Empty Streets in the Capital of Modernity: Formation of *Lieux de Mémoire* in Parisian Street Photography From Daguerre to Atget

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Empty Streets in the Capital of Modernity: Formation of Lieux de Mémoire in Parisian Street Photography From Daguerre to Atget

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
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Empty Streets in the Capital of Modernity: Formation of Lieux de Mémoire in Parisian Street Photography From Daguerre to Atget

Sabrina Lynn Hughes

ABSTRACT

This study proposes the existence of lieux de mémoire in the photographs of Eugene Atget (1857-1927). My framework is based on historian Pierre Nora's definition: a lieu de mémoire is an object or idea which has become a symbolic stand-in for a community's memorial heritage. I suggest that Atget's photographs of the streets of old Paris, in concert with an empty-street aesthetic function as lieux de mémoire for their primary audience, antiquarians and professional archivists who specialized in old Paris.

According to Nora's structure, identification of a lieu de mémoire requires first the establishment of a historical tradition. In the first chapter, I characterize a particular mode of photography, what I term a preservation aesthetic. I examine photographs by Louis J.M. Daguerre, Édouard Baldus, Henri Le Secq, and Charles Marville, all produced between 1839 and 1868. I propose interpretations of and reasons for photographs showing vacant Parisian streets, even after technological advancement allowed for representation by other means.

My second chapter is concerned with a disruption of the established tradition, Nora's second requirement for lieu de mémoire. The focus of this chapter is twofold: since I propose that it is the preservation aesthetic partnered with the subject matter of old Paris that forms a lieu de mémoire, considering alterations in both perception of the old
city and in photographic practice are necessary. First, I discuss the nostalgic views of old Paris that manifested while Baron Haussmann was remaking Paris between 1853 and 1870. The latter half of the chapter is devoted to the events of 1870-71, the Prussian siege of Paris and the Paris Commune. I argue that barricade photographs from the Commune represent a significant change in photographic practice defined by working-class individuals who made up the Commune.

Finally, I examine Atget's practice and work in context of both a medieval historicist revival in the early Third Republic of France and of a popular belief that architecture could be a literal and metaphoric container for nationalist memories. I conclude with a reconsideration of Atget's preservationist and modernist audiences to support my thesis that his photographs are lieux de mémoire.
INTRODUCTION

In 1920, just as photographer Eugène Atget's career was slowing down, he attempted to sell his archive to Paul Léon, then director of the Commission des Monuments Historiques. In a letter to Léon, Atget confidently claimed, “I can say that I possess all of old Paris.” Relatively uncelebrated during his lifetime, Eugène Atget has become posthumously known as the photographer of Paris since his death in 1927. It is estimated that he produced more than 8,000 photographs of Paris and its environs during his 40-year career with work ranging in theme from royal châteaux like Versailles and Saint Cloud to every aspect of old Parisian streets: architectural details, domestic interiors, street vendors, shanties, and parks.

Atget sold his photographs to official entities of the French state as documents of life in Paris – photographic representations of the city from the 1890s through the 1920s. There is no doubt that Atget's pictures functioned within the archival memory of Paris. The photographer's clients included amateur antiquarian groups, the city and national archives in addition to anyone concerned with preserving an image of the remaining medieval portions of the city after the irrevocable changes of the nineteenth century. Despite the reputation of Paris as the turn-of-the-century city of light and capital of modernity, the defining characteristic of Atget's street photography is its empty and abandoned appearance, as if Parisians had fled the city just prior to Atget's picture-taking.

For instance, a photograph like *Place Saint-Andre-des-Arts* (Figure 1) is representative of his street photographs. The picture is framed and angled up to show an entire block, with the dominating structure receding to hint at the neighborhood that lies behind the thoroughfare. This must be an indexical document that accurately records the morphology of the street before the camera, but this view displays a city abandoned, existing in a time that cannot be experienced. The physical fabric of the city is present, but without the active street life for which Paris was so famous. Atget's empty streets create an image of Paris hovering between reality and imagination.

In this paper, I examine both Atget's choice of subject matter, old Paris, and his mode of representation as constructs rooted in a historical tradition that, by the early twentieth century, had become a *lieu de mémoire* or site of memory. I contend the aesthetic of the “empty street” photograph employed by Atget in conjunction with the subject matter of vaguely defined “old” Paris was a *lieu de mémoire*, responding to and reproducing a conception of extant, ancient segments of the city as an urban imaginary. In this study, I construct a narrative of preservationist architectural photography, originating

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2 My conception of a preservationist is based on three sources. First, M. Christine Boyer defines a “preservation mentality” in “La Mission Héliographique: Architectural Photography, Collective Memory and the Patrimony of France, 1851” (in *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, ed. Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan [New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003]). The objective of those with a preservation mentality was to “inventory and preserve historic monuments of France – under an enlightened directorship, with a body of restoration principles worked out in practice and a specially trained group of architects to implement the work.” (29) While preservation may entail a certain amount of restoration, lest the preserved building look shabby or in a state of disrepair, the goals of preservationists came to differ from those of restoration architects like Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, who wanted to add details that may have not been originally part of the structure to create an ideal representative of a period or style. Boyer's mid-century preservation mentality is conflated with the aims of Viollet-le-Duc, but by the time of the Third Republic, sensibilities had changed and fanciful embellishments had fallen out of favor. My second source is Anthony Sutcliffe's *Autumn of Central Paris* (London: Edward Arnold, 1970), particularly the chapter “The Battle for Preservation, 1850-1949” (179-212). Sutcliffe's preservationist was an antiquarian or scholar who was against the widespread demolitions of the Second Empire. Victor Hugo and Charles Baudelaire are both named as supporting a “preservationist case.” (184) During the Third Republic, societies dedicated to the preservation of ancient structures and monuments attempted to expand their constituency to the
with Daguerre and culminating with Atget, highlighting particularly determinative episodes that contributed to the formation of lieux de mémoire.

My theoretical framework for this analysis is Pierre Nora's foundational study of the formation of lieux de mémoire. Nora defines a lieu de mémoire as “any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community.” It is anything pertaining to the cult of the dead, relating to the patrimony or administering the presence of the past in the present that has become symbolic rather than an organic part of life, something recalling an event or feeling to those within the community who recognize the symbol and its layers of surrounding associations. 

educated middle class. Historically, only individuals of leisure or those with vested professional interest were involved. This is a wider audience than the academics of Second Empire preservation societies, but it was still a concern only of the haute bourgeoisie (206-207). Finally, Molly Nesbit's description from Atget's Seven Albums of amateurs of vieux Paris who were among Atget's customers, “antiquarians who tended the large topographical files of the city library and the rich amateurs who tended their own.” (62) Later in her study, she explains that “the best of them were little men of the state, convened in the Commission municipale de Vieux Paris and endowed with a budget […] They were actually producing history for [the state], giving the object of their devotion the suitable cast and color, the detail and the fog of a state ideology.” (104-105). Building upon her argument, Nesbit finally characterizes the work of the Vieux Paris societies at the turn of the century as production of ideology. “Under the guise of objectivity, the Vieux Paris societies researched the classical aspect of the ancien régime, tracked down the town houses built by the urban nobility, and catalogued the contents of their churches. That is to say, they produced an ideology […] History and historical art were used as exempla, selected moral lessons for the perfection of the French nation. Far from being unencumbered facts, styles represented relative powers and entire cultures, aspirations and myths.” (112).

Therefore, my conception of a preservationist attempts to identify the concerns that were constant over the span of my study, from the 1850s until the 1920s. Broadly, for my purposes a preservationist is one who, as an amateur or professional, individually or as part of a society, lobbied to prevent the destruction of buildings that have aesthetic or historical significance in relation to the history of France and desiring, at the very least, there exist an image of such spaces for personal or institutional archives. I will use this term interchangeably with “site of memory” in English translation.

3 Pierre Nora, Realms of Memory; Rethinking the French Past: Volume 1, Conflicts and Divisions (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), xvii.
5 In Nora's eight volume anthology studying lieux de mémoire in French society, scholars analyze all manner of culture as sites of memory that were once part of lived experience, but have become symbolic: monuments and symbols like the Pantheon, the tricolor flag, Bastille day, Versailles, Joan of Arc; divisions between Franks and Gauls, Gaulists and Communists, the French and foreigners, Catholic and secular traditions, North and South, Paris and the provinces; geographical features such as

3
the forest, the region, the painter's landscape, Alsace; and even elements of daily life like physical movement through Paris, the French language, street names, gastronomy, the Tour de France, conversation, cafes, wine, and songs.

Figure 1. *Place Saint-André-des-Arts*. Eugène Atget, 1924. Albumen print from glass negative, 17.9 x 22.5 cm. Bibliothèque National de France, Paris.
I begin my line of inquiry with Atget because it is his practice that has generated a considerable body of scholarship, most of which dates from the 1980s, nearly a century after he began his career in Paris. Stillness and vacancy on the streets are the qualities most often associated with Atget's oeuvre, but this generality does not characterize his entire body of work. Though this openness is most often the entry point into discourse about Atget's photographs, there has not yet been a study interrogating why Atget reproduced this aesthetic so often in his urban photographs. To imply that Atget did not have the technical ability to portray city life and motion, as did contemporary

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8 Atget captured many candid images of crowds and individuals going about their daily business, a taxonomy of the *petit métiers*, individual entrepreneurs who peddled their wares on the streets, prostitutes, and portraits of *zoniers* living on the edge of the city.
photographers, is reductionist and echoes the infamous explanation by Man Ray: Atget was simply a primitive photographer not fully in control of his medium.\(^9\)

Since his death, he has been a figure of interest to artists, beginning with the Surrealists and early modernist photographers like Berenice Abbott. In the early 1980s, Atget studies exploded as scholars attempted to secure his place in the history of modernist photography. The catalyst for reconsideration of Atget as more than simply a “maker of documents” was twofold: Maria Morris Hambourg’s dissertation “Eugène Atget, 1857-1927: The Structure of the Work” from 1981,\(^10\) and the four-part exhibition “The Work of Atget” at the Museum of Modern Art in New York between 1981 and 1985 under the direction of John Szarkowski.\(^11\) Hambourg’s research focused on decoding Atget’s own enigmatic personal archiving system and unearthing the largely unknown details of the photographer’s life, sparking new interest in his practice and livelihood. Until the publication of Hambourg’s meticulous study, scholars did not know the chronological or sequential order of his more than 8,000 photographs, when and for what reason new series were conceived, or if and how the photographs related to each other.\(^12\)

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\(^9\) The exchange between Man Ray and Atget has become a well-trodden narrative. In 1926, a year before his death, Man Ray approached the photographer to request a photograph for the cover of his magazine, La Révolution Surréaliste. Atget sold the print to Man Ray, but demanded that his name not be listed as the author of the image. He claimed that these were simply documents he made. After Atget’s death in 1927, Man Ray characterized the photographer as a naïf who did not know the value of his own work. Despite objections by Berenice Abbott who knew Atget intimately, his work and reputation were summarily co-opted by the Surrealists and Atget was unwittingly associated with the group for decades.


\(^11\) John Szarkowski and Maria Morris Hambourg, The Work of Atget, 4 vols. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1981-85). Curiously, the exhibitions were made up of pictures primarily from the rural and suburban areas surrounding Paris rather than those for which Atget was most well known, photographs from the metropolis itself.

\(^12\) It would be helpful at this point to rehearse a brief overview of Atget’s complex photographic and archival practice as meticulously uncovered by Maria Morris Hambourg, especially in relation to street photography. For his own purposes, Atget categorized all of his photographs in one of five primary series: Landscape-Documents, Art in Old Paris, Environs, Picturesque Paris, and Topography of Old Paris. There are numerous subgroups within each of these primary categories, in addition to albums.
Nearly concurrent with the publication of Hambourg’s dissertation, Szarkowski curated exhibitions of Atget's photographs donated by Berenice Abbott and Julien Levy that sought to characterize Atget as the progenitor of modernist photography. Partnering with Hambourg, Szarkowski characterized Atget as an inconsistent genius, a man who showed unflagging dedication to his self-imposed assignment to document old Paris. What followed was a flood of exhibitions and critical texts seeking to fill in Atget's empty urbanism with possible meaning, as well as the resuscitation of texts written shortly after his death.13

13 Albert Valentin, “Eugène Atget”; Pierre Mac Orlan “The Literary Art of Imagination and Photography”; and Robert Desnos, “Spectacles of the Street – Eugène Atget”; all in Christopher Phillips, Photography in the Modern Era (New York: MOMA, 1989). These men did not have a personal association with Atget, in fact, some of them misspelled his name even as they hailed him as a visionary. Desnos wrote a second article for Merle (1929) and gave Atget's name as 'Émile Adget.' See Ian Walker, City Gorged with Dreams, 111n33. Waldemar George misspelled Atget's last name 'Adget' as well in his essay “Photographie vision du monde” cited in Nesbit, Seven Albums, 18.
Ultimately, even when claiming otherwise, Atget scholarship since the MoMA exhibitions has traditionally considered Atget's career arc as existing in a relative historical vacuum. For instance, in her book *Atget's Seven Albums* (1992), Molly Nesbit painstakingly analyzes Atget's practice from a Marxist perspective. Nesbit's Atget was not an inconsistent genius whose work became more refined as he aged, rather he was a shrewd entrepreneur whose images responded to a very real and lucrative market demand. Even so, Nesbit's concern is with Atget's career in his present, not with the historical precedence for his formal choices. Atget's motives have been very thoroughly contextualized within the span of his own career, but situating Atget within a history of Parisian street photography is a study yet to be attempted.

I undertake a more rigorous analysis of Atget as successor to the lineage of Parisian urban photographers, such as Henri Le Secq, Édouard Baldus, and Charles Marville, just to name a few, who were performing “memory-work” for official archives. I situate Atget as a participant within this photographic heritage. Atget's formal choices make him a singular figure of the time, the only photographer who embodied the heritage of Parisian street photography at the very moment when artists and journalists were turning to the social interactions of Parisian streets for subject matter, forming new genres of photography.\(^{14}\)

\(^{14}\) By the 1930s, the term “street photography” described photographs capturing the social relations that occurred in public places, as practiced famously by Brassai, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and Robert Doisneau among countless others. Street photographs from the twentieth century capture candid encounters, instantaneity, voyeurism, strange juxtapositions that emphasize the temporality of interactions, and split-second judgment needed to affix such occurrences to film. Subjects were often unaware that they were being photographed and, as such, street photography (and by extension, photojournalism) is perceived to have an aura of authenticity in capturing ‘real’ interactions that ‘staged’ or premeditated photographs lack. However, in defining the photographs by Eugène Atget for the purposes of this study, I mean the term ‘street photography’ to indicate photographs which could be classified as ‘portraits’ of the streets and buildings of Paris. These photographs of the streets differ from proto-photojournalistic street photography in that they picture the physical material of the city as the
My research and thesis account for Atget's mode of picturing city streets as more than simply personal style. The aesthetic Atget reproduces participates in a lineage of Parisian street photography which originated with the earliest photographic developments and is rooted in the desire to preserve an image of Paris as it was subjected to catastrophic alterations. The examination of Atget's practice as an archivist, documentarian, or artist-photographer has not made evident that his formal choices are often historically rooted in a mode of photography born hand-in-hand with architectural preservation movements and irrevocable alterations to urban space. Likewise, in studying Atget's oeuvre, one must consider the socially and historically specific nature of his work, namely Paris shortly after the urban traumas of Haussmannization (1853-70), the Prussian siege and occupation (1870-71), and the Paris Commune (1871).

Identifying Lieux de Mémoire

Following Nora's theory, there are several criteria required for successful identification of a site of memory, each of which I delineate within this paper. The first is one that I have already explained above, namely, recognition of a practice that seems out of place in relation to its society. Atget's photographs did not represent the Paris of early twentieth-century lived experience, and this was recognized by some of his contemporary viewers, Man Ray among them. Likewise, his divergence from contemporary styles of photography has made him of interest to later scholars. The sheer abundance of texts about Atget's work is itself indicative of the presence of a lieu de mémoire: twentieth-

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15 This paper will not concentrate on the manner by which Atget's entire oeuvre could be construed as a lieux de mémoire for twentieth- and twenty-first-century viewers, but it is worth mentioning here at the outset as a field ripe for potential study.
century scholars have attempted to fix and determine the meaning of Atget’s oeuvre, and to locate his anachronistic work within the narrative of modernist photography, a narrative within which Atget’s photographs will never easily fit.\textsuperscript{16}

The next goal is to identify the historical tradition which the site of memory references. To that end, the first chapter of this study traces the formation of the aesthetic which Atget emulates, namely empty-street photographs, beginning with the first photograph of a Parisian street by Daguerre in 1838. Why and how was this representational mode adopted as an acceptable means for documenting a modern metropolis? How did this aesthetic come to signify preservation for its viewers?

I trace the formal choices that were repeated and concretized over time into tropes for the photographic preservation of urban spaces and how such formal choices resonated with the experience of contemporary viewers.

Once the historical tradition of empty-street photography is established, one must pose a point of rupture in collective memory. For the purposes of this paper, I am using the Halbwachsian conception of collective memory since Nora's theories are based on the theories set out by sociologist Maurice Halbwachs.\textsuperscript{17} For Halbwachs, individual memory always exists in relation to social memory informed by the perspective of group membership. Memories cohere because

\begin{quote}
they are part of a totality of thoughts common to a group, the group of people with whom we have a relation at this moment, or with whom we have had a relation on the preceding day or days. To recall them it is
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{16} In his essay “Remembering Forgetting: Maladies de la Mémoire in Nineteenth-Century France,” Michael Roth suggests that the effort to \textit{systematically} establish social connections to the past, which may have become difficult to discern, is a characteristic of the existence of a lieu de mémoire. \textit{Representations} 26 (1989): 49-68.

hence sufficient that we place ourselves in the perspective of this group, that we adopt its interests and follow the slant of its reflections […] Just as people are members of many different groups at the same time, so the memory of the same fact can be placed within many frameworks, which result from distinct collective memories.\(^{18}\)

Therefore, for Halbwachs and Nora, collective memory does not exist within a vague collective unconscious. An individual may be affected by as many collective memories as he or she has group identifications.\(^{19}\) Collective memories are nested and overlapping, contextual, much like a palimpsest.

In the context of nineteenth-century Paris, one need look no further for evidence of a collectively experienced trauma than the remodeling of Paris by Napoleon III and his prefect of the Seine, Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann. The upheaval caused by the Second Empire was followed directly by the Prussian siege of Paris during the Franco-Prussian War, and the Commune in 1870-71. The establishment of a practice as a lieu de mémoire is contingent upon the passage of time during which sedimentation of meaning takes place; lieux de mémoire undergo metamorphoses in meaning or interpretation without which they would not exist. These events changed the way Parisians imagined their existence within the city and added multiple layers of signification to the medieval streets of Paris, which had suddenly become unrecognizable, endangered, or home to revolutionaries.

Formation of a lieu de mémoire is dependent upon a disruption of collective memory or social practice, followed by the crystallization of fragments of the memory or

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 52.

\(^{19}\) I would characterize, therefore, a national French collective memory, but also a Parisian collective memory, which could be broken down even further into a collective memory of those who lived through particular urban traumas, like Haussmannization or the Commune, or who were members of a certain quartier or class, social club, religious affiliation, professional association, national or ethnic groups, or any combination thereof.
practice, in a material, symbolic, and functional manner, despite the rupture. My final objective, therefore, is to evaluate the persistence of the practice after the rupture in collective memory by returning to examine the context within which Atget's practice flourished. For whom were these images lieux de mémoire? What was the contemporary perspective on the medieval past? Through guidebooks and primary literary sources, I examine the notion of vieux Paris in the collective imagination of Parisians at the turn of the century and how this urban imaginary was mapped onto the actual extant old portions of the city.

Nora's framework was initially applied solely to studies of French nationalist constructs. I will be applying the methodology to a more localized study since my argument relates to a specifically Parisian collective memory. I will attempt to analyze the phenomenon surrounding street photography during the Second Empire and Third Republic without the apparent biases for memory over history which Nora occasionally evidences.

This study will be of interest to anyone exploring the dialog between memory, urban spaces, and attempts to represent the relation between the two. Even in seemingly straightforward documents of urban spaces, such as Atget's, architecture and cities spaces are themselves representations of a social order and the product of a governing ideology. Likewise for the re-presentation of urban spaces, in images or spectacular leisure constructions. The symbolic order of cities, underlying the physical fabric experienced and lived in every day, is one that can be easily overlooked in its silent structuring of our daily existence. Generally, it is only in the face of catastrophic destruction that such
underpinnings are revealed. The historical moment surrounding Haussmannization in Paris allows me to examine the manner by which social groups respond to and shape their space and how collective memories (of what was there before, or what imagined futures could have been) inform representations of such spaces. Furthermore, a historicized study of both memory and photography’s roles within this particular city during a time of widespread upheaval provides a way to look at contemporary repositories of memory in the modern metropolis.20

Ultimately, in this context and with historical and cultural distance, I side with Roland Barthes who argues that photographs do not recall the past, rather they simply indicate that some thing was in front of the camera at the moment of its exposure, “to attest that what I see has indeed existed.”21 In the case of the photographs in this study, however, the omissions of individuals and social relations that were also before the camera – what I do not see – are just as important as what has been recorded on the plates.

20 In his book-length study Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), Andreas Huyssen approaches some of these same themes as they relate to contentious spaces in Berlin, Buenos Aires, and New York, among others. To the list of worthwhile studies of urban spaces informed by sets of communal memories, I would add twentieth-century Paris as represented by the Situationists and through Gordon Matta-Clark’s cuttings, the mixture of fantasy and reality in theme park constructs, and “nostalgic” home developments (Seaside, FL and Celebration, FL for example).
CHAPTER ONE:
THE INCEPTION OF A PRESERVATION AESTHETIC

Atget's photograph of the Place Saint-Andre-des-Arts may not initially strike a viewer as a document of old Paris. The main building itself is covered with advertisements for *Paris Soir*, the newly formed daily newspaper, and other advertisements. Regardless of its surface appearance, however, the name of this image, and this area, references the church that stood on this block from 1212 until 1809. Though the streets are completely empty, evidence of habitation comes by way of the signs and advertisements, which would require a reader, and tire marks from an automobile that had passed by at some point before the picture was taken. And yet its eerie stillness – presumptively resulting from Atget's penchant for working before the day's activity had begun – recalls not a twentieth-century city teeming with life, but a preserved space, one on which the contingencies of urban life are not permitted to impinge. None of the concerns of late nineteenth century urbanization are alluded to here. For instance, there are no inhabitants present to alter or cause damage to the scene; the building will never need to be demolished for the piercing of a wide boulevard to facilitate the flow of traffic and commerce; there is no population in the city, so concerns of expansion and overcrowding are moot; and without inhabitants, there are none to revolt or to occupy the city while leveraging for political power.

In this chapter I attempt to historicize the mode of photography practiced by

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Atget. It is often the very emptiness of the streets, photographed during the period when Paris was most renown for its exciting street life, from the 1890s through the 1920s, that opens discourse about the photographer and his practice simply because his images seem to be anachronisms from a time outside of modern experience. The purpose of this chapter is both to provide evidence of a historical tradition for Atget's mode of picturing Parisian streets, and to establish this practice as a *milieu de mémoire* during the first half of the nineteenth century.

According to Pierre Nora's definition of the *lieu de mémoire*, the site of memory must have acquired symbolic meaning. Nora proposes that this occurs over time, when a social practice or tradition occurring spontaneously among practitioners suddenly passes away, but then returns after a rupture in practice or communal memory. Nora terms the originating practice, the pre-rupture, a *milieu de mémoire*, or an environment of memory. The *milieu de mémoire* is directly related to *lieux de mémoire* in that it is an unselfconscious practice, which over time acquires symbolic significance through purposeful observation or commemoration. If a *milieu de mémoire* survives as a tradition, it is one that is changeable and open to manipulation. Practitioners ceaselessly reinvent customs, which are integrated into life in such a way that social groups may not even be conscious of their existence. *Milieux de mémoire* are in a state of permanent evolution, open to both remembering and forgetting, and even to being abandoned.23 In fact, it is when a custom is abandoned then revived and invested with symbolic meaning that it may become a *lieu de mémoire*.

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23 Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 8.
In this chapter, I apply this concept to urban photographic practice in Paris from 1839 until 1868. I argue that the visual tradition created and reproduced by photographers during this time was an aesthetic *milieu de mémoire* and the form to which Atget's photographs later refer. To achieve this, I construct a narrative of particularly formative moments in the history of Parisian street photography as it was employed to document architecture and spaces in danger of being lost. The constant theme that I explicate through each of these sections is that the formal similarities of empty-street photographs would have spurred varying interpretations in contemporary viewers; the existence of multitudinous meaning and interpretation is the prime characteristic of a *milieu de mémoire*.

**Daguerre's First Photograph of Paris**

In 1837, Louis J. M. Daguerre invented an imaging process that for the first time permanently recorded images on a plate with only twenty or thirty minutes of exposure to light. Since the exposure time was still too lengthy to photograph people, and because of the need for strongly lit subject matter, Daguerre turned his lens to the streets. Among the earliest of all daguerreotypes, *Boulevard du Temple* from 1838 (Figure 2) is a view of one of the most active Parisian boulevards at the time. Yet all that remained visible after the half-hour exposure were those elements remaining still. Essentially, none of the ephemeral experience for which Paris was famed in the nineteenth century remained fixed on the mirror-polished silver. Neither the bustle of the street, nor indication of the innumerable forms of exciting entertainment, nor traces of the parade of fashionable men...
Figure 2. *Boulevard du Temple*. Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, 1838. Daguerreotype. Stadtmuseum, Munich.
and women are present in this image. Only permanent, solid, grounded elements were recorded on the plate: the buildings lining the boulevard, the newly commonplace wide sidewalks with their gas lampposts, the trees, and all of the other concrete, palpable raw materials of the old city. The sole indicator of inhabitation is the lone man who stood still on the corner having his boots polished long enough to be captured, and even he appears more as a humanoid shape than as an individual. The movement of the bootblack and his labor were too rapid to be recorded and he becomes little more than a smudged crescent.

Incongruities between image and experience did not go unnoticed by viewers of Daguerre's image, though not all critics could explain why the streets emptied out when put to the plate. Samuel F. B. Morse, in Paris to file a patent for his telegraph, paid a special visit to Daguerre's studio to see the Boulevard du Temple. In a letter to his brother, later published by the New York Observer, he described the Boulevard, “so constantly filled with a moving throng of pedestrians and carriages, [as] perfectly solitary, except for an individual who was having his boots brushed.” Morse, himself a scientist who grasped the workings of the photographic process more quickly than other viewers,

24 Vanessa R. Schwartz, Spectacular Realities Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siecle Paris (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 18, 20. The Boulevard du Temple was one of the original grands boulevards created in the late seventeenth century when Louis XIV razed the city walls in a show of French military strength and confidence. Since their creation, grands boulevards were destinations in and of themselves, and were viewed as an urban theater, or a theater of life. The Boulevard du Temple was the most celebrated of the grands boulevards because of the multitude of exciting entertainment one would find there. The establishment of numerous independent theaters like the Théâtre Nicolet, the Funambules, the Gaité, the Cirque Olympique, the Follies-Dramatiques, the Délâss'-Com', the Petit-Lazari and the Ambigu-Comique led to the nickname “Boulevard du Crime” for the type of dramas one would find therein. Daguerre's original Diorama, a colossal painted scene onto which lighting effects were projected creating the illusion of movement and of the passage of time, was located on this street. Further, one would not be hard pressed to find street musicians and merchants, wax cabinets, menageries, and acrobats, and Parisians bringing their own chairs to sit and watch the spectacle. See also Shelley Rice Parisian Views (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 7; T. J. Clark, The Painting of Modern Life (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 50.

correctly attributed the absence of pedestrians, carriages, and other signs of life to long exposure times needed to register sufficient light on the plate.  

For other critics, those who perhaps did not understand the scientific and optic principles behind Daguerre's invention as well as Morse, there was a force at work, an agency, coming from the process, the plate, or even the sun itself, determining what was to be included or omitted from the image. The nineteenth-century viewer's knowledge of daily life tells him that this process has not recorded the boulevard of his lived experience, with lively street vendors and performers or hectic pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Yet, the daguerreotype was popularly called a “mirror with a memory,” referencing the belief that the daguerreotype faithfully preserves the image of that which is exposed to the lens and the plate. With or without the bustle of the Parisian street, this must be reality of some sort.

For those who thought the medium of photography itself or divine sunlight decided what images would remain on the plate, this deserted street view must have confirmed the permanence of Paris, specifically the built environment and the monuments to great men who had brought the city to this point. Writing in January 1839 for the journal *L'Artiste*, literary critic Jules Janin expressed his belief that the daguerreotype process will preserve an unchangeable image of Paris specifically due to the imagined agency of an eternal force, rather than of an inconsistent man, deciding what urban features were worthy of preservation.

This time, it is no longer the hesitant look of a man who has a view of shadow and light from a distance, it is no longer his trembling hand that reproduces upon a loose sheet of paper the changing scene of this world.

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that the void sweeps away [. . .] No human hand can draw like the sun; no human hand can plunge so deeply into these streams of light, this profound darkness. We have seen the greatest monuments of Paris reproduced in this manner – this time Paris will really become the eternal city. We have seen the cobblestones of the Grève, the water of the Seine, the sky covering Sainte-Geneviève, and in each of these masterpieces there was the same divine perfection.²⁷

In Daguerre's photograph, the factual morphology of the Boulevard du Temple, namely the orientation of the street, the relative location of buildings, the illusion of naturalistic space, was conflated with an imaginary image of city space and time that omits all experience of daily life. The camera simply reproduced what was before it, and some mysterious, determining factor decided what was of permanent value (monuments) and what could be left out (people).

The lack of street activity implied the expendability of those who inhabit the boulevard, at least in terms of what was important for posterity, what would be remembered as a part of the 'eternal city,' and what could be forgotten. At this moment, this condition of the medium was evidently not problematic; it was not even mentioned in most reports of the invention.²⁸ In their fascination with the detail of the daguerreotype, and their ability to count paving stones and read distant street signs, the missing people simply were not a concern.²⁹ While a contemporary viewer might have experienced a cognitive dissonance between the image and the experience of living city streets, the emptiness of Daguerre's street view, as expressed by Janin, was Paris stripped to its most


²⁸ Marrinan, 370. Marrinan writes, “The most interesting aspect of this erasure of life was its apparent unimportance to Janin and his Parisian contemporaries, for it elicited almost no comment.” Presumably, the lack of comment on this matter in primary documentation led Marrinan to the conclusion that critics were unconcerned by the unpopulated urban landscapes.

essential elements. Historical structures and monuments would be eternally preserved, without the messy trappings of historical contingency. For Daguerre's audience, men of the Academy, of the government, and of science, emptiness on the old boulevard highlighted the permanence of that which is pictured. The barrenness is a testament to the enduring nature of Paris itself.

It is well known that the busy boulevard rendered vacant by Daguerre's process resulted from the limitations of photographic technology in 1838. Yet, inadvertently, this image also determined the prototype of the archival topographical view for nearly one hundred years. The Boulevard du Temple does not reflect all of the technical signs that would come to define architectural photography, however the illusion of emptiness, the long views down the Parisian avenues, and the omission of inhabitants of the pictured buildings and streets, were persistent elements even after photographic technology allowed for alternate representations of the city streets.

The Invention of Instantaneous Photography

The publication of Daguerre's process in 1839 led to experimentation and rapid advances by enterprising photographers. The invention of lenses with variable aperture settings in 1840 meant the photographer could control the amount of light reaching the plate thus reducing exposure time. The additional discovery that treating the plate with bromine or chlorine vapors before exposure greatly improved the light sensitivity of the

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30 According to Molly Nesbit, the pictorial conventions most useful to the building industry were frontality, symmetry, and exactitude in detail. The desire for legibility of form and detail led to the tendency to photograph buildings as isolated from their surroundings and as if they existed outside of time. When employed in the service of preservationist or conservationist motives, the same attempt to decontextualize the structure occurs. Encroachments in the form of people, vehicles, or even puddles would be cropped out or retouched over to eliminate any indicators of temporality. The preservationist model wanted to portray the city streets in a manner suggesting the building always had and always would exist in precisely the state in which it was pictured. Nesbit, Seven Albums, 51, 63, 104.
surface changed the resulting images of the street. As early as 1841, just three years after
the Boulevard du Temple, it was possible for daguerreotypists to 'freeze' motion on the
streets, showing urban spaces that were populated, if sparsely, by pedestrians, carriages,
and other slowly-moving street traffic.\footnote{Marrinan, \textit{Romantic Paris}, 374.} For example, in Marc Antoine Gaudin's
photograph of the funeral procession of the Duc d'Orleans in 1842 (Figure 3), the forward
guard of the parade is visible with minimal motion blur. However, the figures in the
middle of the streets, as well as the banners and flags on top of the buildings are less
legible because they were moving more quickly during the exposure.

Termed \textit{instantanées}, these views were considered superior from their inception.
An anonymous writer for \textit{L'Artiste} defines an \textit{instantanée} as an image with “groups of
people in action, views of the Pont-Neuf with carriages and pedestrians in motion;
delightful portraits in which you no longer find the stiffness or dryness of the first
daguerreotype portraits.”\footnote{Anonymous, “Des nouveaux procédés de la photographie,” \textit{L'Artiste}, 2e sér., 8 (1841): 245. Quoted in Marrinan, \textit{Romantic Paris}, 376.} Significantly, the term was applied to both city views and
portraiture indiscriminately. What qualified an \textit{instantanée} was evidence of animated,
spontaneous life. People on the street, individuals at work, portraits capturing fleeting
expressions all give evidence of life, of movement, of contingency, and the inevitability
of change.

According to Marrinan, the advent of the daguerreotype \textit{instantanée} created
consumer demand for more images “by shifting the subject of interest from space to
Figure 3. *Funérailles du duc d'Orléans à Notre-Dame de Paris.* Marc Antoine Gaudin, 1842. Daguerreotype, 7.5 x 7.5 cm, Musée D'Orsay, Paris.
action, from monuments to movement. Daguerre's process created the need – but was unable to fulfill the demand – for images of the world in motion.” The public's desire for images of a living city was momentarily fulfilled in 1841, but photographers continued to experiment with methods and materials that would require shorter exposure times. In the early 1850s, new processes flooded the market, all of which required significantly less exposure time – only about a minute in good light – and could freeze the motion of the street, providing some indication of the experiential aspects of life in Paris. With such advanced processes available as early as 1851, why did the conventions unintentionally established by Daguerre endure? Why was the style continually employed for nearly a century after Daguerre's Boulevard du Temple?

The Photographers of the Missions Héliographiques in Paris:

Édouard Baldus and Henri Le Secq

Photography's auspicious arrival coincided with the beginnings of official architectural preservation concerns in France. In 1837, the Comte de Montalivet and François Guizot, the present and former Ministers of the Interior, created the Commission des Monuments Historiques to survey the state of national monuments and to prioritize conservation and restoration for those structures in poor condition. Comprised of historians, antiquarians, administrators, architects, and eventually photographers, the

33 Marrinan, 378.
34 In 1840, William Henry Fox Talbot invented the calotype process, which produced paper negatives that could be contact-printed for paper positives, marking the first practical method of duplicating images. In 1851, Louis-Désiré Blanquart-Evrard presented albumen paper prints, which became the preferred method for popular cartes-de-visites. Nearly simultaneously, Gustav Le Gray developed the papier-ciré-sec process. Occasionally Le Gray is noted as the inventor of the wet collodion process, though this is most often attributed to Frederick Scott Archer who announced the procedure in 1851.
Commission had the assignment of investigating structures that could be identified with national patrimony in terms of their value to the historical record and to French national memory. This Commission embodied what Christine Boyer terms a preservation mentality, the goals of which were “to inventory and preserve historic monuments of France – under an enlightened directorship, with a body of restoration principles worked out in practice and a specially trained group of architects to implement the work.”

Initially, the Commission was slow to recognize the benefit of employing photographers in its overwhelming task. During the 1840s, the organization was primarily concerned with the restoration of already endangered sites, not with searching out other potentially threatened structures. Finally, in 1851, a subcommittee of the Commission, likely spurred by the newly formed Société Héliographique, initiated the Missions Héliographiques, contracting five photographers to travel the provinces for a photographic architectural survey. Photographers would aid in the inventory process, creating an objective image of a structure's condition at the moment of exposure; architects viewing the resulting images would identify the buildings most in need of repair and protection, those most in danger of falling into a condition of irreparable damage.

The photographers were given an urgent errand: trek across the countryside and photograph a set of monuments in danger of entropic destruction; return with negatives to aid a team of architects, most notably Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, in restoring or preserving the monuments; and, ultimately, obtain an image of the structure to function as a baseline,

36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., 38-39.
38 Ibid., 40-41. The photographers of the Mission Héliographique were Henri Le Secq, Gustav Le Gray, Édouard Baldus, Hippolyte Bayard and O. Mestral
a starting point for comparing future damage or repair. Each photographer was directed
to major and secondary monuments in his assigned area, such as abandoned royal
palaces, medieval and Romanesque churches, Roman monuments, and Gothic
cathedrals. Since the Commission had not outlined any formal techniques or
specifications that would produce the most effective images for their needs, what resulted
from the photographers' excursions was a rather diverse set of paper negatives and salt
prints, wherein each of the five photographers decided for himself what aspects of the
monuments were most important or valuable for preservation in archival memory.

To consider the range of emphases in preservation photography, we can turn to
the post-Mission careers of Henri Le Secq and Édouard Baldus. When Le Secq and
Baldus returned from their respective missions, demolitions in Paris were underway.
While Georges-Eugène Haussmann has been seen as the progenitor of modernization in
Paris, Jean-Jacques Berger, Prefect of the Seine from 1848 until 1852, actually began
some of the building projects more comprehensively executed by his infamous
successor. Berger's priority was dégagement, the liberation of architectural monuments

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39 Ibid., 36.
40 Two monuments from each place were enough to satisfy the Commission, even when considerably
more ancient structures existed in the same site. Barry Bergdoll, “A Matter of Time: Architects and
41 The Commission's specification of calotypes over daguerreotypes is a puzzling one. The daguerreotype
is capable of capturing almost infinite detail – to date the resolution achieved is unmatched – which, for
the purposes of recording architectural detail, would seem to be the most effective process. However,
the Commission instead wanted the photographers to use the calotype process, paper negatives contact-
printed for paper positives. The decision could simply be one based on practicality: the men would be
traveling and the paper negatives are less unwieldy than the silver plates needed for daguerreotypes;
calotypes would allow for duplication since it was not a direct negative process; the daguerreotype was
a rather small format – at its largest, approximately 6 x 8 inches. However, the calotype is not known
for its ability to replicate minute detail; conversely, they create a very dramatic chiaroscuro effect
rendering prints somewhat hazy, even painterly.
43 Many of the plans eventually executed by and attributed solely to Haussmann were actually initiated by
the Baron's predecessors. Gilbert-Joseph-Gaspard Chabrol (1812-30), Claude-Philippe-Berthelot de
from parasitic structures and slums that had formed around them over decades, even centuries. Therefore, monuments were being cleared of conjoined buildings to make a more visually pleasing view of the city's architectural patrimony,\(^{44}\) representing the beginnings of a shift from urban spaces of lived memory to spaces of historicization.

Significantly, both photographers replicated the aesthetic determined by Daguerre's street-scape as they documented demolitions and restoration projects in the capital in 1852-53. Baldus had a successful career documenting architectural restoration projects for the Ministry of the Interior, and Le Secq pursued an independent documentation project wherein he photographed many buildings prior to and during stages of demolition. A comparison of photographs by the two men of the same monument, the Tour Saint Jacques la Boucherie, will reveal formal choices and evidence historical concerns of each photographer.

The tower that both men photographed in 1852 was once part of the church by the same name, built between 1509 and 1523, and patronized by the affluent butchers of the central market. The church itself was demolished during the Revolution, leaving only the tower as a fragment of the building that had existed there before.\(^{45}\) The municipal Rambuteau (1833-48) and Jean-Jacques Berger (1848-52) all had plans to straighten, widen, and extend streets and to visually isolate monuments for optimal viewing which were not carried out in a manner as comprehensive as that imagined by Haussmann. Christopher Mead, “Urban Contingency and the Problem of Representation in Second Empire Paris,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 52 no. 4 (1995): 139. As Clark notes, however, some of the plans popularly attributed to Haussmann by his critics had been considered for more than thirty years before he took office. Berger's efforts, therefore, have been subsumed into the larger projects of Haussmann. Clark, *Painting of Modern Life*, 30-32.

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\(^{44}\) My use of this term originates with Boyer, who builds a convincing argument that after the revolution, architecture that was previously characterized as decadent was re-framed by French historians to be part of France's patrimony. “La Mission Héliographique,” 24-25. Kevin Murphy also adopts the term in relation to Eugène Viollet-le-Duc's restoration of the Church of the Madeleine in Vézelay in his book-length study *Memory and Modernity* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000). I will further explicate this concept in relation to my argument in Chapter 3.

government of Paris purchased the tower in the 1830s; by 1852, clearance of the surrounding neighborhoods that had sprung up around the structure in the intervening decades since the destruction of the church was nearly complete. Baldus photographed the tower from the front (Figure 4), providing a view of the monument in isolation from the structures surrounding it. Conversely, Le Secq composed his shot from the neighborhood side of the tower (Figure 5), almost directly opposite where Baldus would have set up his camera. Previous scholars have argued that each photographer individually internalized the propensities of the Commission and each created images that respond to their respective interpretations of what would be of use to the Commission and the archive. I agree with these assessments, and further contend that by comparing these two images, we can see that there was not only one way to anticipate the needs of the archive. This multiplicity in photographic interpretation is a characteristic of a *milieu de mémoire*.

Baldus's photograph shows the tower and its construction site isolated from surrounding buildings, which are dwarfed by the tower and look dark and diseased in comparison to the airy, open, sunlit foreground. The building in the right-background is in the process of being gutted; its inner walls have been exposed for the procedure. The

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46 Ibid. See also Rice, *Parisian Views*, 17.
Figure 4. *Tour Saint-Jacques, Paris, Cleared of Surrounding Buildings and Debris.* Édouard Baldus, 1852–53. Salted paper print from paper negative, 43.5 x 34.5 cm. Private collection, Paris.
Figure 5. *Tour St. Jacques*. Henri Le Secq, 1853, from the *Album Berger*. Positive print from paper negative, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, Paris.
row of apartments to the left of the tower are dark, as if to emphasize the dreary condition of the surrounding areas that will be cleared to create a spacious place surrounding the tower. As he did with monuments from his mission, Baldus presented the historical monument in spatial isolation, framed to appear disentangled from quotidian structures around it. The necessary exposure time for paper negatives, up to five minutes depending on the light available, was enough to erase the activity of the worksite, so it appears empty, even though the materials of the site are still present and highly legible. The piles of stones on the sidewalk and nearer the tower are individually articulated. Similarly, one can count the logs in the pile of timber in the foreground.

Baldus’s print is rather evenly toned throughout; in fact, the shadows in the windows of the tower and on the steps in the foreground indicate that the sun was likely directly above the tower. The area in deepest shadow, the block of buildings to the left of the tower, is almost inexplicably dark. Does this street lie in the shadow of the tower? If so, the front of the tower and the gutted building on the right would be slightly shaded as well, since they would not be facing the direct sunlight. Furthermore, there is a noticeable fluctuation of tones on the roofs of the structures on the left. While the lighter tonal passages are not light enough to be clearly legible as the effects of sunlight, there does appear to be a raking light originating from the top left. This darkening of the tonal range of this entire section of the photograph may indicate that Baldus darkened that part of the image by burning in or overexposing that portion of the print in the darkroom. Likewise, the bright-white plaster of the building that is being torn down functions as a
strategic highlighting of the process, pointing to the fact that this building will shortly be
gone altogether, opening up the surrounding space.

Baldus creatively completed the dégagement of the structure still in progress
through distance, framing, and darkroom manipulation; he focused only on the
sufficiently important historical relic and subsumed unnecessary visual information to the
background.48 The tower stands apart, the construction site and half-demolished houses in
the background hinting at the spacious place that will replace the overcrowded warren of
dwellings. Lighting on the building in the back right highlights its “in demolition” status,
showing the innards that would not be visible otherwise, while the other buildings are
darkened out to further relegate their position to extraneous background detail. This
image, because of Baldus's unique printing process, evidences a clarity and detail that is
not usually associated with paper negatives.49 Ultimately, Baldus used darkroom
techniques to foreshadow the final appearance of the monument.

Le Secq's interpretation of the same subject, also from 1852, could hardly be more
different than that of Baldus.50 Both photographs appear to have been made within a short

49 Boyer, "La Mission Héliographique," 50. When printing a positive image from a paper negative, more
light is needed to pass through the denser negative than, for example, glass negatives that would be
introduced later. Prints made from paper positives can have significant variances in tonality, making for
a heavy chiaroscuro effect. While on his mission, Baldus mitigated the heavy chiaroscuro effect of the
calotype process by meticulously assembling prints from multiple negatives, each exposed for a
different tonality. Many of Baldus's prints were constructed from multiple negatives. In the extreme
example of his photograph of the Cloister of Saint-Trophime in Arles, he combined ten different
negatives to extend the tonal range and depth of field that one single negative could achieve.

50 The demolitions Le Secq photographed in Paris in 1852-53 were part of an independent documentation
project grouped together in the Album Berger, dedicated and gifted to Berger. Among other sites he
photographed were the notorious slums between the Louvre and the Tuileries palaces, the seventeenth-
century water pump outside Notre Dame, the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, and various other demolitions
throughout the city. Eugenia Parry Janis, scholar of Le Secq and his works, presumes these photographs
exist for the sole purpose of commemorating and marking the large-scale changes beginning to mar the
urban landscape. In other words, there is no evidence that Le Secq's album was commissioned by any
official government entity, nor was it requested by an individual antiquarian or historian. Though
information about Le Secq's motives for producing this album and his relationship to Berger is scant,
period of time, simply from opposite points of view. The building in Le Secq's foreground is the same one that is in the background of Baldus's photograph – evident by comparing the shape of the white plaster markings on the side. There are other passages of correspondence between the two images: the awning at the base of the tower and the adjacent jagged brick wall are present in both, as well as the small mounds of dirt and rubble in front of the tower. Like his decision to photograph ordinary dwellings in Alsace on his mission, in addition to the monuments assigned by the Commission, Le Secq here presents the ordinary architecture of Parisian experience, in other words the dwellings and shops of a living community, as having equal value as the monumental tower.

Taken from an oblique angle from a building within the neighborhood, the image emphasizes the very thing Berger was effacing – namely the living monument enmeshed in its quartier. The façades of the apartment buildings are flush with that of the tower creating a sense of unity with the architecture of the street, despite the disparities in height. The heavy shadows formed by the close buildings and narrow streets, and accentuated by the calotype process, create a romantic undulation of light and darkness. Beginning on the right, there is a slight highlighting of the wall facing the street, while the back half of the building is in deep shadow. There is a break of sunlight through the space between the tower and the apartments, then the tower itself is shaded as well. The alternating light and dark of the buildings is echoed in the passage and blockage of sunlight onto the street and construction site, leading the viewer's eye to the crowd of buildings in the background. Rather than the shadows creating a sense of gloom, as in

Janis has suggested a personal association between Berger and Le Secq led to the album of photographs being given to the former prefect as a gesture of moral support upon his retirement from public service. Janis, “Demolition Picturesque: Photographs of Paris in 1852 and 1853 by Henri Le Secq,” 41-43.
Baldus's image, these bars of light and dark that alternately cover the buildings, the tower, the street, and the background, emphasize the interrelations between the structures, ordinary or monumental.

Baldus would have methodically counteracted this kind of chiaroscuro effect in the print room. Le Secq, on the other hand, makes clear that prior to large-scale building clearance in Paris, even the monumental was part of the everyday experience. The tower stands out from its surroundings because of its height, but ultimately remains grounded to the same block as the simple houses being pulled down around it. The purpose of this comparison is to show evidence that photographers who were imaging the streets of Paris at this period may use similar methods, with similar formal results (empty streets), but interpretations may vary greatly. Since the diagonal composition of Le Secq's *Tour Saint-Jacques* nearly obscures the street and construction site completely, I would like to analyze another Le Secq photograph which renders a busy construction site as vacant as Baldus's photograph of the Tour Saint Jacques.

In *Demolitions, Place de l'Hôtel de Ville* (Figure 6), also from 1852-53 and part of the *Album Berger* we see another demolition in progress, this time in the Place de Grève, in preparation for the enlargement of the surrounding square. The worksite itself is photographed from a distant vantage point, again devoid of activity, resembling the unfortunate remnant of a battle rather than an active construction site. In the foreground, the faint ghosting of a horse and cart and other motion smears reaching to the far right edge of the frame are the only perceivable indicators of life on this street, or of the workers who were employed to tear down the structure.
Figure 6. Demolitions of the place de l'Hôtel de Ville. Henri Le Secq, 1853, from the Album Berger. Positive print from paper negative, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, Paris.
We can assume Le Secq chose to memorialize this site because of the small medieval turret in the corner of the building, but he certainly did not use formal techniques to focus the viewer's attention there. The turret threatens to be subsumed by the deep shadow of the building facade, and what is highlighted instead are the spine and viscera of the ordinary immeuble being razed and the text on the far right of the frame. This mixed-use building had housed the neighborhood dentist as well as a restaurant, but was now going to be demolished, along with its charming antique architectural details, to make a grand vista for the Hôtel de Ville.

Yet again, this photograph shows a desolate street that did not correspond with the contemporary experience of Parisians in the 1850s. The living sites visited by these photographers would have been chaotic as construction diverted traffic patterns; it would have been cacophonous with the sounds of demolition; and it would have been a veritable anthill of activity. It was so disruptive and so familiar to Parisians that a caricature of an unspecified worksite (Figure 7) could reference any number of areas throughout the city. Even though the calotype process required significantly shorter exposure times than the daguerreotype, the three to five minute exposure time still produced an image devoid of life, preserving only the remnants of a previous mode of existence.\textsuperscript{51}

The reproduction of this empty-street aesthetic, for the purposes of architectural preservation and restoration, can have different meaning to different audiences. Baldus's interpretation of the scene corroborates the utopian dreams of Jules Janin, who imagined that by way of daguerreotypy, Parisian monuments would exist for eternity. Baldus

\textsuperscript{51} In part, this has to do with the conventions for representing architecture. Illustrated travel books, such as Isidore-Séverin-Justin Taylor's \textit{Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France} (20 vols., 1820–78) informed the beginnings of architectural photography. Andre Jammes and Eugenia Parry Janis, \textit{The Art of the French Calotype}, 56.
represents the past in a majestic form, but it is the past as an image, isolated from the
daily experience of the monument within a living quartier. In this instance, the emptiness
of the street surrounding the Gothic tower attests to a sense of timelessness – once fixed
on the paper, the structure will stand isolated from the concerns of everyday life as a call
to remember the grandeur of the past. Le Secq's audience, specifically those officials of
the Commission des Monuments Historiques and Berger, were themselves reluctant to
allow the architecture of the past to simply fade into ruins without attempting to halt the
entropic decay, or at least record for the archive the details that made the structures so
unique. For Le Secq, then, emptiness in photographs of old Paris is invested with a
sense of sorrow for the loss of the relationship between monuments and neighborhoods.

The work of Le Secq and Baldus presaged the photographic demands of the
Second Empire, under which photographers would create 'before' and 'after' views of the
city under construction. The next section will examine the work of Charles Marville, the
most well-known photographer of the Second Empire, and Atget's direct predecessor.
Haussmann's administration officially recognized the value of preserving in images
structures that could not otherwise be saved, and initiated a systematic documentation of
the portions of vieux Paris marked for destruction. Marville, who was primarily
responsible for this work, photographed neighborhood streets before, during, and after
Haussmann's changes. He also reproduced the empty-street aesthetic while

52 Le Secq's gift of the photo album to Berger at the end of his term would be a puzzling one, perhaps even
contentious, unless Berger had some interest in the architecture that had to be demolished out of
necessity. Le Secq's personal association with Berger, as proposed by Janis, suggests that perhaps the
gift of the demolition pictures was meant to assure Berger that the destroyed architecture would still
exist in images.
photographically preserving the medieval streets that were to be replaced with modern boulevards.

Charles Marville's Photography during the Modernization of Paris

Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann, Prefect of the Seine under Napoleon III, administered the urban overhaul meant to once and for all modernize the rapidly growing city. Haussmann's name is most associated with the widespread destruction to which Paris was subjected between 1853 and 1869. Critics of Haussmann accused him of killing the *quartier* through acts of what many perceived to be wanton destruction.\(^{53}\) Contrary to his common characterization as a solely destructive force, the prefect did recognize the importance of conserving the historical elements of the city to the extent possible, without compromising the ultimate goal of complete modernization. According to Anthony Sutcliffe, Haussmann directed significant funds to extensive historical research of the city, an ailing scholarly field despite popular interest in national history. Haussmann wanted to create a historical narrative from material objects within the city, and to this aim he began collecting notable artifacts for what is now the Musée Carnavalet, the museum of the history of Paris.\(^{54}\)

Additionally, Haussmann employed a team of archivists and photographers, most notable among them Charles Marville, to document the medieval spaces to be destroyed. Marville built upon the trajectory initiated by the photographers of the Missions Héliographiques. He photographed spaces that were already marked for destruction in order to preserve them in the archive, and like Baldus and Le Secq, he also photographed

\(^{53}\) The following chapter will deal with Haussmannization and its effect on the collective memory and imagination of nineteenth-century Parisians in greater detail.

demolitions and reconstructions. For Marville, emptiness on the streets was a side-effect of his desire to document the condition and morphology of the medieval streets accurately, as records for the archive; as such, the gap between pictorial representation (photograph) and lived experience (daily life) widened even further. His photographs emphasized the street's vacant appearance during a period when Paris was more crowded than it had ever been to that point. By the 1870s, Marville's pictures of vieux Paris came to stand in as a replacements for areas of the city that no longer existed.

The self-proclaimed “Photographe de la ville de Paris,” Marville produced more than 400 views of threatened streets between 1865-68, all of which were housed in the archives at the Hôtel de Ville. The documentation project occurred in advance of the second stage of Haussmann's project, which was begun in 1865, and during which the bulk of clearance in congested areas took place. Marville's original set of prints was destroyed in 1871 when the Hôtel de Ville burned during the eradication of the Commune. In 1873, the photographer offered to reprint the photographs, which he compiled into his Album du vieux Paris.

The Impasse des Bourdonnais (Figure 8) is a representative example of Marville’s pictures of the old Parisian streets facing demolition. In the center of the frame is a very

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56 Charles Marville, *Paris*, Marie de Thezy, ed. (Paris: Hazan, 1994), 289. The first stage was the construction of the grand crossing of Paris, the north-south arterial boulevards, Boulevard de Sébastopol and Boulevard Saint-Michel and the extension of the Rue de Rivoli. The second stage, begun in 1865, several years behind schedule, opened up smaller areas abutting the main boulevards. The third stage was primarily concerned with the area surrounding the Opéra.

57 Ibid., 10. It is unknown whether the views included in the album were exactly those from the Hôtel de Ville, or if there was any attempt at curation based on knowledge of the events that occurred between the exposure and the second printing.
narrow, blind medieval alley. Marville's chosen point of view is rather low to the ground, and the vertically-oriented frame is filled by hulking buildings that extend through the top of it. On the left, the edge of another building reinforces the sense of claustrophobia and closeness of this street corner. Buildings close in on all sides blocking out sunlight. The insalubrious alley is dank with standing water or sewage, and the shiny wet cobblestones give the impression that this is not simply a temporary condition. Through his formal choices, Marville unequivocally pointed to everything needing amelioration via Haussmann’s overhaul: narrow streets with runnels of sewage, hulking buildings blocking out all light and preventing the circulation of air, spindly trees choked out by cobblestones, disused carts blocking the passage of traffic in a street that may have been too narrow for vehicular traffic regardless. Marville shows the old city made for foot-traffic, not one suited for the fast-paced interchange of capitalistic commerce.

Marville's method consisted of exposing the wet collodion-coated glass negative to light for three to twelve seconds of light, likely with the camera's aperture stopped down to its smallest opening. The photographer exposed his shots to preserve details in the shadows – a necessary decision since one constant criticism of the medieval city was the darkness of the narrow streets. In the Impasse des Bourdonnais, there is much detail in the shadows. In the foreground one sees the trash in the gutters and the demarkation between cobblestones. As the eye travels back into the recesses of the street, the dark shutters and lamp are clearly visible as well as the door and passage that terminates the

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58 A small aperture requires longer shutter speeds because less light is passing through the lens to the sensitized plate. The use of a small or stopped-down aperture setting allows for deep focus or depth of field – everything within the picture, foreground, midground and background, would be in focus. However, the stopped down aperture was equally related to control of exposure time as it was to the creation of deep focus.
Figure 8. *Impasse des Bourdonnais*. Charles Marville, 1865-1868. Positive print from glass negative, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, Paris.
view. Likewise, the pylons along the base of the two buildings lining the alley remain legible through the length of the alley. Had Marville opened the aperture wider, allowing in more light and therefore accommodating a faster shutter speed, the inhabitants of the streets may have been recorded, but detail in the physiognomy of the street would have been lost. Since Marville's job was to create images of the streets as they were subjected to Haussmann's plan – the details in stone and iron that were going to be destroyed – these formal choices are justified. Marville's concern was not the individuals in each neighborhood, but rather the physiognomy of the buildings and streets themselves.

Significantly, it is also with Marville's work that quotidian structures were officially photographed specifically for placement in the archives. Until this point, the main concern for official preservationist entities had been the great architecture of France: Gothic cathedrals, monarchical châteaux, the remains of Roman engineering, and prehistoric megaliths. Sites of historical significance were prioritized, specifically, those sites acting as a tangible and material link to the accomplishments of the past. Nesbit describes the antiquarians of Paris at this time as collectors and protectors of fragments of history in the architecture of the city. They had no specific project in mind, rather they saved these fragments for this unstated effort to be taken up by future historians who would make sense of the traces they perceived. In this way, Marville's views of ordinary quartiers are examples of a paradigm shift in terms of what was imagined to be valuable for preservation for future generations: not only monuments and cathedrals, but also apartments and alleys.

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60 Nesbit, Seven Albums, 62.
Preservation Aesthetic as *Milieu de Mémoire*

To this point, I have explained several possible significations of emptiness in a photograph of an urban space, focusing primarily on the formal manner by which space was represented by nineteenth-century photographers. After introducing the prototype for urban photography, Daguerre's *Boulevard du Temple*, I examined the work of Le Secq, Baldus, and Marville separately, even though their careers overlapped, to present different interpretations of a photographic convention. Throughout the period of city-wide transformation initiated by the Second Empire, empty streets in photographs could be assigned different significations depending on the sympathies and desires of the viewer. In other words, rather than acting as visual restrictions allowing only one reading, the aesthetic code was permeable, fluid, open to manipulation. I have attempted to contextualize both the photographic practice and the areas within which the photographers worked as *milieux de mémoire*, living environments of memory as opposed to sites of history.

According to Nora's construction of the *lieu de mémoire*, there must occur a point of rupture, a disturbance in collective memory in relation to photography and in relation to the city itself, transforming a mutable *milieu de mémoire* into the codified aesthetic evident in Atget's photographs. In the next chapter, I turn to an analysis of the actual changes taking place in Paris. Atget's pictures, if *lieux de mémoire*, are dependent on both mode of representation, the preservation aesthetic I have identified, and subject matter, namely old Paris, which had become rare and overdetermined because of the public works projects of the Second Empire. In the following chapter, I examine the period
beginning with Haussmann's urban destruction until the Prussian invasion and the Paris Commune, roughly 1860-1871, as a period when there was a perceptible change both in terms of Parisian conception of the old city and in photographic practice.
CHAPTER TWO:
RUPTURE IN COMMUNAL MEMORY AND SOCIAL PRACTICE:
HAUSSMANNIZATION, THE PRUSSIAN SIEGE AND THE PARIS COMMUNE

In twentieth-century analyses of pre-Haussmann Paris, it is not unusual for Marville's photographs to be used as pictorial examples transparently representing the conditions of the city. For instance, Albert Boime illustrates the following point with a Marville photograph of an empty street: “The concentration of the insurgent working classes in the central and eastern districts of Paris facilitated the construction of the barricade system that exploited the narrow, winding, densely crowded streets of Old Paris.”

Marville's photographs, for instance, the Rue des Moulins (Figure 9), fail to give evidence of the dense crowd of inhabitants that populates every contemporary written account of the city. The Parisian street is completely desolate and the image could not be any more different from the written descriptions of Paris from the same period.

In this chapter, I change direction to analyze the manner by which Haussmannization, the Siege of Paris and the Commune initiated a transformation in Parisians' perception of their local streets. I pose a point of rupture in Parisians' perceived relation to their own city, and a subsequent shift in photographic tradition. These two alterations – both in the Parisians' imagined place in their city and of photographic representations of themselves within their city – are crucial to my argument and to the

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development of *lieux de mémoire*. I propose that it is the preservation aesthetic I have described in the first chapter, in concert with the old streets of Paris as subject matter, that was a *lieu de mémoire* by Atget's time. Nora's framework specifies that sites of memory (*lieux de mémoire*) can only form when living memory (*milieu de mémoire*) metamorphoses in such a way as to leave relics of a former practice, which reappear later as phantoms of their original meaning. Therefore, there must be an event or determining factors that renders a former practice or habit as something whose time has passed. I will highlight two particularly disruptive moments that interrupted social and photographic tradition. Haussmannization changed Parisians' conception of their city in such a way as to create a longing for the medieval city, despite its unsuitability for modern life. The Siege and Commune, 1870-71, led to a brief reversal in the power structure of Paris, largely by the working class, overturning some of the social stratifications that were the result of Haussmannization. This inversion manifests in photographs of working-class Parisians and their neighborhood barricades during the Commune.

There already exists a body of scholarship of considerable breadth and depth dedicated to investigating how Haussmann's urban overhaul affected the living memory of *quartier* practices, and how the war subsequently ended the materialistic culture of the Second Empire. Despite the wide range of theoretical approaches, scholars agree that

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the continuous state of demolition in Paris between 1851 and 1870, when Napoleon III surrendered to the Prussians at Sedan, ending the Second Empire, irrevocably altered the manner by which Parisians' imagined their place within the city. Since T. J. Clark and others have established that this was a particularly traumatic and contentious period in terms of the social space of Paris, I seek to explicate how these cataclysmic events affected habits and practices leading to the formation of lieu de mémoire. My interest, then, is twofold. First, tracing Haussmann's critics' nostalgic vision of the old sections of the city will set the stage for examining the reoccurrence of this vision in the context of the Third Republic. Second, considering a divergence in photographic practice during the Commune, when social structures inverted for a short time, will provide a contrast to the preservation aesthetic, which I traced in the first chapter, and which returns in Atget's work.

Part I: Haussmann's Disruption of Everyday Life

Haussmannization ushered in the modern era in Paris and with it Parisians experienced fragmentation, isolation, and alienation that is assumed to have not existed prior.\footnote{Equally common as the refrain that Haussmannization initiated modern, fragmented life in Paris is the argument that at some point prior to this, generally thought to be before the loss of peasant culture, memory and social orders were whole. I want to temper this with the observation by Terdiman, Nora, and others, that “people [reconstruct] the prehistory of their new environment in the effort to naturalize it. They were involved in an effort of memory that made the very lack of transparency of the past a conscious focus of concern.” (Terdiman, Present Past, 6). Therefore, the researcher must be conscious of the fact that in the face of great upheaval, even primary sources may not be relied upon, since these very individuals, in their attempt to make sense of the present, may have reimaged and re-presented the past.} To this point, I have only discussed Haussmannization in terms of Marville's

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pictures of the sites to be destroyed. Though maligned by many, Haussmann's *grands travaux* were in fact necessary for the survival of Paris. The most readily-cited reason among historians, late-nineteenth and twentieth-century scholars alike, for scrubbing and breaking up the old *quartiers* was to prevent further revolutions and barricade-building; perhaps this was anticipated to be a beneficial side-effect for the Emperor and his prefect. In reality, however, the necessity for an urban overhaul was not simply born of an effort to prevent future insurrections. The urban construction projects, not only the neighborhood alterations which take priority for my purposes, but also the sewers, fountains, parks, monuments, gas lamps, schools, churches, *immeubles*, railways, administrative buildings, and telegraph network, were essentially grand-scale public works projects that normalized France's economy, at least for a while, and improved living conditions immeasurably. While much criticism of Haussmann was well-founded, those who focused solely on the image or form of the new city were helping to construct a romantic, nostalgic version of old Paris that would reappear in a wide-reaching form later.\(^{64}\) This section will focus on that nostalgia; therefore I will rely heavily on Clark for the foundation he provides. I will build on Clark's argument by linking the nostalgia he identifies with the subsequent fear that the *quartier* would be abandoned. My ultimate goal is to create a clear correspondence between nostalgia and a rhetoric of emptiness that will manifest in Atget's photographs in the Third Republic.

\(^{64}\) Clark cites very colorful criticisms, but the length of my study does not allow me to quote them all as Clark does. Clark's comprehensive list includes Émile Zola, Victor Hugo, Louis Lazare, Edmond and Jules Goncourt, Honoré de Balzac, Edmond Texier, Victorienn Sardou, Privat d'Anglemont, Charles Yriarte, Victor Fournel, Eugène Peletan, N. Sheppard, L. Marie, and anonymous pamphleteers (26-46). Additionally, Sutcliffe lists the Marquis de Laborde, Ferdinand de Lasteyrie, and M.F. De Guilherny as other outspoken critics of Haussmann (184-85).
Pictures of old Paris, such as Rue des Moulins, only give a partial sense of the condition of old Paris. Since Marville focuses on the morphology of the street itself, the viewer does not see the condition of individual structures, nor is one privy to the living culture of the neighborhood. More significantly, photographs cannot communicate the loud noise, oppressive stench, or the ubiquitous crush of traffic described in written accounts of the experience of Paris. Since I have historicized the appearance of these photographs as a convention, not to be taken for a transparent window into old Paris of the 1860s, we must append the image with textual descriptions to construct a fuller representation of the old streets.

Consider the reactions of three visitors to Paris who experienced a city in need of expansion long before Napoleon III took office. Firstly, the unnamed Secretary to Girolamo Lippomano, Venetian ambassador to France, notes the overcrowded conditions of Paris when he wrote between 1577 and 1579:

> On the squares themselves one sees small shops of wood built by poor people who do the humblest jobs to survive. So that there is no part of the city that can be called vacant [...] in a few years, everything will be covered with houses; indeed, they are already and continuously building.\(^{65}\)

Giovanni Paolo Marana, an Italian noble, describes a similar scene in 1692, more than a century after the Venetian ambassador's secretary wrote of his visit.

> Concerning Paris, I don't know where to begin to paint for you a picture of a city whose inhabitants are lodged even on the bridges of the river and on the roofs of houses [...] This great city is the seat of tumult, and

since you want a sort of description of it, I shall begin with the perpetual movement that reigns here day and night.\textsuperscript{66}

Marana describes the constant din of the city from church bells, carriages, and street peddlers. Furthermore, he describes the unsanitary nature of the streets: “Though it may not be raining, one can't help often walking in mud; they throw all the filth in the street, but the vigilance of the magistrates isn't sufficient to have them cleaned.”\textsuperscript{66} Finally, Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamzin, a celebrated Russian writer who sojourned in Paris for three months in 1790, again describes a city already at capacity and suffering for it.

Soon we entered the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, but what did we see? Narrow, filthy, muddy streets, miserable houses, and ragged people. […] What is Paris? It is not enough to call it the first city in the world, capital of splendor and enchantment. Stop here, if you do not wish to change your opinion, for if you go farther you will see crowded streets, an outrageous confusion of wealth and poverty. Close by a glittering jewelry shop, a pile of rotten apples and herrings […] The picture of a splendid city grows dim in your thoughts, and it seems to you that the dirt and muck of all the cities in the world is flowing through the cities of Paris […] Thus you must call Paris the most magnificent and most vile, the most fragrant and most fetid city.\textsuperscript{68}

These three men describe a city that had been stretched to its limits for centuries, in terms of space for its ever-growing population, its stressed infrastructure, and its unsanitary conditions.

In the years leading up to the Second Empire, the situation in Paris became even more grim as people continued to pour in from the provinces and as capitalism took hold.

\textsuperscript{66} First published as “Traduction d'une lettre italienne ecrite par un Sicilien a un de ses amis, contenant une critique agreable de Paris,” in Charles Cotolendi, \textit{Saint Evremoniana, ou Dialogues des nouveaux dieux} (Paris: M. Brunet, 1700) in Berger, \textit{In Old Paris}, 66. NB: Berger notes that even though the title of the letter indicates that Marana is Sicilian, he was in fact Genoese. Its length suggests the “letter” is meant to be an essay with both fictive and true elements, not an actual letter to a friend (58).

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 69.

When Louis Napoleon Bonaparte was elected president in 1848, Paris was experiencing an unprecedented period of overpopulation with the potential for catastrophic results. An influx of provincials, many of whom had lost their livelihood to harvest failures and floods in 1846-47, were moving into the city in search of new livelihoods, causing overcrowding in all parts of the city. Louis Chevalier describes a Paris that had quickly become unrecognizable to its inhabitants, as if a larger city had suddenly invaded its intimate medieval spaces,

piling man on man and trade on trade, filling every nook and corner, making over the older dwellings of the nobility and gentry into workshops and lodging houses, erecting factories and stockpiles in gardens and courts where carriages had been moldering quietly away, packing the suddenly shrunken streets and the now overpopulated gothic graveyards, resurrecting and overloading the forgotten sewers, spreading litter and stench into the adjacent countryside.⁶⁹

Rulers since the seventeenth century had attempted to address the overcrowded and insalubrious condition of Paris piecemeal, with varying degrees of success, but none had attempted the necessary city-wide scheme which necessarily meant destroying large segments of the old city to make room for modernity.⁷⁰

David Harvey describes the economic situation in Paris in 1850 as a straightjacket binding the city – surpluses of capital and labor were unable to come together profitably because older structures of manufacturing, commerce, finance, and labor relations could not reconcile the sophisticated methods of production and

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⁷⁰ Prior to the nineteenth century, much of the “improvement” to the urban fabric of Paris was in the forms of monuments to the ruler’s own glory. Louis XIV created the grands boulevards on the right bank, from the foundations of the city walls, but focused the majority of his attention on Versailles. Louis XV added the Place de la Concorde and the Avenue des Champs Elysées. The Rue de Rivoli was begun by Napoleon, extended by Charles X, and finally completed in 1858 by Haussmann.
consumption brought about by capitalism. The second constraint was the medieval
infrastructure of the city within which these practices functioned. Like the city and its
sporadic renovation since the seventeenth century, systems of production had been
updated piecemeal, attempting to adapt old methods to new economic problems, rather
than confronting a full-fledged overhaul. The revolution of 1848 had compounded these
problems leading to a deep recession. Maxime du Camp compared the Parisian economy
after 1848 to a patient in critical condition: “Industry, commerce, and finance had all
fallen into a comatose state, near death. Though the forecasters preached confidence, we
existed in a depressed anxiety from which we could not escape. Frightened capital
(wealth) hid.” The economy needed to be resuscitated, but without revolutionizing the
space within which it all operated, only stopgap measures would be applied. There were
significant infrastructural obstacles preventing a capitalist economy from functioning
correctly; in turn, the unhealthy national economy drew more people from the provinces
to Paris and compounded the miseries of the already overpopulated city.

Critics of the form of Haussmann's Paris

Among those who targeted Haussmann's funding methods, business practices, and
the relocation of the working class to the banlieue, there were those who also criticized

71 Harvey, Capital of Modernity, 93-95.
72 My translation of the original French, “L’industrie, le commerce, la finance étaient tombés dans un état
comateux qui ressemblait de bien près à la mort. Les clairvoyants avaient beau prêcher la confiance, on
vivait dans une sorte d’inquiétude somnolente dont on ne parvenait pas à sortir. Le capital effrayé se
73 Harvey, Capital of Modernity, 93-95. Only six bridges traversed the Seine in 1848 and those who
wanted to cross had to pay tolls; winding narrow pedestrian streets formed inefficient and dangerous
routes to the inadequate central market. Furthermore, department stores had begun to propagate a retail
model over local artisanal craftsmanship. How would, for instance, a department store be commercially
successful without an enormous city block to occupy, without direct roads to deliver consumers to its
door, or without the railroads to deliver raw materials from far-flung craftsmen.
the form that the new city would take.\textsuperscript{74} In his canonical study of art in Paris during and after Haussmann, \textit{The Painting of Modern Life} (1984), T.J. Clark explains, “those who looked back to the life of the \textit{quartier} were fond of calling it the real Paris, which a false one was destroying.”\textsuperscript{75} Clark presents an extensive argument in this chapter that some of Haussmann's critics were responding to the disorienting experience of a city in flux. For instance, many critics, Victor Hugo included, focused their ire on what they thought would be the ultimate result of Haussmannization: the alignment and regularization of all the twisted streets in Paris. This created a mythic nostalgia for the medieval city, even as parts of it remained extant.

For these critics, the \textit{real} Paris was old Paris, already seen through the rosy lens of nostalgia even as Haussmann's work was continuing. Those who took up this line of attack – preferring the charm of the medieval city over and above the new rational Paris – left out the insalubrious conditions of the streets that had plagued the city for decades. Instead they focused on the form of the city, pitting the quaint and irregular old \textit{quartiers} against the straight and uniform boulevards being constructed by Haussmann. For example, decades before Haussmann was prefect, Victor Hugo wrote a passage in \textit{The Hunchback of Notre Dame} (1831) that disdainfully anticipated the regularity and symmetry for which Haussmannized Paris would become known.

Add to these [structures whose purpose is not legible from the outside] many a pretty street, amusing and diversified, like the Rue de Rivoli; and we need not despair that Paris shall one day present, as seen in a balloon flight, that richness of outline and opulence of detail, that peculiar

\textsuperscript{74} Harvey, \textit{Capital of Modernity}, 99; Clark, \textit{The Painting of Modern Life}, 43-46; Sutcliffe \textit{Autumn of Central Paris}, 184-85.

\textsuperscript{75} Clark, \textit{The Painting of Modern Life}, 60.
diversity of aspect, that something surpassingly grand in the simple and striking in the beautiful, which distinguishes a draught-board.  

Hugo's criticism of the Rue de Rivoli, a project of Napoleon I, reveals an apprehension that the Paris of the near future will resemble a chessboard more than the “inextricable web of streets fantastically ravelled [to form] one complete whole” and clearly indicates which form of urbanism he preferred. But his fear, though well-founded, was premature since the Rue de Rivoli would only be fully completed as part of Haussmann's projects.

Likewise, Jules and Edmond Goncourt, writing as Haussmann was remaking the city, express a sense of disorientation within and alienation from the city they knew. “I am a stranger to what is coming, to what is, as I am to these new boulevards without turnings, without chance perspectives, implacable in their straight lines.” This focus on straight lines, and loss of chance perspectives was a common criticism of Haussmann.

Charles Yriarte, writer for Paris-Guide in 1867 made an even more desperate claim, namely that

The straight line has killed the picturesque, the unexpected […] There are no more coats of many colours, no more extravagant songs and extraordinary speeches. The open-air dentist, the strolling musicians, the ragpicker philosophers, the jugglers, the Northern Hercules, the hurdy-gurdy players, the sickly snake-swallowers, and the men with seals who said 'papa’ – they have all emigrated. The street existed only in Paris and the street is dying.

Victor Hugo, Charles Baudelaire, Émile Zola, and Jules and Edmond Goncourt, just to name some of the most well-known, all expressed anxiety over Haussmann's

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77 Hugo, Hunchback, 173.
reforms, and nostalgia for the old city, despite its known unsuitability for modern life. These men, in particular, were distressed by the form of new Paris – straight lines, regularity, predictability, a seeming loss of chance and surprise that one would have found among the twisting warren of alleys that made up old Paris. Were the aesthetics of the new quartiers in comparison to the old really so disturbing? What exactly was the object of the nostalgic longing? What did the loss of these twisting passages really represent?

Victorien Sardou, in his comedic play Maison neuve from 1866 gets to the essence of why the new boulevards were so disturbing.

It is the old Paris that is lost, the real Paris! A city which was narrow, unhealthy, insufficient, but picturesque, varied, charming, full of memories. […] Nothing left of the things which once constituted our own little world, a world apart; a world of expertise, judgement and refinement […] Nevertheless, it isn't Paris…and there are no Parisians any longer.80

Paris was metaphorically destroyed because the form of the old city, and the memories contained within, was in danger. The familiar aspects of the city were what defined the real city for these individuals. The strange new shape of the neighborhoods, and the new people which would presumably inherit them defined a false Paris.

I want to make clear, however, that not all Parisians experienced the nostalgia that Clark identifies, especially during the period on which he focuses – as the new Paris was in the making, the early to middle 1860s. Wholesale criticism of Haussmann's work was not yet a matter of popular public discourse, and would not become so until the 1880s and 1890s. David Harvey suggests that the literal and metaphorical dust had to settle

before Parisians could fully comprehend and (belatedly) resist Haussmannization.\textsuperscript{81} According to Sutcliffe, the critics represented a minority of the Parisian population.

“Most people admired Haussmann's boulevards, because at first they made a welcome change from the twisting tortuous maze of streets which had previously characterized central Paris.”\textsuperscript{82} It goes without saying that the new boulevards were a popular leisure destination for most Parisians, even for Baudelaire, whose opinion of the new streets was ambiguous at best. Though he mourned the passing of old Paris openly, he also praised the showcase of modern life on the new boulevards. For instance, Baudelaire's poem, “The Eyes of the Poor,” while presenting a critique of boulevard culture, also indicates that rich and poor alike flocked to experience the spectacle of the new streets.

**Developing Connections between Empty Streets and Nostalgia**

What was the imagined result of Haussmannization on the old *quartiers*? Surprisingly, it was not that the areas would be completely leveled and replaced with new structures. Instead the popular fear was that they would simply be emptied out of all social relations. Implicit within the sentimental observations by critics above is an underlying sense that Haussmann is killing the *quartier*, not destroying it physically, but affecting a slow death, preventing the established social networks from functioning healthily. In Yriarte's article cited above, the list of bizarre street spectacles is exemplary of a healthy street.\textsuperscript{83} Healthy neighborhoods, those of real Paris were mythologized into


\textsuperscript{82} Sutcliffe, *The Autumn of Central Paris*, 190.

\textsuperscript{83} Clark compiles a list from guidebooks and journals of the types of people, essentially forming a neighborhood network, one would expect to find on a healthy street in the 1850s: “Flower girls and faggot sellers; water carriers, errand boys, old-clothes dealers, organ grinders, pedlars, bailiffs, acrobats, wrestlers, rag-and-bone men, bill stickers, lamp-lighters, porters for the market and the shops, porters for hire by the hour; coachmen, window cleaners, dog washers and dog trimmers, knife grinders, booksellers, coal merchants, carters, prostitutes, odd-job men, glaziers, itinerant plumbers, menders of
veritable carnivals of activity, where constant interaction with colorful and banal personalities alike made up the fabric of daily existence. In the face of this characterization, then, the implications of empty streets are that the quartier is dead. An anonymous pamphleteer writing under the pseudonym “Haussmann's Jeremiah” warned the prefect about the image of the city that he was creating: “You will live to see the city desolate and bleak […] The roads will then become gloomy and deserted […] and solitude, the ancient goddess of the deserts, will come to preside over this new empire.”

For critics who focused their ire on Haussmann's aesthetics, the sure outcome for the central quartiers was not just physical desolation, but social isolation.

The question at hand, then, is how much did the quartiers in fact change after Haussmann was finished with the central city? Had the working class become completely exiled? Were the workshops closed for good? How different were the central neighborhoods after the dust had settled? According to Clark, the social structures of the quartier were not as different as residents had anticipated them to be.

On the face of things, the new image [of Paris] did not look entirely different from the old ones. It still seemed to propose that the city was one place, in some sense belonging to those who lived in it. But it belonged to them now simply as an image, something occasionally and casually consumed in spaces expressly designed for the purpose – promenades, panoramas, outings on Sundays, great exhibitions, and official parades. It could not be had elsewhere, apparently; it was no longer part of those crockery or shoes; sellers of licorice water and lemon juice, of herbs, of baskets, umbrellas, shoelaces, chickweed, and whips; puppet shows, street singers, somnambulists, dogs that played dominoes, Scottish jugglers, baton twirlers, savages with stones round their necks, India-rubber men, and human skeletons. 'Sellers of ink, fish, potatoes by the bushel, peat, birdseed; chimney sweeps, saltimbanques, charlatans, stone breakers, open-air jewelers, sixpenny stall holders; all of them shouting, singing, modulating their apostrophes and descanting their sonorous invitations on the scale that most sets one's teeth on edge.'” (Painting of Modern Life, 50-51). Clark indicates that the guidebook writers and journalists attempt to outdo each other with the longest and most comprehensive list, which created a sense of liveliness on the streets that was exaggerated beyond reality (51).

patterns of action and appropriation which made up the spectators' everyday lives. Clark describes the quartiers as being even more crowded after Haussmann than before—flats were subdivided to make up for the dwellings that had been demolished, and workshops maintained their craft or trade. Not all working-class men and women were exiled to the banlieue, which was another popular refrain of critics. There was certainly drifting of residents who were obliged to relocate to the edge of the city, but this was tempered by the working class residents who obstinately refused to be displaced.

The appearance of emptiness and desolation of Marville's photograph, then, bespeaks a withdrawal and vacancy that was simply not representative of the reality of life in these areas at any point before, during, or after Haussmannization. I have argued that Marville's images are empty due to his choice to use a long shutter speed and stopped-down aperture to attempt to record the range of tones in the shadowy streets that he photographed. These photographs are in fact so empty and still that the residents of the neighborhood appear to have already vacated the condemned premises. One imagines the demolition crews to be waiting only for the photographer to cap his lens before tearing down the structures, as if the documentation and the destruction were carried out on the same day.

Clark, 36. Incidentally, the language with which Clark describes the new image of Paris anticipates Nora's binary categorizations of milieu de mémoire and lieu de mémoire. In this instance, the patterns of everyday life, and with that, the appropriation of urban space according to daily social relations was a very literal milieu de mémoire, an environment of memory. City spaces, whether a park, a theater, a monument, a vocation, or an entire quartier, were now designed for specific consumption rather than remaining an organic part of inhabitants' relations to their everyday spaces.

Clark identifies five loci on which most criticism of Haussmann focused: (1) his business practices were wasteful and dishonest, (2) the resulting new areas were regular, empty, and boring, (3) purposeful eviction of the working class from the city center, (4) in place of one Paris, Haussmann had made two by raising rents in the city too high for the working class, who then had to relocate to the banlieue, (5) the new city was one of vice, vulgarity, and display. (43-46).

Ibid., 53.
Marville's images present a vision of old Paris as already desolate and vacated, which many critics believed would be the result of Haussmann's work in the central city. Abandoned streets would have been symptomatic of a dying neighborhood, and were what critics imagined and feared would be the results of Haussmann's work. The stark appearance of the streets in Marville's photographs, caused by long exposures to properly expose the plate for the dark passages, announces a metaphorical vacancy that was anticipated to be the real result of Haussmann's work. This connection relates Roland Barthes's perception of the future anterior tense of some photographs: this will be and this has been. If the public works projects of the Second Empire continued on the imagined trajectory, this will have happened.\footnote{Barthes, \textit{Camera Lucida}, 96. I want to clarify this point by beginning to introduce the audience for these images which will be addressed more comprehensively in chapter three. I do not mean to suggest that Marville's images were in direct discourse with the literary critics Clark cites. Marville's images were not displayed to the public until the Exposition Universelle in 1878. While it is not impossible that some of the above critics saw images such as these in the archives, the primary viewers of Marville's photographs would have been officials of the state. Rather, I simply compare the two interpretations as a means by which to evidence how for later viewers, in Atget's time, emptiness on the streets could be invested with nostalgia that was manifest in the 1860s.}

A rhetoric of empty neighborhoods, linked with a nostalgia for a way of life that had passed or was imagined to be passing away, was in place among literary circles even before Haussmann's projects had been completed, and before residents knew how, or whether, the new shape of Paris would be different from the old. Marville's photographic practice was not likely a direct response to pervasive rupture in social practice. The photographs themselves, however, eerily resonate with accusations by certain critics that Haussmann would kill the \textit{quartier} and leave in his wake dead husks of the previous living neighborhood.
Part II: The Terrible Year, 1870-71: The Prussian Siege of Paris and the Commune

Clearly Haussmannization caused a rupture of sorts, if not in actual social practice as imagined by certain critics, at least in Parisians' manner of conceiving their relation to the spaces of their city. Coupled with Haussmann and Napoleon III in the popular memory of Parisians in the 1870s, is the Prussian Siege of Paris and the Commune, a literal disruption in the form of urban warfare. Victor Hugo declared, “Bismarck finished what Haussmann began,”\textsuperscript{89} expressing a common feeling that the Second Empire really ended when Paris was blockaded by the Prussians. Following Hollis Clayson's model for her book-length study of art during the Prussian Siege of Paris, \textit{Paris in Despair} (2002), I examine a radical change in the visual representation of central-city neighborhoods and residents as a function of the condition of urban warfare. Furthermore, I suggest the possible implications of brief social and pictorial inversions.

The photograph of a barricade at the Rue Faubourg Saint-Antoine (Figure 10) typifies a visual trope that developed during the Commune.\textsuperscript{90} This is a significantly different image from the pictures of barricades from the 1848 revolt, for instance \textit{Barricades Before the Attack, Rue Saint-Maur} (Figure 11). The daguerreotype did not register the builders or defenders of the barricade because of a long exposure and the daguerreotype, which was photographed from a building, exhibited the panorama of the street from above. In contrast, the photographer of the group at the Rue Faubourg Saint-

\textsuperscript{90} Christine Lapostolle, “De la barricade à la ruine,” \textit{La recherche photographique} 6 (June 1989): 21. Lapostolle identifies five themes of Commune photography: ruins of Paris, barricades, the fall of the Vendôme Column, portraits of Communards after their imprisonment in Chantiers and \textit{Crimes de la Commune}, the set of photomontages published by Eugène Appert after the suppression of the Commune. Each of these categories could be studied at length on their own, however for the length and focus of my study, I will only talk about barricade photos.
Antoine is at ground-level with the blockade. Formally, one might argue that the photograph is not radically different from Marville's. As in Marville's Rue des Moulins, the camera is at street-level pointing down a canon-shot avenue with buildings on either side receding into deep space. Most obviously, though, the barricade pictures show what is missing from Marville's photographs: the diverse residents of Paris populating their quartiers.\(^1\)

There are many oddities in this photograph, however, that strike the viewer as slightly off, almost theatrical. The men have assumed what they imagine to be military postures, pointing guns at the camera and blowing a trumpet for a rally cry, as if they would be fighting again as soon as the shutter snaps shut. The man in the center of the barricade appears to be leading a charge of the two rows of kneeling men arranged in an orderly, symmetrical way, so all are visible. Whereas in previous street photographs, people would continue about their daily business, walking through the frame but not pausing long enough to make a permanent impression on the emulsion, everyone in photographs like these defiantly stood their ground before the lens and faced the camera proudly, posturing and posing for the camera, and for history. No longer casual passersby, ignoring and being ignored by the camera, they purposefully inhabit their space, and also dictate how they will be remembered. Why did the revolutionaries of Paris devise this rather peculiar mode of photography for commemorating the Commune? More importantly, why was this visual code eradicated after the Commune? This turbulent

\(^{1}\) I find it important to qualify this image with a note about its subjects. Though this Commune photo has only men in it, it is common for barricades to be populated with women, children, even pets within the photographs. My choice of this picture for discussion, instead of one with a more diverse social group, is equally due to availability of high-quality images, and the obvious theatricality of this picture.
Figure 11. *La Barricade de la rue Saint-Maur-Popincourt après l'attaque par les troupes du général Lamoricière, le lundi 26 juin 1848.* Thibault, 26 June 1848. Daguerreotype, 12.7 x 10.4 cm. Musée D'Orsay, Paris.
period in Parisian history is complex and cannot be sufficiently analyzed here, but I will begin with a brief summary of the conflicts as they relate specifically to Parisian spaces.

In the short span of one year, France saw the declaration of war against Prussia, the fall of the Second Empire and proclamation of a Government of National Defense in the infancy of the subsequent Third Republic, and the four-month long siege of Paris by the Prussians ending in capitulation by the interim government. Finally, there was the revolutionary Paris Commune, the unofficial and short-lived ruling entity that filled the power vacuum left by the deflated Government of National Defense. The Commune ended on May 28, 1871 when Parisians were brutally suppressed by the National Guard which had withdrawn to Versailles in March. Between twenty and forty thousand individuals were killed during the *semaine sanglante* in an attempt to eradicate the revolutionaries from the city.

The Prussian Siege, which lasted from September 1870 to January 1871 was not a siege in the conventional sense; rather the Prussian army blockaded Paris for four months, keeping bourgeois and working-class residents alike sequestered without the food, supplies, information, and commodities that would normally flood the city.  

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92 Hollis Clayson notes the relative absence of photographs attributable to the period of the Siege itself. For the most part, photographers were either making portraits of men and women in uniform, the commuting soldiers, or attempting to image battlefields (370-71). I would also note several other possible factors for the lack of Siege photography. Firstly, Parisians attempted to go about their daily life during the Siege to the extent possible. Until the bombardments began, less than a month before Thiers surrendered, there would have been no changes to the urban *spaces* of Paris as a result of the Siege. Secondly, Paris was unable to receive supplies from outlying areas for five months. Once photographic chemistry was depleted, there would be no replenishment. The lack of images could simply mean that there were no materials for recording such. David Shafer relates a peculiar anecdote that may account for a reduction in supplies: rehydrated albumin was reportedly used as an egg substitute during the food shortages (*The Paris Commune*, [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005], 49). Thirdly, since the Commune literally followed on the heels of the Siege, many of the photographs of Paris in ruins taken after the suppression of the Commune stand in for the destruction of both events as one single period of war.
alone was isolated from the rest of the country creating a strong sense of solidarity among those who had not fled the city before access was severed. Alisa Luxenberg explains that during the Siege, class may have been a less divisive issue than at other times: “Seeing their better-off neighbors also reduced to eating rats and suffering other privations instilled in many Parisians a sense of solidarity against the Prussians making the siege as well as the French government that later betrayed them in order to win the provincial vote.” Not all scholars support this utopian view that social strata essentially melted away during the Siege. David Shafer argues that the relative availability or scarcity of food during the Siege was an matter of class. The print subtitled “Preparing for the defence [sic] of Paris” (Figure 12) is perhaps a more realistic scenario, where the bourgeoisie lend their “moral support” by watching the rare spectacle of workers preparing the fortifications.

The Prussian army did not expect Parisians to hold the city for as long as they did. When isolation did not work, the Prussians began attacking the city in earnest, launching projectiles beginning in early January, 1871. Again the invading army did not anticipate Parisians' fierce defense of their city and resistance to surrender. Victor Hugo, having returned to Paris from exile just before it had been completely closed off, addressed the people of Paris in a manner indicating a personal identification with the very urban fabric

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94 Shafer proposes that the infamous consumption of the animals at the Jardin des Plantes, the Paris Zoo, was not necessary to prevent starvation of Parisians. He admits that killing the animals was a humane way to prevent the animals starvation, but that food scarcity had not reached a level critical enough to make the consumption of the menagerie necessary for people's survival. Rather, he argues that it was a novelty for the bourgeois to eat the exotic animals, “a reification of their privileged position within the social hierarchy.” Shafer, Paris Commune, 50.
95 Ibid., 52.
of their home: “We are no longer flesh, we are stone. I no longer know my name, I am called France, Paris, wall!”66 During the Siege, then, there was an intense personal identification by Parisians of all classes with the brick-and-mortar of Paris to be safeguarded at all costs.

Adolphe Thiers, President under the interim Government of National Defense, capitulated to the Prussian forces on January 28, 1871 ending the siege and instituting an uneasy peace, during which Paris was opened again to trade and communication. After a symbolic two-day occupation of Paris by Prussian troops, Thiers attempted to relieve Parisians of the guns and canons they still held. The Comité Central, the political party which spurred the revolution, declared that the army had no rights to the arms because they had been cast and paid for by the Parisian population. This was the impetus for revolt the Comité Central had been waiting for, and they wasted no time initiating the Paris Commune, the three month experiment in municipal self-rule by a primarily working class population.97

It would be safe to say that one goal of Parisian Communards was to reclaim the city after the injustices they experienced at the hands of the Second Empire. According to Shafer, during Haussmannization

Paris's working class was a consideration only to the extent that the make-over would lead to greater control over the banlieue and greater difficulties for insurgents to erect barricades across the wide boulevards. In fact, one of the chief motivations for the transformation was to make Paris more hospitable to the bourgeoisie […] Rents rose exponentially, driving the working population further away from central Paris and

97 The bourgeoisie had largely fled the city after the Siege, seemingly in anticipation of the civil war that was to follow. See Przybyski, “Moving Pictures,” 256; Boime, Art in an age of civil struggle, 738.
towards its periphery, increasing their commuting time while literally and figuratively shifting them to the margins of Parisian life.⁹⁸ Many scholars argue that the Commune represented the workers' desire to reoccupy the city from which some had been evicted.⁹⁹ In a footnote, Clark quotes J. Rougerie's musings about the purpose of the Commune at its inception: “The Commune of 1871 will be in large part the retaking of central Paris, the true Paris […] by the exiles of the quartiers extérieurs, of Paris by its true Parisians, the reconquest of the City by the City.”¹⁰⁰ The rhetoric of a 'true Paris' and 'true Parisians,' in opposition to the false ones that had been set in place during the Second Empire, is reminiscent of the longings of Haussmann's critics for a quartier that retains its long-standing social relations. Likewise, it is expressive of Communards' pride of place, of longing for their neighborhood network, whether they had been personally forced to move to the banlieue or not.

The barricade photographs represent a momentary change in photographic practice, a hybridized photo with signifiers of group-portraiture, street view, and costume tableau, that would not have manifested without a significant upending of the established social relations and conception of their place in the city. In her excellent essay “Moving Pictures: Photography, Narrative, and the Paris Commune of 1871,” Jeannene Przyblyski suggests that these photographs represent the beginnings of a reportage sensibility, or the attempts by the photo's commissioners and producers to record events as they occur, and to develop a visual language for communicating the immediacy of historical events as

⁹⁸ Shafer, The Paris Commune, 11.
⁹⁹ See Boime, Art in an age of Civil Struggle, 738; Przyblyski, “Moving Pictures,” and “Revolution at a Standstill,” 64.
¹⁰⁰ Clark, The Painting of Modern Life, 276n61.
“[T]hese photographs speak to the growing tendency throughout the 1860s and 1870s to turn the camera upon contemporary events, as well as to the popular desire that the camera, cumbersome and slow as it was, be there as significant happenings were occurring.”101 In short, they are intentionally laying claim to what Przyblyski calls “a place of visibility in the iconography of urban Paris.”102 Not only did the inhabitants finally assert their presence on their streets, literally and photographically, they also justified their right to be pictured therein, in whatever manner they chose.

**Agency of Subjects in Barricade Photographs**

The barricade photograph exists at the intersection of posed portrait and historical document.103 Through what Przyblyski terms “narrative compression,” all of the key elements in the story of the Commune are present within these barricade photographs to attempt defining a significant moment or a photographic shorthand. First, the barricade, the uniquely Parisian symbol of insurrection, protects individual streets and homes from menacing, and historically governmental, forces. The barricade is built from the street where they stand, with whatever material is around, lending it symbolic force as the physical fabric of the neighborhood protects them.104 Secondly, the people. They dress in brass-buttoned jackets, pointing their weapons at the camera, or perhaps the viewer, making it clear that none whom they do not wish will pass. One is under the impression that if the man on top of the barricade drops his arm, the troop will fire, placing the

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103 Przyblyski, “Moving Pictures,” 257.
104 The barricades were likely only symbols at this point, because the canon had been invented in 1830, and would make short work of breaking down the obstruction. Additionally, Przyblyski cites an anecdote reported by Maxime DuCamp that it was not unusual for a group to erect a barricade for no other purpose than to have a photograph made, after which it would be dismantled. “Revolution at a Standstill,” 59.
viewer in a precarious position. Thirdly, the neighborhood stretched behind the barricade. This is why they are fighting, to protect their street, their home, their families. The story, then, is clear. Should it be necessary, these individuals will give their lives to protect their place in the city.

Bourgeois critics of photography, especially Baudelaire, thought that photography would lower the standards of art as it fell into the hands of ordinary working people. However, photographic portraits were not, during the Second Empire, something that washer women, démolissoeurs, or street vendors could generally afford. Photographic portraits were primarily a way for the bourgeoisie to represent themselves.105 When these workers were made visible in photographs, the most common way of picturing them was in their work uniform, with the tools of their trade, recreating a taxonomy of modern “worker types” that would have been familiar to viewers of popular prints.106 (Figure 13) Therefore, by and large, until the Commune, working class individuals had only been photographed by the bourgeoisie, who reproduced well-known visual codes that reinforced the class divisions among them. Barricade photographs allowed the predominately working-class Communards to represent themselves on their own terms and on their own turf.

The Communards were aware that pictures could also be a site of resistance, exerting their presence in the face of a long and conspicuous absence. In her seminal essay on African-American photography, “In Our Glory,” bell hooks writes, “All colonized and subjugated people who, by way of resistance, create an oppositional

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105 Ibid., 62-63.
106 Boime, Art in an Age of Civil Struggle, 739.
subculture within the framework of domination, recognize that the field of representation [. . .] is a site of ongoing struggle.” 107 When a colonizer, or anyone exerting power over another group, controls how the group is represented, the subjected will never gain power. The ability for Communards to picture themselves and each other as individuals rather than as caricatures or generalized types, formed a site of resistance and a disruption of bourgeois control over the working class. Just as Communards desired to exert their presence in the city, so the trope of barricade portraits emphasized their presence, their unwillingness to abandon their neighborhood, and their decision to represent themselves in government, and in images. At this juncture, the urban spaces of Paris were owned and defended by local inhabitants as spaces of contestation. Rather than nostalgically pining after old buildings that had been destroyed, they simply took over that which remained, albeit for a very brief period, and tried to remake the city in their image. 108 Likewise, their photographs of themselves, of each other, make the same claim for pictures – they no longer wanted to be peripheralized or represented as motion smudges, a visual sacrifice or mechanical aberration that viewers simply accepted as a shortcoming of the photographic process. 109 They attempted to move from a realm of invisibility to one of presence, assertion, and entitlement. Photography allowed the Communards to

108 Before the Commune was crushed, they performed numerous acts that have historically been called vandalism, but that indicate the desire for remaking a less stratified Paris. The Vendôme Column, a monument to Napoleon I was pulled down as a despised commemoration of values to which the Communards did not subscribe. Clark argues that the vandalism in the city during 1870 and 1871 was a reaction against the new image of Paris. He groups actions against effigies of the Emperor and Empress, the effacement of “Boulevard Haussmann” on a street sign, the smashing of street furniture and the ruin of a map of Paris drawn up by Napoleon, Haussmann, and their engineers as a direct and pointed reaction to their urban planning scheme that had destroyed old Paris. Painting of Modern Live, 41-42.
commemorate their actions, to memorialize the solidarity they had with those in their own quartier, and to make claims about their place within the city.

This pictorial mode was very much a product of its time, its place, and its subjects. It originated because these people had a statement to proclaim, and they recognized the power of place and of images in communicating their cause. The leaders of the Third Republic recognized this as well, and began censoring the images, invoking a law from 1852 requiring commercial prints to be approved by the Dépôt Légal before they could be distributed or sold.\textsuperscript{110} The lengths to which the Third Republic went to suppress the memory of these events, to be considered in the next chapter, provides an unspoken acknowledgement of the symbolic potency of these images and of the ideology of their producers.

\textsuperscript{110} Luxenberg, “Creating Désastres,” 116.
CHAPTER THREE:  
EUGÈNE ATGET, VIEUX PARIS, AND LIEUX DE MÉMOIRE

Formally, Atget's style seems to be an organic extension of that of the nineteenth-century photographers introduced in the first chapter of this study. Indeed, Atget and Marville are often grouped together as individuals working during the early days of photography. However, Atget created the majority of the work for which he is well known in the first three decades of the twentieth century, nearly one hundred years after Daguerre's Rue du Temple, and more than fifty years after Marville's photographs for the archives of the Second Empire. The pairing of Atget and Marville, while slightly ahistorical, is not without merit. In fact, Atget's project shared the same concerns as that of Marville: to document and preserve for the archive the state of the city before it changed irrevocably.

Atget's picture of the Hôtel de Sens (Figure 14), a fifteenth-century hôtel particulier in the Marais, is from his second series, “Art in Old Paris.” He started this series in 1897-98 and continued adding to it until 1927. It was the largest serial group and generally documented the unique architecture and decoration of old Paris. The clientele

\[\text{\textsuperscript{111}}\text{ It is primarily non-specialists who subscribe to this incorrect assumption, which supports my argument. Based on formal similarities only, both Marville and Atget reproduce the look of very early photography, when street motion was erased due to technological limitation. See for instance: Elisabeth Parimet, “Diplomatics and Institutional Photos.” American Archivist 59 (Fall 1996): 484 and George Baker, “Photography between Narrativity and Stasis,” October 76 (Spring 1996): 82.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{112}}\text{ According to the Bibliothèque National de France, the negative number for this image is 3658. There is a seeming discrepancy in Hambourg's explanation of the catalog numbers for the Art in Old Paris series; it is unclear whether the series began with the negative numbered 3000 or 3500 (see Hambourg “Eugène Atget, 1857-1927: The Structure of the Work,” pp. 112 and 118 respectively). In either case, this photograph was made relatively early in the history of this serial group since by 1927 the group ended with negative number 6721.}\]
Figure 14. *Hôtel de Sens, Rue de Fauconnier*. Eugène Atget, 1899. Albumen print from glass negative, 20.5 x 17.5 cm. Bibliothèque National de France, Paris.
for these images were artists, artisans and architects who needed historical models, as well as public institutions, publishers, and private collectors.\textsuperscript{113} Atget composed the image nearly frontally with the structure situated comfortably within the frame, the best vantage point for appreciating the unique architectural details of the building. Atget accentuated the morphological aspects that rendered this hôtel valuable – namely the peaks of the turrets and pointed arches – by the upward-tilt of the camera. The height of the building is accentuated by an ample foreground and empty street stretching toward the viewer and a street-level point of view.

Despite its innocuous composition and subject matter, I argue that this photograph embodies several key themes that contribute to my argument. The convergence of these numerous and interrelating motifs contribute to both the signification of the photograph to its contemporary viewers and to its existence as a \textit{lieu de mémoire}. In order to approach an understanding of what this photograph signified to contemporary viewers, and how Atget reproduced and manipulated the conventions of street photography, one must consider both the popular \textit{fin-de-siècle} revival of interest in medieval history and the role of photographic documents in nineteenth-century France. The medieval revival manifested in innumerable ways, not the least of which was interest in authentic architecture, reproductions of medieval objects, and themed medieval spectacles. Furthermore, medieval culture and its physical remnants, in the form of buildings, stories, or objects, were popularly imagined to be able to transmit moral lessons from the originating culture to an open-minded reader. Photo-documents participated in this imagined access to past cultures in a similar manner. I will continue to

\textsuperscript{113} Hambourg, “Structure,” 112.
return to this photograph throughout the chapter as I enumerate how Atget's interpretation of the *Hôtel de Sens* participates directly in this popular interest in all aspects of *vieux* culture and as I consider the naturalization of photographs as containers of knowledge.

Part One: Architecture as Containers of Knowledge and Memory

The unpleasant task of reunifying the splintered residents of Paris fell to the largely conservative leaders of the Third Republic. The new regime had to recover not only from the war with Prussia, but also from the progressive reforms successfully instituted by the Paris Commune: the separation of church and state, equality among male and female workers, and expanded rights for the working class, among them. One strategy to garner support for a more controlled and disciplined ideology was the demonization of the Second Empire – a regime that many felt was characterized by hedonistic excess and materialism. The leaders of the Third Republic, some of whom were so conservative that they wanted to reinstitute a monarchy, needed to distance their own policies from those of both the Second Empire and the short-lived but liberal Commune. Concurrently, they needed to complete some of the public works projects initiated by Napoleon III.

The symbolic link designating Napoleon III as a scapegoat for the horrors of the Siege and Commune was not a difficult one to forge. For instance, the burned-out shell of the Tuileries Palace was left standing until 1883 – more than a decade after the suppression of the Commune. The city was left with a concrete reminder of the disastrous end of the Second Empire in the ruins of the Tuileries Palace. The decision to delay clearance of the ruin could be interpreted two ways. Most obviously, it is a reminder of
the consequences of insurrection: the Tuileries Palace, the Hôtel de Ville, where all of the city's public records had been stored, and other sites throughout Paris were torched during the street fighting that ended the Commune. But the husk could also function as a moralizing monument to the excess of the Second Empire. The integration of the Tuileries and Louvre into one super-palace was the former Emperor's pet project, yet after all the modernization, the place lay in ruins.

According to historian Colette Wilson, many who lived through the events of 1870-71 saw the Commune as the “final bloody and apocalyptic conclusion to the fall of the Second Empire.”¹¹⁴ Wilson cites a series of articles published in 1878 in *Le Monde illustré*, a conservative journal, which further helped to cement the symbolic link between the destruction wrought by Haussmann and Napoleon III and that by the Siege and Commune in French, and particularly Parisian, popular imagination.¹¹⁵ These articles, pseudonymously written by “Walker,” contrast the orderly, moral, rational Paris repaired by the Third Republic with the decadent and illusory climate under Napoleon III. Public works projects, like the construction of new schools, hospitals, churches, libraries, and the continued modernization of old *quartiers* were highlighted for readers as improvements for the city rather than projects for monetary gain, a pointed reference to what had become the most popular motivation for the works of the Second Empire.¹¹⁶

It is a seeming paradox that Haussmann's modernization schemes were demonized even during their completion under the Third Republic. The Third Republic appropriated

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¹¹⁵ Wilson, “Memory and the Politics of Forgetting,” 48-51.
¹¹⁶ Ibid., 49-51.
the results of Haussmann's projects as part of the virtues of Paris under the new government while dodging association with the unpopular and traumatic demolitions of the Second Empire. The leaders of the Third Republic undertook the effacement of the memory of the revolutionary Commune and that of the Second Empire as the same project.

**Architecture, Memory, and Nationalism for Morale Recovery**

A second tactic to aid in morale recovery was the revival of a mythical common point of origin for the nation as a whole – namely medieval France. Andreas Huyssen notes that such attempts were not only about accessing and celebrating the past, they were ways to give stability to the present. “[T]he main concern of the nineteenth-century nation-states was to mobilize and monumentalize national and universal pasts so as to legitimize and give meaning to the present and to envision the future: culturally, politically, socially.”¹¹⁷ This tactic had been employed in the post-Revolutionary period as well to create a sense of national unity and to prevent the destruction of architecture which was either religious or royalist. Relating the structure to the nation's *cultural* past, instead of the religious or political past, and inculcating a sense of responsibility for national history, saved many medieval buildings from destruction by vandals. Historians during the Revolutionary period linked the architecture of the past with the imagined memory of the bygone era during which it was created; this effort, by the nineteenth century, meant that buildings were popularly thought to be *monuments vivants* and containers for cultural memories.¹¹⁸

At the end of the eighteenth century when France was attempting to reconcile its monarchist past with its revolutionary present, historians employed nationalist architecture as a means of bridging the gap between these seemingly disparate ideologies. In the face of the possible destruction of historical architecture, such as gothic churches or the châteaux of the deposed nobility, Abbé Grégoire set out to symbolically link the buildings to the patrimony of the French nation in 1794. Grégoire attempted to wrest the decadent architecture from the memory of past royal regimes, focusing instead on morphology and evolution of a national style rather than emphasizing patronage and purpose. Essentially, he was attempting nothing less than to convert architecture into mnemonic devices, not for the ancien régime, but for the general greatness of the nation's ancestors, that would unify the nation and create a collective desire to protect important structures from abuse.119

Independently of Grégoire but during the same post-revolutionary period, other historians including Alexandre Lenoir and Constantin François Volney studied artifacts and ancient megaliths throughout France with similar aims.120 The country had a wealth of ancient and medieval structures that had largely been ignored by scholars or condemned as fabrications of decadent monarchs. Jacques-Antoine Dulaure, who

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119 Ibid., 22-23.
120 Murphy draws attention to Anthony Vidler's recontextualization of Grégoire. “Anthony Vidler has [disputed] the idea that Grégoire campaigned for the preservation of historic monuments … out of a disinterested love of old buildings, and he posits Grégoire as a linguistic and nationalistic 'revolutionary' who shifted the terms in which monuments were discussed to show that vandalism was a counter-revolutionary activity that robbed France of its history and impoverished the learning of its people. Vidler shows that Grégoire was able to represent vandalism and preservation as both belonging to the revolutionary process. In a similar sense, a continuity existed between vandalism and preservation in Lenoir's museum, which incorporated tomb sculpture saved after its violent removal from the royal abbey at Saint-Denis.” *Modernity and Memory*, 40. Vidler's assertions appear in “Grégoire, Lenoir, et les 'monuments parlants','" in *La Carmagnole des muses, l'homme de lettres et l'artiste dans la Révolution*, Jean-Claude Bonnet, ed. (Paris: Armand Colin, 1988).
founded the Académie celtique in 1804, succinctly explained how material objects functioned as containers of knowledge and why they were valuable for study and preservation:

> [t]he stones or columns that serve as landmarks offered the first repository of human knowledge, and they were the most ancient library of nations, because it was on those columns that all findings in the arts and sciences, laws, great events, political, moral and religious principles, were engraved. Philosophers, scholars, historians, princes, legislators all came to consult these inscriptions and to draw from them the principles of their doctrine or customs.¹²¹

Material remains from past cultures were becoming central to the history of France because scholars imagined that the physical presence of an object from the past would enable immediate and transparent comprehension of the knowledge from the originating culture's elites.¹²² Buildings and monuments, then, contained the history and knowledge of their culture, and were didactic, able to teach moral lessons about the historical moment in which they were built.¹²³

The attempts by Abbé Grégoire and others after the Revolution to associate architecture with national memory were ultimately successful. Victor Hugo expressed similar sentiments in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1831):

> [T]he greatest productions of architecture are not so much the work of individuals as of society, the offspring rather of national efforts than of the conceptions of particular minds, a deposit left by a whole people, the accumulation of ages, the residue of the successive evaporations of human society [...] Each wave of time leaves its alluvium, each race


¹²³ Ibid., 30.
deposits its stratum upon the monument, each individual contributes his stone[...]

Echoing Abbé Grégoire, Lenoir, and Volney, Hugo implies that architecture was a product of a society that left a legible mark – knowledge or memory – within the stones. The subsequent city-wide destruction of buildings and neighborhoods beginning with Haussmann resonated as a very real assault against what Parisians by then perceived as their history embodied in the fabric of the city, their material link to a fixed and legible past, to the 'real Paris.' This point of view is even echoed in Haussmann's efforts to collect notable artifacts from the neighborhoods that were demolished for the Musée Carnavalet.

In his article “Le Vieux Paris” published in 1867, while Haussmann was still attempting to complete his renovations, Louis Blanc equates the immortal charm of Paris with the great men and great events marking the city. The mark, as imagined by Blanc, was quite literally the memory of those great men and events, what he calls “illustrious phantoms” that made up the soul of Paris and were inscribed within the material form of the city over time. Paraphrasing Blanc, historian Shelley Rice illustrates how Haussmann's renovations were disruptive not only of daily life, but also to Parisian collective memory:

Haussmann, by demolishing the old, did nothing less then separate the body of Paris from its soul. The prefect destroyed much more than objects and spaces – he destroyed the repositories of mental images, demolished the histories and meanings of places that together shaped collective memory. He created a rupture with the past, with tradition,

with metaphorical thought that was irreparable, and he left the 'illustrious phantoms' of memory wandering homeless through the new metropolis.\textsuperscript{126}

Structures had become mnemonic devices, recalling to neighborhood inhabitants the great men and great events of the quartier, those which were worth knowing, remembering, and teaching to the next generation. Essentially the great memories metaphorically inhabited the very stones of the city as “illustrious phantoms” which made up the soul of Paris. Therefore the desire to preserve an image of the city's historical architecture was nothing less than life support for the ailing soul of Paris.

\textbf{Revivification and Reification of Medieval Paris}

As after the French Revolution, so too in the aftermath of the dual traumas of the Siege and the Commune, government officials, scholars, and journalists, both liberal and conservative alike, promoted a sustained and universal enthusiasm for the history of the Middle Ages, including its remaining architectural treasures.\textsuperscript{127} Significantly, it was during the Third Republic that architectural preservation societies in Paris reached a zenith.\textsuperscript{128} In the late 1880s, Haussmann became the target of indiscriminate contempt,

\textsuperscript{126} Rice, \textit{Parisian Views}, 145.
\textsuperscript{127} Elizabeth Emery and Laura Morowitz, \textit{Consuming the Past: The Medieval Revival in fin-de-siècle France} (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 19. See also Janine R. Dakyns, \textit{The Middle Ages in French Literature, 1851-1900} (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 195. These scholars argue that study of the medieval ages during this period was partly a means to recover, morally and politically, from the Second Empire, war with Prussia, and Commune. The valorization of the middle ages as a heroic period was embraced by Catholics and republicans alike.
\textsuperscript{128} Sutcliffe, \textit{The Autumn of Central Paris}, 206-207. Sutcliffe has the most comprehensive listing of preservation societies, though this is only the list for architectural preservation within Paris. Likely, there were many other historicist societies throughout the country, as well as other groups concerned with preserving other antique objects. Commission Municipale du Vieux Paris (1897), Historic Monuments Commission (1837), Academy of Inscriptions (1663), Society of the History of Paris (1874), Society of Parisians of Paris (1890), Society of Friends of Paris Monuments (1884), Old Montmartre Society (1886), Auteuil and Passy historical society (1892), Montagne Sainte-Genevieve (1895), the historical society of the VIe and XVe arrondissements (1898), the historical and archaeological society of the VIIe and XVIIe arrondissements (1899), the historical society of the VIIe and XVe arrondissements (1903), La Cite (1901), the Centre de Paris society (1912), the Society of Friends of the Louvre (1898), the Tuileries Committee (1911), Association of the Friends of Paris
which the former prefect himself attributed to the circulation of nostalgic etchings by artists such as Charles Méryon. (Figure 15) Méryon's etching presented the old city with a picturesque, pastoral innocence. The turreted building in the image is not unlike that from Le Secq's photograph, yet it is presented in a state that never existed, overrun by nature, echoing the picturesque ruins of European travel guides. Méryon's work was met with indifference during the Second Empire, when this type of architecture would have been more common, but as they were reproduced in the decades following, this was the image of pre-Haussmannized Paris with which many became familiar. Even those who lived through Haussmannization, according to Sutcliffe, forgot the state of the old slums since better sewers and cleansing methods had improved those *vieux* sections still extant.

Elizabeth Emery and Laura Morowitz argue the widespread interest in medieval French history in the late nineteenth century essentially had its roots in escapism at a national level: “the medievalism of the fin de siècle is part of a much broader phenomenon of revivalism; it is one manifestation of a desire to escape the present by studying the past (and especially the French past).” Study of the medieval past did not remain solely an official concern, rather the capitalistic marketplace of the late nineteenth century made it possible for consumers to participate on an individual level by purchasing, if not authentic medieval objects, reproductions and themed commodities.

— (1911). Notably, there was an attempt to form a Paris Archaeological and Historical Society as early as the mid-1860s, but this effort failed.  
129 Ibid., 189.  
130 Ibid.  
131 Emery and Morowitz, *Consuming the Past*, 8.  
132 Emery and Morowitz describe the revival of interest in the Middle Ages between 1871-1905 as “a widespread phenomenon that engaged people from all social and economic classes.” (2) Since I am specifically concerned with medievalism as it relates to the spaces of Paris, I will have a rather limited
After a period of severe social unrest and anarchy, medieval French society was popularly extolled as a lost golden age: cohesive, whole, and socially harmonious. Instead of dwelling on the present dire situation in France, studying the monuments, architecture, and other relics of the past allowed citizens to imagine a common remembrance of a time when social order was legible, before modernity ushered in an age of alienation.¹³³

For evidence of the wide reach of medievalism during the fin-de-siècle, one need only examine one of the most popular diversions of Paris in the earliest days of the twentieth century: Vieux Paris at the Exposition Universelle of 1900. (Figure 16) On the Right Bank, just west of the Pont de L’Alma stood the amusement park constructed by antiquarian and architectural illustrator Albert Robida. Vieux Paris was an amalgamation of archetypal French medieval building styles from which visitors may recognize constituent historical parts still extant in Paris or nearby environs.¹³⁵ The destroyed architectural treasures of Paris were temporarily rebuilt and represented by

¹³³ This perception is the basis for the theories formulated by Halbwachs and Nora respectively. The loss of peasant culture is characterized by both scholars as the prime rupture in collective memory, the point that led to the loss of the collective memory of both nobility and peasants alike. In his essay, “Social Classes and Their Traditions,” Halbwachs explains what had changed in terms of communal memory between the medieval and early modern periods. “It is hence a singularly concrete and particular physiognomy that dominates the social order of this [feudal] period. Names and titles evoke the past of families, the geographical location of their belongings, their personal relations with other noble families, and their proximity to princes and to the court […] Every man and group that can so tries in this way to create for themselves historical rights and to find their position within this framework.” (123-24)

¹³⁴ N.B.: When discussing the attraction, I will capitalize the adjective “Vieux” to differentiate between the entertainment complex advertising itself as “Vieux Paris” and the actual old or vieux portions of the city.

¹³⁵ Barrett Eastman and Frédéric Mayer, *Paris, 1900: The American Guide to the City and Exposition* (Chicago: Northern Trust Company Bank, 1899), 73. Within this guide, the authors describe the three main sections of Vieux Paris: the “medieval quarter” (fifteenth century), the Grand Markets (eighteenth century), and the section formed by the Châtelet, Pont-au-Change, the street of St. Lawrence Fair, and Le Palais (sixteenth through eighteenth centuries). The Exposition’s Vieux Paris was not representative of any particular neighborhood from a specific historical period, rather it was made up of replicas of notable destroyed buildings dating from the fifteenth to early nineteenth century within 65,000 square feet of constructed urban space.
Figure 15. *Little Tower on Rue de la Tixeranderie.* Charles Méryon, 1852.
monuments, houses, and markets that guidebook writers Barrett Eastman and Frédéric Mayer term the “fabric of life in Paris.” The outcome was a jumble of turrets, spires, buttresses, gabled roofs, half-timbered houses, niches formed by intersecting multi-level buildings, and open areas for crowds to watch wandering minstrels or other street entertainers. It was a story-book construction providing a sanitized version of the old city, the most quaint and picturesque features distilled and combined into the components of the simulated city. Nowhere within Paris was it possible to find so many architectural wonders, not only so well preserved, but unmarred by any indications of the passage of time, where the attendees were the only allowable sign of modernity.

*Le Vieux Paris: Le Chevet de Saint-Julien* (Figure 17), one of a set of montaged postcards produced as souvenirs for the exhibition, presents a mélange of architectural styles, all suggestive of the medieval period, co-existing and blending into each other. The construction blends the romanticism of Méryon's etchings with the excess of detail provided by photography. In essence, this photomontage representing Robida's spectacle signifies its meaning through photographic shorthand describing the entire attraction to the viewer at a glance through highly descriptive detail. Furthermore, it describes how the viewer is supposed to interpret the attraction: an imaginary voyage into an authentically-rendered past. The architectural amalgamation is echoed in the diverse types of people pasted into the stage-set street. In the foreground a presumably noble woman in an elaborate *fin-de-siècle* interpretation of a fifteenth-century headdress is reading from a

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136 Ibid., 72.
137 Ibid., 78-79.
139 Many thanks to Maureen Cox for helping identify the costuming via email, August 9, 2009. Specifically, it seems to be an early twentieth-century interpretation of a reticulated headdress with ear cauls, which was a fifteenth-century style. Further anachronisms in the dress are the model's highly
book – a further indication of her noble social status, if one needed any more clues. To her left is a more humble couple, perhaps not noble, but not peasants either. Behind these main figures are knots of other people carousing on the constructed street. Based on the clothing of the individuals pasted into this scene, one would imagine the medieval period to be one where noble and serf mingled, and where there was perhaps the existence of a middle-class, as evidenced by the couple in the foreground who appear to be clean and well-kept, but not as richly-clothed as the nobility.

The cobblestones and the steeple at the bottom and top of the postcard both break the boundaries of the picture plane, projecting into the space of the viewer. The street actually extends itself toward the viewer inviting an imaginary spatial exchange. Whereas Atget's photograph of a *vieux* building in Paris is situated in a space devoid of activity, the producers of the postcard populated the streets, illustrating what manner of people one may have found in old Paris. As I have shown in the first chapter, the typical visual mode for signifying the historicity of an area was an empty street. What accounts for the decision to include people in this montage? I would attribute it to the difference in intended audience for each image. Atget created his photo-documents for a specialized consumer, an archivist or antiquarian who would have known without any prompting what sort of people would have populated the streets. They had knowledge that would have informed the imaginary work necessary. The photomontage, on the other hand, was marketed to a generalized audience who was not privy to the knowledge or collective memories of groups familiar with urban photographs of this sort. Furthermore, the creators of the photomontage had supreme control over what type of society populated corseted Edwardian figure with the cotehardie and sideless surcote, and opera-length gloves.
Figure 17. *Le Vieux Paris Le chevet de Saint-Julien*. Mass-produced photomontage postcard for the Exposition Universelle of 1900 Bibliothèque National de France, Paris
the streets in their image. Atget’s empty streets surrounding the Hôtel de Sens invite the viewer to project himself into the scene, and to populate the streets with imaginary period inhabitants.

Presumably, this composite photograph is meant to communicate to the viewer-attendee the diversity of entertainments to be found within in the attraction. Inside, the attendee was confronted by a purely commodified space, a blatant commercial spectacle about history, in which consumers were the only allowable evidence of modernity. Robida's idealized Vieux Paris indelibly conflated the stage-set city with the remaining vieux areas of Paris itself.\(^\text{140}\) In addition to creating an entertaining attraction and garnering commercial success, Robida made a structural narrative to teach appreciation for historical architecture and invest visitors, particularly Parisians, with a feeling of responsibility for protecting the city’s architectural treasures.\(^\text{141}\) This attraction was a place where the city's 'illustrious phantoms' could inhabit the simulated city of complete, whole memory once more, at least for the duration of the exhibit. The ideal audience for Robida's project, if its constituents learned the lessons of Vieux Paris, would imagine what possible forgotten histories were embedded within the vieux constituents of their own quartier and would therefore foster respect for remnants of the past in the present, all the while being entertained and educated.

**The Self-Referentiality of vieux Paris**

As an amateur antiquarian, Robida based the qualifications for the types of buildings included in Vieux Paris on the general status quo for the time. Broadly,

\(^{140}\) Emery, “Protecting the Past,” 80.
\(^{141}\) Ibid., 79.
buildings with a feature that had become rare after Haussmannization were considered valuable and worthy of protection. This would include, but was not limited to, late-medieval and Renaissance turrets on mansions, medieval military architecture, and gable ends on ordinary houses.

However, the phrase ‘vieux Paris,’ and what structures qualified as vieux, and therefore valuable for some sort of preservation, was never succinctly defined by advocacy groups. Those who wanted to preserve the image of vieux Paris simply recognized value innately in the morphology of the structure or street. In fact, the inability of preservationists to present a unified set of principles during the Second Empire worked to their disadvantage and subjected them to Haussmann's ridicule. For example, during the Second Empire, one group may have called only for the preservation of buildings erected before the first half of the seventeenth century; anything newer than that was not old enough to be considered rare or valuable. Other preservationist groups defended only buildings made of stone. Some historians wanted to conserve all old buildings since their very existence as remnants from another age gave them inherent historical value, even if the condition was substandard, while still others only valued structures that exhibited “exceptional artistic quality.”¹⁴²

After 1870, according to Sutcliffe, preservation groups attempted to present a more united front. At the same time, the already loose criteria by which old and valuable architecture was judged, according to scholars, antiquarians, and politicians, had become even more liberal. The Commission municipale du Vieux Paris, founded in 1897,

¹⁴² Sutcliffe, Autumn, 185-87.
described the parts of the city that were valuable for physical or photographic preservation:

Old houses at the point of demolition, the quais of the Seine during their transformation, the work beneath the public thoroughfares, the architectural ornament decorating the dwellings of the past few centuries, the old streets and crossings, in a word, everything across the city that can conjure up the memory of the past or call to mind vanished epochs.\footnote{Commission municipale du Vieux Paris, “Notice rédigée par L. Lambeau destiné à être remise aux visiteurs de l'exposition spéciale,” 
\textit{Procès-verbaux} (19 July 1900), 129. Quoted in Nesbit, \textit{Seven Albums}, 63. Nesbit indicates this notice was intended to be distributed to attendees of the special Commission-sponsored Vieux Paris attraction at the Exposition Universelle in 1900.}

It may rightly seem that the Commission's qualifications for what is old, valuable, and therefore worthy of archival remembrance is vague to the point of absurdity. Any house, ornament, bridge, street, intersection, \textit{quai}, essentially any material architectural or infrastructural remnant from the last “few centuries” was fodder for the archive. Of concern was that the place be able to “conjure up the memory of the past or call to mind vanished epochs.” Therefore, what was valuable for the Commission were the structures that resonated with a viewer, that called to a viewer's mind the memory associated with a structure based primarily on its appearance.

\textit{Vieux} Paris, the term and the disjunctive spaces remaining in the city, had become abstracted into a self-referential construct, the recognition of which was triggered by the existence of old architecture and the sentiment of memory. The very inability or unwillingness of preservation groups to define \textit{vieux} Paris as a signifier of a specific period or as representative of a consistent set of architectural principles confirms antiquarians' and archivists' desire to preserve the image of \textit{vieux} Paris, despite the lack of a systematized convention for identifying what \textit{vieux} actually meant. Preservation societies knew it was important to protect these areas, but simply depended on the
knowledge of their own group and their own common sets of group memories to select the valuable architecture. Nora identifies the existence of this type of self-referentiality as a simple means to identify lieu de mémoire. “Contrary to historical objects, […] lieu de mémoire have no referent in reality; or, rather, they are their own referent: pure, exclusively self-referential signs.”

Vieux Paris was not a real place, not in the way that Belleville or the Ile de la Cité were; it was an idea. The conception of vieux Paris after Haussmann was, by and large, a construct. The term vieux Paris represented an imaginary historical city whose constituent structures were smattered indiscriminately throughout the city.

Even though vieux Paris represented a constructed urbanism, the idea was very real to Parisians and visitors. In the nineteenth century, Parisian guidebooks often resembled a form of historical fiction, wherein description was combined with an account of the history of the space one visited. Sutcliffe notes authors who perhaps originated the style, at least in the old Paris market: Louis Lurine who wrote *Les Rues de Paris: Paris ancien et moderne* in 1844, and Fanny Richomme, author of *Paris monumental et historique* from 1850. These authors, and countless others that follow, point out

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144 Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 23. Nora further explains that this characteristic does not mean the signs are without content or history, therefore these are not empty signs.

145 Sutcliffe, *Autumn of Central Paris*, 182. My concern is specifically about the vieux Paris guidebooks, so I will not go into much detail regarding the evolution of the type. Boyer convincingly links the change in guidebook writing style to the popularity of personalized, subjective travel accounts beginning around 1800 with Mariana Stark's *Travels in Italy*. (237-38)

evidence of *pittoresque* architecture, and then diverge into a nostalgic reverie, encouraging the reader to imagine himself in a bygone time as he traverses the historic neighborhoods and contemplates the architecture.

Authors generally rehearsed anecdotes associated with old buildings to characterize a history of each respective neighborhood. For instance, George Frederick Edwards in his guidebook, *Old time Paris, a plain guide to its chief survivals* from 1908 enthusiastically extolled his readers to meditate on the particularly rare Hôtel de Sens, not long after Atget photographed it. It is worth quoting Edwards at length as he describes the structure (I will discuss the textual description more deeply in the next section). Edwards writes:

> Now at your right elbow is a remnant of Mediaeval Paris – the Supreme Example –

> **THE HOTEL DE SENS!**

> Shut out from consciousness, if you can, the aggressive presence of that intrusive market, and revel in this harmonious anachronism, this belated lingerer of a bygone world. It has been in some measure outraged; but much remains to testify to the loving care of those builders, who, in the year 1474, began this work when Louis the Eleventh was king.

> It was designed for the town house of the Archbishop of Sens. A hundred and twenty years afterwards, the divorced wife of Henri Quatre, 'Queen Margot' lived here. In the seventeenth century it became a coaching house: and tradition has it that in the time of the Directory, the 'Lyons Mail' left its yard coming out of that stately doorway, on the fatal night, the story of which has thrilled thousands of playgoers who have witnessed the elder Irving in his marvellous [sic] impersonation of the unhappy Lesurques.

> Once a Bishop's palace, a Queen's retreat, a hostelry in the heroic days of the road: it serves now the prosaic purpose of a glass warehouse!

> Happily, its outward features have not been hopelessly marred even yet: though an attempt at its destruction was made in 1830 by the Revolutionists of that year; as witness the presence of that small cannon ball embedded in the masonry just over the little window on the left. [. . .] When you have proceeded forty or fifty yards, just turn round a moment and see the old house once more from a distance. It is an
impression that will take long to efface – this venerable vignette of a bygone Age – silent witness of four and a half centuries of the seething life of a city where so much history has been made!  

This description was written within a decade of Atget's photograph, introduced at the beginning of the chapter. Edwards does not deviate from the common vieux Paris guidebook format, in fact, he hopes that his reader, after studying his choices of vieux architecture will be able to pick out his own. The right mindset, entered into after viewing architectural treasures, would put the reader in a state of imaginary reverie. Edwards suggests,

Once you get in touch with the genius of the quartier, and your eye begins to catch the odd corners, quaint doorways, bulging windows out of drawing, top-heavy gables, and all the thousand and one bits of 'long-ago' that look out upon you passing, your imagination will be attuned to your environment; and it would not startle you to encounter a group of citizens in doublet and hose, or to find yourself making way for a couple of armed swashbucklers in panache and spurs shouldering out from the low-browed doorway of a tavern.  

The old Paris guidebooks intermingled the history of the site with nostalgia that informed Robida's Vieux Paris creating an imaginary urbanism that encouraged viewers to block out the building's current purpose and to revel in a bygone time which, presumably, one could access through the material presence of the building.

Extant medieval spaces of Paris were ripe for this sort of treatment. The unstated goal of many guidebook writers, Edwards included, is to create a historical narrative linking the building to a time before memory had been fractured by modernity. Even an innocuous old structure, having survived the destructive nineteenth century, would now

147 George Frederick Edwards, Old time Paris, a plain guide to its chief survivals (London: A. Doubleday, 1908), 41-42.

148 Ibid., 102-103.
have a noteworthy history, if for no other reason than because it had been spared. Since
the Hôtel de Sens, and other historical buildings, had survived the nineteenth century, the
narrative of its survival automatically made it important. Furthermore, the desire to
preserve such spaces, whether in life or in images, represented a dislodging of the space
from history, a temporal dégagement. What might have been destroyed on a whim was
now deemed sacred for the sake of memory, and had become untouchable.

Part Two: Photographs as Containers of Knowledge and Memory

It is my contention that by the turn of the twentieth century, empty street
photographs such as those produced by Atget contributed to the nostalgic urbanism
expressed by Edwards and others. However, it is the role of the photographic document
as a container of knowledge and memory that made this interpretation possible.149 The
association between photo-documents and knowledge was a constructed one, based on
the reproduction of Enlightenment values that had become naturalized over time. Nesbit
acknowledges the naturalization of the relationship between knowledge and photographs,
but does not explain how the conflation of the two came about. Mary Warner Marien, in
her book *Photography and Its Critics* (1997), argues that the correspondence between
camera vision, human vision, and objective knowledge existed even at the outset of
photography's invention.150 Joseph Nicephore Niépce, Daguerre's partner until the
former's death in 1833, called his camera an artificial retina. Thereafter, the image fixed

149 Though the photo-viewing public had become accustomed to the medium and thus recognized that the
image was not self-made by the sun or by the object itself, as did some of the first viewers of
Daguerreotypes, people continued to see photo-documents as relatively objective in a way that
paintings, drawings, or prints were not. The indexical re-presentation of a site or object, assisted by a
machine, attested to the factual nature of photographic documents. The hand of the artist-photographer
was present, yet the processes of technology minimized its influence.


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on the sensitized plate “was thought to be an analogue of the picture on the human retina,” corroborating the Enlightenment idea that the retinal image exists independently of the individual's interpretation of what he or she sees. With this conceit, it is not a leap to reason that the camera, like the human retina, allowed for direct perception of knowledge as if meaning is embedded within the image, not within the subject's interpretation.

According to Molly Nesbit, a photographic document “held knowledge that in turn would be used to produce more knowledge, usually in a more advanced state.”

Nesbit is not simply referring to the use of pictures as visual aids, as in the case of a book illustration. The document was important as an assistant to art and science, but also as an article of objective or historical proof that could aid in generating knowledge. Its role was strikingly similar to that of the historical artifacts preserved by Abbé Grégoire, Lenoir, and Volney – it provided direct comprehension of another time or place through first-hand exposure to the setting pictured. The underlying consensus among elite intellectuals was that the photograph was not an end in and of itself: its role was to provide a basis for a more important final product.

Nesbit compares the collaboration between the photo-document and the system of knowledge production that it informed to a peasant who works the field for a feudal lord, or a worker who produces commodities for a capitalist. The photo-document in the late nineteenth century would have been a tool, not art or even decoration. Nesbit characterizes it as a working document, existing in relation to and as inspiration for a

151 Nesbit, Seven Albums, 16.
higher form of knowledge production. The document's highest purpose was to be what
Nesbit terms a “detailed blank”\textsuperscript{153} or an image with details that give primary evidence of
historicity while remaining open to multiple uses. A painted portrait, a history painting
for the Salon, a written account of a particular battle location, or even a guidebook would
all have potentially have had a photo document as an assistant to the final work. Atget
himself, in the infamous exchange with Man Ray, declared his photographs simple
documents he made.

It is within this context, because of its double use value, at once specialized and
supremely open to having meaning assigned, that Atget's \textit{Hôtel de Sens} functions. Atget's
photograph of the \textit{hôtel} was one of these blanks, waiting to be imbued with meaning by
the specialist who required that exact representation to assist in further knowledge
production. Knowing the use to which Atget's photographs may have been put allows an
interrogation between the relation of image and knowledge production. Is there actually
any information communicated by Atget's image that gives the viewer special access to
the historical essence of the street corner? In relation to knowledge production, would
this photograph contribute anything except a morphological description of a location to
the work of, for instance, a political historian?\textsuperscript{154} Does the vacant street serve as anything
other than an empty stage through which the imagined actors and events progress?

The short answer is no. Yet, by the turn of the century, architectural settings were
inextricably linked to memory in the Parisian popular imagination, and glimpses of
medieval craftsmanship would have been enough to direct a sympathetic viewer to a

\textsuperscript{153} Nesbit, \textit{Seven Albums}, 16.
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid.
nostalgic reverie. The belief, instituted by Grégoire and other post-Revolution historians, that a viewer who is attuned to his space and to the aura of an ancient structure would be able to infer facts about the history 'experienced' by the building had taken hold within the imaginations of Parisians and other Europeans alike. The persistence of this belief is evidenced by Edwards and others, and it exists at the intersection of the naturalization of both buildings and photographs as containers for knowledge and memory.

A Comparative Reading of the Space of the Hôtel de Sens

When reading the nostalgic prose by Edwards, one has a strong sense that, for Edwards, merely looking upon a space, or by extension a representation of a historical space, inspired conjecture about other facets of life and events that had transpired and had been “witnessed” by the building. Edwards hopes a perceptive viewer, one who recognized the role of architecture as a trigger for memory, will begin to recognize the many extant medieval features for himself, attuning his imagination to the urban environment. In life, for a passerby to access such knowledge he must shut down his consciousness and deny the reality of the building in its present milieu to imagine its past inhabitants.

Significantly, Edwards's description of the Hôtel de Sens is accompanied in the text by an illustration of the structure (Figure 18), signed Ch. F. Flower. The etching is remarkably similar to Atget's photograph, presenting the hotel at a slightly skewed frontal view, hinting at the neighborhood behind the medieval home. The narrow road on the left and the sidewalk in front of the building are the only points at which the hotel is anchored to the neighborhood – on the right Flower has left out the adjacent apartment and instead

155 Many of the guidebooks I will introduce later were originally published for visitors to Paris.
simply cut the building off at its last turret and let it drift into a void. While it is tempting
to create a direct correspondence between Atget's photo and Flower's etching, the
relationship between the two is not so explicit. There is at least one etching from an
earlier guidebook\textsuperscript{156} that depicts the same view (Figure 19). Flower's etching and Atget's
photograph are representative of a visual trope for picturing this structure. Regardless, I
would argue that the two images are in conversation with each other since each presents a
mediated interpretation of the space, with different results. Since Edwards wrote the type
of \textit{vieux} Paris guidebook that may have been informed by “detailed blank” documents,
and Atget's photo-document of the same was created just a few years prior to the
publication of Edwards's guidebook, one may compare the two images, supported by
Edwards's textual description, to explore how the nostalgic writer mitigates the effects of
modernity on a historic structure.

Atget seems to have attempted to empty this photograph of signs of modernity to
the greatest extent possible. For instance, there is no street traffic, no bicycles or
automobiles, and no people to betray the period through their dress, which would
certainly indicate that this site is neither frozen in the past nor immune to temporality.
Even with these blatant omissions, likely to satisfy the demands and expectations of his
customers, modernity creeps in, literally, at the edges of the photograph through the
posters and advertisements on the facing building at the far right, and most prominently
with the gas light on the left edge of the frame. Both the ads and the lamppost would call
to the mind of the viewer the contingency inherent in urban spaces, since the gas lamps

\textsuperscript{156} Philip Gilbert Hamerton, \textit{Paris in Old and Present Times} (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1900), 230.
had been installed as part of Napoleon III's public works, and the ephemeral
advertisements were ceaselessly changing.\textsuperscript{157} The inclusion of these modern elements was
not dictated by the dimensions of the photograph. Atget's box camera could have been
adjusted to exclude some of the contextual visual information, as does this picture by an
anonymous photographer from 1880.\textsuperscript{158} (Figure 20) Instead, Atget chose to allow some
elements of modern society exist within the photographic space of the preservationist.

In the passage by Edwards above, the author indicates his distaste for certain
“outrages” that have marred the building or the space. Furthermore, Edwards makes
clear that, were it his decision, a busy market would not be located so near a historic
structure. Other than these two clues, Edwards does not explicitly name the other
outrages the structure has endured. By comparing Flower's etching to Atget's
photograph, we can hypothesize what aspects of the space so offended Edwards.
Presumably Flower would have known, or would have been asked, to omit these offenses
to make an illustration commensurate with the space as Edwards's readers want to
imagine it. In the book's illustration, there is no suggestion of the aggressive market, of
the vehicular and pedestrian traffic that would have surrounded it, of the fact that the
building currently houses a business above the door, or of the modern trappings of the
city – gas lamps, streets designed for vehicles, posters advertising various commodities
and services. The etching pictures a space existing outside of a specific temporality,

\textsuperscript{157} According to Ruth Iskin, posters were meant to last for “an hour or a day.” Ruth E. Iskin, “Father Time,
\textsuperscript{158} Possibly this is the photograph that determined the prototypical view of the Hôtel de Sens which the
other images exemplify.
where all signifiers of modernity, or even of a particular epoch after the construction of
the building have been omitted.

For Atget's viewers, the emptiness of the streets in the photograph was what
Nesbit terms a “technical sign” which denoted this was a document of old Paris. Haussmann physically excised nationalistic monuments from their neighborhood as a
means of highlighting and protecting the important architecture and setting it apart from
the baseness of ordinary existence. This temporal *dégagement* allows the viewer to dwell,
not on the modern aspects of urban life that coexists with the surviving *vieux* artifacts, but
instead on the past itself, a desolate and fixed image wherein the viewer can meditate on
the lost or changing bourgeois values of the past. The Hôtel de Sens is returned to history
both as a reified structure and as a photograph, both of which stand in synecdochally for
the old buildings and old social practices which had not survived.

Atget’s photograph of the Hôtel de Sens represents an already preserved space,
one in which the viewer does not have to exert much effort to imagine the absence of
modernity because most of it – cars, bicycles, transient Parisians – has been
preemptively effaced. This represents a space in which the presence of the historic
building alone is enough to spark an imaginary historical tour of the area, much in the
same manner as contemporaneous guidebooks. The *Hôtel de Sens* of Atget’s image has
undergone a temporal *dégagement*; it has been disentangled from time, from historical
contingency, from the living *milieu* in which it had existed for centuries.

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159 Nesbit, *Seven Albums*, 17. Nesbit explains the technical sign as that which existed within the document,
within the content, that would have made it identifiable and useful to a certain audience, the
photograph's ideal viewer. The technical signs of photographs for architectural preservation include
frontal framing and focus on the important architectural details. If the subject of the photograph is a
building, a view of the street may be included, but with minimal inclusion of other structures. The
setting is empty and as devoid of signals of modernity as possible.
Old Paris as Milieu de Mémoire

For decades during the mid-nineteenth century, the empty-street photograph was associated with preserving an image of an ancient space. The symbolic vacancy of the city at the turn of the century left room for the viewer to invest the picture with an imaginary urbanism of the past. Empty photographic documents, then, provided a space to be injected with an imaginary vivacity and life to an otherwise inaccessible history. To return to Edwards as an example, access to the memories depends on the viewer's ability and desire to associate extant medieval architecture with an imaginary historical urbanism, a mental link, by the early twentieth century, that needed only the barest suggestion to activate, and a link entirely integrated with French architectural patrimony. The memories of the past were thus nascent within the buildings and only required a sympathetic individual to access them.

Edwards described the area with language that highlights the simplicity and peacefulness associated with the structure, in contrast to the frenetic pace of modern life and the market. The building itself exudes a sense of harmony, and it is anthropomorphized as a lost or confused “lingerer of a bygone world,” not entirely unlike Baudelaire's tragic swan in “Le Cygne” (1857), his poem lamenting the alterations being enacted by Haussmann. Edwards characterizes the anachronistic hôtel as a beautiful but lost entity, unable to return to its natural environment, ultimately destined to be damaged or destroyed by careless men. Meanwhile, the market surrounding the hôtel is described as aggressive and intrusive, disturbing the scene with its modern outrages, such as commerce, advertisements, and other signs of modernity.
Edwards's so-called outrages are important, for they indicate that this building and corner were a *milieu de mémoire*, a living environment of memory, for those in this neighborhood. For the ordinary inhabitant of this area, the pointed arches and turrets of the *hôtel* were not likely to inspire the nostalgic fantasy invoked by Edwards. Rather, the structure existed within the living fabric of the neighborhood and housed a local business; for *quartier* residents, the *hôtel* had use value. Instructed to shut out the structure's role as part of a living neighborhood, Edwards's reader is instead supposed to channel a vivid vision of the past embodied by the old *hôtel*. For Edwards and his audience, the building's current situation was no more than an affront, and was not how it should be remembered for posterity. Instead Edwards encouraged his *promeneur* to regard the actual space as an image, already fixed, historicized, and archived. Edwards's call to ignore the liveliness of this area is reminiscent of the perception by some of Haussmann's critics cited in the previous chapter that Haussmann would kill the *quartier*. Edwards attempted a temporal *dégagement* even though the site was, in fact, relatively unchanged despite the traumatic experiences of the previous half-century. The reader who was sympathetic to the plight of historical structures in the city, however, was supposed to reject this reality and substitute his own: the space as an image, as devoid of life as Atget's photograph.

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160 Philip Gilbert Hamerton, another guidebook writer (for which the 1885 etching serves as an illustration), notes that "the hotel is unfortunately occupied as a manufactory of sweets, and the enterprising marker uses a representation of the building in all his illustrated advertisements. How little the architect in the fifteenth century foresaw this special kind of celebrity for his work!" *Paris in Old and Present Times* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1900), 233.
The Preservation Aesthetic as *Lieu de Mémoire*

By the turn of the twentieth century the empty-street aesthetic described in the first chapter of this study had become outmoded in relation to the technological possibilities of photography. This aesthetic had not been the primary mode of representing the street for many years. Stereographic street views and postcards had been widely and cheaply circulated for decades for those seeking verisimilitude and excitement in their images of the street.\(^{161}\) Furthermore, handheld box cameras, invented in 1888, marked the introduction of the snapshot and democratized photographic practice; point-and-shoot photographers required no specialized knowledge of either the equipment, the medium, or representational conventions.\(^{162}\)

Atget's penchant for this old-fashioned convention, then, was clearly a choice, not the result of technological constraints as had been the case with some earlier photographers. Furthermore, it was an aesthetic that was becoming more and more difficult to replicate in the twentieth century. Therefore, Atget's penchant for working early in the morning, before the *quartier*’s activity had begun, appears to be the only means by which to create an image of a street with no traffic. My contention is that the aestheticization of this type of empty-street photograph, by this time a deliberately reproduced visual construct, in combination with the subject matter, *vieux* Paris, had become a *lieu de mémoire* for viewers of such images.

In the first chapter of this study, I identified a trajectory of photography as it became a valuable tool for lobbyists of conservation and preservation of old Parisian

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162 Kodak's slogan for its box camera, introduced in 1888, was “You press the button - we do the rest.”
landmarks. The men of the Académie des Sciences, the first to be presented with Daguerre's invention, recognized that fixing an image of Paris would make the city immortal even if important monuments degenerated over time. The Missions Héliographiques further intertwined photography with archival preservation of national architectural treasures. Through the Second Empire, this link between photography and preservation continued, especially in the face of imminent destruction. Neighborhoods condemned to destruction by Napoleon III's and Haussmann's plans became part of the archive through their immortalization in images, such as those by Marville. Marville's photographs, in many cases, replaced the neighborhood spaces by means of his photography which was destined for the archive. I have made clear that though the aesthetic of photography for architectural preservation remained static over the span of photography's formative decades, 1839 through 1871, the images could be invested with any number of meanings depending on the sympathies of viewers.

This characteristic, evidence of a constantly reinvented tradition, wherein meaning is vulnerable to appropriation, even manipulation, by different groups, defines a *milieu de mémoire*. Nora refers to *milieux de mémoire* as “unspoken traditions” and “unstudied reflexes” as though the tradition was internalized from repetition, and common enough to be carried out automatically.\(^{163}\) Photographs exhibiting the formal characteristics I have identified broadly shared the same concern, namely fixing an image of a city in flux, but individually were open to differing interpretations and were created for a variety of motives. The earliest photographers, like Daguerre, were bound by technological limitations, while others achieved similar formal results by exploring new

\(^{163}\) Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 13.
technology, like Le Secq, or by using a longer shutter speed to create a range of tones as Marville did when photographing shadowy streets. In essence, during the period encompassed by my first chapter, 1839 through 1871, photographers reproduced the aesthetic unselfconsciously. Achieving emptiness on the streets in these photographs was not the final goal of these men, rather it was a side effect of a variety of photographic processes and representational necessities.

By establishing this photographic tradition as a *milieu de mémoire*, I have opened a means by which to interrogate Atget's photographic practice in a manner more commensurate with the concerns of urban photography's lineage than has been performed by previous scholars. Formal similarities between Atget and earlier photographers persisted in his work at the same time that it had been abandoned by the modern sensibility of the twentieth-century. Rather than supposing Atget was a proto-modernist visionary, or someone who reproduced the aesthetic because he did not understand developing photographic methods, his works can be examined as manifestations of a practice that was once an act of memory, but by his time had become a codified construct, a *lieu de mémoire*. Nora describes *lieux de mémoire* as “moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned; no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded.”¹⁶⁴ A site of memory crystallizes when consciousness of a break with the past is intertwined with a sense of continuity, though in a less vivid, less thriving form, a mere echo of the original tradition.¹⁶⁵ Sites of memory only solidify as such when their meaning stops changing,

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 8.
¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 7.
when meaning becomes fixed and self-referential through the process of reification. I have explicated this process through examination of guidebooks and contemporary popular references to old Paris. They are no longer open to multitudinous meaning, rather their meaning is fixed and incontrovertible.

Old Paris was, by the end of the century, an overdetermined construct given weight by the existence of historical architecture and invested with preservationist desires. Vieux Paris had become its own mythic and subjective referent. Images of such spaces, in the preservationist mode, allowed viewers to re-invest the empty streets with the “illustrious phantoms” that had hemorrhaged out of the bricks and mortar during the period of destruction beginning with the Second Empire. The empty street photograph, then, was in and of itself complicit with the aims of the preservationist movement. It presented, to the extent possible, a timeless and sober image, distinguishing between past achievement and the outrages of the present, thereby equating the distant past with nobility and greatness, and modernity with degeneracy. Just as the popularization of medievalism during the Third Republic was not so much about the past, so the images of vieux Paris appropriated the architecture of the past to serve the needs of the present.

Part Three: A New Perspective on Atget's Audiences

To this point the ideal viewer for these images has not been specifically addressed. I have used the term 'preservationist' to refer to the constituents of Atget's primary customer base, whether individual or institutional. But what of Atget's other audience with whom he has unwittingly been associated for much of the twentieth century – the Surrealists? How does this group's reaction to Atget's pictures resonate in relation to lieux
de mémoire? It is necessary to delve more deeply into the ideal viewership for these lieux de mémoire embodied within the photographs.

To those who were not archivists or specialists in vieux Paris, Atget's practice was distinctly out of sync with progressive modes of photography gaining hold in the 1920s. Artists – Man Ray, Alexander Rodchenko, and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy among them – began to explore photography as an avant-garde medium that did not necessarily indexically reproduce what was before the camera at the time of exposure, but that instead created new ways of seeing. These photographers were independently investigating abstraction, unconventional points of view, and the possibilities of the medium beyond those traditionally embraced by photographic tradition. Henri Cartier-Bresson, who coined the term “decisive moment” as a means by which to capture split-second interactions, and whose work marked the beginnings of both photojournalism and street photography, began his career only five years after Atget's death. Therefore, for viewers who were interested in exploring the formal qualities unique to photography, Atget's documents of vieux Paris were nothing more than pictures from everyday life that mysteriously hinted at a more vivid side of ordinary existence.

For the avant-garde, especially the Surrealists, the emptiness of Atget's streets signified the enchanting possibilities of banality. Walter Benjamin further linked Atget with the Surrealists in his essay “A Small History of Photography” wherein he notes that Atget was the first photographer to emancipate the photograph from its aura.166 Twentieth-century viewers attributed this quality to Atget's own initiative as a

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photographer, to his recognition of a 'signal' indicating the presence of something remarkable buried within the everyday. It is now clear, however, that Atget was replicating a well established photographic convention, expected and demanded by his customer base.

The dual nature of lieux de mémoire foregrounds the question of audience in any discussion of a site of memory's formation. What may be a living environment of memory for one group functions at the same time as a site of memory for another, as is exemplified by the use value of the Hôtel de Sens as an inn, a candy shop, or glass warehouse in opposition to the vacant image as a preservationist urban imaginary. All of this begs the question, then, for whom did the photographs of empty, vieux streets function as lieux de mémoire? What group's collective memory was activated by these pictures? The audience for architectural images in a preservationist mode was a very exclusive population of nostalgic bourgeoisie forming a closed circuit from 1839 until late in Atget’s career.

Beginning with Daguerre, the viewership of photographs such as those I have examined was relatively narrow, especially in comparison to portraiture and mass-produced stereography, which were widely practiced and patronized. The images from the Commission des Monuments Historiques's Missions Héliographique were not exhibited, and in most cases, were not even printed. They were ushered directly into the archives where they could be accessed if needed by a restoration architect or craftsman.

167 Records indicate Baldus having a prolific independent exhibition record, but most often his photographs were categorized as industry and shown within that context. He also submitted photographs to the Salon, but over ten years and twenty submissions, only two were accepted. Daniel, The Photographs of Édouard Baldus, 233, 242-43
The same can be said of Marville's photographs for the archives of the Second Empire.\(^{168}\) Likewise, Atget's documents were circulated among a relatively narrow set of viewers during his lifetime – his most regular and lucrative customers were the various arms of state archival institutions.\(^{169}\) Viewers would have either purchased the prints directly from Atget, or they would have viewed his collections of albums in the print room of a Parisian library or museum.\(^{170}\) Both Maria Morris Hambourg's and Molly Nesbit's comprehensive research into Eugène Atget's business practices characterizes a specific type of consumer who made up his public – specialists, architectural restorers, institutional archivists, artists who needed reference documents\(^ {171}\) and, only after his death, the larger public.

The primary viewers of these photographs, then, were only the same men who commissioned them, and perhaps fellow photographers or craftsmen who were all concerned with the same type of historical preservation. The viewers and producers of empty-street photographs, in effect, formed a closed-circuit for three-quarters of a century, wherein the aesthetic came to indelibly stand for preservationism, archival memory, and the desire to fix an image of the city in anticipation of its unavoidable future loss. By the time Atget's career was flourishing in the twentieth century, it could stand for nothing else.

\(^{168}\) Some of Marville's images were exhibited to the public at the Exposition of 1878, juxtaposed with images of Haussmann's finished boulevards in a didactic manner to highlight the progress that had been made over the span of two decades. Marie De Thezy, *Marville Paris*, 32-33.

\(^{169}\) Nesbit estimates the number of photographs Atget sold to the French state for its official archives to be at least 16,748. Nesbit, *Seven Albums*, 21-22.

\(^{170}\) Nesbit, “The Use of History,” 79.

\(^{171}\) Nesbit, *Seven Albums*, 27-41.
According to Nora, *lieux de mémoire* exist only because of the constant vigilance of those who need to protect the memory from obliteration, in the form of commemorations, celebrations, or in this instance, maintenance of an image by way of a codified, outmoded aesthetic. He writes, “We buttress our identities upon such bastions but if what they defended were not threatened, there would be no need to build them.”

The bastions to which Nora refers would not exist in an environment of lived memory. *Milieux de mémoire* are built upon an acceptance of forgetting. In other words, what is necessary to remember for the society would be engrained in actions and traditions, and what was unimportant for communal memory would be forgotten without regret. If, for instance, Atget's photograph of the urban space surrounding the Hôtel de Sens indicated the liveliness for which Edwards criticized it, if photographic technology and the appearance of the space itself were more commensurate with the lived experience of Paris in 1899, viewers would be in the presence of a *milieu de mémoire*. Likewise, if the Hôtel de Sens had not been singled out for perpetual preservation, it would remain a part of the neighborhood's daily life, a *milieu de mémoire*, and would perhaps be demolished when no longer useful.

The perceived threat against the city's architectural patrimony need not have been imminent or certain, as it was during the modernization projects of the Second Empire. The ultimate irony of urbanization is that the transformation of city space, necessarily requiring the replacement of old structures with new, increases the need for comfort.

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172 Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 12.
through familiar surroundings. In relation to what a photograph is possible of communicating, Barthes writes:

The Photograph does not necessarily say what is no longer, but only and for certain what has been. This distinction is decisive. In front of a photograph, our consciousness does not necessarily take the nostalgic path of memory (how many photographs are outside of individual time), but for every photograph existing in the world, the path of certainty: the Photograph's essence is to ratify what it represents.

Preservationists fell victim to the same kind of contradictory longing described by T.J. Clark as those who criticized the form Paris would take under Haussmann – to have an image of the city, not to vilify, but to mourn. These viewers tended to invest the images with nostalgia, to lament that this space may not be in the future.

Preservationists were anticipating the future destruction of all of these structures and were preparing for it in advance. Clearly, vieux Paris, exemplified by Atget's pictures of the Hôtel de Sens, the Cour du Dragon, the Hôtel Chalons Luxembourg, St. Étienne du Mont, or numerous other sites by which Atget became known as the preeminent photographer of the old city, had not been physically lost because they all existed at the time of the photograph. In fact, the possibility of another period of mass destruction on the scale of Haussmann's work was unlikely, since Haussmann's initial projects had ameliorated many of the problems of circulation, overcrowding, and unhealthy living conditions which necessitated his work to begin with. Also, in the intervening decades between Haussmann's first boulevards and the start of new projects by the Third Republic, urban planning conventions had changed such that alignment and geometrical

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symmetry was no longer considered the apogee of modern city planning. Even Haussmann recognized the inherent paradox of modernization as he foresaw the need for images of the unique buildings that would finally be demolished. In relation to this Janus-faced need for both preservation and modernization, the drive to preserve images of these spaces originated with the fear and knowledge that, regardless of value to the patrimony, every aspect of vieux Paris could be wiped out by powers beyond the control of those who wanted to preserve the historic spaces. What is communicated by the photographic mode and subject matter – vacant, empty streets perceived to be in danger of intentional or entropic destruction – is only legible because the aesthetic came to mark that which would be destroyed by forces greater than the Parisians. Furthermore, the legibility of the image extends only to those whose group communal memories were hypersensitive to issues of destruction, conservation, and preservation, and to those who would have had access to the images, not only Atget's, but also those, stored in the archives, which established the form.

By the time Atget's work was noticed by those outside preservationist circles, in the late 1920s just before his death, the aesthetic generated interest because of its

175 Sutcliffe, *Autumn of Central Paris*, 191-92. Possibly, because of the Vieux Paris attraction, this may extend beyond professional preservationists. Robida's Vieux Paris, I would argue, brought the concerns of architectural preservation into popular consciousness. However, my argument specifically relates to those individuals who would have known and participated in the formation of the conventions for architectural photography established by the photographers I examined previously. These photographs were primarily stored in the archives, therefore those newly interested in historical preservation were not likely to have seen the images of old Paris by those photographers. Sutcliffe's synopsis of the acceptance of Meryon's etchings as accurate representations of the old streets corroborates my argument.

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abnormality. Those who were unfamiliar with architectural photography of this type, for instance the Surrealists who admired Atget's work, as well as Walter Benjamin, experienced an intense cognitive disjunction, a recognition that this was not the Paris of their lived experience, and a concurrent inability to conceive of a reason for such a pictorial mode. For the avant-garde, it was a source of puzzlement and delight. Surrealist Robert Desnos wrote, “Atget has photographed all of Paris with the marvelous objective of creating a dream and a surprise” and called his documents “the visions of a poet.”

Albert Valentin, a Belgian novelist associated with the Surrealists between 1928 and 1931 called him a “primitive visionary” who “obeyed his own infallible instinct, which led him into decidedly strange places where there appeared to be nothing of the slightest interest,” ultimately producing a “fantastic and perfect mirror” of the ordinary existence of Paris.

Pierre Mac Orlan, novelist and essayist who conceived of a “social fantastic” or element of daily life only accessible through photography, characterized Atget as a lyric-poet-cum-street-peddler who had a gift for anticipating the presence of the social fantastic in the neighborhoods wherein he worked. Andre Breton, while not commenting directly on Atget's work, commissioned photographs as illustrations for his novel Nadja, published in 1928, in an 'Atgetian' mode by Jacques-André Boiffard – banal scenes

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180 Ian Walker, City Gorged with Dreams: Surrealism and Documentary Photography in Interwar Paris (New York: Palgrave, 2002): 88. Walker defines the Atgetian aesthetic as “the everyday recorded with such understated directness that it comes to seem haunting, somehow inexplicable.”
from everyday life to serve as proof of the truth of his literary descriptions. (Figure 21) In photographs such as these, Breton sees “facts which may belong to the order of pure observation, but which on each occasion present all the appearances of a signal, without our being able to say precisely which signal, and of what.”

As I have established in my first chapter, this aesthetic had been utilized by architectural photographers for nearly a century before being 'discovered' by the Surrealists in Atget's work. What accounts for the surprise and delight upon their encountering Atget's banal photographs? It can be explained by examining Atget's intended viewers. Nesbit explains:

A document could not exist alone: it needed a viewer and a job. For a document was actually defined by an exchange, which is to say, by a viewer reading a certain kind of technical information from the picture and by the picture's ability to display just that technical sign. Both were needed for the document to become a document.

Atget's documents had a specific audience who recognized the technical signs of architectural preservationist photography. Even when Atget warps the technical signs by including undesirable and extraneous contextual information, the documents still perform their job, which is to focus on the architecture. Members of the Surrealist groups, even Berenice Abbott who was more intimately acquainted with the aging photographer and his work, were not likely to have been researching architectural photography in the Parisian archives or to have seen the historical precedent upon which Atget built. Their only exposure to photographs in this mode was in Atget's own studio.

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181 Ibid., 61.
182 I will touch on the failure of an empty-street photograph to signify as a lieu de mémoire in the conclusion to this paper.
Figure 21. Untitled photograph from *Nadja* (*We have our dinner served outside by the wine seller*). Jacques-André Bouffard, 1928.
I have presented the reaction of non-preservationists to Atget's codified empty-street photographs to show that these individuals were not privy to the collective memory of preservationists, Atget's primary audience. However, anyone familiar with Atget's oeuvre knows that not all of his photographs are in this mode. He also made photographs of crowds and street activity, markets, street peddlers, châteaux, parks, and modern transportation, just to name a few examples. My study has concentrated on those photo-documents which, by their aesthetic and formal qualities, appealed to groups and individuals concerned with the preservation and immortalization of Paris through images. I also want to make clear that while I argue for these documents as *lieux de mémoire*, I am not contending that every Atget photograph is a site of memory for the same groups. No doubt, by their very nature and due to the supreme blankness of many of Atget's images, documents of other aspects of Parisian life could function as *lieux de mémoire* for groups with different concerns.
CONCLUSION:

LIMITATIONS OF *LIEU DE MÉMOIRE* AS A METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In this paper, I have traced the evolution of a particular mode of representing Parisian streets, what I have termed a preservation aesthetic. Empty streets in urban photography originated due to the limitations of a new technology's ability to picture the urban experience of daily life. Over time, new photographic techniques and materials allowed for alternate representations of the streets, but the original set of formal qualities gradually became aestheticized as various official and amateur preservation entities employed photographers to record the physical condition of monuments and streets before demolition. By the turn of the twentieth century, the aesthetic had become codified and concretized; it became a site of memory for its preservationist viewers who invested photographs of old architectural structures with the same nationalist memories they imagined the architecture itself to contain. I have constructed a narrative proposing a communal memory among architectural preservationists and historicists who propagated the pictorial mode within their social and professional groups as a way to guard against the eventual destruction of national memory and to construct a collective architectural patrimony.

Throughout this study, my primary theoretical framework has been Pierre Nora's concept of the *lieu de mémoire*, or site of memory as a stand-in for living memory. Nora describes his own experience of the gap between lived historical experience and the
intellectual experience of studying history as a foundational moment for the development of his ideas. Until 1979, French law dictated public archives remain sealed for sixty to one hundred twenty years, necessarily creating a long period during which 'recent' historical events would not be studied by historians, and therefore only examined within the context of political science. Nora developed his theory out of the awakening of a historiographical consciousness in France. In other words, the self-conscious interrogation of historiography as it relates to attempts to expand the basis for collective memory, which crystallized during the Third Republic, is one development which led to Nora's conception of lieux de mémoire. The study of historiography, according to Nora, is itself a site of memory, evidenced by a turn to examination and analysis, a desire to systematically fix meaning, rather than simply continuing within the vein of tradition.

Nora's characterization of the site of memory can make it seem a foregone conclusion that anything and everything is destined to become a lieu de mémoire, or else be forgotten. Essentially, might not every deliberately preserved reference to the past in the present have an overdetermined history which ensured its survival? Likewise, are there not an infinite number of ruptures, nested and overlapping, in collective memory or social practice? The study of lieux de mémoire must by definition privilege those sites with a recorded history because of the empirical research necessary to trace its formation and concretization.

As initially imagined, this project would have attempted to historicize the urban spaces photographed by Atget to discern whether he is referencing the collective

memories of neighborhood inhabitants. Why were these particular spaces important for archival preservation, especially those that are not reflective of the preservationist mindset of Atget's clients? Why did he return to certain locations several times throughout his career? By explicating the already existing symbolic meaning within various areas of Paris, and attempting to locate these markers within Atget's pictures, it may become possible for a future study to examine photographs of areas of indeterminate historical significance and search out possible indicators of significance to the Parisian memory. The complications, however, of examining Parisian urban space, whose signification is always and already overdetermined within the collective imagination, may prove to be overly complex simply because of the existence of layered strata of signification of many areas of Paris. Furthermore, this approach may lead to creating a state of overdetermination where one would not otherwise exist.

The primary conceit of Nora's framework assumes a culture's self-consciousness and its desire for archival preservation in the face of erasure. The lieu de mémoire cannot exist without the archival “support” for the living memory – it can only exist for sites that have a modicum of continuity; therefore application of this framework is limited to those groups or societies who already attempt to represent their history. Even if a certain social group had experienced a particular tradition, rupture, and return, if none of these

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185 As any visitor to Paris can attest, the sheer number of memorial sites in the form of plaques on buildings where famous men and women lived, where people died, statues, street names (and so on) can make it seem that there is not a space in the entire city that does not yet have some sort of memorial signification.

186 It is for this reason that I felt it necessary to qualify the criticism of Haussmann by Baudelaire, Hugo, Zola, and the Goncourt brothers which is cited by T.J. Clark. Their criticisms have come to stand in for the common opinion of Parisians reactions to Haussmann. However, these are the critics that are most often cited, and whose writings have been preserved and analyzed since they have all been deemed to have been important thinkers of the time. Therefore their opinions may be overdetermined.
things were recorded and preserved, the site of memory could not be said to exist. Therefore, while the *lieu de mémoire* framework is appropriate for investigating remnants of the past in the present *where an established historiography exists*, without a historical archive of considerable breadth and depth, the attempt to identify *lieux de mémoire* will fail. The *lieu de mémoire* is inherently a history of representations.

*Vieux Paris in Contradistinction to Lieu de Mémoire*

Before concluding, I would like to introduce a final photograph by Atget to exemplify the complications I have identified above. In the photograph *Écrivain Public, Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève* (Figure 22), Atget's choices differ from the preferences of antiquarians in two ways: by showing evidence of the passage of time and of the encroachment of modernity. Many Atget scholars have characterized his work as expressive of a personal nostalgic vision, or as the personal project of a man who is mourning the changes to his heroic city, in other words, sharing the concerns of his preservationist patrons. Ultimately, it is my contention that attempts to fit Atget within the same mentality that spawned the exposition's Vieux Paris are continually short-circuited by his democratic treatment of subject matter.

Preservationists valued particular types of historical structures, those that often had a long and prestigious historical lineage. Throughout his prolific career, Atget did not prioritize those areas of Paris canonized by antiquarians as old, historic, and valuable. Indeed, it is because he also gave attention to a generous cross section of subjects not of interest to *vieux Parisians* – street peddlers, rag-pickers, and the *zoniers* of the *banlieue* –
Figure 22. Écrivain Public, Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève. Eugène Atget, 1899. Albumen print from glass negative, 17.8 x 22.1 cm. Bibliothèque National de France, Paris.
that he is known as 'the photographer of Paris.' What happens when the preservation aesthetic is applied to less dignified structures than those I have heretofore analyzed?

On this corner of old Paris, we are shown, not picturesque medieval turrets and towers, but instead a small dilapidated shop enclosing a courtyard. From the title, we know this small shanty is where one would have found an écrivain public, a person who would read documents, write letters, or complete administrative paperwork for an illiterate public. This aging structure lacks the noble lineage of the Hôtel de Sens or the Place Saint-André-des-Arts. Gaps at the bottom of the façade, where the sagging wall does not quite meet the sidewalk, show how the building has settled as it has aged. Dominating the right mid-ground is a more solidly grounded, but no better maintained, building, the exterior walls of which are painted advertising cuisine bourgeoise. The name of the business, “Au Vieux Paris,” capitalizes on both its location on the historic hill in the fifth arrondissement named for the ancient patron saint of Paris and Parisians' frenzied consumption of medieval goods and culture in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The title, assigned by Atget, partnered with the composition of the picture indicate the scribe's shop is the focus, yet the sign for the écrivain is visible only when one studies the picture closely – attached to the wall next to the advertisement for Kola-Coca is a small painter's palette-shaped sign reading “Dame Écrivain.” (Figure 23) It is hidden in the foliage of the tree and simply cannot compete with the text and pictures of the lithographed ads and the restaurant. What dominates the picture is the text on the back of the restaurant, “Au Vieux Paris,” to the point of serving as a caption for the picture. Thus
Figure 23. Detail, Écrivain Public, Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève.
the enormous text advertising the name of the restaurant alerts the viewer that this, too, is old Paris.

The evocation of *vieux* Paris contrasts brutally with the features in the left half of the picture. The farthest wall is completely filled with an advertisement for Lu Biscuits. A well-circulated Cheret lithograph\(^\text{187}\) advertising the Palais de Glace and a large poster promoting the superiority of Pompadour pasta were, at the time of this photograph, the exposed strata of layered lithography. An empty sidewalk and cobblestone street in the foreground gives the viewer a space within which he could imagine the inhabitants and daily routines of the neighborhood occupants. What manner of residents and activities a viewer would imagine would likely vary: the posters and well-kept apartment buildings indicate a contemporary reading, while the crumbling edifice of the *écrivain public*, itself a service becoming less necessary by the end of the century,\(^\text{188}\) would evoke an older way of life.

The picture of the city block on which the *écrivain public* worked stands as a direct counterpoint to the concerns of Robida, Edwards, and other preservationists who continually sought to exclude signs of modern life in their images of old Paris.\(^\text{189}\)


\(^{188}\) The Jules Ferry laws, enacted in 1881 established free (and one year later mandatory) laic education for boys and girls under age 15.

\(^{189}\) Nesbit, *Seven Albums*, 104. Nesbit here gives several examples of photographs wherein Atget compromised the timelessness that preservationists desired above all. One example is a picture Atget sold to an antiquarian society containing a cart visible in the foreground. Before publishing the photograph, the editors removed the cart from the picture. (104). Similarly, a photograph of the facade of the Hôtel Chalons Luxembourg necessitated Atget turn his camera to a more oblique angle, and thereby included the adjacent shopfronts and small boys observing the photographer. When published, the facade was cropped to its most essential, in other words, the architectural detail surrounding the grand entryway (63-65). Finally, and perhaps most absurdly, even the remains of a puddle on the street was enough evidence of contingency and mutability to distract from the otherwise stately entrance to the Hôtel de la Monnaie (110).
this version of *vieux* Paris is teeming with signs and signifiers of the passage of time and of modern life itself. It shows the manner by which urban spaces, even ancient ones, function like a palimpsest. Old and new features co-exist, one supplanting and overlapping the other, covering but not completely erasing all traces of the older existence and embodying different stages or epochs of time.

By focusing on the building's degenerating condition, Atget's picture draws attention to the passage of time within the space, including details considered extraneous and incompatible with preservationist desires. Because the twentieth-century preservationist viewer is already hyper-attuned to the issues at stake regarding the precariousness of *vieux* Paris, the picture operates as a referent to the passage of time, exactly what antiquarians wanted to efface in their preferred images of the old city. Atget exploits this by including within the picture allusions to numerous temporalities or life spans within the frame: the temporality of the tree; that of the *écrivain* - the building and the vocation, perhaps even the individual; the ephemerality of the advertisements, the shortest-lived feature; the lifespan of the business, the building, and the food within; and finally that of the entirety of *vieux* Paris as is forced into the viewer's mind by the painted text, which just happens to be disintegrating with the crumbling stucco. Though there are no people visible in the picture, the ghosting in the center of the frame between the bottom of the picture plane and the edge of the sidewalk, indicates the motion of some form of street traffic, another temporality – and a quick one at that – too fast to be recorded on the plate. A final temporality is activated by the viewer who is implicated
within a more deliberate scheme as he or she looks slowly and closely at the image, replicating what Atget himself did just before the plate's exposure.

Each of these referents, with its lifespan or duration of varying length, would encourage the viewer to make comparisons between elements within the image. For instance, between the shop of the écrivain and the apartment building behind it, between the peeling stucco and the recently pasted-up lithographs, between the street traffic that is too fast for the picture and the photographer who carefully framed the shot. By composing the frame to include the wider street view rather than focusing only on the old structure, Atget comments on the contingency of modern life. This photograph would not have pleased preservationists as a proper document of vieux Paris. There is too much twentieth-century looming at the edges. Preservationists preferred the historic components of the city to appear as pristine as when each was completed, without any signs of the passage of time.

One cannot predict what elements of the past will survive into the future and what may be important for posterity, but preservationists were certain that modern life could be excluded. Loaded with detail, this photograph denies the nostalgic interpretation of vieux Paris, and disrupts the neat historical narrative preferred by preservationist viewers. This picture represents an urban palimpsest wherein time is translated into a spatial manifestation in a cluttered patchwork. Vieux does not always mean quaint, charming, or containing the heroic memories of the past. It may also means dirty, dilapidated, crumbling, covered over, and sometimes abandoned, just like the modern areas of the city.\footnote{Charles Dickens published a guidebook to Paris in the form of a dictionary of terms a visitor was likely
modernity into these *vieux* spaces – historical and modern coexisted in the *quartiers* of Paris, even surrounding the supreme example of historic architecture, Hôtel de Sens.

Nora's methodology becomes problematic when one is confronted with numerous sites of signification as within Paris, for instance. How does the historian prioritize what collective memory is being crystallized within the social, national, professional, or regional groups that overlap and interact within a city? How do various sites of memory inform and influence each other? And what of the collective memories of groups that have no representations or written history to research? Are we to assume that they live in a culture of *milieux de mémoire*? Nora's binary system does not readily accommodate the collective memory of groups which experienced a rupture and return to tradition, but which lack self-representation. Nora's study was initially conceived to study the French past. As the *lieux de mémoire* framework has been adapted by scholars in other fields since its original conception, perhaps some of these problematic issues will be addressed.

Simply because a *lieu de mémoire* can be identified in some of Atget's photographs does not mean he was an automaton at the service of collective memory. There are cracks in the façade of *vieux* Paris where other possibilities occur, where the contingency and vicissitudes of modern life in a metropolis seep in and challenge the dominant reading. Atget's formal and compositional choices in depicting the shop

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191 Emery, “Protecting the Past,” 76-77. Emery argues *lieux de mémoire* were created simply based on proximity to other replicated edifices that had a meaning within the Parisian collective memory, creating the possibility for a viral transference of retroactive significance. While this is not an unreasonable conclusion based on Nora's qualifications of *lieux de mémoire*, the problematics and ramifications of a site of memory transmitting those qualities to something based on proximity is not addressed by Emery.
indicate that lieu de mémoire are not fait accompli. Their existence depends on sympathetic replication of the codified behavior that led to their formation. Atget does not always cooperate with the unwritten rules of photography bound for the archive; he does not always seem to be a completely willing participant in the collective dream of 'vieux Parisiens.' Atget's own agency in recording the Paris of his experience acts to subvert the collective memories referenced by this site. He chose to allow the seepage of modernity into his work as a way to negotiate the difference between the mythic image of vieux Paris and the representation of Paris as a twentieth century metropolis.

192 Atget's subtle photographic subversions make up one of Nesbit's core themes in Atget's Seven Albums.
Bibliography


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