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Le Déracinement de l'Utopie: Haussmannization and the Disciplining of the Revolutionary Imagination

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Le Déracinement de l'Utopie:

Hausmannization and the Disciplining of the Revolutionary Imagination

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honors in Modern Languages from
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

by

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Introduction

“But, if the city is the world which man created, it is the world in which he is henceforth condemned to live. Thus, indirectly, and without any clear sense of the nature of his task, in making the city man has remade himself.” –Robert Park

In the history of western thought, Space has had a slyly important role. Difficult to define yet undeniably existent, Space is a subject that has been tackled both by physics and by philosophy, and it has served as a bridge between the two at times. The obsession with the stuff – or absence of stuff – that stands between us and the objects we look upon dates back at least to classical Greece and Aristotle. For much of that history, Space was viewed as being outside of the objects that inhabited it. It was its own entity, an unchanging frame occupied by objects and people. When debate arose, it was over the possibility of emptiness in space or of infinite space. Isaac Newton dedicated a scholium in his *Principia Mathematica* to “Absolute Space and Time,” arguing that “Absolute space, in its own nature, without regard to anything external, remains always similar and immovable.” He argues aggressively that absolute space is a thing distinct from apparent space, which the “vulgar” conceive “from the relation [it] bear[s] to sensible objects”; real space, in other words, exists independent of human observation.¹ It is against this position that Immanuel Kant was writing in his *Critique of Pure Reason* when he said that “Space [...] is a necessary representation *à priori*, which serves for the foundation of all external intuitions.”² He argues that it is not a thing itself nor is it a relation between objects. According to Kant, “it is [...] from the human point of view only that we can

¹ Newton, Isaac. "Scholium on Absolute Space and Time." *Principia Mathematica*. Minnesota State University. Web. 26 Nov. 2010.

<<http://www.mnstate.edu/gracyk/courses/web%20publishing/NewtonScholium.htm>>.

² Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. London: Bohn's Philosophical Library, 1855. Page 24. Google Books.

speak of space.”³ He locates it in the subjectivity of the observer.

This move was an important one. It created a link between the mind and the outside world, allowing us for the first time to conceive of space as something that could change according to how we looked at it. Hegel took up Kant’s subjectification of space and incorporated it into his dialectic of the construction of the Self.⁴ Space became a constantly shifting frame through which we shaped the object world and through which it in turn shaped us. As Philippe Hamon beautifully puts it, “no place is a place until it is a spoken-place.”⁵ We invest places with our thoughts and memories, turning the world into a touchstone for our identity, and those places become inextricable from our definition of who we are. This movement also had an effect on the way we described ideas. Henri Lefebvre points out how thoroughly a spatial vocabulary has been integrated into our intellectual lexicon. Space, he says, has become one of the central metaphors in the expression of ideas. “We are forever hearing about the space of this and/or the space of that: about literary space, ideological space, the space of the dream, psychoanalytic topologies, and so on and so forth.”⁶ Any essay, including this one, is loaded with “*contiguous* ideas” and “*plot structures*.” We begin, even, to describe the mind as a space: “a space in which the subject may take up a position and speak of the objects with which he deals in his discourse,” to use Foucault’s words.⁷

This is not, for Lefebvre, an innocent change, because the space Foucault alludes to is an ideologically neutered one. It is stable, first of all, allowing us with confidence to

³ Ibid, p 26

⁴ See Hegel, GWF. "Philosophy of Nature." *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*. *Marxists Internet Archive*. Web. 27 Nov. 2010. <<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/na/nature1.htm>>.

⁵ Hamon, Philippe, *Expositions : Littérature et architecture au XIXe siècle*. Page 46. José Corti, Paris: 1989.

⁶ Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Page 3. Malden, MA: Editions Anthropos, 1984. *Google Books*. Web.

⁷ Quoted in Lefebvre, p. 4

“take up a position” (another slip into a spatial vocabulary), like a general mounting a hill to safely observe the fray below him. The space of the mind is cut off from the space of the real world, ignoring Hegel’s demand of a reciprocal exchange. The lack of reciprocity prevents the space of the mind from being social. For Lefebvre, this is tantamount to saying that the space of the mind is no space at all. “The mental realm comes to envelop the social and physical ones” and the mediation between those realms, the movement between them, is ablated. Such an attitude and such language revoke Hegel’s contribution to spatiality and reinstate the unidirectionality of Kant’s system. The exchange between consciousness and its surroundings disappears and with it the social content of space. To make the mind a space is to empty Space itself of its ideological content; it stops the *production* of Space, whereby society collaborates to give values and hierarchies to spaces and spatial forms.

Lefebvre intends the word “production” in a Hegelian sense. He asks if Hegel’s “concrete universal still [has] any meaning” and concludes that it does: “the concepts of *production* and the *act of producing* do have a certain abstract universality.”⁸ What is this production? It is the means whereby the word, “bedroom,” comes to designate a certain combination of walls and furniture, and the way that that combination comes to stand for a certain social function. Say the word, “home,” and instantly an immense network of associations, norms, and behaviors are called to mind; it is not inherent in the space nor in the bricks; it is generated through the unconscious collaboration of members of a society. And this network is historical: it is not hard to recognize that the “home” of 1970’s America is not the same “home” as that of Victorian England, even if the walls are made of the same material. Lefebvre acknowledges that speaking “of ‘producing space’ sounds

⁸ Lefebvre, p. 15

bizarre, so great is the sway still held by the idea that empty space is prior to whatever ends up filling it,” but as Kant and Hegel have shown, the idea of empty space is irrelevant.⁹ If a preallable empty space is possible, an empty social space is not. Space is bound up in our perception of it, and its social content is dependent on our organization of it. An empty social space is as meaningless a notion as an asocial language, and social spaces are themselves a kind of language. The aforementioned example shows the proximity of the meaning of the word, “home,” to the content of the space it refers to; “perhaps,” then “what have to be uncovered are as-yet concealed relations between space and language.”¹⁰

What I’d like to show in this paper is that such relations exist not only between space and language, but also between space and the imagination, and that such influences on the imagination can show themselves in the behavior of individuals. This is not a remarkable claim for those who accept, as Michel Foucault asserts, that language encodes power relations. It is also not a remarkable claim at the most superficial level. The majority of people would accept that the inhabitation of a space presents a situation that is far from a free choice: in a city one’s motions are governed by the size of the street, the patterns of the traffic, the quality of the housing, the distribution of essential functions, and all of the other decisions that are the province of urban planners. Ideas as essential as communal identity can be influenced by concerns as small as the cost of rent or the presence of different shops and restaurants. And yet, it is extremely difficult to show exactly how such mechanisms operate. How does it come about that people of different social classes are separated from one another by the form and material of buildings?

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 17

What is the process by which a person's thoughts are shaped by the organization of their surroundings? It is these internal mechanics of the city/identity dialectic that are made visible by the examination of specific examples, and that is what I would like to do in this project.

If we begin from the premise that an individual's thoughts and behaviors are influenced by their surroundings, then it follows that during a period of massive spatial change we would see corresponding changes in thought and behavior. Focusing on such a period offers perhaps the surest chance to witness these exchanges in action, and it is with this in mind that I have decided to center this analysis on the period in French urbanism known as Haussmannization. This is the name given to the works of the Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann, who was Prefect of the Seine from 1852 to 1870. His appointment was one of the first acts of the Second Empire after President Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte declared himself Emperor Napoléon III in the coup of 1851. The earliness of the appointment underscores its importance to Napoléon III's regime. Haussmannization was not a side project of the Second Empire. Rather, it was at the heart of almost every aspect of Imperial policy, and to live in France in the Second Empire was to find oneself daily confronted by Napoleonic politics in the form of public works. The projects were a response to major shortcomings in the design of Paris that were fomenting almost constant threats to the national government. The Paris of the early 19th century was a city of revolution, and the city itself did much to promote and aid rebellion.

In 1801, Paris had a population of approximately 550,000 people. In 1851, the population of the city had grown to over one million.¹¹ When the Second Empire began,

¹¹ Papayanis, Nicolas, *L'émergence de l'urbanisme moderne à Paris* in La Modernité avant Haussmann, ed. by Karen Bowie. Page 83. Editions Recherches, France: 2001.

the city was growing by approximately 30,000 people a year.¹² This growth was made possible by the introduction of rail travel in France, which allowed people from all corners of the country to converge on the capital in search of a better life for their families. “Après 1843, le grand succès remporté par deux lignes, celles de Paris à Orléans et celle de Paris-Rouen, mirent les valeurs de chemins de fer à la mode.”¹³ The French government began a mad dash to expand the lines and bring trains to more and more cities; the number of rail companies multiplied. The economic boom brought on by the spread of railroads was not without consequences: as Louis Girard describes, “La crise agricole, les inondations, l’état imparfait des communications provoquèrent dès 1847 un sévère resserrement du crédit. Naturellement les actions de chemins de fer subirent d’emblée une « effroyable baisse ». [...] L’Etat doit secourir les compagnies qui sont d’ailleurs pour lui de si importantes créancières qu’il ne peut les laisser sombrer.”¹⁴ The economic catastrophe that ensued was fatal to King Louis-Philippe’s Monarchie de Juillet, which had ruled France since 1830, and left the country politically adrift. As the politician Louis-Antoine Garnier-Pagès recounted at the time, “Une vaste pensée d’ensemble pouvait seul vivifier la France, dont la vie s’épuisait, et conjurer le suprême péril qui grandissait de jour en jour.”¹⁵ Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte returned from his exile in London promising just such a movement. He was elected the country’s first president in 1848, but his response to the crisis – nationalizing the major railroads to save them from bankruptcy – left his government with significant debt.

And while Paris’s population had doubled in the first half of the 19th century, its

¹² Haussmann, Georges Eugène. *Baron Haussmann: Mémoires*. Ed. Françoise Choay. Page 623. Paris: Seuil, 2000. Print.

¹³ Girard, Louis. *La politique des travaux du Second Empire*. Page 4. Librairie Armand Colin, France : 1953. Print.

¹⁴ Girard, p. 6

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 9

size had hardly increased. Not only that, but the Paris of 1851 included only the first twelve arrondissements, with the eight perimeter arrondissements remaining almost uninhabited. The increase in density strained the city's ability to support its inhabitants, and the winding medieval streets of the city center quickly transformed into slums. Crime became a major problem in the city, with neighborhoods like the Ile-de-la-Cité – at the foot of the Notre Dame de Paris – becoming so dangerous that police officers refused to patrol them alone. Eugène Sue described the neighborhood as “black, filthy alleys [which] led to steps even blacker and more filthy,” inhabited by “released convicts, thieves, and murderers.”¹⁶ 14,000 people lived on the island at the start of the 1850's.¹⁷ In the 1820's and 30's, the government made special efforts to clear the streets by disallowing any activity that impeded traffic, stating that “as the public street is specially required for the circulation of vehicles, no one shall have the right to establish themselves on it.”¹⁸ This outlawed begging, soliciting, and the street-side carts that had been fixtures of Paris's commercial neighborhoods, but it did little to affect the growing number of deaths from collisions in the streets.¹⁹ As the city grew, the space it occupied ceased to have enough resources to support its residents. Drinking water was bought by the city's poor from *Auvergnats* who collected it in buckets from the Seine and sold it in the street. The river water was dirty and unfiltered.²⁰ Unsurprisingly, disease began to spread in the city. In 1832, the cholera epidemic that had been making its way across Europe reached France. The disease spread through contaminated drinking water, a discovery that would

¹⁶ Sue, Eugene, *Mystères de Paris*, quoted in Horne, Alistair. *Seven Ages of Paris: Portrait of a City*. Page 268. London: Pan, 2003. Print.

¹⁷ Horne, p. 268

¹⁸ Barles, Sabine, “La voie publique est spécialement affectée à la circulation.” Page 200, in Bowie, Karen.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 198

²⁰ Haussman, p. 624

not be made until 1855.²¹ About seven thousand people died in Paris alone. In 1849, with Louis-Napoléon in the presidential palace, a second outbreak hit Paris, this one twice as deadly as the first. Additionally, typhoid and tuberculosis were constant threats in poor neighborhoods.²²

Noticeably, these problems mostly revolved around urban politics and the government's response was consequently centered on urban policy. Haussmann recalls a key moment in his first encounter with the Emperor: he was brought into the Emperor's room and was shown a map of Paris. "L'Empereur était pressé de me montrer une carte de Paris, sur laquelle on voyait tracées par Lui-même en bleu, en rouge, en jaune et en vert, suivant leur degré d'urgence, les différentes voies nouvelles qu'Il proposait de faire exécuter."²³ These lines were drawn with little regard for the neighborhoods and structures extant at the time. Haussmann was given unprecedented powers of expropriation to seize the structures that stood between him and the completion of his Emperor's perfectly straight boulevards – structures that were most often personal residences. Teams of engineers (rather than architects) drew templates for new buildings that fundamentally changed the scale of French architecture and the experience of the city. What ensued was a trauma on a national scale. Vast portions of the city's population were displaced, immense quantities of wealth changed hands, and the shape of the French capital was indelibly altered. References to the chaos in the city were omnipresent in the newspapers, in cartoons, and in the political discourse; the projects were inescapable. If ever a period could offer a glimpse into the deeply mediated relationship between the shape of a city and the thoughts of its residents, the Second Empire is it.

²¹ "Cholera Epidemics in the 19th Century," Harvard University Library Open Collections. <http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/contagion/cholera.html> Accessed on 08/19/10

²² Horne, p. 273

²³ Haussmann, p. 469

While the process of figuring out what projects were carried out in the city by Haussmann is fairly straightforward, we have not yet discussed how to observe the effects of those changes on the imaginations of the city's residents. This will be done through a literary analysis of the novels produced in Paris in the period in and surrounding the Second Empire: Honoré de Balzac's *Le Cousin Pons* (1846), Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856) and *L'Education Sentimentale* (1869), and Emile Zola's *Le Ventre de Paris* (1873). The 19th-century novel in France had a particularly strong infatuation with architecture. Hamon writes, "Pour la littérature, pour le texte littéraire, l'objet architectural [...] semble doté d'un statut sémantique particulièrement riche et complexe."²⁴ Hamon argues that the 19th-century novel turned to architecture for guidance for its form; this gives a second level to Lefebvre's suggestion that words and space belong to the same family. We tend to use a spatial vocabulary to describe literature, but we underestimate the extent to which the novel sees itself spatially. It is a fictive space in which the writer can build another world, a world whose unique contours show us reality mediated through the imagination of the writer. The novel is a unique window into the world as it was experienced by those who were living in it; its form and content show us both how space influenced a writer's thinking and how he or she wished to change that space.

Gustave Flaubert once said, "le style [est...] une manière absolue de voir les choses."²⁵ That quote summarizes much of the problematic of Second Empire literature. The major figures of this period – Balzac, Flaubert, and Zola – are often grouped together under the umbrella heading of "Realism," which is a term meant to reflect their interest in

²⁴ Hamon, p. 29

²⁵ Flaubert, Gustave. Letter to Louise Colet. 16 Jan. 1852. Université De Rouen. Web. 17 Mar. 2011. <<http://flaubert.univ-rouen.fr/correspondance/>>.

how to describe and depict reality. It is a literature that is in many ways about seeing things and Flaubert's quote is similar to Kant's description of seeing, only where Kant named Space the primary engine of perception, Flaubert has put Style. Both allow the viewer to organize the objects he or she perceives in a way that makes their existence comprehensible. In this paper I'd like to argue that between Flaubert's description of seeing and Kant's there is perhaps no distance at all. The authors of each of the books we will be looking at began with two spaces in mind: that of the real world and that of the fictitious world that is supposed to be its mirror; each novel produced a third: that of the text itself. The text is a new place where different ideologies are given primacy, different ideas given voice, and different political relations allowed to exist. As we will see, in the changing shape of this textual space, we can witness the changing relationship between the individual of the Second Empire and the political universe in which he or she lived.

We will approach the four texts chronologically, starting with Balzac. We will begin by looking at the specific ways in which the Second Empire novel attempted to relate to the real world. As we will see, the ways in which Balzac's novels attempt to revise and improve reality is heavily dependent on spatial mechanisms. We will then look at how the structures Balzac relies on were destabilized and deconstructed by Flaubert. Flaubert's spatial imagination differs slightly but importantly from Balzac's. Finally, with Zola, we will show how the architectural projects of the Second Empire contributed to the structural changes in the Second Empire novel. Despite calling itself descriptive, the Second Empire novel was in fact highly imaginative and even politically revolutionary, yet the degree to which this revolutionary thinking is pursued in the novels is not constant over the course of the Empire. It is a change that is visible in the spaces the novel describes and in the structure of the narrative itself. I believe that this change can be

traced back to Haussmann's works and the authoritarian politics of Napoléon III's regime. In this paper I will show how.

Chapter 1 – Balzac and French Realism

Realism and Fantasy

I have said that the novel of the Second Empire has been described as “realist,” but the exact definition of this term is problematic. Balzac, Flaubert, and—to a lesser extent—Zola might be associated with a movement bearing the name of Realism, but the writers belonged to no coherent school and had no manifesto. Flaubert and Zola certainly felt themselves to be writing in Balzac's shadow, but they did not see themselves as his collaborators. The notion of a realist movement is one that has been imposed on these writers by critics. As a result, the writers themselves offer few clues as to the appropriateness or the meaning of this term. The dictionary offers little more help, since while it is easy to say that being realistic refers simply to what *feels* real to the writer or reader, no firm criteria could possibly exist for isolating that characteristic. One obvious reference point for a work's realism might be the fidelity of its depiction of the world – its mimesis. A “realistic” work of art, then, would be one that documents the real world with the greatest detail and the least artistic manipulation. This is consistent with the mission Balzac set out for himself in the avant-propos of *La Comédie Humaine*: “En dressant l'inventaire des vices et des vertus, en rassemblant les principaux faits des passions, en peignant les caractères, en choisissant les événements principaux de la Société, en composant des types par la réunion des traits de plusieurs caractères homogènes, peut-être pouvais-je arriver à écrire l'histoire oubliée par tant d'historiens,

celle des mœurs.”²⁶ Flaubert and Zola similarly wrote about how to incorporate the real world into their texts, with Zola going so far as to posit literature as one of the empirical sciences.

However, such a definition of realism ignores the fact that purely mimetic literature is an oxymoron: words on a page can never be anything but an extremely mediated representation of the real world. And what “feels” realistic can change. Readers in the 1920’s certainly felt Virginia Woolf’s disjointed narratives to be the best approximation of their psychological experience of the world, while numerous critics starting in the 19th century reprimanded Zola for an attention to detail that seemed to rob the world of all of its vitality.²⁷ It is with this contradiction in mind that Roman Jakobson argues that “realism” is in fact a historical construction, having less to do with the inherent verisimilitude of a work of art than with the art young writers grow up with. To each age what seems least realistic are the tropes that have grown cliché in the art of its parents: “the words of yesterday’s narrative grow stale; now the item is described by features that were yesterday held to be the least descriptive, the least worth representing, features which were scarcely noticed.”²⁸ When we are made to see an object in a way that runs contrary to what we are accustomed to, we feel the object to have a new vividness. In this way, all realisms are reactions. Jakobson’s historicizing definition of realism calls into question the notion that mimetic art has a purer claim to Reality than other more symbolic or metaphorical movements, and in the process he makes us think about the

²⁶ Balzac, Honoré de. *Avant-Propos de La Comédie Humaine*. Paris: Gallimard, 1976. Print.

²⁷ See Lukács, George. "Narrate or Describe?" *Writer and Critic: And Other Essays*. Trans. Arthur Kahn. United States: Merlin, 2005. Print.

²⁸ Jakobson, Roman. "On Realism in Art." *Readings in Russian Poetics*. Dalkey Archive Press. Web. 22 Dec. 2010.

<<http://www.dalkeyarchive.com/book/?GCOI=15647100391890&fa=customcontent&extrasfile=A1261BB-D-B0D0-B086-B65BC4AFC132C9C5.html>>.

degree to which the historical mission of art articulated by Balzac, Flaubert, and Zola actually works to mask the ideological and political content of such works. The realist novel wants us to consider it alongside historical texts and journalism but such a desire is insidious to the degree that it dissuades us from unearthing the fantasies of the text and author.

While the realist novel claims to have mimesis as its goal, realist novels from this period frequently abandon their mimetic imperative in order to clarify a metaphorical content. These metaphors can become prescriptive, allowing the novel to smuggle a hidden fantasy in its ostensibly neutral description. Look, for instance, at the way Balzac introduces the title character of *Le Cousin Pons* (1846). He “rappelait l’Empire sans être trop caricature” – a stipulation Balzac can’t hold to the end of the paragraph: “ce vieillard, sec et maigre, portait un spencer couleur de noisette sur un habit de métal blanc!... Un homme en spencer, en 1844, c’est, voyez-vous, comme si Napoléon eût daigné ressusciter pour deux heures.”²⁹ If anyone was willing to accept Balzac’s argument that he does not caricature, the first chapter’s title would be enough to disabuse one: “Un glorieux débris de l’Empire,” a title which makes it impossible to assume Balzac’s character is not primarily a symbol. Pons becomes a perfect metaphor of his own social role. This description devalues realism in that real people are not metaphors in this way, but it does enable Balzac’s story to attain an allegorical quality. Characters stand in for ideas; so do places. This allows them to function as placeholders in a social fantasy: the poor relic of the Empire stands in for the dilapidated social ideologies of the First Empire; if he is successful then the Empire would be as well. According to Lukács, “Voici la catégorie centrale et le critère de la conception réaliste de la littérature : le type,

²⁹ Balzac, Honore De. *Le Cousin Pons*. Page 54. Paris: GF-Flamarion, 1993. Print.

selon le caractère et la situation, est une synthèse originale réunissant organiquement l'universel et le particulier."³⁰ The Balzacian novel thus deliberately sacrifices the idiosyncrasies of characterization in favor of more fully articulating its fantasies.

Utopia

This notion of fantasy is bound up in the impossibility of purely mimetic literature. Texts are written for reasons. For all of our talk about the “death of the author” and texts as cultural productions, the fact remains that human beings have to write them and that they must offer some libidinal compensation to their authors for the time committed to their creation. One such motivation is the possibility the fictional text offers for repairing deficient realities. The critic, Fredric Jameson, arguing for this function of the novel, describes literature as “the imaginary resolution of a real contradiction.”³¹ Novels create a realm where intractable social problems can be managed and given satisfying solutions. They are for Jameson a kind of fantasy of an alternate political or social reality. To this function of the text he gives the name, “Utopia.” The term is a particularly appropriate one given the historical context of our study, since the 19th century was a period in French history where the idea of “utopia” had particularly strong appeal in political discourse.

The term “utopia” of course comes from the 16th century and Thomas More. The word was borrowed by multiple languages throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, but always as an allusion to More’s island nation. In the 18th century, however, the word came to have a broader meaning. Starting in 1734, *utopie* was redefined as a “plan idéal

³⁰ Lukacs, p. 9

³¹ Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious*, p. 77. London: Routledge, 1996.

et irréaliste, dans le domaine social.”³² In the 1800’s, the word’s usage exploded as thinkers like Charles Fourier and Saint-Simon began to spread their socialist political philosophies. Such philosophies promised to harness the new capacities of the industrial revolution and to mobilize what was perceived as a new era in scientific enlightenment. Saint-Simon imagined a world where a perfected system of communication would allow quicker advances in science and would transmit those new ideas to the world of production, where the commonweal would be improved at an exponentially faster rate by industry’s ability to mobilize knowledge for the greatest good. This current of thought was not limited to the period when Fourier and Saint-Simon were writing; on the contrary, their ideas integrated themselves into the heart of the French social discussion and were carried on by later thinkers like Proudhon, Considérant, and even Napoléon III.

What is notable about the use of utopia in the writings of these thinkers is the dual function of the word. On the one hand, it is a word taken from an ideological realm: it describes social theories and more generally the way people think about organizing society. At the same time, though, those applications of the word harken back to its first sense in very concrete ways. Utopia, as the word’s etymology (*topos*) implies, is a place. It originally referred to a specific island, and the spatial characteristics of that island were inextricable from the paradisiacal political culture the island gave birth to. Similarly, the utopian philosophies Fourier and his contemporaries proposed were often founded on the organization of space and on architecture. The unique political culture of More’s island paradise was, for the 19th-century philosophers, connected to the island location itself; to reshape French society, one would therefore have to reshape the French space.

³² "UTOPIE : Etymologie De UTOPIE." *Centre National De Ressources Textuelles Et Lexicales*. Web. 14 Mar. 2011. <<http://www.cnrtl.fr/etymologie/utopie>>.

Utopia, in this way, very strongly recalls Lefebvre's argument about the space of the mind. It is a word which contains within itself the inseparableness of space and thought; it unites a political philosophy with a spatial organization. Fourier's most famous proposition along these lines was the *phalanstère*, an enormous building whose different wings would allow for cooperation between, but also the organized separation of, the nation's various sectors of production. Labor occupied one wing, leisure the opposite, with a silent central area dedicated to sleep, eating, and study. Jeremy Bentham's panopticon is another fantasy of this genre. In it, the construction of a central tower with the ability to see in every direction in the middle of a circular structure of individual cells would allow the mechanization of the nation's prison, medical, and educational systems. The individual subject, always visible but never capable of knowing if he was watched, would behave always. The fraught relationship between the human guard and the subject he was charged with observing would thus be replaced by a more mediated and abstract structure of power that prevented the subject's anger from finding a human target. These are only two of the many examples from the 19th century where philosophers attempted by architectural ruses to solve problems that had been up to then intractable in the organization and control of society.

Certainly, Fourier's definition is not what Jameson intended when he reapplied the word, utopia, in the 20th century, but we cannot ignore the baggage of this term when attempting to understand the context in which Jameson applies it. Certainly there are other non-spatial alternatives that he had at his disposal when writing *The Political Unconscious* – fantasy, dream, optimism – which he chose not to use. Especially considering the importance of 19th-century literature in the articulation of Jameson's argument, I think it is a mistake to ignore the spatial aspect of this word choice. While the

writers we are studying do not produce architectural fantasies in their novels of the kind Fourier is famous for, they are nevertheless architects in the way Hamon and Lefebvre describe, and here I think it is important to underline the predominance of the spatial vocabulary in our thinking about texts. Because whether or not an intrinsic link exists between textual production and thinking about space, the text itself nevertheless functions as a space: it depicts space in ways often revolutionarily different from the ways they exist in reality and it is structurally a way of revising the experience of space. Jameson writes that “no working model of the functioning of language, the nature of communication or of the speech act, and the dynamics of formal and stylistic change is conceivable which does not imply a whole philosophy of history”; to this I would add that no such model is capable of being produced that does not also imply a whole philosophy of space and time.

Fictitious Histories

The text is then utopian in two senses: it is the engine for a fantasy of political change (Jameson’s utopia) and it creates a space where social structures wildly different from those in the real world can blossom (More’s utopia). What is common to these two utopias is their dependence on the political imagination. Utopia is about conceiving of alternative realities. It is a way of rethinking the present-day and attempting to imagine other possible presents that history could have produced and that it could produce in the future. An example of how utopia functions in the text is found in Lukács’s book, *Balzac et le réalisme français*. In it, Lukács analyzes Balzac’s novel, *Les Paysans*, and in the process is able to tease out the political desires at the heart of Balzac’s writing. Lukács turns the novel into a proto-communist fantasy. He performs an analysis almost identical to the one Jameson outlines, showing how Balzac transforms the farm at the novel’s

center into an area isolated from the march of history taking place around it. “Balzac represents the fight against the capitalist degradation of man,” according to Lukács, with the farm standing for communist cooperation and unalienated labor and the manor house that controls it standing in for the bourgeois world that would destroy that fantasy.³³ The juxtaposition of spaces which stand in for ideologies makes this a clear example of utopia at the level of the novel’s content: if the fictitious farm can be realized, then so can Balzac’s ever-more-anachronistic monarchist politics.

But if Balzac wants to make that utopian space real, history and the present have to be made more malleable. They have to be stripped of their necessity and transformed into contingent realities that could be replaced by the ones Balzac would prefer and which he creates in his novels. To accomplish this, the text must erode the separation between fiction and reality, which it does by mingling pure observation and claims to historical objectivity with an awareness of its own fictiveness. For instance, Balzac frequently addresses the reader directly.

Tout le monde désirera sans doute savoir ce qu’est devenue l’héroïne de cette histoire, malheureusement trop véridique dans ses détails, et qui, superposée à la précédente, dont elle est la sœur jumelle, prouve que la grande force sociale est le caractère. Vous devinez, ô amateurs, connaisseurs et marchands, qu’il s’agit de la collection de Pons ! Il suffira d’assister à une conversation tenue chez le comte Popinot, qui montrait, il y a peu de jours, sa magnifique collection à des étrangers.³⁴

These interpolations by the narrator remind the reader in multiple ways that he or she is reading a story. First, there is the fact that Balzac addresses us directly us (in other places, he refers to us as “lecteur”³⁵). Second, the conversational style makes it seem like Balzac is recounting the novel to us as if it were some kind of bedtime story. Third, Balzac goes

³³ Lukacs, George. *Balzac Et Le Realisme Francais*. Trans. Paul Laveau. Page 67. Paris: La Decouverte, 1999. Print.

³⁴ Pons, p. 381

³⁵ See, for example, p. 72

so far as to state directly that this is a book and to encourage us to buy its sister volume, *La Cousine Bette*. Balzac talks about the book we have just finished reading like a magician revealing his tricks, pulling back the veil to show us the inner mechanics of his writing process. He tells us about the secret “heroine” of the tale, reinforcing even more than his didactic character creation did the feeling that these characters are symbols rather than real people.

He also ends by moving the time of the novel from its nearly historical original setting (1844) to a period “only a few days ago,” as if the novel’s terminus were the present day and the world it gives way to were ours. The dilation of the novel’s time scale from the past to the present is reinforced by the present tense used in many of Balzac’s digressions from the “realistic” diegetic content of the novel. The use of the present tense is a narrative elision that Balzac also occasionally makes use of when he’s actually telling his stories. But if the present tense pulls the reader out of the novel’s world, it also works to legitimate the novel’s world. It becomes one of the tools of the novel as history. Balzac’s books claimed to be historical records. In an essay entitled, “Ce qui disparaît à Paris,” which appeared in an 1846 collection called *Le Diable à Paris*, Balzac writes, “Encore quelques jours, et les Piliers des Halles auront disparu, le vieux Paris n'existera plus que dans les ouvrages des romanciers, assez courageux pour décrire fidèlement les derniers vestiges de l'architecture de nos pères.”³⁶ In his writing, Balzac attempted to capture the city he lived in, in the way Charles Marville did with his photographs two decades later. He recorded the nature of each neighborhood and each street in the hopes that posterity would know what his world was like, and he did so out of a sense, as he says, that “in only a few days [...] the old Paris will exist no more.”

³⁶ Balzac, Honoré De. *Le Diable à Paris*. Comp. J. Hetzel. Paris: J. Hetzel, 1846. Print.

This “Old Paris” became an important symbol in Balzac’s late writing. The impulsion towards describing it inscribed Balzac in the tradition of the *Tableau de Paris*, a genre that had been created by Louis-Sébastien Mercier in the 1780’s and which had exploded in popular French literature in the 19th century. The proliferation of *tableaux* underscores their essential purpose: in a changing world, the *tableau* captures the outline of the present moment, but it is by definition an antiquated art form from the moment it is finished. Already the present races off into new changes and new forms and a new *tableau* is needed to capture what the last publication is already too old to register. The *tableau* is thus a record of the mutability of the present. It testifies to the present’s capacity to be otherwise. The Balzacian novel accomplishes this with its *tableau*-esque descriptions. The last line of *Pons* is: “Excusez les fautes du copiste!” It is a final reminder of the literality of the work we have just completed, and it is a gentle segue from the fantasy world of the novel back to the real world. The ending of the novel mingles fiction and reality, aggressively contradicting the notion that the present is inevitable or unchanging.

Destabilizing the present is one of the major effects of Balzac’s writing. The Balzacian novel is a paradox of meticulous description and fantasy. It uses an abundance of detail to make the fictitious seem real. This is what Roland Barthes calls the “reality effect.”³⁷ Each novel works to make a specific utopia seem plausible. The abundance of such texts – Balzac wrote over a hundred – creates a veritable assault on the stability of reality, which makes alternative visions of the world that much more believable. The presentation of fantasy as reality, the combination of allegorical past and journalistic present, the combination of real places and recent dates (1844 and the rue de Normandie

³⁷ Barthes, Roland. *The Rustle of Language*. Berkeley: University of California, 1989. Print.

in *Pons*), all of these things collaborate to make the utopian seem real, and to make the real seem contingent. As Jameson writes, the Balzacian novel works “to ‘manage’ [historical] facts and to open up a space in which they are no longer quite so irreparable, no longer quite so definitive.”³⁸ It presents real history as just another version of an almost infinite roster of possible realities. The vision of society put forth in *Les Paysans*, which forcefully contradicts France’s political reality in 1846, takes part in a concerted attack on the stability of the accepted historical narrative. “The disaster of *Les Paysans* (like that of *La Vieille Fille*, a reflection of a certain empirical history) is thus emptied of its finality, its irreversibility, its historical inevitability, by a narrative register which offers it to us as merely conditional history, and transforms the indicative mode of historical ‘fact’ into the less binding one of the cautionary tale and the didactic lesson.”³⁹ In this way the realist text is potentially revolutionary: it is an argument for a world other than the current one. It encourages revolutionary thought in its readers by insisting on the possibility of alternative histories, and it does so aggressively by bringing the full force of its perspicacity to bear on fleshing out the contours of its fantasies. Every superfluous detail in Balzac works to make utopia seem like a world that can be realized. As Balzac says, “toutes les choses vraies ressemblent d’autant plus à des fables, que la fable prend de notre temps des peines inouïes pour ressembler à la vérité.”⁴⁰

Balzac’s Utopias

What, then, is the utopia of *Le Cousin Pons*? The story revolves around Pons, who is a concert conductor without renown and an art collector. He lives in an apartment built into an old *hôtel* in the Marais. These *hôtels* were built by aristocrats in the 13th

³⁸ Jameson, p. 164.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 169

⁴⁰ Pons, p. 116

century after the court moved to the Marais from the Ile-de-la-Cité in the center of Paris. They were enormous, ornate chateaux in the heart of the city designed to show off an aristocrat's importance. They were architectural symbols of the power of the aristocracy. Pons lives in one that has fallen in disrepair enough to have been divided up into apartments. The neighborhood around him, too, hangs somewhere between the old glory days of the aristocracy and present-day dilapidation: "Les maisons datent de l'époque où, sous Henri IV, on entreprit un quartier dont chaque rue portât le nom d'une province, et au centre duquel devait se trouver une belle place dédiée à la France." It is a neighborhood which embodies the nostalgia for a pre-modern Paris; its innocence in that regard translates into it adopting the qualities of a pre-urban Arcadia: "La rue de Normandie est une de ces rues au milieu desquelles on peut se croire en province: l'herbe y fleurit, un passant y fait événement, et tout le monde s'y connaît."⁴¹ Pons's neighborhood is simultaneously a village, a garden, and the epicenter of the Old Paris which Balzac loves so much.

This village is neatly separated from the novel's other major locations: the elegant homes where Pons goes for dinner.

1° Chez monsieur le comte Popinot, pair de France, ancien ministre de l'agriculture et du commerce ; 2° Chez monsieur Cardot, ancien notaire, maire et député d'un arrondissement de Paris ; 3° Chez le vieux monsieur Camusot, député, membre du conseil municipal de Paris et du conseil général des manufactures, en route vers la pairie ; 4° Chez monsieur Camusot de Marville, fils du premier lit, et pourtant le vrai, le seul cousin réel de Pons, quoique petit cousin. [...] Voilà le firmament bourgeois que Pons appelait sa famille⁴²

These homes are nothing like Pons's residence. First, they are bourgeois and not aristocratic. Still, they are elegant to the extent that "il croyait en entrant, être aux

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 96

⁴² Ibid, p. 78

Tuileries.”⁴³ They are also new houses. They were purchased using new money, much of which was acquired through inheritances or investments. The Camusot, for instance, were silk merchants who only recently ascended into the roster of government luminaries. The Président de Marville purchased his home only ten years ago. The houses are indicative of the conquest of the Old Paris by the New Paris, just as their inhabitants are indicative of the replacement of the old aristocracy by the new bourgeoisie. Pons goes to these homes in a position of uncomfortable supplication, desperate for rich meals but not willing to admit to himself that he is unwanted or unwelcome. Slowly the selfish mentality of these nouveau riche families takes precedence over politeness and Pons is pushed away.

This force works on Pons from one side while simultaneously a much more dangerous force begins to bubble up on Pons’s other flank. In the course of the novel we learn that Pons’s art collection is actually worth a fortune, a fact which is a complete surprise to Pons. When he is offered over half a million francs for his collection he says, “je ne pourrais pas me séparer de ce qui fait mon bonheur... Je ne vendrais ma collection que livrable après ma mort.”⁴⁴ He is offended by the notion of a price tag for artwork. But when the news reaches the poor woman who works as a servant in Pons’s home, she goes mad with the thought that she has been insufficiently compensated for her work. She determines to get her hands on the money through Pons’s will and testament no matter what it takes. Mme Cibot, as she is called, enlists a team of money-hungry petits-bourgeois to help her: the amoral lawyer, Fraisier; Pons’s Jewish rival, Elie Magus; the merchant, Rémonencq. Eventually, Mme Camusot herself joins the fray. Together, they

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 138

harass Pons until he falls terminally ill at which point they set about attempting to pry the collection away from him, going so far as to steal pieces of it.

In Balzac's world, these characters, excepting Mme Camusot, represent the ascendant strains of the lower bourgeoisie, those former laborers determined to do anything it takes to make a profit and climb the social ladder. It is this faction of society which is pitted against the last vestiges of the pre-modern and artistic aristocracy represented by Pons. Pons, who is naïve and innocent, can barely fight back. He is besieged. His house becomes his *chateau fort* against the invading armies; their primary objective is to penetrate its walls. If the little apartment in the Marais is Balzac's spatial utopia in this novel, it is a utopia that is under attack from all sides. Cibot's forces infiltrate deeper and deeper into Pons's fortress. They begin by claiming his stoop as a point of observation – "l'Auvergnat avait écouté les derniers mots dits par Brunner à Pons sur le pas de sa porte" – which leads them then to want to break into Pons's inner sanctum – "il avait donc désiré pénétrer dans le musée de Pons."⁴⁵ In the climactic scene they finally break into his bedroom while he is sleeping. Fraisier, Rémonencq, and Magus are described as three "oiseaux de proie" circling around Pons's dying body, weighing the value of his collection.⁴⁶ When Pons awakes, the three men flee while Cibot attempts to manage the situation. She finds them a few minutes later, waiting on the aforementioned stoop, "les trois bourreaux de Pons."⁴⁷ Balzac's utopia in *Pons* is one waiting for the executioner. It is a utopia in crisis, threatened inside the city that has belonged to it forever. It is attacked by a new class that wants to wipe it away and install a new Paris and with it a new social order.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 158

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 285

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 286

The climactic encounter in the bedroom spurs Pons on to his one mode of resistance. He secretly enlists the help of an honest notary named Léopold Hannequin who himself evokes a simpler, pre-bourgeois economic world. “Il est notaire comme on était notaire autrefois! Il est notaire quand il marche, quand il dort.”⁴⁸ Even without the nostalgic reference to “other times,” the description inscribes Pons’s ally in the aristocratic past, a time when people were not alienated from their roles in society but rather had a fundamental connection between their identity and their profession.⁴⁹ Together, these two relics of the monarchist past produce a secret will that will pass the entire inheritance to his friend, Schmucke. With this done, Pons dies and a happy ending with comeuppance for the detestable antagonists seems assured. Balzac’s utopian desire is clear: in a world where the ascendant bourgeoisie seems intent on commodifying everything from art to death itself (this is, after all, a play about an inheritance), the last vestige of Empire will get its revenge. Pons’s death, depressing as it is, seems like it will not only disappoint the financially-motivated characters, but also send them to jail.

But Balzac’s novel does not end with this satisfying result. Instead, a second series of twists gives the story a much more depressing end. Schmucke, endlessly naïve, cannot understand what has happened to Pons and to himself. The only thing clear to him is his own misery at losing his only friend, and as Cibot and her team muster a new round of bureaucratic attacks on Schmucke, he is led by his credulity into ever-deeper misery. He is forced to go to city hall to take care of Pons’s funeral arrangements, where he is abused by funeral directors whose only aim is to make the biggest profit from Pons’s interment. As Balzac writes, “on ne se figure pas le nombre des gens pour qui la mort est

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 307

⁴⁹ See the discussion of individuality and individualism in Lukács, George. "The Sociology of Modern Drama." Trans. Lee Baxendall. *The Theory of the Modern Stage*. Ed. Eric Bentley. Penguin Literary Criticism, 1992. 425-50. Print.

un abreuvoir.”⁵⁰ These people are desperate enough to milk a few extra francs from their prey that they impute Schmucke’s love of his friend, suggesting that the former’s reluctance to buy the most expensive tombstone is a reflection of an absence of affection. Schmucke is sued by Camusot and in the novel’s conclusion, “[il] ne jouissait pas de toutes ses facultés déjà bien ébranlées par tant de secousses.”⁵¹ He settles the suit, ceding the inheritance to Camusot in exchange for nothing but a small payout to an employee from the orchestra who was kind to Schmucke in his depression. The fatal blow is delivered to Schmucke shortly thereafter, and it comes from another bureaucratic document: “Schmucke prit [l’assignation], le lut, et en se voyant traité comme il l’était, ne comprenant rien aux gentillesse de la procédure, il reçut un coup mortel.”⁵² Fraisier is rewarded for his work with a position as “juge de paix”; Cibot ends happily with a chic boutique on the Champs-Élysées; and Pons’s collection ends up in the bourgeois home of Count Popinot, from which Pons himself was chased.

The lesson of this novel is an extraordinarily pessimistic one when viewed in the light of Balzac’s own political desires. Schmucke, a symbol of friendship and devotion, is destroyed by bureaucracy. Pons is destroyed by commodity culture. His collection, the “heroine of the novel” by Balzac’s own declaration, ends up in a bastion of the New Paris. We cannot even talk about Pons as a martyr against commodification, since he is consumed by it as well. The moment that disabuses Pons of his last illusions, the moment when he calls for both the notary and the priest and begins to prepare for his death, the moment when he leaves innocence behind in favor of his secret plan is also the moment when he first begins to talk about his art collection in the economic terms he so despises

⁵⁰ Pons, p. 349

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 379

⁵² Ibid, p. 380

at the novel's beginning. This is the moment when Pons awakes from his coma to find Magus, Fraasier, and Cibot in his chamber preparing to steal his most valuable paintings. Schmucke tries to explain, since it is he that gave the enemy the key, by saying that he had to sell the paintings to pay Pons's legal bills. Pons asks:

--Combien t'a-t-on donné des huit tableaux?...
 --Cinq mille francs.
 --Bon dieu, ils en valaient vingt fois autant !⁵³

In this way, Balzac dismantles his own utopian desire. His aristocratic utopia is destroyed as completely as possible. What is the origin of this pessimism? If the novel is really "the imaginary resolution of a real contradiction," as Jameson suggests, then why would the author deny himself the satisfaction of bringing that resolution through to its fruition? Why would Balzac spend four hundred pages on a story that comes no closer to making the author's revolutionary fantasies real than he in his old age could accomplish in reality?

Chapter 2 – Gustave Flaubert and the Erosion of Utopia

The Reality Principle

Jameson addresses this problem in his discussion of *La Vieille Fille*. In that story, too, the novel's utopia is undermined at the critical moment. In both *La Vieille Fille* and *Le Cousin Pons*, Balzac seems motivated by a desire to imagine a way to undo the advent of the bourgeoisie and to find a mechanism whereby aristocratic values can be preserved in the face of commodity culture. We don't have to guess at Balzac's politics in these stories; he summarizes his view of the bourgeoisie quite clearly in 1846 when he writes, "On peut se demander, sans insulter Son Altesse impériale l'Economie politique, si la

⁵³ Ibid, p. 291

grandeur d'une nation est attachée à ce qu'une livre de saucisses vous soit livrée sur du marbre de Carare sculpté, à ce que le gras-double soit mieux logé que ceux qui en vivent !”⁵⁴ And yet in both of the stories, Balzac capitulates, allowing the bourgeois status quo to crush whatever revolutionary possibilities the novel offered. Balzac is almost brutal, both to himself and to his readers, who over most of the novel have been lured into identification with characters and ideologies that the novel intends to abuse. Considering the enormous number of novels Balzac wrote and his immense popularity among Parisian readers, it is difficult to understand the reason for this masochistic exercise both on the part of the writer and his loyal fans.

Jameson proposes an explanation of this phenomenon in *The Political Unconscious*. Jameson uses a Freudian terminology to describe utopia, at one point referring to it as an act of “wish fulfillment.” It makes sense then that he should offer as a counterbalance to utopia the possibility of “a more consequent act of desire in which the wish-fulfilling mind sets out systematically to satisfy the objections of the nascent ‘reality principle’ of capitalist society and of the bourgeois superego or censorship.” He imagines a narrative which “is not to be satisfied by the easy solutions of an ‘unrealistic’ omnipotence or the immediacy of a gratification that then needs no narrative trajectory in the first place, but which on the contrary seeks to endow itself with the utmost representable density and to posit the most elaborate and systematic difficulties and obstacles, in order the more surely to overcome them.” With such an impulse, “it then sometimes happens that the objections are irrefutable, and that the wish-fulfilling imagination does its preparatory work so well that the wish, and desire itself, are

⁵⁴ Le Diable à Paris

confounded by the unanswerable resistance of the Real.”⁵⁵

The term “reality principle” in Jameson’s explanation is an important one. It is taken directly from Freud who introduced it in his essay, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

Freud writes

[I]t must be affirmed that it is not strictly correct to speak of the supremacy of the pleasure-principle over the course of psychic processes. If such existed, then the vast majority of our psychic processes would necessarily be accompanied by pleasure or would conduce to it, while the most ordinary experience emphatically contradicts any such conclusion. One can only say that a strong tendency towards the pleasure-principle exists in the psyche, to which, however, certain other forces or conditions are opposed, so that the ultimate issue cannot always be in accordance with the pleasure-tendency.⁵⁶

The problem Freud is wrestling with is that of pain. His psycho-analytic philosophy was based on the presumption that humans behave out of a need for pleasure. It is easy to see how Freudian sublimation might emerge from the failure of desire in the face of *external* forces: when the child is torn from its mother’s breast, the desire remains and an external trauma is imposed. However, there are innumerable situations, as Freud acknowledges, when the individual itself thinks thoughts and imposes boundaries that lead to pain, suffering, and lack. Freud explains this contradiction by saying that “the pleasure-principle is adjusted to a primary mode of operation on the part of the psychic apparatus, and that for the preservation of the organism amid the difficulties of the external world it is *ab initio* useless and indeed extremely dangerous.”⁵⁷ In other words, the pleasure principle can frequently lead to pain if it is unchecked: the spontaneous satisfaction of sexual desire is inimical to the organism if it results in his being locked up in jail for rape. The subconscious learns this lesson and monitors itself accordingly: “Under the influence of the instinct of the ego for self-preservation it is replaced by the ‘reality-principle’,

⁵⁵ Jameson, p. 183 Emphasis mine

⁵⁶ Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Page 4. Trans. C. J. M. Hubback. London: Intl Psycho-analytical Library, 1922. Print.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 5

which without giving up the intention of ultimately attaining pleasure yet demands and enforces the postponement of satisfaction.”⁵⁸

What Jameson is arguing then is that the realist author proposes a utopia and then submits it to the approval of his reality principle. If the reality principle decides that the desire is acceptable, then it allows the fantasy to endure; if not, it quickly pulls it apart leaving the author disappointed but perhaps not as poorly off as he might have been had the utopia not been managed properly. The reality principle makes the author work for his utopias; if the novel is to provide imaginary resolutions to real contradictions, then those imaginary resolutions must be of a difficulty in proportion to the size of the problem. Jameson and Freud’s theory seems to describe what we see in Balzac well. The novelist uses his imaginary world to propose an alternative organization of society (an aristocratic value-system) and then pits that vision against a series of obstacles (an ascendant bourgeoisie) to see what its weaknesses are.

When we look at Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* we find the conflict between utopia and reality principle played out even more openly. *Bovary* was published in 1856, four years after the arrival of Baron Haussmann at city hall. At times the novel seems something like a parable of the reality principle in the way it returns to the theme of dreams and fantasy and in the consistency with which it undermines them. But Flaubert’s sarcastic treatment of his character’s dreams separates him from Balzac in one sense: it demonstrates an awareness of the utopia-reality battle taking place in literature. Flaubert heightens this battle almost to the point of parody.

Madame Bovary’s Utopias

Look, for instance, at the moments in the book when reading is mentioned. Emma

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Bovary is an avid reader of fiction:

Elle avait lu *Paul et Virginie* et elle avait rêvé la maisonnette de bambous, le nègre Domingo, le chien Fidèle, mais surtout l'amitié douce de quelque bon petit frère, qui va chercher pour vous des fruits rouges dans des grands arbres plus hauts que des clochers, ou qui court pieds nus sur le sable, vous apportant un nid d'oiseau.⁵⁹

Avec Walter Scott, plus tard, elle s'éprit de choses historiques, rêva bahuts, salle des gardes et ménestrels. Elle aurait voulu vivre dans quelque vieux manoir, comme ces châtelaines au long corsage, qui, sous le trèfle des ogives, passaient leurs jours, le coude sur la pierre et le menton dans la main, à regarder venir du fond de la campagne un cavalier à plume blanche qui galope sur un cheval noir.⁶⁰

Elle étudia, dans Eugène Sue, des descriptions d'ameublements ; elle lut Balzac et George Sand, y cherchant des assouvissements imaginaires pour ses convoitises personnelles.⁶¹

In each of these three cases, the reading act is the trigger for a moment of *dreaming*. Emma dreams frequently over the course of the novel, with her fantasies working as a compensation for the boredom she feels about her quotidian life. As these quotes all demonstrate, literature is for Emma Bovary a way of escaping into a different world, and it is worth noting how those worlds are described according to their spatial difference from the empty, quiet village where she lives her unremarkable life. They are worlds of “bamboo huts,” “great trees taller than church steeples,” covered in sand; worlds of “old manors,” rolling countrysides, and gothic buttresses. These scenes, however, have little in common beyond their exoticism. They are frequently rural or even insular, but in other places in the novel Emma’s fantasies are very urban.

As the narrator says, Emma “souhaitait à la fois mourir et habiter Paris.”⁶² This is a novel about escapist fantasies that leave the experiences of everyday life barren and joyless. For Emma, the form of these fantasies is not important, just as long as they are different and far away. That said, Paris is the main engine of those fantasies and their

⁵⁹ Flaubert, Gustave. *Madame Bovary*. Page 69. France: Librairie Générale Française, 1983. Print.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 71

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 91

⁶² Ibid, p. 93

primary locus. The first man who draws Emma away from her marriage is the Viscount, who “était à Paris, maintenant; là-bas! Comment était ce Paris? Quel nom démesuré! Elle se le répétait à demi-voix, pour se faire plaisir; il sonnait à ses oreilles comme un bourdon de cathédrale, il flamboyait à ses yeux jusque sur l'étiquette de ses pots de pommade.”⁶³ Emma's hatred of her small town comes to a head when she gets to see Rouen for the first time. At the time Flaubert was writing, Rouen was developing as a city. France depended on maritime trade and as Paris became more and more important, the need grew for a way to funnel the fruits of that trade to the capital. The journey from the south was too far, so Le Havre was transformed into Paris's personal port. Rouen became the equivalent of Arles, “étant le port intermédiaire entre la navigation maritime et la navigation intérieure et sa rivalité avec le Havre étant de même nature sinon de même grandeur que celle qui oppose Arles à Marseille. La place de Lyon serait tenue par Paris, énorme entrepôt qui aspire le trafic.”⁶⁴ Rouen had become, in essence, a distant Paris suburb.

And it looked like it, too. Haussmann's signature façades were being exported to cities around France. Parisian boulevards began to crop up in Marseille, Lyon, and Le Havre. In *Bovary*, the Town Hall of Yonville is “construite ‘sur les dessins d'un architecte de Paris.’”⁶⁵ The year after *Bovary's* publication is “aussi le moment où les grandes villes vont toutes se lancer dans l'œuvre d'urbanisme qui prend à Paris, à Marseille et à Lyon une ampleur extraordinaire.”⁶⁶ Those cities came to resemble little Paris's, giving off a growing impression that they existed merely as background for the capital. As more and more cities began to borrow to fund their urban design projects, the

⁶³ Ibid, p. 90

⁶⁴ Girard, p. 16

⁶⁵ *Bovary*, p. 105

⁶⁶ Girard, p. 397

unequal distribution of loan money by the State Council caused “deux cités [à émerger] : Paris et Marseille.”⁶⁷ “Le résultat est à la fois l’appauvrissement de la province, vidée de ses meilleurs éléments, et l’enrichissement de Paris qui groupe ce que le pays possède de plus brillant.”⁶⁸ This demographic transition in France is reflected in the spatiality of Emma’s utopian thinking: she fetishizes distant places, moving to a bigger city each time she arrives in the city of her dreams and finds it lacking. Initially it is Rouen which “s’étalait à ses yeux comme une capitale démesurée, comme une Babylone où elle entrait.”⁶⁹ Her even bigger obsession is Paris which, “plus vague que l’océan, miroitait donc aux yeux d’Emma dans une atmosphère vermeille.”⁷⁰ Paris is desirable precisely because it is unattainable for Emma, just as the imaginary worlds of her novels are. These places, united only by their difference from Yonville, offer Emma limitless sources of utopian dreams.

Irony and Flaubert’s Narrator

Madame Bovary sounds like Jameson when it describes Emma’s search for utopia in her books: compare Jameson’s “imaginary resolution of a real contradiction” to “she read Balzac and George Sand, looking in them for imaginary assuagements for her outlandish personal desires.” The plot of the story centers on exactly these “outlandish personal desires.” Emma Bovary is someone whose need for utopian thinking in her life propels her to seek it out not only in the relatively innocent sources of Balzac and Sand but also in the people she meets. She transforms everything that happens to her into the beginning of a great romantic novel; no concern of petty reality (money, the law, truth) is

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 330

⁶⁸ Barbéris, Pierre. *Aux Sources Du Réalisme: Aristocrates Et Bourgeois : Du Texte à L'histoire*. Page 219 Paris: Union Générale D'éditions, 1978. Print.

⁶⁹ Bovary, p. 300

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 91

great enough to dissuade her from deepening her fantasies. The three primary fantasies in the novel are Emma's love affairs, first with Charles Bovary which leads to her marriage, then with the nobleman Rodolphe Boulanger and finally with the young law student Léon Dupuis. The first is a doctor who arrives at the home of Emma's father at four in the morning after receiving word that her father has broken his leg. Charles arrives on horseback like a white knight. He has knowledge and status balanced by a soft politeness that make him seem exactly like the hero of Emma's Walter Scott fantasy. Of course, in constructing this image, Emma cannot hear Flaubert's sarcastic touches that tip the reader off to Charles's fundamental mediocrity: when Charles arrives, "le cheval glissait sur l'herbe mouillée," "les chiens de garde à la niche aboyaient en tirant sur leur chaîne," and "son cheval eut peur et fit un grand écart."⁷¹ The image of the white knight arriving on his galloping steed is undermined by these awkward moments.

Similarly, while Rodolphe seems at first to have the money, status, and inscrutable sex appeal of a Mr. Darcy, and while Léon seems to be the reincarnation of Young Werther, neither character turns out to be everything Emma dreams them to be. The former is a seducer. He wins Emma over with lovely speeches, like in Chapter 8 of the Second Part when he says:

« Est-ce que cette conjuration du monde ne vous révolte pas ? Est-il un seul sentiment qu'il ne condamne ? Les instincts les plus nobles, les sympathies les plus pures sont persécutés, calomniés, et, s'il se rencontre enfin deux pauvres âmes, tout est organisé pour qu'elles ne puissent se joindre. Elles essayeront cependant, elles battront des ailes, elles s'appelleront. Oh ! n'importe, tôt ou tard, dans six mois, dix ans, elles se réuniront, s'aimeront, parce que la fatalité l'exige et qu'elles sont nées l'une pour l'autre. »⁷²

But his words are hypocritical; he has probably delivered them to any number of other girls. He even keeps a "souvenir box" of trophies from past conquests which he digs

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 46

⁷² Ibid, p. 180

through to find inspiration for his break-up letter to Emma: “machinalement il se mit à fouiller dans ce tas de papiers et de choses, y retrouvant pêle-mêle des bouquets, une jarretière, un masque noir, des épingles et des cheveux – des cheveux ! de bruns, de blonds ; quelques-uns même, s'accrochant à la ferrure de la boîte, se cassaient quand on l'ouvrait.”⁷³ Léon, similarly, is just a cheap imitation of Goethe's poetic Werther. He is effete and sometimes shallow; when Emma asks him to write poetry for her, he can't think of good rhymes so he ends up plagiarizing other poets; he fails when Emma asks him to resolve her debt situation. While he might have some of the superficial qualities of the romantic hero, crucially, when Emma is in danger, rather than dying for her he slips off and marries another girl who has less emotional baggage.

Throughout the novel, little hints are dropped that Léon is not quite the hero he seems to be. In an important moment in the third section, Flaubert writes, “Léon, étourdi par la colère d'Emma, le bavardage de M. Homais et peut-être les pesanteurs du déjeuner, restait indécis.”⁷⁴ The aside about Léon's indigestion is humorous. It is part of Flaubert's oft-discussed ironic style. At times, the novel itself seems to be mocking Emma, especially when it juxtaposes her credulous utopianism with the narrator's gratuitously banal observations about the “reality” of her situation. The novel distances itself from its protagonist, but for this distancing to be possible, there must be a voice which works in counterpoint with Emma's. The novel's judgmental gaze has to come from somewhere – if we spent the whole of the story in Emma's imagination there would by definition be no irony at all. The source of this irony is the narrator of the novel, who becomes visible at each moment when he intervenes to render his cruel critiques on Emma's situation. J.C.

⁷³ Ibid, p. 234-235

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 317

Lafay writes, “C’est le *nous* initial qui endosse donc la responsabilité du ton ironique et du registre parodique.”⁷⁵

What Lafay is referring to is the first line of Flaubert’s novel, “Nous étions à l’Étude quand le Proviseur entra, suivi d’un *nouveau* habillé en bourgeois et d’un garçon de classe qui portait un grand pupitre.”⁷⁶ The novel’s first word is “we.” The speaker of this line is only established later and somewhat imprecisely. We gather that it refers to one of the boys in Charles Bovary’s elementary school class, but Flaubert avoids giving this speaker a name or a body. He (she?) is left somewhat ethereal. We are not given any idea of how he came to his knowledge of the story he is about to tell. His identity is further clouded by the fact that he speaks in the plural, a device which is repeated every time he uses a first-person pronoun. In this way, Lafay argues, he seems to speak for the class as a whole, or even for the community as a whole. It is the voice of normativity and local values. We can acknowledge a few ways in which this narrative setup distinguishes Flaubert from Balzac. First, in Balzac’s literature we had the impression that the author himself was speaking to us. Balzac’s many allusions to the act of storytelling situated the novel in a quasi-oral tradition and worked to reinforce a one-on-one connection with the reader. Already in the pluralization of the narrator this intimate relationship is broken down.

This is connected to the second point, which is that whereas utopia in Balzac’s fiction came out of the author, here its origin has been displaced. One of the reasons Balzac is such a popular author for materialist and politically-motivated critics like Lukács, Adorno, and Jameson is that, as we have said, he seems personally invested in

⁷⁵ Lafay, J.C. *Le Réel Et La Critique Dans Madame Bovary De Flaubert*. Page 33. Paris: Archives Des Lettres Modernes, 1986. Print.

⁷⁶ Bovary, p. 35

the utopia of his literature. We have the impression reading Balzac that Honoré himself is looking for a way out of the bourgeoisie, that he's testing his own utopian desires. In *Madame Bovary*, it would be difficult to identify a single source of utopia in the cloud of communal narration, but it turns out we don't have to, because utopia doesn't come from the narrator at all. The utopia of the novel is produced by Emma. It comes from a character. The reality principle, by contrast, remains definitively in the hands of the "nous" narrator. We could say that Emma is a perfect example of what Freud means when he talks about the total freedom of the pleasure instinct leading to the destruction of the organism, and that the novel is on some level a parable about unchecked utopianism: the individual dreams without limits, refusing to accept any displeasing aspect of her life, and is destroyed by the community in the guise of the collective narrator, who slowly but surely enforces the rule of the status quo and of normative behavior. Emma is forced to accept her mean station in life or die, and she chooses the latter by poisoning herself in the end. She inadvertently teaches a lesson to all those who might let their dissatisfaction with everyday life lead them to extreme behavior.

Invisible Narrators and Conservative Utopias

This explanation would suffice if it were not for a complication in Flaubert's narrative voice that appears at the beginning of the second chapter. The first line of that chapter is "Une nuit, vers onze heures, ils furent réveillés par le bruit d'un cheval qui s'arrêta juste à la porte." What is notable is how impersonal this narrative is: it shifts from the first person to a distant third person. This is not just a remark on the narrator's tone. This is rather to say that the "nous" of the novel's first chapter vanishes completely. As Lafay says, it disappears "définitivement comme avalé par une chausse-trappe

textuelle.”⁷⁷ The novel essentially has two narrative voices: a personal though ambiguous voice that simulates the critiquing eye of polite, bourgeois, village society and an impersonal descriptive voice that nevertheless can’t resist occasionally reasserting its partiality through its ironic juxtapositions and scathing interjections. It seems difficult for a single text to support two narrative attitudes, and this is a difficulty of which Flaubert was certainly aware. The author’s ambivalence about his own narrator becomes even more visible in the manuscripts of *Madame Bovary*.

Compare, for instance, the impersonal beginning of chapter two to the opening Flaubert originally envisioned for chapter one: “Une heure et demie venaient de sonner à l’horloge du collège quand le Proviseur entra dans l’étude, suivi d’un nouveau habillé en bourgeois et d’un garçon de classe qui portait un grand pupitre.”⁷⁸ The immediate introduction of the narrative “we” is absent from this version of the novel. It does still appear in various places in the manuscript, for instance on the second page when he writes, “Nous avons l’habitude en entrant, en classe de jeter nos casquettes par terre.” But the effect is not the same; it appears more like an interjection or a temporary digression than a commitment to collective narration. It is only in the final, copyist’s draft that Flaubert decided to blot out the impersonal opening that had already survived four revisions in order to insert in a marginal note the beginning that has become so famous.

It is safe to say that Flaubert was obsessed with the question of the author’s presence in his own book. The “nous,” which seems to be such a defiant assertion of authorial presence, was nevertheless written by the same Gustave Flaubert who said in an 1852 letter to his romantic interest, Louise Colet, “Autant je suis débraillé dans mes

⁷⁷ Lafay, p. 33

⁷⁸ Flaubert, Gustave. *Madame Bovary*. 1851. MS 1(3). Université De Rouen, Rouen. *Les Manuscrits De Madame Bovary*. Université De Rouen. Web. 17 Mar. 2011. <http://bovary.univ-rouen.fr/roman_visuep.php?rep=001#001>.

autres livres, autant dans celui-ci je tâche d'être boutonné et de suivre une ligne droite géométrique. Nul lyrisme, pas de réflexions, personnalité de l'auteur absente."⁷⁹ Flaubert's early vision for the novel (when the above letter was written, Flaubert had entered into the first draft of the second section) was for a book that presented its story without commentary. The novel was to be entirely divorced from its creator. From the point of view of utopia, this is a problem, since it reflects a desire to have authorial utopia stripped out of the book entirely. In Balzac's novels verisimilitude was traded for allegory, allowing the novel to formulate a coherent and overarching political utopia. In *Bovary*, characters do not embody their place in society in the same way. They are paragons of nothing, not even of mediocrity. As a result, the novel struggles to formulate an overarching political utopia.

It compensates for that with Emma's personal utopias. But these differ from the ones which characterized Balzac's work in two ways. First, they are not political in the same way. Emma's fantasies act as an escape from the politics of her world rather than as an engagement with them. Emma's utopias are also spatially different. The novel sets up a spatial dichotomy between the boring reality of the village and the paradisiacal utopia of the distant cities, but what is important is not the specific character of the *city*; she is equally fascinated by the rural or oriental landscapes she finds in the novels she reads. What is important to her is merely distance and difference itself. Balzac's utopia in *Pons* is one under attack; it is being chased out of its place in the heart of the city. But it is one that the characters inhabit and fight for. In *Bovary*, Flaubert presents a utopia which is displaced. It is a utopia which is no longer local, no longer present. It is not a place one

⁷⁹ Flaubert, Gustave. Letter to Louise Colet. 20 Mar. 1852. Université De Rouen. Web. 17 Mar. 2011. <<http://flaubert.univ-rouen.fr/correspondance/>>.

can inhabit physically. It is always a place in the horizon, glittering in the fading sunlight. Utopia becomes specifically that which *can't* be inhabited. In Balzac, political utopia and spatial utopia were the same thing. In Flaubert, the distant spatial utopias become ways of escaping from politics and escaping from the responsibility of political utopia. Rather than improve her life, Emma chases fantasies that temporarily sate her without ever making her truly content. Her utopias are therefore not revolutionary as Balzac's were. As dangerous as Emma's whims might be for her personally, for the society as a whole they are conservative. She will never commit herself to local revolution so long as there are distant fantasies in which she can hide.

The Novel and History

Flaubert thus creates an alternative version of utopia from Balzac's. He does this in a novel which examines utopia and the reality principle with an attention that, I have said, verges on parody. In *L'Education Sentimentale*, Flaubert manages to deconstruct another central aspect of Balzac's realist text, again by bringing it center stage in the novel. It is Balzac's philosophy of history: the idea that multiple presents are possible and that history is contingent and changeable. This deconstruction begins with Flaubert's narrator. While he might have failed to completely extract his own ironic voice from his narrative in *Madame Bovary*, he did not fail in that regard in *L'Education Sentimentale*. The book was the product of one of the more tortured writing processes of Flaubert's career. His first story to bear that title was written during the late 1840's and was on his mind during the writing of *Bovary*. He returned to the story beginning in 1864, but *L'Education* was not finished until 1869. It thus bears a curious relationship to its time period, begun on the eve of the election of Louis-Napoléon and completed right before the fall of Napoléon III. It is also related to its historical time period in another way.

Madame Bovary is, admittedly, an odd entry in the list of novels we are analyzing: while Flaubert was living in Paris while he wrote it, it is set in a mostly rural village outside of Rouen in Normandy. This makes it the only novel we are looking at without Paris as its setting. In a study like this one that is interested in the relation between the novel and the city, this choice is a noticeable negation on Flaubert's part. In *L'Education Sentimentale*, not only does Flaubert set the story in Paris, he also focuses his narrative on the events surrounding the 1848 revolution and the arrival of the Second Republic. In this way, history is directly present in the novel. The events of the narrative are all bracketed by real occurrences and real people. This has important effects for utopia in the novel and represents a much more dramatic change than a simple change of time and place.

The novel is in many ways similar to *Le Cousin Pons*. Beyond the repetition of certain character archetypes and themes (the artist battling against commodity culture, the importance of debt and inheritance), the most important is that the novel begins in the 1840's and ends "vers le commencement de cet hiver."⁸⁰ This repeats Balzac's device of returning the novel to the present at its termination. Based on our reading of *Pons*, we might then be inclined to view *L'Education* as a revisiting of the revolution of 1848. We could say that the novel opens "up a space in which" the facts of the revolution "are no longer quite so irreparable, no longer quite so definitive," to return to Jameson's terminology. But *L'Education Sentimentale* has many stylistic and textual differences from *Pons* that contradict this interpretation and show once again how Flaubert, while resembling Balzac on the surface, secretly dismantles the assumptions of Balzac's writing.

The subtitle of *L'Education Sentimentale* is "Histoire d'un jeune homme," which

⁸⁰ Flaubert, Gustave. *L'Education Sentimentale*. Page 548. Paris: GF-Flammarion, 2001. Print.

in French can mean either “story of a young man” or “history of a young man.” The latter translation is in many ways more appropriate. In terms of storytelling the novel doesn’t have much content: Frédéric is a low-energy, low-romance Werther – a quintessential anti-hero. The novel is, however, riddled with French history. The first line of the story is “Le 15 septembre 1840, vers six heures du matin,” which separates the initial action from the novel’s first readers by almost thirty years.⁸¹ The climax of the novel takes place in the midst of the 1848 revolution. The contrast between Frédéric’s apathy and the major historical events that form the novel’s background became one of the prime problems for Flaubert in the crafting of the novel. In March of 1868, Flaubert wrote to his friend, Jules Duplan, “j’ai bien du mal à emboîter mes personnages dans les événements politiques de ‘48. J’ai peur que les fonds ne dévorent les premiers plans ; c’est là le défaut du genre historique. Les personnages de l’histoire sont plus intéressants que ceux de la fiction, surtout quand ceux-là ont des passions modérées ; on s’intéresse moins à Frédéric qu’à Lamartine. Et puis, quoi choisir parmi les faits réels ? Je suis perplexe ; *c’est dur !*”⁸²

Philippe Desan argues that Flaubert gets around this problem by making his first rule “never to allow direct, physical intervention by historical characters into the fiction.”⁸³ Flaubert does this by creating a spatial separation in his story between the characters and the revolution. Frédéric wanders the streets during the revolution like an out-of-place flâneur. He takes his mistress, La Maréchale, to dinner and then on a stroll through the streets of Paris:

Par la rue Duphot, ils atteignirent les boulevards. Des lanternes vénitiennes, suspendues aux maisons, formaient des guirlandes de feux. Un fourmillement confus s’agitait en

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 49

⁸² Flaubert, Gustave. Letter to Jules Duplan. 14 Mar. 1868. Universite De Rouen. Web. 17 Mar. 2011. <<http://flaubert.univ-rouen.fr/correspondance/>>.

⁸³ Desan, Philippe. "From History to Fiction: A Reading of Flaubert's "L'Education Sentimentale"" *Pacific Coast Philology* 18.1/2 (1983): 108-13. *JSTOR*. Web.

dessous ; au milieu de cette ombre, par endroits, brillaient des blancheurs de baïonnettes. Un grand brouhaha s'élevait. La foule était trop compacte, le retour direct impossible ; et ils entraient dans la rue Caumartin, quand, tout à coup, éclata derrière eux un bruit, pareil au craquement d'une immense pièce de soie que l'on déchire. C'était la fusillade du boulevard des Capucines.⁸⁴

The revolution becomes something distant and abstract, just the sound of tearing fabric off in the distance. "The historical events are thus systematically emptied of their political meaning and are presented only as anachronisms: a carnivalesque revolution."⁸⁵ Frédéric, despite his interest in law, never really participates in the historical events taking place around him. He and his mistress "passèrent l'après-midi à regarder, de leur fenêtre, le peuple dans la rue."⁸⁶ They watch history from their window, a stark metaphor for the alienation they feel from its forward march. The wall of their building becomes an architectural symbol for their separation from their world. The emotional detachment they feel is represented in spatial terms.

The characters of the novel feel themselves disconnected from the flow of time around them. They experience what Jameson calls a "crisis of historicity." In the first chapter of the second part of the novel, Frédéric is waiting in M. Arnoux's living room. To pass the time, "il avala un verre de rhum, puis un verre de kirsch, puis un verre de curaçao, puis différents grogs, tant froids que chauds. Il lut tout *Le Siècle* du jour, et le relut."⁸⁷ *Le Siècle*, which means "the century" is the name of a magazine; the pun that in a single afternoon someone could read the whole of the century and read it again, implying that vast expanses of time have been reduced to bite-sized, reified chunks, is an apt description of Flaubert's period. The Second Empire de/construction was responsible for vast changes in the fabric of the city. Buildings, monuments, and cultural reference

⁸⁴ L'Education Sentimentale, p. 384

⁸⁵ Desan.

⁸⁶ L'Education Sentimentale, p. 383

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 176

points that had stood for centuries were wiped away in almost no time at all. As we have said, Balzac's desire to capture the world around him goes hand in hand with the rapid disappearance of that world. But Balzac's anxiety in 1844 was caused by the relatively restrained scope of the urbanist projects under Louis-Philippe; we can imagine what Flaubert must have felt living through the much more massive projects of Haussmann and Napoléon III.

The Erosion of Touchstones in the Second Empire City

Napoléon III was an aggressive proponent of modernity and everything that stood for it. He encouraged projects like the Bibliothèque Nationale and the new Halles market, both of which were dominated by modern iron pillars opening into elegant umbrella-like structures. Iron had been associated with train stations up to then and was considered an undignified construction material; Napoléon III and Haussmann inserted it into the most sacred buildings. They wanted their architecture to be a departure from the past, to represent the technological innovations that enabled it. It is the same reason why Napoléon III organized the Universal Exposition in 1867 as a showpiece for France's new scientific advances. That said, they also wanted the government to be seen as legitimate and part of France's history. To span this paradox, Napoléon III promoted an architectural style which married the new materials and the new shapes to classic façades. The new Haussmannian apartment, whose size and monolithic scale were constantly increasing, was also built with a simple façade that evoked nothing so much as Louis XIV's east façade of the Louvre. Familiarity counterbalanced novelty and modernity.

This worked to legitimate Napoléon III's government as well as its ideological positions. But these ideologies that were being legitimized were founded on change itself. Haussmann built iron temples dedicated to the timeless worship of mutability – that is

precisely what Baltard's Halles are. This seems an oxymoron until we recall the phrase from *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*: "All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned."⁸⁸ This is Marx's description of life in 1848, and it could just as easily have been written by Balzac or Baudelaire. This idolatry of change, produced by the constructions, looped back to feed them. The city was developed not just by the government but also by private investors who saw demolition and construction as somehow chic. Wiping away the past became a hobby for Paris's bourgeoisie. The political cartoonist, Daumier, depicted the demolitions in the city multiple times. In one cartoon, Daumier presents a panorama of French rooftops – an iconic scene in the history of Paris – and on every rooftop he places a worker with a pickaxe tearing the building down. Two workers in the foreground speculate that the only reason the Tour Saint-Jacques is still standing is because you'd need a balloon to get on its roof to demolish it.⁸⁹



Daumier's depiction of the Paris skyline

⁸⁸ Marx, Karl. "Communist Manifesto." *Marxists Internet Archive*. Web. 05 Jan. 2011. <<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm#007>>.

⁸⁹ Cartoon from Harvey, David. *Paris, Capital of Modernity*. Page 140. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.

For the residents of the city, this constant destruction and reconstruction had the effect of wiping away those cultural touchstones which served as reference points in the day-to-day experience of the city. Parisians were disoriented. The narrative of *L'Education Sentimentale* reflects this feeling of lagging behind the rapid advance of history in the way it jumps from one time period to another. By contrast, Balzac's *Comédie Humaine* has been described as an effort to create a totalizing vision of society: Lukács writes, "Les grands réalistes ne se contentent pas de reconnaître et de décrire cet état de choses, mais en font aussi une exigence : ils savent que cette déformation – née certes pour des raisons sociales – de la réalité objective, cette division de l'homme total en l'homme de la vie publique et l'homme privé, équivaut à une déformation et une mutilation de l'être humain."⁹⁰ Balzac is Lukács's grand réaliste *par excellence*, someone who shows how all the events of social life are connected, who fills in the blanks of history, transforming discrete bits of data into a coherent social narrative. *L'Education Sentimentale* completely rejects that imperative. The novel begins in 1840, then jumps backwards to Frédéric's family background in 1833, forward to 1841 and then to 1846, then after slowly creeping through the events of the 1848, it leaps forward to 1851 and then all the way to 1867. The time displacements are disorienting and frequently occur without warning. It is difficult for the reader to know at all times what year it is. The novel repeats for the reader the dehistoricizing feeling its characters live through.

This changes the effect of the novel's final chapter. When the novel returns us to the present at the end, it does not do so with Balzac's mandate to pursue social change; it does not hand the present back to us as something malleable, whose past has been shown

⁹⁰ Lukács, Avant-Propos of *Balzac et le réalisme français*

to be contingent by the author's imagination. On the contrary, it returns us to a present rendered all the more disconnected from its past. It is impossible for the reader to understand the connection between 1848 and 1869, since rather than give narrative necessity to that transition, Flaubert skips over it entirely. Desan writes, "What is striking when reading *L'Education sentimentale* is the absence of historical forces. Flaubert disassembles history piece by piece, he dehistoricizes his characters by making them incapable of action." In so doing, Flaubert also preempts the formation of a Balzacian revolutionary utopia: because the novel takes place in a historical setting, its dénouement is preordained. If it intends to satisfy its mission to report reality faithfully, then it can only end with the world in which Flaubert is living in 1869. By taking history as his subject, Flaubert transforms it into something immutable and decided in advance; it is simply not possible for *L'Education Sentimentale* to end in a way other than with the ascension of the bourgeoisie, no matter how much Flaubert personally might despise the class. It makes us feel that the present reality is the only possible reality, rather than one among many revolutionary possibilities.

If *Madame Bovary* represents the displacement of responsibility for imagining utopia from the narrator to the fictional characters, then *L'Education Sentimentale* represents the displacement of responsibility for realizing that utopia from the present (which would have been hypothetically capable of it) to the past (which by definition is incapable of changing the future). The tables are thus tilted strongly in favor of the reality principle in its battle with utopia. What utopias the text depicts are always born into a world where their imminent failure is already known to the audience. In *Le Cousin Pons*, we could hope for Balzac's narrator to succeed and find another possible world; in *L'Education Sentimentale*, the possibility of an alternative world being realized is

doubtful. The book's characters, whatever their dreams, cannot escape the truth that Flaubert, writing in the dusk of the Second Empire, knows all too well: that the revolution of 1848 can lead nowhere except to the excessive and authoritarian Paris of Napoléon III. "Flaubert makes a qualitative choice: the revolution of '48, that of the people in revolt, can only be fiction. This fiction is then presented as the only possible history. History will be bourgeois or it will not be."⁹¹

This trend towards past tense narration is continued by Emile Zola, who set the entirety of his epic, *Les Rougon-Macquart* in the Second Empire, even though he was writing in the 1870's after its fall. Once again, the subtitle of the book invokes a historical imperative: *Les Rougon-Macquart: Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le Second Empire*. But Zola's project went well beyond Flaubert's in its obsession with the past. Whereas Flaubert offers an ambivalent critique of Balzac's idea of history, showing how fragile utopia is in realistic narrative, Zola dismantles Balzac's stance completely. For Zola, literature's goal was not to show history's fragility, but rather to explain its necessity: the job of the novelist, he writes, is to "fait mouvoir les personnages dans une histoire particulière, pour y montrer que la succession des faits y sera telle que l'exige le déterminisme des phénomènes mis à l'étude."⁹² The word "determinism" is a favorite of Zola's, and it reflects the attitude that the writer had towards his subjects and his characters, along with their dreams and utopias. In the next chapter we will look at how Zola's novels further the stylistic and structural changes visible in Flaubert and at the ways in which the erosion of utopian thinking that is the necessary consequence of these changes is connected to the architectural changes being pursued by Baron Haussmann.

⁹¹ Desan.

⁹² Zola, Emile. *Le Roman Experimental*. Paris: Charpentier, 1881. *Gallica*. Bibliotheque Nationale De France. Web. <<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k113130k.r=roman+experimental.langEN>>.

Chapter 3 – Emile Zola and Disciplined Narratives

Naturalism and the Experimental Novel

In an 1860 letter to his friend, Jean-Baptistin Baille, Emile Zola writes:

Ce sera toujours ce poète interrogeant le futur, divaguant et se perdant dans la nue pour aller demander le grand mal au Seigneur, bâtissant utopies sur utopies, toujours dévoré par sa fiévreuse activité. Même, j’irai plus loin, la paresse rêveuse, ces moments où l’on sommeille à demi, regardant les nuages glisser, qu’est-ce, sinon un résultant de l’activité dont je te parle ? Il serait trop long d’écrire ce qu’on ressent, on préfère le rêve – j’en parle sciemment. Voilà ce que sont les poètes de notre siècle, voilà notre école lyrique.⁹³

The paragraph is remarkable. It occurs in a literary argument between Zola and Baille and is the core of the aesthetic stance Zola is defending. Zola’s use of the term “utopia” seems taken straight from Jameson, and the aesthetics he describes aligns him with the most revolutionary moments in Balzac’s writing. Here we see the young Zola as a dreamer, full of imagination. He speaks of the Second Empire with an optimism based on his faith that the Second Empire was building to an age of perfect social enlightenment. He says, “lorsque la mère porte encore son enfant dans son sein, on s’incline devant elle ; inclinez-vous donc, brutes, devant notre siècle plein de promesses pour vos petits-neveux.”⁹⁴ Two decades later, in *Le Roman Expérimental*, that same Zola wrote that “le plus bel éloge que l’on pouvait faire autrefois d’un romancier était de dire : « Il a de l’imagination. » Aujourd’hui, cet éloge serait presque regardé comme une critique. [...] L’imagination n’est plus la qualité maîtresse du roman.”⁹⁵ In that essay, he says of Balzac, “l’imagination de Balzac, cette imagination dérégulée qui se jetait dans toutes les exagérations et qui voulait créer le monde à nouveau, sur des plans extraordinaires, cette

⁹³ Zola, Emile. Letter to Jean-Baptistin Baille. 2 June 1860. *Correspondance d’Emile Zola*. Paris: Editions Du Centre National De La Recherche Scientifique, 1983. 170-72. Print.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ *Le Roman Experimental*, p. 205

imagination m'irrite plus qu'elle ne m'attire."⁹⁶ Between these two moments in Zola's life, a massive change had taken place. Zola moves from one aesthetic position to another which is almost diametrically opposed to it.

The latter position is one that completely rejects authorial utopia as a valid category. It disdains imagination and argues instead for description. "Puisque l'imagination n'est plus la qualité maîtresse du romancier, qu'est-ce donc qui l'a remplacée ? Il faut toujours une qualité maîtresse. Aujourd'hui, la qualité maîtresse du romancier est le sens du réel."⁹⁷ The criterion of good writing becomes how faithfully the novel reproduces the present, rather than how inspiringly it re-imagines it. Zola's anti-utopian stance has made him a punching bag for any number of Marxist critics, with none more vocal than Lukács, who was eager to show how thoroughly he thought Balzac exceeded Zola in talent. The fact that Zola's literature bears the name of a different movement (naturalism vs. realism) makes it tempting to draw a firm line between him and Balzac and Flaubert. It is tempting to discard the utopia/reality principle vision of literature and begin anew with the axioms Zola sets out for himself. And yet, Zola viewed himself as a response to Balzac. The realism, in Jakobson's sense, which he reacts against is always Balzac's: "Balzac à l'aide de 3 000 figures veut faire l'histoire des moeurs [...] Mon œuvre, à moi, sera tout autre chose."⁹⁸ He goes on, "Je ne veux pas comme Balzac avoir une décision sur les affaires des hommes, être politique, philosophe, moraliste."⁹⁹ Given the fact that Zola felt his novels to be in the same family as those of Balzac and the fact that Jameson's theory of utopia is one that, as we have pointed out, hopes to explain all literary acts and not just those of the relatively constrained movement of Realism, it

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 212

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 208

⁹⁸ Zola, Émile. Dossier of *La Curée*. Page 381. Manchecourt: Pocket, 1990. Print.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

seems to me premature to abandon the utopian hypothesis with regard to Zola's work.

Jameson's definition of utopia does suffer, though, from a lack of historicization. The fundamental paradox of Jameson's work is that it begins by arguing "the priority of the political interpretation of literary texts. It conceives of the political not as an optional auxiliary to other interpretive methods current today [...] but rather as the absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation."¹⁰⁰ In other words, it offers historicity as an ahistorical analytic procedure. This is not necessarily a paradox, but it becomes one when Jameson simultaneously asserts the universality of a principle and then pretends that it can simply disappear after the advent of a mysterious and origin-less "bovarysme." The paradox is worsened by the conjoining of a Freudian psychoanalytic terminology with a historico-ideological one, since Freud's theory is heavily ahistorical. I think it is better to view the organizing axioms of Jameson's theory of the text as historical constructs. What our analysis up to now has shown is that utopia and the reality principle, while they are present in all of these works, exist under different forms. They change with the passage of time. They don't disappear – the innumerable 20th-century utopian texts prove the persistence of the concepts – but they do alter according to political reality.

Different critics have focused on different historical events as the cause of Zola's difference in philosophy from the realists who preceded him. The scientific language Zola uses in *Le Roman Expérimental* has led many to focus on the influence of the 19th century's positivist scientific movements on Zola (the Zola expert, Henri Mitterand, writes, "On connaît la fascination que les sciences médicales exercent sur les meilleurs romanciers des années 1850 à 1870"¹⁰¹); Jameson, for his part, invokes the advent of

¹⁰⁰ Jameson, p. 16

¹⁰¹ Mitterand, Henri. *Zola Et Le Naturalisme*. Page 22. Paris: Presses Universitaires De France, 1986. Print.

“bovarysme” *tout prêt*; and Lukács chooses the appearance of the proletariat on the political scene in 1848 as the crucial events that separate these authors from each other. Very few critics, however, have focused on the role of the Second Empire itself, and specifically on the role of Haussmannization in the changing nature of the reality principle and utopia. This is strange given the massive role the construction in the city played in French life. Thanks to Walter Benjamin, the importance of Paris in the 50’s and 60’s to Baudelaire’s poetry is accepted by almost everyone – the leap is not a large one to make given the content of Baudelaire’s poetry: men walking through the streets, describing great crowds, recording the performers they see, lamenting that “la forme d'une ville change plus vite, hélas ! que le coeur d'un mortel.”¹⁰² But the city, as I have said, is more than a topic for artistic contemplation: it also plays a role in the construction of the self and in the shape of the imagination. What I will argue, then, is that a likely candidate for the cause of the Second Empire’s increasing anti-utopianism was the revolution in the shape of the city. Haussmannization created changes in the French imagination that are visible in the changing nature of utopia and the reality principle in the French novel. The way this occurs is most visible in Zola’s 1873 novel, *Le Ventre de Paris*.

Utopianism and Observation in *Le Ventre de Paris*

Le Ventre de Paris revolves around Florent, a young man arrested during Napoléon III’s coup the morning of December 2, 1851. Florent was found that morning by Napoléon’s police running through the streets with blood dripping from his fingers. The blood comes from the stomach of a wounded woman Florent attempted to help – his presence in the streets is a coincidence – but the police ignore his protestations and take

¹⁰² Baudelaire, Charles. “Le Cygne.” 1861.

him prisoner. Multiple times he is on the verge of death as the frustrated soldiers wonder why they can't just shoot the prisoners and be done with it. He survives by chance and ends up on a boat to a prison colony in South America. He stays there for years until one day another young prisoner, coincidentally also bearing the name, Florent – dies in his arms. Our Florent steals the young man's identity and sneaks aboard a ship bound for France to begin his life there again. He is taken in by his step-brother, Quenu, and Quenu's wife, Lisa. They own a charcuterie in Les Halles, the central market of Paris. Florent refuses their offer of money, but stays in their home and ultimately gets a job as health inspector in the market. The salary is sufficient, but Florent is scarred by his sense that he was unjustly punished, and his resentment of the government slowly transforms into a revolutionary fantasy that leads him to create a clandestine meeting of young discontents in Les Halles. Over the course of multiple nighttime meetings, all led by Florent, they begin to plan a revolution that will overthrow Napoléon III's government. At the end of the novel, though, Florent discovers that his revolution was never really a secret, nor was his return as a fugitive to Paris, and the police arrive to arrest him and his friends.

The group of optimistic revolutionaries meets in the basement of a bar, where they have arguments like this:

« Il faudra faire table rase, disait Charvet de son ton bref, comme s'il eût donné un coup de hache. Le tronc est pourri, on doit l'abattre. »

— Oui ! oui ! reprenait Logre, se mettant debout pour être plus grand, ébranlant la cloison sous les bonds de la bosse. Tout sera fichu par terre, c'est moi qui vous le dis... Après, on verra.

Robine approuvait de la barbe. Son silence jouissait, quand les propositions devenaient tout à fait révolutionnaires. Ses yeux prenaient une grande douceur au mot de guillotine; il les fermait à demi, comme s'il voyait la chose, et qu'elle l'eût attendri; et, alors, il grattait légèrement son menton sur la pomme de sa canne, avec un sourd ronronnement de satisfaction.

— Cependant, disait à son tour Florent, dont la voix gardait un son lointain de tristesse, cependant si vous abattez l'arbre, il sera nécessaire de garder des semences... Je crois, au

contraire, qu'il faut conserver l'arbre pour greffer sur lui la vie nouvelle... La révolution politique est faite, voyez-vous; il faut aujourd'hui songer au travailleur, à l'ouvrier; notre mouvement devra être tout social. Et je vous défie bien d'arrêter cette revendication du peuple. Le peuple est las, il veut sa part.¹⁰³

The revolutionary language becomes so embedded in their thoughts that Florent starts using it in grammar exercises he teaches to the young boy, Muche. Florent's activism seems like a refreshing change from Frédéric's velleity in *L'Education Sentimentale*. Where the latter was marked by a "desire to desire," Florent knows exactly what he wants and he works methodically to attain it. In the morass of old acrimony that governs the Halles, Florent is a breath of fresh air. He is noble, refusing the money from his relatives, and through the force of his personality he is able to reconcile some characters who previously were feuding irreconcilably. His little enclave of revolutionary sentiment seems like a place of revitalized utopianism. In that basement room, it is possible for Florent and his friends to imagine worlds completely different from the one they occupy, and they take concrete steps to make them a reality. In this reading, one might be inclined to see Zola as the triumphant return of Balzac's utopia, only this time incorporated into the characters themselves rather than centralized in the narrator: a successful blending of Flaubert's characterization and Balzac's dreaming.

But this reading is undermined by the scene that immediately follows the one above.

— Ah bien! merci, ils se cognent là dedans, disait la blouse, en reposant le verre sur le zinc, et en se torchant la bouche d'un revers de main.

— Pas de danger, répondait tranquillement monsieur Lebigre; ce sont des messieurs qui causent.

Monsieur Lebigre, très-rude pour les autres consommateurs, les laissait crier à leur aise, sans jamais leur faire la moindre observation. Il restait des heures sur la banquette du comptoir, en gilet à manches, sa grosse tête ensommeillée appuyée contre la glace, suivant du regard Rose qui débouchait des bouteilles ou qui donnait des coups de torchon. [...]

Mais Florent, un matin, aux Halles, dans une querelle affreuse qui éclata entre Rose et

¹⁰³ Zola, Emile. *Le Ventre De Paris*. Page 224. Paris: Gallimard, 2002. Print.

une poissonnière, à propos d'une bourriche de harengs que celle-ci avait fait tomber d'un coup de coude, sans le vouloir, l'entendit traiter de « panier à mouchard » et de « torchon de la préfecture. » Quand il eut rétabli la paix, ou lui en dégoisa long sur monsieur Lebigre: il était de la police; tout le quartier le savait bien¹⁰⁴

All of the revolutionary conversation that takes place in the basement of the bar is recorded by Lebigre, who listens from the floor above. The information he collects is passed on to the police. Florent, as a result, becomes suspicious and attempts to quiet his friends. Their revolutionary utopianism is compromised by someone penetrating the sanctity of their walled paradise. They require privacy, but Zola demonstrates throughout the novel that privacy is impossible. The market is filled with surveillance, if not of the police kind then of the kind motivated by the malicious gossip of the market community. Mlle Saget is the leading figure in this world: “Maintenant, à toute heure, dans tous les coins, le chapeau noir de Mlle Saget apparaissait, au milieu de ce déchaînement. Sa petite face pâle semblait se multiplier.”¹⁰⁵ She eventually ascends to the top floor of her centrally located apartment in the city to continue her surveillance.

C'était ensuite à sa fenêtre qu'elle complétait son dossier. Cette fenêtre, très élevée, dominant les maisons voisines, lui procurait des jouissances sans fin. Elle s'y installait, à chaque heure de la journée, comme à un observatoire, d'où elle guettait le quartier entier. D'abord, toutes les chambres, en face, à droite, à gauche, lui étaient familières, jusqu'aux meubles les plus minces ; elle aurait raconté, sans passer un détail, les habitudes des locataires, s'ils étaient bien ou mal en ménage, comment ils se débarbouillaient, ce qu'ils mangeaient à leur dîner; elle connaissait même les personnes qui venaient les voir. Puis, elle avait une échappée sur les Halles, de façon que pas une femme du quartier ne pouvait traverser la rue Rambuteau, sans qu'elle l'aperçût; elle disait, sans se tromper, d'où la femme venait, où elle allait, ce qu'elle portait dans son panier, et son histoire, et son mari, et ses toilettes, ses enfants, sa fortune.¹⁰⁶

The structure from which Saget observes the neighborhood strongly resembles an architectural fantasy of the 19th-century utopians: Jeremy Bentham's panopticon. The panopticon, as Bentham imagined it, was a prison made up of a tall central tower from

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 227-228

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 352

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 371-372

which a ring of cells could be observed without any of the prisoners being able to see into the windows of the central tower. As Michel Foucault explains in *Discipline and Punish*, the result was an observer stripped of its corporeal identity. The observed were divided up into individual cells which prevented them from communicating with one another. This created a monadic organization where each individual was left with nothing to relate to except the central tower. The purpose of the structure was to do away with the power structures that had caused problems in the medieval world: before, criminals were publicly and brutally punished for their crimes, and the large crowds who assembled were intended to take away a lesson about the foolishness of crime. The result instead was to unite the populace in opposition to those authority figures who stood in for the social order: the judge, the executioner, the policeman. Antipathy towards the government was allowed to foment in collectives assembled by and for the public executions and as sympathy grew for the criminals, resentment grew towards the people who punished them.

The panopticon repaired that problem by replacing the body of the policeman with the abstract machine of the central tower. Collective action was anticipated and neutralized by alienating each individual from other individuals and privileging the individual/tower relation over the individual/individual ones. Collective rage towards a person was replaced by individual resentment of an abstraction. The panopticon also did away with the event that precipitated the collective rage in the first place: the public punishment. Rather than ostentatious punishment of crimes after they had been committed, the panopticon worked by preempting crimes before they had been performed. It did this by creating the illusion of constant surveillance. For the individual in the cell, it was impossible to know at any one moment if the eye in the tower rested on

him or her. As a result, he or she would behave always, assuming that the eye was ready to pounce. In the end, it didn't matter if anyone actually was in the tower, just so long as the fear remained that any illicit behavior would be stamped out before it could have its effects. The observed began to discipline him or herself. "A real subjection is born mechanically from a fictitious relation."¹⁰⁷

This happens in multiple places in the novel. It is visible in a conversation Logre has with Lebigre: "Moi, on me file depuis quinze ans, reprit l'hébertiste avec une pointe d'orgueil. Je ne vais pourtant pas crier cela sur les toits... Seulement, je n'en serai pas de sa bagarre. Je ne veux point me laisser pincer comme un imbécile..."¹⁰⁸ Logre, despite attending Florent's meetings, never plans to participate in the rebellion. He knows he is watched and he knows that fighting will result in his arrest. Even Florent despairs in this regard. "Ce sourd grondement de rancune dont la cause lui échappait, annonçait quelque catastrophe vague, sous laquelle il pliait *d'avance* les épaules, avec la honte d'une faute à expier. Puis, *il s'emporta contre lui-même*, à la pensée du mouvement populaire qu'il préparait."¹⁰⁹ Florent comes to abandon the notion of success *in advance*, before the revolt has taken place. He accuses himself. He internalizes the power relation set up around him. Foucault calls what Florent experiences *disciplinary power*.

Disciplinary power can be thought of as a limit on the imagination. It functions not by punishing behaviors inimical to society, but by preventing such behaviors from being conceived. Rather than cut off the hands of a thief, disciplinary power works to prevent theft from being an action the individual imagination can countenance. This power structure is strongly similar to the one that governs the reality principle: like

¹⁰⁷ Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*. Page 202. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1995. Print.

¹⁰⁸ *Le Ventre de Paris*, p. 357

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 385-386. My emphasis

disciplinary power, the reality principle describes imposed limits on the imagination that prevent some ideas from being allowed while condoning the existence of others. So it is that the imagination can allow itself to imagine a world where Emma Bovary is punished for her transgressive behavior but not a world where she gets away with it. In systems of disciplinary power, the individual internalizes the power relation; the central tower Foucault describes quickly becomes an abstraction incorporated into the thought process of the prisoner.

A simple architectural structure thus creates a change in the mind of its subject. The panopticon “was the most direct way of expressing ‘the intelligence of discipline in stone’; of making architecture transparent to the administration of power.”¹¹⁰ In disciplinary systems, space has been impregnated by power relations. In this way, disciplinary power becomes one of the more insidious examples of what Lefebvre and the other spatial philosophers describe: by inhabiting a space, an individual opens him or herself up to being changed by that space. But as Foucault points out, the specific shape of the panopticon is not what is important: “the Panopticon must not be understood as a dream building: it is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its idealized form; [...] it is in fact a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use.”¹¹¹ In other words, the effect of the panopticon is often translated into local structures that only resemble it vaguely, and Haussmann’s city employed many such structures.

Discipline in Haussmann’s City

The implementation of disciplinary systems was one of the major unstated goals

¹¹⁰ Foucault, p. 249

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 205

of Haussmannization. The public works were often portrayed by the government as being motivated by sanitation and public well-being and the massive improvements made to the hospital system and to the water distribution system, as well as the introduction of multiple enormous parks and gardens, testify to this goal. But the government was also aware of the role the city had played in facilitating political upheaval throughout the first half of the century. Paris's medieval streets were perfect locations for barricades; in every fight they gave the advantage to the locals who knew the complicated geography of the labyrinthine neighborhoods. The military's numerical advantage was always immediately negated by the cramped spaces fighting took place in. The result was that revolutionaries were almost unassailable in their slum neighborhoods. The prevention of future revolution was a prime concern in Haussmann's reconstruction, and the technological advances of the mid-nineteenth century along with Haussmann's own urban vision made disciplinary systems on a city-wide scale possible for the first time. The city became a weapon against its inhabitants. As the Marxist urban historian, Michel Ragon, writes, "Le nouveau Paris est conçu comme une place forte aménagée contre la subversion intérieure"; "avec Haussmann, l'urbanisme entre dans une phase militaire et policière."¹¹²

The most famous, iconic, and dramatic way in which this was done was through the "doctrine of straight lines" and the long, perfectly straight boulevards that were its progeny. The boulevards brought order, cleanliness, and, most importantly, transparency to the neighborhoods of the city center. As was mentioned earlier, Haussmann was given unprecedented powers to expropriate property for the purpose of building his boulevards. Many neighborhoods were razed in the process. The boulevards, which became wider

¹¹² Ragon, Michel. "Tome 1, Ideologies Et Pionniers." *Histoire Mondiale De L'architecture Et De L'urbanisme Modernes*. Page 96. [Tournai]: Casterman, 1971. Print.

and longer as the Empire went on and which were specifically targeted to pass through the hearts of the most dangerous neighborhoods, made it possible for an entire regiment to march into problematic neighborhoods. They could even support cavalry and artillery if they were needed. The star-shaped intersections which are today so iconically Parisian were designed to increase the difficulty of building a barricade: each boulevard in the star was another opportunity to flank the insurrection.

Of course, these practical aspects of the anti-revolutionary city would not necessarily be disciplinary unless they were conjoined with the awareness of their anti-revolutionary function. Disciplinary power lives in a paradox of visibility and invisibility: it must be invisible at all times to preserve the unidirectionality of the disciplining gaze (the one-way windows of the panopticon) but it must at the same time be highly visible. All the subjects of the panopticon must have the central tower constantly in their minds. To get around this paradox, disciplinary power uses symbolic reminders of its existence; these allow it to be simultaneously omnipresent and always invisible. This is the effect had by the military and police barracks that Haussmann built at strategic intersections of his city.¹¹³ On the one hand, they decreased the response time of police officers. At the same time, though, they worked to create a link in the public imagination between boulevard and policing. This was also the effect of the ostentatious statement Haussmann made in the city center: the Ile-de-la-Cité, which had been home to one of Paris's worst slums, was torn down to the ground completely and on the land that once housed so many discontented Parisians, Haussmann built a massive palace of justice. It is to this "Palais-de-Justice" that Florent's caretaker and stepsister-in-law, Lisa, goes to turn in Florent. These gaudy monuments to the rule of law, carefully distributed through the city, made

¹¹³ Ibid.

sure that the very act of walking down the street was a reminder of the necessity of lawful behavior for Parisians.

This effect is visible in the passages in *Le Ventre de Paris* dealing with the church of Saint-Eustache. The artist, Claude Lantier, looks on the cathedral with the eyes of Victor Hugo and of the innocent Parisian. He says:

C'est une curieuse rencontre [...] ce bout d'église encadré sous cette avenue de fonte... Ceci tuera cela, le fer tuera la pierre, et les temps sont proches [...] Voyez-vous, il y a là tout un manifeste : c'est l'art moderne, le réalisme, le naturalisme, comme vous voudrez l'appeler, qui a grandi en face de l'art ancien¹¹⁴

The reference “ceci tuera cela” is to the famous chapter of that name in Victor Hugo’s *Notre-Dame de Paris*, where the author argues that the printed novel is the direct descendant of the cathedral. It is a philosophy of literary architecture. For Claude, no matter how incongruous and violent and revolutionary the new architecture might be, it represents simply the continuation of artistic traditions dating back hundreds of years. He sounds like the architecture historian, Anthony Sutcliffe, who said of Haussmann’s style, “This combination [of simple marble and plain facades] of quality and simplicity came to be seen as ‘modern’ and equated industrialism with the classical style.”¹¹⁵ Claude has bought into the legitimacy of the new architecture. For him, the buildings of the city are objects of aesthetic contemplation and nothing else.

The theories he offers about the odd juxtaposition in Les Halles are spoken in response to a forlorn silence that falls over Florent as the two walk past the church. Claude assumes this silence is artistic reverie, but he is wrong. Florent’s silence is brought about because Florent sees the cathedral in a completely different way, which we learn in one of the book’s first scenes: “Florent [...] levait les yeux sur le cadran

¹¹⁴ *Le Ventre de Paris*, p. 293-294

¹¹⁵ Sutcliffe, Anthony. *Paris: an Architectural History*. Page 88. New Haven: Yale UP, 1993. Print.

lumineux de Saint-Eustache, sans même voir les aiguilles. [...] Et Florent se rappelait qu'on avait manqué le fusiller là, contre le mur de Saint-Eustache."¹¹⁶ For Florent, the church is inextricable from the political history in which he and it have participated; he cannot look on it without being reminded of his own near-execution in the 1848 revolt. Like the central tower of the panopticon, the cathedral functions as a symbolic reminder of the rule of law for Florent, of the punishment for revolution. This association is all the more insidious because it is hidden beneath a layer of politically-innocent aesthetics.

Hausmann's city acts as a constant reminder of the presence of the surveying eye while always hiding the functioning of that eye; it hides authority while enforcing visibility on those it observes; it makes obedience omnipresent in the imagination while almost never enforcing it on the body. And *Le Ventre de Paris* is a novel which demonstrates the omnipresence of this principle of discipline. First, it is a novel which is strongly interested in architecture and spatial arrangements. The title is the first sign of this interest, emphasizing both the metaphorical status of Les Halles as the source of the city's food and the location of the market in the city's center. And the Halles themselves were architecturally unique at the time: the pavilions were a massive building without walls. This lack of barriers contributed to a freedom of movement within the market, but also made it an area of transparency. The Halles are perhaps the closest thing in the city to another architectural fantasy from Zola's oeuvre: Saccard's dream of placing Paris under a giant greenhouse roof in *La Curée*. The greenhouse is a building of glass, a building made entirely of windows. It is a building that offers no possibility of hiding oneself from an exterior gaze. Both are quintessential examples of the functions disciplinary power hopes to carry out. The transparent quality of the greenhouse is

¹¹⁶ *Le Ventre de Paris*, p. 42

something that seeps into all of the other buildings of the novel. In the next section we will look at the specific features of these buildings in *Le Ventre de Paris*.

Points of Observation

The first of these is the *cabinet* where Florent holds his meetings with his group of revolutionaries. The *cabinet* is an ostensibly private space where the discontents of Les Halles can go to speak freely about their political opinions. And yet, it is a public room in the bar that other patrons enter and exit freely. At one moment, “Florent vit entrer le marchand des quatre saisons, Lacaille, et Alexandre, le fort, l'ami de Claude Lantier. Ces deux hommes étaient longtemps restés à l'autre table du cabinet; ils n'appartenaient pas au même monde que ces messieurs.” These other patrons turn out to be harmless and join up with Florent’s movement, but the same cannot be said of Lebigre, who is communicating everything he hears to the police, or of Mlle Saget: one evening, “Florent par la porte entre-bâillée de la cloison, aperçut encore mademoiselle Saget, debout devant le comptoir.”¹¹⁷ Worst of all, the secret *cabinet* has windows that give onto the street. From them, all of the actions of the secret society can be seen from outside:

Mademoiselle Saget, un soir, reconnut de sa lucarne l'ombre de Quenu sur les vitres dépolies de la grande fenêtre du cabinet donnant rue Pirouette. Elle avait trouvé là un poste d'observation excellent, en face de cette sorte de transparent laiteux, où se dessinaient les silhouettes de ces messieurs, avec des nez subits, des mâchoires tendues qui jaillissaient, des bras énormes qui s'allongeaient brusquement, sans qu'on aperçût les corps.¹¹⁸

Florent also has a window in his fifth floor room above Lisa’s shop. His room is a mansard in the servants’ quarters whose previous occupant was Augustine, who is moved to another room downstairs to make room for Florent. The room has much in common with the cabinet vitré and with Saget’s secret observation room. It is ostensibly a private

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 176

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 230

space where Florent can cut himself off from the world outside, but its one window creates a link between the interior and exterior. “[L]e soir, un grand soulagement pour lui était encore de s'accouder à la fenêtre de sa mansarde. Cette fenêtre taillait dans le toit un étroit balcon, à haute rampe de fer, où Augustine soignait un grenadier en caisse.”¹¹⁹ From this window, Florent can take up the observational pose that Saget occupies elsewhere in the novel. He has a panoramic view of the Halles and of the people moving through them, a position which is unidirectional in the sense that the height of Florent's window makes it impossible for those on the street to see up into it. However, Florent is not entirely protected in his room. When he first moves into it, his first impression is of the claustrophobia caused by the adjoining rooms and the permeability of the thin walls. At one in the morning he can hear his neighbors whispering and eating.¹²⁰ And the secrets that Florent attempts to hide in that room are poorly guarded. At the end of the novel, Lisa climbs upstairs to snoop on Florent: “Ce fut un étonnement, car elle s'attendait à trouver des caisses suspectes, des meubles à grosses serrures. [...] Puis, elle s'assit enfin devant la table, lisant une page commencée où le mot « révolution » revenait deux fois. Elle fut effrayée, ouvrit le tiroir, qu'elle vit plein de papiers. Mais son honnêteté se réveilla, en face de ce secret, si mal gardé par cette méchante table de bois blanc.”¹²¹ The room reveals its secrets with almost no resistance. Lisa is even surprised by how easy it is to read Florent's secret documents. Florent is therefore not invulnerable in his observation post; he is not protected like the guard in the central tower. When he seems to be on the observing end of a unidirectional relation, he is in fact highly vulnerable to other kinds of observation from his neighbors and from his host.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 179

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 107

¹²¹ Ibid, p. 290

Florent's vulnerability in his observation post makes us wonder about the impermeability of Saget's post overlooking the Halles and about all the other ostensibly unidirectional observation structures in the novel. It replaces the unidirectional panoptical quality of these elevated posts with the image of a circular system, where each observer is in turn watched from another position. In the Halles, surveillance has "transformed the whole social body into a field of perception: thousands of eyes posted everywhere, mobile attentions ever on the alert, a long, hierarchized network."¹²² Even Saget, who seems to slip covertly through the novel in perfect secrecy, has to answer to Méhudin. The "secret police" woman still has a master to answer to. Everyone's behavior is regulated by someone else. Les Halles effectively maintains itself. This gives another meaning to Henri Mitterand's observation that for Zola "La Société est une immense machinerie – et *Les Rougon-Macquart* sont une immense machine textuelle conçue à son image –, avec pour problème essentiel celui de sa propre maintenance."¹²³

To return this to the terms of utopia and the reality principle, we can look to a revealing quote from *Le Roman Expérimental*. Zola writes, "[L'écrivain] finit par ne plus faire qu'un avec son œuvre, en ce sens qu'il s'absorbe en elle et qu'en même temps il la revit pour son compte."¹²⁴ This quote describes the disappearance of the narrator in Zola's writing. The narrator's invisibility is a function of his dispersal into the characters of the text. If we accept Zola's argument that the consciousness of the writer is "absorbed" into the text itself, into its characters and its events, then *Le Ventre de Paris* presents a further complication to the dichotomy of utopia and the reality principle Jameson describes. If in *Madame Bovary* we witnessed the separation of the production

¹²² Foucault, p. 214

¹²³ Mitterand, p. 44

¹²⁴ *Roman Experimental*, p. 215

of utopia and the enactment of the reality principle, then what we see in Zola is a world where these two operations have become fully incorporated into a system that maintains itself. There is little need anymore for an exogenous force to deal with revolutionary thought; the Sagets and the Belle Normandes of the world perform the task that was once the province of the ironic narrator.

Distant Utopias

Les Halles and Paris more generally are portrayed in the novel as places of observation and disciplinary control. However, there is one place in the novel that seems to offer an escape from this system. As Florent sits at his 5th-floor window, his attention is split between the people he observes below him and the beautiful sky in the distance. The altitude of the window puts it in a liminal relationship with the city below; it is part urban and part celestial:

Il jouissait du grand morceau de ciel qu'il avait en face de lui, de cet immense développement des Halles, qui lui donnait, au milieu des rues étranglées de Paris, la vision vague d'un bord de mer, avec les eaux mortes et ardoisées d'une baie, à peine frissonnantes du roulement lointain de la houle. Il s'oubliait, il rêvait chaque soir une côte nouvelle.¹²⁵

If we map the novel's locations, we find that the majority of the action takes place in a fairly small area. Most of the events play out in and around Les Halles. About two-thirds of the way through the book, however, the story goes on a picnic, quite literally. Florent, Claude, and Mme François disappear one afternoon for a lunch of omelets out at Mme François's rural cottage in Nanterre. The countryside proves to be a bucolic paradise. "Florent, qui s'était fait un oreiller d'un paquet de feuilles de choux, regardait toujours le ciel, où s'allumait une grande lueur rose. Par moments, il fermait les yeux pour mieux sentir la fraîcheur du matin lui couler sur la face, si heureux de s'éloigner des Halles,

¹²⁵ *Le Ventre de Paris*, p. 179

d'aller dans l'air pur, qu'il restait sans voix, n'écoulant même pas ce qu'on disait autour de lui."¹²⁶ Florent is revitalized by the country air. His companions insist he looks years younger. They begin to fantasize about leaving the city for good and living in peace far away from the Halles.

The countryside is depicted as a place of life and freshness. It is a place where the plants grow in the ground rather than waiting in carts to be eaten. The Halles are to Florent "un vaste ossuaire, un lieu de mort où ne traînait que le cadavre des êtres, un charnier de puanteur et de décomposition."¹²⁷ While the countryside is a place where Florent breathes easily, watching the clouds float idly by overhead, the city comes to symbolize breathlessness and decrepitude. "Florent ne riait plus. Paris le reprenait, Paris qui l'effrayait maintenant, après lui avoir coûté tant de larmes, à Cayenne. Lorsqu'il arriva aux Halles, la nuit tombait, les odeurs étaient suffocantes."¹²⁸ Paris is a place of constant and insatiable consumption; the countryside is a place of regeneration.

Les épluchures des légumes, les boues des Halles, les ordures tombées de cette table gigantesque, restaient vivantes, revenaient où les légumes avaient poussé, pour tenir chaud à d'autres générations de choux, de navets, de carottes. Elles repoussaient en fruits superbes, elles retournaient s'étaler sur le carreau. Paris pourrissait tout, rendait tout à la terre qui, sans jamais se lasser, réparait la mort.¹²⁹

The countryside is a place of "une grande paix"; it is cut off from the city, "au bout du monde."¹³⁰ Florent "respira là quelques heures de bien-être absolu, délivré des odeurs de nourriture au milieu desquelles il s'affolait."¹³¹ The countryside is also a place where Florent doesn't feel watched or censored. The disconcerting transparency of the windows of Les Halles has been replaced by a wall that not only protects Florent from the outside

¹²⁶ Ibid, p. 295

¹²⁷ Ibid, p. 299

¹²⁸ Ibid, p. 304

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 297

¹³⁰ Ibid, p. 297-298

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 300

gaze but which is made of greenery and life. “Des haies vives le séparaient d'autres pièces de terre; ces murs d'aubépines, très-élevés, bornaient l'horizon d'un rideau vert.”¹³² His comfort is such that he offers information about himself to Mme François and she reciprocates; this is not an aggressive collection of information like the kind the police take part in but rather an eager sharing: she is “s'offrant à lui simplement.”¹³³ The countryside offers the hope of a corner of earth that is not watched by the surveillance systems of the city.

This scene complicates the utopian structure of *Le Ventre de Paris*. Certainly, Mme François's cottage represents a utopia, but how can we reconcile this utopia which is almost completely divorced from the rest of the plot with Florent's political utopia that fomented in the Halles? Nanterre seems to represent everything the city is not. Whereas the Halles is an enormous market and therefore a major center of consumerism, the countryside is agricultural. The characters dream of living off the fruits of their own garden. Furthermore, the characters who meet in Nanterre are all members of what Mme François calls “Les Maigres”: the skinny residents of the city who are always being exploited by “Les Gras.” In the countryside they can escape from that exploitation and live a peaceful, pre-modern existence. This fantasy has some things in common with Balzac's agrarian utopias from *Les Paysans*, but, crucially, it is marked by an escapist urge that empties the site of much of its political content. The implication is that if Florent moves to Nanterre to live with Mme François, he will abandon his plan for the revolution.

The novel thus sets up a choice between the revolutionary political utopia that is

¹³² Ibid, p. 298

¹³³ Ibid, p. 300

possible if Florent stays in Paris and a more personally pleasurable utopia for Florent that will do nothing to change the overall condition of laborers in the city. In this way the novel points out that there are two kinds of utopianism: the escapist urge of Emma Bovary on the one hand and the political utopia of Balzac. It forces its protagonist to choose between them. We might read into Florent's return to the city a recommendation on Zola's part to pursue change in one's immediate environment rather than chasing Thomas More-style utopias in distant lands, but that reading is complicated by the utter failure of Florent's revolution. At the end of the novel the reader is left to wonder, as Mme François does, why Florent made the choice he did: "Il aurait dû m'écouter, dit la maraîchère au bout d'un silence, venir à Nanterre, vivre là, avec mes poules et mes lapins... Je l'aimais bien, voyez-vous, parce que j'avais compris qu'il était bon. On aurait pu être heureux..."¹³⁴

The novel does offer some clues as to why Florent never thinks hard about remaining in Nanterre. First, on the way out to the cottage, the travelers pass by the spot where Mme François found Florent's half-starved body at the beginning of the story. While the memory of that night does not bother Florent much during the scene, it does call to mind the image of the novel's opening: a long train of wagons making their way into the city from all corners of France. In that scene, Florent's arrival in Paris is involuntary. Zola writes, "Il était venu de Vernon sans manger, avec des rages et des désespoirs brusques qui le poussaient à mâcher les feuilles des haies qu'il longait; et il continuait à marcher, pris de crampes et de douleurs, le ventre plié, la vue troublée, *les pieds comme tirés, sans qu'il en eût conscience, par cette image de Paris, au loin, très-*

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 421

loin, derrière l'horizon, qui l'appelait, qui l'attendait."¹³⁵ Paris sucks Florent in during that first scene just as it "le reprenait" after the visit to Nanterre, and he's not the only character to feel that the choice to enter or leave the city belongs in fact to the city and not to the individual. Augustine, too, "n'était d'abord venu à Paris que pour se perfectionner et retourner ouvrir une charcuterie à Troyes. [...] Puis l'ambition le prit, il rêva de s'établir à Paris avec l'héritage de sa mère."¹³⁶ Augustine is sucked into the city to the point that he can't imagine leaving.

While Florent and Augustine are stripped of their agency, the city of Paris is endowed with it. The city becomes alive: "Paris mâchait les bouchées à ses deux millions d'habitants. C'était comme un grand organe central battant furieusement, jetant le sang de la vie dans toutes les veines."¹³⁷ While Mitterand calls Paris a machine that maintains itself, Zola describes it instead as a great living beast with its own vitality and autonomy. The city refuses to let Florent leave; it "takes him back in." If the Halles are the belly of Paris, then they are a belly of a monster that is never satisfied; it must constantly claim new people, new funds, and new territory. And it did, in 1858, when Haussmann annexed the mostly-rural suburbs of Paris. These facts remind us that Nanterre is not, in real terms, a distant utopia far from the field of influence of the city; today, of course, it is part of the business district of La Défense. Emile Zola might not have foreseen that, but he did live through a period that saw the populations of Paris's suburbs multiply exponentially. Most of this population growth came from poor workers expelled from the city center by rising housing prices, which adds a retrospectively macabre note to the novel's proposal that Florent could find utopia by moving from the belly of Paris to the

¹³⁵ Ibid, p. 35

¹³⁶ Ibid, p. 107-108

¹³⁷ Ibid, p. 68

city's outskirts.

Privileged Spaces in the Second Empire City

The expulsion of the working poor from the city center was an inadvertent though unavoidable consequence of Haussmannization. In a typical Paris apartment of the 1830's, there had been four to five floors. The floor right above ground level was called the *étage noble* and was occupied by the owner of the building. It was by far the lushest of the floors, with high ceilings and balconies. As one climbed the stairs, the luxury diminished, until one arrived at the poorest residences in the space inside the building's roof. Each of those floors was rented out. Usually, their occupants were the same people who worked in the shops on the ground floor. Towards the end of the 1830's the concept arose of letting multiple families share a floor, which they did awkwardly, without firm delineations between one family's space and the other's. "Il y a donc, et par nécessité, mélange étroit d'activités dans l'ensemble de la ville : superposition de l'habitat au commerce, parallélisme de ce dernier avec l'artisanat. De la même manière, il n'y a pas de séparation nette entre riches et pauvres."¹³⁸ In the same building, one could find a wealthy landowner, a shopkeeper, an artist, and a laborer. All of them shared the same entrance door. But not all neighborhoods were pictures of this perfect cohabitation. As has been described, many neighborhoods in the city's center had become overcrowded. The decrepit buildings in the city's slums were populated exclusively by the poor, and desperation pushed the poorest of them to crime.

These neighborhoods were a major target of Baron Haussmann's projects. His boulevards planned to address them in two ways. The first was by replacing the decaying medieval housing with the clean, elegant template apartments that were his calling card.

¹³⁸ Loyer, François. *Paris XIXe Siècle: L'immeuble Et La Rue*. Page 24. Paris: Hazan, 1987. Print.

The second was by providing wide streets that would allow the easy movement into and out of those neighborhoods. Like a tracheotomy, Haussmann would puncture the city's congested areas and let the air rush in. The reconstruction, however, had a very different effect. When Haussmann planned his construction projects, they were intended to come in three phases. "On voit figurer, dans le Premier Réseau, la portion de la rue de Rivoli comprise entre la Place du Louvre et l'Hôtel de Ville, et, dans le Second, celle qui va de l'hôtel de Ville à la Bastille ; puis, reléguées dans le Troisième, des voies telles que la plus considérable section du Boulevard Haussmann."¹³⁹ Haussmann's hope was that the initial flurry of expropriations and construction would serve as a warning to property owners, giving them time to let their leases expire and to make arrangements to relocate. Instead, between the first expropriations and the last the prices and values of housing in the city skyrocketed. Haussmann writes, "Une des principales causes de l'exagération de dépenses qui dépassa les prévisions les plus larges fut certainement la répartition sur dix années [...] des Grands Travaux de Voirie constituant le Deuxième Réseau."¹⁴⁰ Haussmann's own constructions contributed to that rising expense, as his own beautifications made neighborhoods more desirable right before the government attempted to buy them up and destroy them.

The new housing in Paris, which Haussmann claimed was intended for the inhabitants of the slums that he was tearing down to build them, instead was bought up by nouveau riche businessmen. As the prices escalated, the poor were chased to the cheaper neighborhoods outside the city. In 1872, Engels wrote with the benefit of retrospection, "We demolish [cheap houses] and in their place we construct boutiques,

¹³⁹ Haussmann, p. 617

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 619

department stores, government buildings. In Paris, bonapartism with its baron Haussmann has exploited this tendency towards the greatest profit through speculation and the enriching of the individual to the supreme degree [...] The result is that workers are pushed from the center of cities to the periphery.”¹⁴¹ The populations of these peripheral neighborhoods skyrocketed. Les Batignolles went from zero residents in 1800 to 44,000 fifty-six years later. Montmartre went from 609 residents to 36,500 and La Villette increased from 1,600 to 30,300 in the same period. The working class population increased from 265,000 people in 1840 to 416,000 twenty years later and 550,000 by 1872.¹⁴²

The relocation of the city’s poor to the fringes of the city meant that even though the working class made up 1/3 of Paris’s population, they became relatively invisible to the wealthy inhabitants of the city center. The same was true of the city’s manufacturing infrastructure. Paris may have been designed with certain flashy allusions to its industrial backbone in mind. The city’s train stations were ostentatious architectural achievements and they were built in the center of the city. The rail lines were symbols of France at the cutting edge of modernity, and the city’s designers held them in high enough esteem to utterly disregard the concerns of the citizens whose homes would be inundated with their noise. “La gare, dont Hittorff va créer le prototype avec la gare du Nord, devient l’un des monuments essentiels de la cité industrielle. C’est la nouvelle « porte » de la ville.”¹⁴³ But factories, the other building of Paris’s industrial modernity, were neglected. They were exiled from the city:¹⁴⁴ The separation of factories from residences is part of what’s

¹⁴¹ Ragon, p. 79

¹⁴² Ibid, p. 89

¹⁴³ Ibid, p. 101

¹⁴⁴ See Belhoste, Jean-François, Evelyn Lohr, and Paul Smith. "Paris, Ville D’usines Au XIXe Siècle." Page 352 in Bowie

known as “zoning” in urbanist terminology, but it was a concept that had not truly been employed before Haussmann.

By giving each area in the city a goal and a character, Haussmann gave his city a sense of order and control. Paris guidebooks from the end of the Empire are, for instance, the first to describe the city in terms of its *arrondissements*, with each neighborhood evoking something different in the imagination of the visitor to Paris.¹⁴⁵ But in creating that sense of order, Haussmann also did away with the cohabitation of classes, of the superposition of functions in the city, and of the proximity of rich and poor that had been characteristic of the pre-Second Empire Paris. “la politique haussmannienne s’est précisément attachée à faire disparaître cette hétérogénéité, en comblant les interstices par de nouveaux lotissements résidentiels et en reliant les portions de voies existantes pour former un grand réseau d’ensemble.”¹⁴⁶ This was a major change in the way the city was experienced. Starting with the Second Empire, the inhabitants of a single building and more generally of a single neighborhood were all of similar wealth and social status. As a result, while the city was more aesthetically unified – one could almost think of its *arrondissements* as different chapters in a book – for the individual inhabitant it became harder and harder to see the various machinations that materially allowed the city to exist. The resident of Paris was deprived of a totalizing perspective of his or her city.

This change is visible in the plot of Zola’s novels as well. Zola said of *Les Rougon-Macquart* that it would transform the whole history of the Second Empire into the story of a single family. However, the novels also have relatively little crossover between characters and locations. Lisa says of Aristide Saccard, one of the central

¹⁴⁵ El Gammal, Jean. *Parcourir Paris Du Second Empire à Nos Jours*. Paris: Publ. De La Sorbonne, 2001. Print.

¹⁴⁶ Belhoste, p. 352

characters in *La Curée*, “J’ai un cousin à Paris... Je ne le vois pas, les deux familles sont brouillées.”¹⁴⁷ While the characters might be related, they are extremely distant from one another. They don’t see one another and they don’t even have the same family name, since Aristide changed his. The family motif seems an unnecessary one, then. However, family relations do show themselves through genetics and heredity. While the characters might not interact with one another, their actions and behaviors are related. The genetic disorder of a character in one novel might be passed along through the blood to a character in an unrelated novel; the inheritance of one character might prove to be the salvation of a character he never meets; family traits dictated by genetics control people’s actions in ways they can’t explain or predict. For Zola, Paris is an immense beast or machine, that is to say that it is one unified entity – “Pour reprendre la formule de Maurice Halbwachs, *les Paris de Balzac cèdent la place à la métropole de Zola.*”¹⁴⁸ Paris, though, is a machine whose workings cannot be perceived by those who are inside it. No character has a complete vision of the society; only the reader can approach that by reading all of the novels together. Haussmann attempted to unify Paris under one aesthetic; in the process he broke down the links that allowed his city’s residents to relate to each other. Zola attempted to do the same for Parisian society in his novel and he, too, produces a society where the individual members were made to feel more distant from one another.

Power in Discourse

Society and the city were broken down and fragmented in the Second Empire. They could only be perceived in pieces. This fragmentation is visible in the climactic

¹⁴⁷ *Le Ventre de Paris*, p. 99

¹⁴⁸ Choay, François. Introduction to Haussmann, p. 13.

scene of *Le Ventre de Paris*, where Lisa goes to the Palais-de-Justice to inform on Florent. The Palais-de-Justice was built, as I have said, on the grounds of one of the biggest poor neighborhoods Haussmann destroyed: the Ile-de-la-Cité. Thousands of working class Parisians were forced to move away from the island of the Notre-Dame and on the land where they had lived the government built a temple of the law. Lisa arrives full of trepidation, which is only augmented by the long wait she's forced to endure in the waiting room. When she is finally admitted and allowed to tell her story, the investigator has a surprising reaction:

— Voyez-vous, c'est qu'on m'assomme depuis plus d'un an avec cette affaire-là. On me fait dénonciation sur dénonciation, on me pousse, on me presse. Vous comprenez que si je n'agis pas, c'est que je préfère attendre. Nous avons nos raisons... Tenez, voici le dossier. Je puis vous le montrer.

Il mit devant elle un énorme paquet de papiers, dans une chemise bleue. Elle feuilleta les pièces. C'était comme les chapitres détachés de l'histoire qu'elle venait de conter. Les commissaires de police du Havre, de Rouen, de Vernon, annonçaient l'arrivée de Florent. Ensuite, venait un rapport qui constatait son installation chez les Quenu-Gradelle. Puis, son entrée aux Halles, sa vie, ses soirées chez monsieur Lebigre, pas un détail n'était passé. Lisa, abasourdie, remarqua que les rapports étaient doubles, qu'ils avaient dû avoir deux sources différentes. Enfin, elle trouva un tas de lettres, des lettres anonymes de tous les formats et de toutes les écritures. Ce fut le comble.¹⁴⁹

In the packet of letters are denunciations from every corner of Les Halles: Saget, Lecoeur, la Sarriette, Jules, Méhudin, and even Augustin, who lives with the Quenu family. The government, she discovers, was aware of Florent's criminal status when they offered him his job as health inspector. His proximity to the government has allowed them to record his movements and use him to "bust" the whole circle of revolutionaries. As the officer goes on to explain, Lisa's confession comes too late. She is warned not to help Florent in the future with an ominous and ambiguous statement that she's being watched.

Importantly, the letters are described as "détachés"; they are on different types of

¹⁴⁹ *Le Ventre de Paris*, p. 379-380

paper, in different handwritings, written by different people with different styles. The incondite nature of the police narrative is testament to the effects of disciplinary power. The version of history it produces is not linear; it repeats certain elements while perhaps omitting some others. This is because it doesn't come from one source but rather comes through the constant interpolation of all elements of society simultaneously. As Foucault says, there is a tenuous balance between the central authority and the local "eyes." Disciplinary power must, according to Foucault "be given the instrument of permanent, exhaustive, omnipresent surveillance, capable of making all visible, as long as it [can] itself remain invisible."¹⁵⁰ It must be everywhere at once without ever manifesting itself in a local corporeal essence; it must always be in its subjects' imaginations without ever presenting itself to their bodies. To accomplish this it dissipates itself into junior observers and it replaces the forceful collection of information with an economy of data that offers pleasurable compensation to those members of society who consent to participating in it. Disciplinary power depends, then, on record-keeping and communication, and its emergence in the 19th century was broadly facilitated by technological breakthroughs that Baron Haussmann incorporated thoroughly into the fabric of the new Paris.

The Second Empire was obsessed with information. It was a key currency in the world of housing speculation that had seized the urban bourgeoisie and it was crucial to the government's monitoring and control of its people. A massive new post office was the second major project Haussmann initiated (after Les Halles) and it became the control center of the country's new telegraph network. The communication system would allow the Emperor to know at a moment's notice what was happening throughout his

¹⁵⁰ Foucault, p. 214

country.¹⁵¹ The Hôtel de Ville and the Palais-de-Justice became bureaucratic centers where the government could keep track of its citizens, like Florent. The disjointed narrative the investigator presents to Lisa is not the only example in the novel of the government's use of bureaucracy and discourse as a means of enacting disciplinary power. It also does so with the "chiffon de papier" that Florent is forced to carry around with him after he is arrested in 1851.¹⁵² Florent's escape from the prison camp also depends on a mistake of identity which can only happen because the ID papers Florent steals from the prisoner who shares his name serve as a more convincing statement of Florent's identity than his own body. Identity depends on papers – enough that the body carrying them is nearly immaterial.

The other major mechanism by which the government translated its power into discourse was through an aggressive system of censorship. Gustave Flaubert and Emile Zola both had to stand trial repeatedly against accusations of public obscenity for their novels and plays. Zola's *La Curée* began to be published in serial on the 29th of September, 1871; on the 5th of November the authorities ordered the cessation of the novel's publication. The next day, Zola wrote to Louis Ulbach, the head of the journal in which the novel was appearing, to protest his censorship. The letter ran on the front page of the journal on the 8th of November and expresses Zola's attitude about the censorship enacted by the government. He writes, "il me plait de rester seul sur la sellette, le jour où la tentative est criminelle. Je deviens orgueilleux de ce crime, de ce livre de combat." He complains about a French populace that believes itself "trop [le défenseur] de la morale" and which cannot handle the truth of their own ugly qualities. Mixed into the self-

¹⁵¹ Van Zanten, David in Karen Bowie, p. 161

¹⁵² *Le Ventre de Paris*, p. 42

righteous railing against Parisian prudery is a defense of the novel which rests on Zola's sincere belief that the novel is in fact moral: "[j]'ai voulu, dans cette nouvelle *Phèdre*, montrer à quel effroyable écroulement on en arrive, lorsque les mœurs sont pourries et que les liens de la famille n'existent plus."¹⁵³ Zola essentially argues that the unfortunate ends to which his characters are condemned exculpate the writer for having put on paper the lascivious acts in the first place. The writer is innocent of his characters' sins as long as the writer condemns and punishes those sins in the novel.

This is the defense Flaubert used when he was brought to court for *Madame Bovary* – her death by poison, he said, made the novel a warning to women who would leave their husbands rather than an inducement to imitate her. The argument has the effect of making the reality principle explicitly political and moral. The “realistic” denouements we have described become ways of satisfying censors just as much as they are ways of testing the plausibility of the author's utopia. The content and structure of the writer's fantasy is preemptively altered to satisfy the conservative requirements of a societal status quo. The censor becomes like the inspector of the Halles pavilion. He is a figure whose mere existence regulates the content of the writer's discourse. And he is, like the inspector, a figure whose corporeal existence and individual identity are strongly deemphasized in favor of his status as an institution. Notice, for example, that Zola does not write his complaint to the censor himself but rather to the publisher of the literary journal in which *La Curée* was being published. He cannot even accuse the censor by name; the decision to halt production is handed down from a faceless institution.

Zola did not stand trial for *Le Ventre de Paris*. The novel was published without problems. Given that the novel depicts a group of communists openly advocating a

¹⁵³ Zola, Emile. Letter to Louis Ulbach. 6 Nov. 1871. *Correspondance d'Emile Zola*. Page 303-05.

workers' revolt, this is perhaps surprising. The lack of public outrage is testament to how thoroughly successful Zola's reality principle is at the novel's end. The government makes it through the novel without ever facing a truly menacing threat to its control and those who would think to challenge it are dealt with in a quiet and peaceful way. As Logre says, Florent "le serait, coffré, s'il était aussi dangereux qu'il veut le faire croire."¹⁵⁴ In the end this declaration proves prescient: Florent's revolution never gets off the ground; no shots are fired; no heads roll through the public squares. Florent is quietly sent back off to the distant labor camp in Guyana and the community rejoices with a cheer of "good riddance." We readers, as I have already noted, are left not to wonder what might have come of the revolution but instead why Florent couldn't have accepted life in the country.

The novel leaves a utopia standing at the end – that of the Nanterre cottage – but it is a utopia which is conservative in its own way. From a certain distance Nanterre becomes indistinguishable from the botanical heat of the Guyana labor camp; both are in their own ways a form of deportation. Both are ways of managing political discontent by displacing it to somewhere less harmful than the city center. Nanterre, like Emma Bovary's utopias, is in that way complicit in the conservative system. Zola leaves his characters a choice that is not a choice: they can "deport" themselves or let the police take care of the deportation for them. Florent's experience is a testament to nothing so much as the futility of choosing the latter. The other characters, the ones who live, end happily because they discipline themselves. *Le Ventre de Paris* pleased the censors because it is almost a parable of the benefits of self-discipline. This "reality principle" which satisfies the censors at the expense of Florent's revolution strongly resembles what

¹⁵⁴ *Le Ventre de Paris*, p. 356-357

Foucault says: “He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; *he becomes the principle of his own subjection.*”¹⁵⁵

Fatalism, Utopia, and Systems of Control

The last part of that Foucault citation underlines how close the functioning of a reality principle founded in a political status quo resembles the functioning of disciplinary power in controlling the imagination of the citizen. It also underlines discipline’s weaknesses. Disciplinary power is an effective and sturdy system, but it depends on the cooperation of its subjects. The individual subject must become “the principle of his own subjection.” Mechanisms like censorship can be subverted, and writers like Flaubert have succeeded at subverting them. While Flaubert was brought to trial for *Madame Bovary*, he successfully defended the novel and ensured its continued publication. By convincing the censors that Emma’s death was a sufficient “punishment” for her behavior, Flaubert succeeded in introducing thousands of readers to a book whose content was, until the final chapter, dangerous or even revolutionary. Zola’s defense of his own controversial novels differs slightly from Flaubert’s and it does so in a way that demonstrates significant problems with utopianism in Zola’s literature.

Zola argued in his letter to Ulbach that all of the information in *La Curée* was taken from real life. “Pendant trois années j’avais rassemblé des documents”; “Je n’ai pas osé tout dire. Cette audace dans les crudités, qu’on me reproche, a plus d’une fois reculé devant les documents que je possède. Me faudrait-il donner les noms, arracher les

¹⁵⁵ Foucault, p. 202-203. Emphasis mine.

masques, pour prouver que je suis un historien, et non un chercheur de saletés ?”¹⁵⁶ This argument is almost identical to the aesthetic philosophy Zola puts forth in his 1880 essay, *Le Roman Expérimental*. He begins that essay by declaring that “Le romancier est fait d'un observateur et d'un expérimentateur.”¹⁵⁷ The aesthetic he describes is what came to be known as “naturalism.” The term was borrowed from the world of science where “naturalist” meant natural scientist. The scientific term was appropriate. Zola says, “Dès ce jour, la science entre donc dans notre domaine, à nous romanciers [...] Nous continuons, par nos observations et nos expériences, la besogne du physiologiste, qui a continué celle du physicien et du chimiste.”¹⁵⁸ Zola’s goal was the complete effacement of authorial desire; the novel would be “simplement le procès-verbal de l'expérience, que le romancier répète sous les yeux du public.”¹⁵⁹ The only way the “genius” of the author would be visible would be through the choice of what types of characters to mix in the novel, a metaphor that calls to mind a chemist combining different chemicals to observe their effects on one another.

The problems for utopia are numerous in this vision of the novel. If the writer’s only task is to recount what happens in the world, then the novel cannot serve a revolutionary purpose. Rather than the imaginary resolution of a real contradiction, the novel just becomes a way of constating the existence of contradictions in society. It has no transformative function. Rather than searching for the chinks in reality’s armor, the novel serves to solidify reality. Zola’s characters imagine utopias they can never achieve. These are kept out of reach in multiple ways. Disciplinary systems work to anticipate and stomp out the production of revolutionary thoughts, transforming society and the city

¹⁵⁶ Letter to Ulbach

¹⁵⁷ *Le Roman Expérimental*, p. 7

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 16

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 8

itself into mechanisms for observing, reporting, and curtailing. Then, distant utopias are offered as salves for dissatisfaction; they act as compensation for a local world that fails to meet expectations. These distant utopias are unattainable by definition since their basic characteristics are distance, difference, and fictitiousness. When they do threaten to become real and attainable, as in the case of Nanterre, they are slowly colonized and consumed by the disciplinary system, forcing the unsatisfied individual to capitulate to the disciplinary system or to find a new unrealizable utopia.

Zola's novel also fails to destabilize the present, which is a basic condition of the revolutionary possibilities of the Balzacian novel. Balzac preserved a connection between his novel and the present, between the present and the past. Zola, on the other hand, places the entirety of his narrative in the past. There is therefore no suggestion that the novel should give birth to new presents or an alternative future. The novel solidifies the past at the same time it fails to connect the past to the present. By using a historical setting, Zola also anticipates his utopia and cripples it, forcing it to conform to what really happened in the past rather than destabilizing that past by making it stand up against plausible alternatives. Just as in Flaubert's *L'Education Sentimentale*, Zola's novel forces its events to line up with what the reader knows to have happened. Utopia has no room to flourish in this relation to history.

Furthermore, Zola's premises that there is a single, unchanging human nature which can be grasped through scientific inquiry and that the scientific novel can lead to "absolute knowledge" are based on a presumption of intractability in social arrangements. Rather than finding a way to revolutionize the world, Zola's novel proposes to explain instead why the extant world is the only one possible. This is the source of his determinism, a fatalistic worldview that views genetics, environment, and social milieu as

the deciding factors in human behavior. Individual agency is nowhere to be found in Zola's novel. Characters don't take responsibility for their actions and they aren't forced to. History, genetics, and an animalistic, living Paris make decisions for them. The politics the novel promotes is one of individual powerlessness, displacement of agency, and justification of the status quo.

At the end of *Le Ventre de Paris*, Mme François and Claude meet up one last time. The two remaining Maigres of Les Halles both have tears in their eyes over the sad end of their friend, Florent. Mme François, looking for someone to blame for her sadness, says to Claude, "C'est Paris, c'est ce gueux de Paris."¹⁶⁰ She blames the city for Florent's arrest. On one hand, this is a perspicacious accusation on her part, demonstrating an awareness of the role the city's architectural organization had in destroying Florent. But the accusation is misguided given the way disciplinary power functions. Throughout the Second Empire, politicians railed against the city when they could not rail against the government. They attacked "Haussmannization" and the aesthetics of the new Paris in place of criticizing the Emperor when the latter was seen as too dangerously close to treason. Haussmann freely admits how his projects bore the criticism of the Emperor's policies more generally: "pendant cette longue durée d'une administration dont j'avais eu bien raison de redouter les difficultés, il me faudrait subir d'attaques passionnées, d'injures, que dis-je ? de grossiers outrages. Sans doute, dès le premier avis de ma nomination à la Préfecture de la Seine, je pressentais la lourdeur de la tâche exceptionnelle imposée par l'Empereur au titulaire de ce poste éminent."¹⁶¹ In 1864 one of the major avenues of the Second Empire was rechristened the Boulevard Haussmann:

¹⁶⁰ *Le Ventre de Paris*, p. 421

¹⁶¹ Haussmann, p. 531

the street had replaced the man in every respect. Georges-Eugène Haussmann became a secondary figure to the process of Haussmannization. But what has consistently been portrayed as a clever bit of political maneuvering by the opposition – crippling the finances of the projects, railing against a “boring” aesthetic, glorifying the beauty of the lost “old Paris” – comes to seem like a depressing complicity in the mechanization of the forces of power by those who ought to have been opposing it. The example of every politician who blamed the monotony of Haussmannian houses instead of denouncing the totalitarianism of Napoléon III’s government testifies to and solidifies the transformation the Emperor and his Prefect wanted to create. The machinery of the city became the government’s arm of surveillance; the streets of Paris became the central tower of Haussmann’s panopticon. Haussmannization became the abstraction that bore the public outrage. As Claude says in response to Mme François: “Non, je sais qui c’est, ce sont des misérables.”¹⁶² Claude perceives what she cannot: that the panopticon is built and maintained by people; it functions most efficiently when its subjects fail to remember the man inside the central tower.

By combining the mobilization of a vast network of informers with major improvements in communication, documentation, and observation, Haussmann transformed the city of Paris into a modern utopia – in the sense Bentham would have used it – of disciplinary power. And it is a system even more insidious than Bentham’s, because it hides its political and disciplinary function behind the assumptions that the city is a utilitarian and aesthetic object. We began this analysis with Henri Lefebvre’s observation that spatial systems are always ideological, even when they least seem to be, and it is Haussmann’s awareness of how eagerly we want to assume that architecture is

¹⁶² *Le Ventre de Paris*, p. 421

politically impartial that made his transformation of Paris such an effective tool in strategically limiting the imaginations of the city's occupants. The four novels we have looked at demonstrate not only the persistence of the reality principle and utopia in literary creation; they also show the subtle changes that narrative underwent over the course of the two decades of the Second Empire and its reconstruction.

In many places, *The Belly of Paris* reads as if it had been written by Foucault himself, and when we approach it with an eye for disciplinary structures, the story becomes something like a parable for the death of the revolutionary imagination which was such a driving force in Balzac's literature: Florent is arrested during the revolution of 1848; the government sends him to a labor camp; Florent returns to France motivated to produce a new revolution (performing the crime for which he was once unfairly punished); but where the ancien régime could only respond after the fact to the revolutionary imagination fomenting in its streets, the world of the Second Empire has learned its lesson. It invites Florent into its heart the more surely to control him. And when he attempts to mobilize the forces he has assembled, he is arrested before he can act. If *The Belly of Paris* is in fact a parable of some kind, then it is clear what its lesson is: revolutionary thoughts are pointless in a world that is always watching. The novel records Zola's *prise de conscience* of this reality. It is the culmination of the process by which Balzac's revolutionary utopianism was deconstructed: through the disappearance of the narrator, the displacement of the novel's narration to the past tense, the replacement of prescription by description, the characters' loss of agency, and the move from local utopias to the conservatism of distant ones. No wonder, then, so many Marxists have railed against Zola's writing, for no matter how fervently Zola felt himself a critic of the Second Empire, what we learn from his books is in fact the internalization

of the Second Empire's goal: the status quo will endure, revolution will not happen again.

Conclusion

It is perhaps ironic, given all this, that the Second Empire did end with a revolution. After the catastrophic Franco-Prussian War battered and brutalized France – and Paris specifically – the working class that had been excluded from the financial glory days of the Empire had finally had enough. In March of 1871, an army rose up in the heart of Paris and quickly expelled the republican government and its army from the capital. The republicans were forced to regroup at Versailles during a two-month period when the communists governed Paris. Little legislation was passed in those two months, although the laws that were voted on were radical for their time (separation of church and state, significant labor reform), but the groups that had been oppressed under the Second Empire suddenly found themselves reinvigorated by the possibility of massive social change. Women's groups mobilized and renewed their demands for equal rights; workers asked for the work day to be standardized and for higher wages; atheists cheered the arrival of the secular classroom, which in some districts came with free school supplies, clothes, and food. It was a workers' government run by the workers and for the workers, and the subjugation and exclusion that had seemed likely to dictate the future of the city faded into the background.

The Paris Commune officially began on the 21st of March. On the 21st of May, the republican army of Adolphe Thiers breached a gate on the western edge of Paris. It took only seven days for them to sweep across the city. The commune's defense was disorganized and ill-prepared. Its biggest asset – the geography of the city, which had aided so many revolutions – had become a tool for the republicans. Haussmann had done

his job: improvised barricades were seldom capable of spanning a whole street; government snipers moved along the long, connected balconies of the Haussmannian apartments and fired down into fortified communard positions; republican artillery and cavalry battered any barricade that attempted to withstand the rain of sniper bullets. The republicans moved through the bourgeois neighborhoods of the west quickly and easily. The only impediment came in the working class neighborhoods of the northeast. The communards held out in Belleville and Montmartre, and then took up a last refuge in the eastern necropolis of Père-Lachaise. With each retreat, the communards turned desperately to the one resistance left to them: they burned. Hundreds of Haussmannian apartments and dozens of monuments including Haussmann's Hôtel-de-Ville were destroyed by fire-bombers. One last time, the buildings would bear the rage the poor could not make the government feel. Street-to-street fighting became grave-to-grave fighting as the two armies fought amongst the mausoleums of Père-Lachaise.

The last communard fighters surrendered to the government the afternoon of the 28th. One-hundred and forty-seven communards were lined up against the wall of Père-Lachaise. On the horizon, the flames consuming the bourgeois neighborhoods made the city below indistinguishable from the setting sun. All one-hundred and forty-seven were shot. Their bodies were pushed into a mass grave dug at the foot of the wall. They were just a small number of the tens of thousands of revolutionaries who were killed by the republican soldiers in that week.¹⁶³ The episode was perhaps the only suitable ending for the Second Empire. What more fitting destiny could befall Haussmann's buildings, themselves born out of widespread demolition, than to be battered by Prussian artillery and then burned by the working poor? Those same working poor had once lived in the

¹⁶³ See Horne

heart of Paris and had been displaced to the city's suburbs by initiatives which claimed to help them and in the end did more to help the nouveau riche; for a few days they did to the bourgeois apartments what government expropriations had done to theirs.

The commune provides an ambiguous resolution to the question of utopia. In the literature of the Second Empire, we observe an increasing skepticism of utopian thought. Flaubert problematizes utopia bit by bit in *Bovary* and in *L'Education*, leaving the healthiness of utopia doubtful. His characters are increasingly likely to hide from their unhappiness in worlds that can't be realized. They feel incapable of changing their world and they eagerly shirk their responsibility to attempt to. As the Second Empire progressed, its novels testified more and more to the impossibility of revolution. And yet, in the face of all of this doubt, the commune, spurred on by the fragility of the bourgeoisie after the disastrous war with Prussia and by the desperation that fomented during the long siege of Paris, provided for two months a strong counterargument to Flaubert's skepticism. It was a brief utopian retort to twenty years of slow capitulation to the acceptance of the status quo under the regime of Napoléon III. The Paris Commune was a refusal of Flaubert's utopia; it was the return of utopian thinking to the heart of the city, carried on the backs of the workers who could inhabit the city center for the first time since their expulsion.

But this return of political utopia was brutally and mercilessly punished by the systems that had been set up to punish it. In *Le Ventre de Paris*, Zola presents his protagonist with the same choice facing political discontents throughout the Second Empire: fight in the streets for a political revolution or run far away from politics and hide from the world. But this choice is no choice at all. Nanterre is a paradise that will be colonized by the city sometime in the future, and revolution – the choice Florent makes –

is snuffed out before it can materialize. This is the lesson the fiery end of the Second Empire has taught Zola, who published *Le Ventre* only two years after the Commune. For Zola, the lasting image of the Commune was not of workers rushing to the polls to vote for equality and freedom, but of those same poor being executed. It is an image of the streets of Paris cooperating with government soldiers to extinguish the revolt, of a city which had learned the lessons of 1789, 1830, and 1848 and was now ready to deal with revolutionary utopianism in its interior. The Second Empire had produced a Paris that was an engine in the destruction of utopia. Zola's novel cannot therefore offer a plausible politics of revolution; Zola sees none in the world around him. Of course, to return to Jameson's theory, this result is doubly depressing, since it means that the novel teaches its readers that utopia is hopeless. The novel becomes part of the system it hoped to oppose. It doubts political utopia while it itself is, as Emma Bovary's love of reading demonstrates, exactly the kind of fictitious utopia the disciplined citizen can hide in. The novel becomes one more cog in the immense machine of disciplinary power.

The four novels we have looked at, from Balzac to Flaubert to Zola, each conceptualize space in a different way. We began by pointing out the heavy spatial baggage of the word "utopia." It is a word which forces one to think spatially and in all of these novels, utopia is spatially conceived. But the relation of the characters to that place and the way that that space is produced in the text change dramatically. For Balzac, utopia is everywhere, or at least possible everywhere. Balzac's utopia is formed by the conjoining of a local space with a political vision, and then fighting to make the combination a reality. Over the course of the Second Empire, we have seen a series of displacements in the realist novel, whose result is to push utopia out into the unattainable distance. For Flaubert, utopia is where we go to escape political visions, to find a world

where we aren't responsible for change. That world can be a city or a desert island or even a book itself; the shape doesn't matter just so long as the space can never be attained. In Zola, the schism between these two versions of utopia is made stark and visible. Each is married to a place. But Zola, whether he realizes it or not, presents his characters with a choice between two unacceptable options. Writing at the end of the Second Empire, after the rapid expansion of Napoléon III's totalitarian rule, after the complete destruction of the buildings and monuments that had served as the touchstones of Paris's collective memory for centuries, after the slow erosion of the morality system that had governed the city, and after the catastrophic climax of the war and the commune, Emile Zola's two utopias are not all that different from one another. Whether they are near or distant, they are both uninhabitable.

It is difficult to prove that specific spatial organizations were responsible for the loss of the revolutionary imagination in French realism. It is especially difficult when, as Jameson's psychoanalytic terminology testifies, such a proof relies on subconscious processes of which the writers were by definition not aware. Zola certainly felt himself to be a critic of the Empire and he had no qualms with bringing the scrutiny of the censors upon himself. But his novels, as do those of Balzac and Flaubert, show Zola to be very conservative. The novels, despite their revolutionary intentions, have internalized a power structure that quashes revolution and that solidifies the status quo. The process by which they do this is strongly similar to the process by which disciplinary power functions. Given the avowed importance of disciplinary systems in the process of Haussmannization and the omnipresence of disciplinary power structures in late-Second Empire literature, it is plausible if not likely that discipline played a major role in the effacement of the revolutionary imagination. Disciplinary power is visible in the way

these characters interact, in the novels' attitudes towards agency and revolutionary responsibility, and in the novels' narrative structures themselves. The novels are riddled with references to Haussmann's works and their thematic content is always circumscribed by limits imposed by the changes in the city (the conquest of the suburbs, increased transparency of the home and of the poor neighborhood, lack of reference points in new neighborhoods). As a result I think it is likely that the differences between Balzac's realism and Zola's naturalism that we have described were influenced by the changes taking place in Paris. These works thus serve as an example of the exchange between architecture and the individual imagination, between a city and the people who inhabit it.

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