminal moments in history and is often marked as the beginning of modern history. Many of the ideas that were brought forth during this event were revolutionary: breaking the supreme power of the aristocracy, raising the living standard of the common man, expansion of voting rights, filling the government with capable men who understood the needs of the nation, and many more. After the collapse of the First French Empire, the victorious allies and the Bourbon kings tried to undo many of these reforms; bringing France back to the Ancien Regime. It wasn't until the Second Empire that these ideas became a permanent facet of French government. The men who left their mark on France during the Second Empire were largely not of noble extraction, such as Haussmann, Archille Fould, Jean-Gilbert Persigny, and others. The Second Empire dedicated many of its resources to raise the standard of living of the average Frenchmen. An example of this is that during Haussmann's renovation of Paris, the Prefect frequently built public schools, churches, postal offices, and hospitals in the formerly crowded, unhealthy neighborhoods.¹ Similarly, Napoleon III was

adamant that the financing of the Grand Travaux would not be paid for by an increase in taxes on the people of Paris as he felt that they were already overburdened with heavy taxes. This period of French history saw the rural areas begin to see a rising standard of living from increased literacy to modernized infrastructure.

The idea of universal male suffrage was established by the Second Republic, but was kept through the Second Empire and became a reality of French politics. Napoleon III often used this to his advantage such as the 1848 election and the two plebiscites in 1851 and 1852 on overthrowing the republic and establishing the Second Empire respectively. The electorate was greatly increased; before the Second Empire Bordeaux had just over 2,000 electors, roughly the same number it had had 300 years earlier, but during the reign of Napoleon III this was extended to every male over the age of 18.² The Second Empire also established a meritocracy, the dream of the Revolution of 1789 and the First Empire. In this system, qualified men rose to positions of prominence due to ability, not birth. Haussmann was only promoted to Prefect of the Gironde after we had proven his skill in the Var and Yonne, and was only appointed to Prefect of the Seine after again proving himself to Napoleon III while in Bordeaux. Haussmann was not born into power, but rose to it through ability and ingenuity. Charles Garnier is one of the clearest examples of this meritocracy. The architect became one of the most successful men in his field due to his skill alone. The competition that Garnier won to build the Paris opera was entirely awarded by design ability alone. Several prominent architects were looked past during selection as the little known Garnier had a far superior design. The Second Empire carried through and cemented the ideas of the French Revolution; ideas that much of our modern society today is based on. The renovation of Paris highlights the ideas of the French Revolution as it gives

tangible evidence of the enactment of many structural changes to France during the Second Empire.

The renovation of Paris has also left a lasting imprint on the study of architecture by defining a clear and distinct style. The buildings the line the grand boulevards and the design of the Palais Garnier are the most significant examples of Second Empire architecture. This style defines Paris to this day; the proliferation of buildings constructed during the Second Empire still largely stand today. A Parisian in 1871 could walk down many of the boulevards built by Haussmann today and find them familiar and true to the original design. The Palais Garnier, lauded for its beauty and grandeur, is still one of the most visited attractions in Paris and hold the honor of being one of the most photographed buildings in Europe. This renovation is not only important for defining an architectural style still praised today, but ushered in a building craze all over the world of Second Empire architecture. The Ringstrasse in Vienna, the Recoleta neighborhood of Buenos Aires, Prenzlauer Berg in Berlin and the Kensington area of London are just a few examples of neighborhoods build with this style to copy the grand boulevards built by Haussmann. This style proliferated as individual building as well all over Europe, North America, and European colonies. Second Empire style can be found in prominent buildings in San Francisco, Philadelphia, Quebec City, Madrid, Rome, Tangiers, and Calcutta, to name a few.

The style of the Palais Garnier exemplifies this new architecture that became in vogue throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. The construction of this Opera instigated off a building frenzy of grand operas all over the world inspired by Garnier's design. The capitals of Europe felt the need to compete to build grander and grander operas to copy Paris; so as to show themselves as modern and cultured. After the completion of Garnier's opera many other operas opened around the world that were inspired by their Parisian counterpart. These

include: the Warsaw Philharmonic in Poland, the National Opera in Kiev, Ukraine, the Hanoi Opera House in then French-Indochina, and even the Amazonas Theater of Manaus, Brazil in the middle of the Amazon Rainforest. The proliferation of grand, expensive operas in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries spawns almost entirely from the construction of the Paris opera and still impacts art and architecture today.³

The renovation of Paris under Haussmann also significant impacts on the economic growth of Paris and continues to boost the economy today. The years of the July Monarchy and the Second Republic were marked by a struggling economy that contributed to the collapse of these governments. One of the ideas that the Bonapartes instituted was the concept of “productive expenditures,” sums spent by the government on various projects so as to inject money into the system and allow people to spend.⁴ The Grand Travaux was the biggest example of this, putting over one billion francs into Paris alone, allowing money to trickle up from construction workers to business owners and help the bourgeoisie. This represents the ideas of John Maynard Keynes, who, 40 years later, would describe “productive expenditures” as a viable way for a government to foster economic growth. The growth of the French economy during the second half of the nineteenth century was one of the largest expansions of its kind and helped to pull many out of poverty and greatly expand the middle class. The renovation of Paris has had lasting effects on the economy of Paris today. The grand boulevards have left Paris with large amounts of valuable property and ensure that the real-estate industry in the city is wealthy, both in properties and monetarily. The Grand Travaux affected Paris at the exact time that mass tourism hit the continent and helped the city to attract and accommodate millions of tourists. The boulevards that Haussmann built were lined with many hotels and restaurants and the transit system he implemented helped ease the transport to the city’s main attractions. The Palais

Garnier alone is a huge tourist attraction and brings millions of euros to Paris every year. The projects undertaken by the city of Paris during the Second Empire helped to revitalize the Parisian economy, sustained growth throughout the nineteenth century, and still benefit the city to this day by bringing millions of tourists and euros to Paris.

Lastly, the renovation of Paris is important today as a study of urban planning and conscientious forethought given to the needs of the population. This is far from the first example of massive urban overhaul; several examples include London after the Fire of 1666, Lisbon after the 1755 earthquake, or Chicago after the Great Fire of 1871. However, the Haussmann renovation was one of the first and largest examples of urban overhaul not precipitated by a disaster or war. The restructuring of the city and development of utilities, such as a sewage system and aqueducts, greatly improved the standard of living of the average Parisian. Previously, some neighborhoods had their sewage flow on the sides of the street into the Seine, but the sewer system eliminated this health hazard. Similarly, Parisians would often pump their water from the Seine and let the water sit for a day so the filth would settle to the bottom before drinking or cooking with it. After the renovation clean water was made abundant and cheap with the construction of several aqueducts into the city, rapidly decreasing the prevalence of waterborne illness.⁵ This, combined with the restructuring of the roads and transit system under Haussmann, contributed to the high standard of living that many Parisian enjoy to this day.

Between 1853 and 1870 the face a Paris was dramatically altered by the modernization effort on the part of the Second French Empire. Hundreds of thousands were displaced, billions of francs were paid out by the government, and old Paris gave way to the new. This is important today to the study of history as it marks the definitive end of an era of aristocratic oriented government and the start of the prominence afforded to the middle classes. The renovation of

Paris and the Palais Garnier defined an architectural style called Second Empire that was copied by many cities across the western world and still defines the iconic images of Paris.

Understanding the layout and popularity of the renovation help to explain why many cities such as Vienna, Berlin, or Buenos Aires look the way they do today. The economy of Paris in the nineteenth century and today relies on the renovation to boost growth and sustain the billions of euros spent by tourists every year. And finally, Haussmann's renovation of Paris substantially improved the standard of living of the average Parisian and laid the groundwork for the modern amenities that the city enjoys today. Haussmann and Napoleon III accomplished the Bonapartist dream of the transformation of Paris into a capital worthy of the empire and left Paris as the grandest city in Europe, "...a Rome remade in marble."⁶

¹ Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn: Napoléon III, Baron Haussmann, and the Quest to Build a Modern City*. New York, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2013, 179

² Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris: The Life and Labors of Baron Haussmann*. New York, NY: Free Press, 1995, 72

³ Mead, Christopher Curtis. *Charles Garnier's Paris Opéra: Architectural Empathy and the Renaissance of French Classicism*. New York, New York: Architectural History Foundation, 1991, 206

⁴ Kirkland, Stephane. *Paris Reborn*, 80

⁵ Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris*, 322

⁶ Mead, Christopher Curtis. *Charles Garnier's Paris Opéra*, 219

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