Title
Traffic: On the Displacement of Art in Early Twentieth-Century France

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Traffic: On the Displacement of Art in Early Twentieth-Century France

By

Daniel Joseph Marcus

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in

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of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor T. J. Clark, Chair
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Abstract

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This dissertation is about the image and the reality of traffic in early twentieth-century France, from the late 1890s to the mid-1930s. It comprises three chapters, each of which centers on a different artist's encounter with the emergence of the modern traffic system: Camille Pissarro's *Boulevards Montmartre* and *Avenues de l'Opéra* series of 1897-98, Le Corbusier's first projects in and around Paris between 1917-1923, and Fernand Léger's "object-drawings" of 1928-33. Together, these chapters shed light on the emergence of a new scene of modernization three decades after Baron Haussmann's first campaign of urban renovations, from which would result the transformation, not simply of the old core of central Paris, but of the road network in its entirety, encompassing city and country alike. Tracking the development of the traffic system in broad strokes, from the policing of the street in the moment of the Dreyfus Affair to the planning of the first *autoroutes* in the late 1920s and early '30s, my dissertation asks how the modernization of street traffic came to be seen as a natural and normal aspect of the human environment, and how, in turn, artists, architects, and other advocates of modernism sought to grapple with the contradictions of the new infrastructural landscape.

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INTRODUCTION

At its root, this dissertation mounts an argument about modernism and its world, placing its emphasis on the latter term—the issue of worlds and their making—and with an eye to ways access to something like a common world, a space in which human subjects might plausibly claim to find themselves *together*, has been drastically reduced for much of the human population over the course of the early twentieth century.

This will surely strike readers as an excessively unwieldy claim; so let me put my historical case front and center, and with the caveat that although my focus will be restricted to metropolitan France, not Punjab or California, the history at issue is plainly larger and more generalized. The argument is simply this: At some point around the middle of the 1890s (it is hard to say precisely when, but certainly after the arrest and trial of Ravachol, who was only the most famous of the *fin-de-siècle*'s myriad propagandists of the deed, in 1893), a new set of tactics were introduced by the forces of order, part and parcel of a broader struggle to stabilize bourgeois authority in an period of urban crisis; tactics which, although initially limited in scope, would result in a fundamental change in the nature of public space. Tactics of military suppression—the deployment of armed troops to keep order in the streets—were quietly phased out, in favor of methods of policing and crowd control designed to keep public space permanently fluent, unblocked by demonstrators and available to traffic. These tactics took as their pretense the intensification of traffic volume in the centers of major urban areas, and would be substantially expanded with the shift from equestrian to automotive traction; but they preceded the generalization of car traffic by at least a decade, and had already formalized the circulatory fluency and systematicity of the streets long before the spike in pedestrian deaths in the 1910s and '20s.

By the early twentieth century, these measures, which had originated with the police, were expanded—at first only formally, but very soon materially—across the whole of France: A national traffic code was put through in 1899, and refined over the first two decades of the twentieth century in order to favor high-speed, motor-powered traffic over smaller and slower users of the roadway. Indeed, it was in some ways easier to enforce rules of order in the country than in the city (especially a city like Paris, with its long record of ungovernability), since the interurban roads, from the main arteries down to the capillaries of vicinal circulation, had already been regulated by the central government since their creation in the seventeenth century (in fact, the theory of road-space as a fluid system had first been applied to the description of the national roads). Until the 1920s, this infrastructure of interurban communications remained intact and little changed: the Routes Nationales were largely hellish to motor tourists, and no account of a cross-country voyage by automobile or bicycle in the first third of the twentieth century (even this is probably overestimating the snail's pace of road improvements in the *héxagone*) was complete without a paragraph or two's worth of curses directed at the uneven, mud-soaked, rock-strewn, and otherwise impassable terrain of the national roads. Even so, the policing of the road system in city and country alike would carry forward along a path toward integration; increasingly, rural space and urban space—at least, the spaces conducive to locomotion—were subjected to the same, abstracting policy.

The outlines of this story should be familiar: we are dealing in the long arc toward spatial homogenization—a history to which the anthopologist Marc Augé's study of *Non-Places* remains a useful guide, especially in the following long passage:

> If place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relation, or historical, or concerned with identity wll be a non-place. The hypothesis advanced here is that supermodernity produces non-places, meaning places which are not themselves anthropological places and which, unlike Baudelairean modernity, do not integrate other places: instead these are listed, classified, promoted to the status of 'places of memory' [*lieux de mémoire*], and assigned to a circumscribed and specific position. A world where people are born in the clinic and die in hospital, where transit points and temporary abodes are proliferating under luxurious or inhuman conditions (hotel chains and squats, holiday clubs and refugee camps, shantytowns threatened with demolition or doomed to festering longevity); where a dense network of means of transport which are also inhabited spaces is developing; where the habitué of supermarkets, slot machines and credit cards communicates wordlessly, through gestures, with an abstract, unmediated commerce; a world thus surrendered to solitary individuality, to the fleeting, the temporary and ephemeral,[1]

The passage has its disadvantages, to be sure: Augé's '*surmodernité*' is as unhelpful a neologism as the French publishing industry has ever let pass, and one wonders how poor Baudelaire found himself so firmly on the side of the anthropological. Still, it furnishes a workable description of the kind of social geography that has emerged from the spatial transformations of the twentieth century, evoking what Augé repeatedly calls "a world," but which is really anything but: not a world at all, but a collection of social margins absent a core. Where I differ from Augé has less to do with the sweeping social vision than the particulars of the social process: for I do not see in the rudiments of non-place the shape of a new order, much less a new world. I see rather an attempt at the *reduction* of world—a history of world-impoverishment, accompanied by so many distractions from this central fact of social life.

Let me be clear: Obviously the measures at the heart of my story—tactics of policing, codes of traffic violations, debates over road signaling systems, schemes for improving the Routes Nationales, and even the rudiments of a national highway system—describe something near to an order of space. But the functionaries, legislators, and policymakers who crop up in these pages were not dreamers of new worlds; they were bureaucrats tasked with managing an unstable public, and their efforts at imposing order were self-professedly invested in the order that already existed. What they achieved, in sum, was a desperate *theft* of space—not, however, in the service of a world yet to come, but as a measure aimed at preventing *any* new world from materializing. My story therefore has nothing to say about the 'production of space' in the sense frequently given that term; it will not offer a roadmap, much less an philosopher's guided tour, of some new regime of the supermodern, whether networked, controlled, immaterialized, topological, risk-oriented, liquid, or the like. I am not convinced by the theorist's impulse to make the negative into a positive; after all, the negative remains the more palpable trait of the

[1] Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* [1992], trans. John Howe (London and New York: Verso, 1995), 78.

system of social controls presently in effect. It is precisely because the space that was stolen has not been given back that we are where we are.

*

My case studies—Camille Pissarro, Le Corbuiser, and Fernand Léger—span some forty years in the history of modernism in France, each homing in on a relatively limited period in an individual artist's career; the flow of the dissertation is therefore episodic, with each episode tracing the path of a problem—not always the path of its working-out—through a sequences of artworks, images, or projects. In all three cases, it is the same fundamental problem at issue: how, if at all, can the fact of the world's despatialization be made relevant to art, without simply yielding (as in so many artworks over the course of the twentieth century) a pictorial void, or a blank, or sheer flatness, or repetitive stuttering? This will turn out to be a meaningfully different question than the hypothetical of art's get on *without* space; it is obvious, of course, that art has remained fully possible in an era of despatializations and un-worldings; for there has always been the interior to fall back upon—private life to be cannibalized, psychodrama to be pumped into mythology or beaten into impersonality, forays into the heart of spectacle as compensation for the shrinking of historical agency in the streets, and so on. The viability of art is not at issue; my question is whether art is, or ever was, capable of going beyond the limit of its compulsory smallness without simply reiterating the shaping form of its enclosure—whether a form, however fleeting and illegible, might nonetheless be wrested from art's the encounter with the apparatus of separation. At least, this was the question, in so many words, that each of my artists found himself asking, and continued to ask—to the point of obsession, even—until the answer finally came back in the negative.

CHAPTER ONE

THE NAKED CITY

> *Between the Métro and the north side of the Place de la Chapelle are spread out two leprous squares, to which plane trees furnish shade in summer. (At the time I passed here, the one on the left—looking outward—served as an encampment for refugees, who settled or resettled here after the police violence on Rue Pajol.) The newspaper kiosk, set against the park on the right, used to be run by a young woman who was Arab, Trotskyist, and veiled, which is not so common. In brief, if the Place de la Chapelle can be seen, and is often seen, as a site of giant traffic jams, noise and dirt, you can also—as I do—find poetry here, and even a certain gentleness. (This is my only use of the word 'poetry' in this book, I promise.)*
>
> —ÉRIC HAZAN[1]

In June 1898, Camille Pissarro mounted an exhibition of twenty-eight paintings at Galerie Durand-Ruel, featuring two recently completed series, his *Boulevards* and *Avenues*, which he had painted in Paris during the winter and spring of 1897 and 1898, respectively, alongside eight paintings from the Normandy countryside. The exhibition, the painter's sixth at the gallery, summed up two extraordinarily difficult years of life and work, and suggested, in ways subtle and not, the shifting foundations of his modernism. Personally as well as politically, the years 1897 and 1898 had been trying in the extreme to the sexagenarian painter, owing to the death of his son Félix and the furor surrounding the Dreyfus Affair, which exploded into a national firestorm in January 1898, just as he was starting in on his *Avenues* series. In the end, however, the main source of difficulty for Pissarro was artistic: Paris was not his natural territory; for reasons that were, again, as much political as personal, he cleaved to the countryside and its peasantry against the city and its bourgeoisie. During the 1870s, Pissarro had been virtually alone among the founding members of the *Société Anonyme* to have staked his reputation on the countryside in avoidance of Paris, preferring to paint along the outskirts of Pontoise, a few hours due north of Paris by train, and eventually settling at nearby Eragny, a village of cowherds and apple-growers, where he resided with his family from 1884 until his

[1] Éric Hazan, *Une traversée de Paris* (Paris: Seuil, 2016), 131-32: "Entre le métro et le côté nord de la place s'étirent deux squares lépreux don't les platanes donnent de l'ombre en été. (au moment où j'y passe, celui de gauche en regardant vers la périphérie sert de campement à des réfugiés qui s'y sont installés ou réinstallés après les violences policières de la rue Pajol.) Le kiosque à journaux, contre le square de droite, était naguère tenu par une jeune femme qui parvenait à être à la fois arabe, trotskiste et voilée, ce qui n'est pas si fréquent. Bref, si l'on peut voir, si l'on voit souvent la place de la Chapelle comme un lieu d'embouteillages géants, de bruit et de saleté, on peut aussi – c'est mon cas – y trouver de la poésie et même une certaine douceur. (*Poésie*, le mot ne figurera qu'une seule fois dans cette traversée, je le promets." I am grateful to Sebastian Budgen for bringing this passage to my attention, and for sharing a preliminary translation of this passage, which I have modified here.

death in 1903. The land and its painting had always been, and would remain, the bedrock of Pissarro's art; more than just a tradition or a set of conventions, the genre of landscape painting came to provide something on the order of an epistemology—a way of brushing the surface of the material world, and of questioning the place of the human subject therein. How this sort of painterly intelligence was to lay claim to the Paris boulevards was not at all obvious; Pissarro was bound to struggle with the scene of the street—and struggle he did, albeit toward inconclusive, and even contradictory, ends.

What those ends might have been, and how Pissarro's idea of Paris changed along the way, are this chapter's main questions. As far as answers go, I shall attempt to do little more than to follow the trail left by the paintings themselves, arranged in as close to a chronological order as can be reconstructed *ex post facto*—basic art-historical work, admittedly, yet which cuts through deep waters, we shall see. Here is the place to acknowledge, by the way, that these questions remain at present unasked and unanswered: remarkably—it is truly a lacuna—art history has not yet seen fit to query the sequence of Pissarro's work in 1897 and 1898, preferring to treat each Paris series *en bloc*, as so many variations on a theme, rather than as the unfolding of a dialectic.[2] Needless to say, my sense of Pissarro's accomplishment skews differently: I shall emphasize the sequence more than the series in the pages to follow, with the aim, again, of understanding why the job of painting Paris proved so daunting to Pissarro—why, indeed, it had to be let go of in the end. There should be no mistaking the direction of the narrative at issue: By 1899, Pissarro will have relocated from Haussmann's Paris to the capital of the *ancien régime*, coming to rest in the gardens of the Louvre and the Tuileries, an urban landscape planned and advertised as such. The question, again, is why it took him so long to give up on modernity, and what idea he was able to wrest from the city—what he saw, and how he saw it—in the break.

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Before setting off in search of answers, let me return for a moment to the scene of Pissarro's *exposition particulière* of June 1898, and to the view of things in retrospect. We should begin with Pissarro's own appraisal of the Paris series, as communicated in two letters sent to Lucien, his eldest son and a formidable artist in his own right, in the days before and after the exhibition's opening at Durand-Ruel. The first is dated 29 May 1898, and gives an overview of the show and its contents, with light editorializing on the part of the sender:

> My *Avenue de l'Opéra* series is hung. I've got a large room all to myself; there are twelve *Avenues*, seven or eight *Avenues* and *Boulevards* [note: Pissarro is referring to his *Boulevards* series of 1897], including four which no one has seen before (I had kept them in my possession); also some studies of Eragny, which I find very well

[2] See, for example, Richard R. Brettell and Joachim Pissarro, eds., *The Impressionist in the City: Pissarro's Series Painting* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992). The lacuna at issue does not diminish the usefulness of this imporatnat volume, which was written for very different reasons than mine.

> pleasing, especially the *Printemps en fleur* that I'd worked on at intervals for two years, and which I reckon will have been the best thing I ever did. Durand-Ruel is very pleased; the general look of things is quite nice. In the neighboring rooms are a series of admirable Renoirs, in another, some superb Monets, and another for Sisley, and the final little room for Puvis de Chavannes. Thus the whole place is filled with Impressionist painting. My *Avenues* are so bright that they would look well alongside the Puvis'.[3]

A week later, on 6 June, Lucien received another missive from his father, who was still in Paris but leaving soon for a trip to Bourgogne:

> I depart for Eragny tomorrow morning, and then will pack my bags to head to Mâcon. […] There's hardly any pleasure for me in traveling, as I've got so many projects still to paint, and it will only throw things off to knock about from one place to the next; it really is impossible to make any progress except in doing what one knows well, and on that score, I've been thinking of going to Pontoise in order to redo a number of things I'd sketched out in the past. Really, it was a success, my exhibition; it seems hardly anyone wrote against it, except for Arsène Alexandre, in *Le Figaro*; which doesn't shock me, he's not exactly on the level.[4]

Pissarro's determined optimism shines through in both letters, and was no doubt warranted; after all, the two Paris campaigns had cost him dearly in hotel bills and sundries, diminishing the flow of funding to the the painter's six children (five, following Félix's passing), who continued to require regular stipends from their parents into

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[3] Camille Pissarro to Lucien Pissarro (hereafter cited as CP to LP), 29 May 1898; in Janine Bailly-Herzberg, ed., *Correspondance de Camille Pissarro: Tome 4 / 1895-1898* (Paris: Éditions de Valhermeil, 1980), 486: "Mes avenues sont accrochées. J'ai une grande salle à moi tout seul; il y a douze avenues, sept à huit avenues et boulevards, parmi lesquels il y en a quatre que l'on ne connaissait pas qui m'appartiennent; des études d'Eragny, dont je suis assez satisfait, entre autres un printemps en fleur que j'ai travaillé deux ans de suite qui est, je pense, la meilleure chose que j'aie jamais faite. Durand est très satisfaite; l'aspect est très doux. Dans les salles à côté il y a une série d'admirables Renoir, et une autre de superbes Monet, et une autre de Sisley, et la dernière petite salle des Puvis de Chavannes. Tout est donc rempli de peinture impressionniste. Mes avenues sont si claires que cela irait très bien avec les Puvis." Further references to this volume of Pissarro's correspondence are cited as *BHIV*.

[4] CP to LP, 6 Jun 1898, *BHIV*, 488: "Je pars demain matin pour Eragny, je vais faire mes malles pour aller à Mâcon. […] Cela ne m'amuse guère d'aller en voyage, j'ai tant de projets de peinture à réaliser que cela me déroute d'aller d'un côté et d'autre; décidément on ne fait des progrès qu'en faisant ce que l'on connaît bien, et à ce sujet, j'avais pensé aller à Pontoise refaire bien des choses que j'avais étudiées dans le temps. Décidément, c'est un succès, mon exposition; il n'y a guère qu'Arsène Alexandre, paraît-il, qui, dans *le Figaro*, a écrit contre; cela ne m'étonne pas, il y a quelque anguille sous roche."

adulthood.[5] Unlike the late Caillebotte or his onetime colleague Paul Signac, Pissarro was not rich, or even comfortably well off; the family home at Eragny had been bought thanks to a loan from Monet—one secured by Julie Pissarro, Camille's wife, who rolled up her sleeves and did what had to be done when her husband's overweening pride got in the way. The issue of money was a constant strain on familial relations in the Pissarro household, especially between Camille and Julie; the argument usually came down to the unproductivity—fiscally, I mean—of the children, and the apparently open-ended horizon of their dependency. As much as he resisted his wife's good sense, Pissarro was no fool: he knew his income had to provide for the entire family, and had come to regard the private art market as a necessary evil, to be humored at one moment in order to secure a bit of autonomy in the next.

In any case, whatever moves he made in his art, especially on the order of a new series of canvases (the sort of thing likely to anchor a one-man exhibition, and to absorb the bulk of the critic's attention), had to yield at least a modicum of income, especially when the coffers were near to depleted—which they very much were in June 1898, following the family emergencies of the previous summer and autumn.[6] It would be pointless to deny that Pissarro had the market in mind when deciding on Paris as his next subject; in fact, the impetus to paint what would become his *Boulevards* series seems to have been due to the art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel, with whom Pissarro had signed an exclusive contract a few years earlier. None of which is to suggest that Pissarro's enterprise in Paris was free of risks: the painter would have to figure out a way of claiming as his own such a thoroughly overdetermined subject, placing his mark where the great modernists of his generation—Manet, Monet, Caillebotte, Degas—had gone before. Then, too, he would need on some level to convince the art critics and collectors that his views of Paris did not negate his previous work as a painter—in other words, that the Pissarro of the *Boulevards* was the same artist renowned for his views of Normandy orchards and peasants. The paintings had to be warmly received, and they had to sell; yet

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[5] The cost of lodging at the Grand Hôtel du Louvre, where Pissarro completed his first Paris series, the *Boulevards*, came to one thousand francs per month (the figure is quoted in a letter sent from Camille to his son Georges, quoted below; see footnote 38). A letter sent by the painter to his niece, Esther Pissarro, dated 5 October 1897, just a few months shy of his *Avenues de l'Opéra* campaign, illuminates the precariousness of his finances, and suggests how seriously the Paris stays taxed the family's finances: "L'affaire Durand-Ruel a été fort mauvaise, Durand ne me prend que les cinq toiles anglaises et la prairie avec l'arbre, qu'il n'aime pas du tout. Il m'a pris mes Eragny qui se montaient à sept mille neuf cents francs et diminué de mille neuf cents francs, ce qui me fait six mille francs pour aller jusqu'au mois de mars, avec les dépenses que j'aurai, impossible de travailler à Paris." The expenses at issue were not personal, after all; they accounted for the entire family, Esther included. CP to Esther Pissarro, 5 Oct 1897, *BHIV*, 380.

[6] This was in order to tend to Lucien, who had suffered a stroke in late May; Camille and his wife, Julie, would remain with Lucien in Chiswick until the end of summer.

somehow, the painter had somehow to keep sane in the process, making the best of a hard situation without betraying his sense of artistic rigor or good politics.

About politics, it would be equally fruitless to deny that Pissarro had them, or that they did not in some way inflect the difficulty of Durand-Ruel's brief. A declared anarchist since the mid to late 1880s, Pissarro corresponded regularly with the movement's leading lights in France—in particular, with Jean Grave, editor of the journals *La Révolte* and *Les Temps nouveaux*, with the novelist-cum-provocateur Octave Mirbeau, and with Émile Pouget, the firebrand responsible for the argotic newspaper *Le Père Peinard*.[7] A diligent reader, Pissarro was current with Kropotkin, and knew the anarchist geographer (also a brilliant polemicist in his way) Élisée Reclus personally, the two having met in 1894 during Pissarro's brief period of self-imposed exile in Belgium. To anarchists of this vintage and stripe, especially around the turn of the 1890s, the bourgeois metropolis was not, to put it mildly, Utopia: cities writ large, and Paris in particular, represented the antithesis of anarchism's vision of pastoral harmony, concatenating within hard borders the most venal bureaucracy and social privilege, as well as the lion's share of economic spoils. Prior to anarchism's lurch into terrorism in 1892, anarchist writers regarded the countryside as the source of purgative justice; it was with this ideal in mind, for example, that Mirbeau had complimented Pissarro earlier in the decade, celebrating the painter's views of Eragny as part and parcel of anarchism's clarion call:

> Pissarro does not introduce any idle detail into his motifs that might catch the gaze and stop thought. He paints, overflowing its horizons, the life that burgeons forth across the cosmic vastitude. In his canvases, we have the real idea, the almost physical representation of this immensity, in which man is but a barely visible smear, a sort of shadowy mildew, a mushrooming mold, and wherein the cities themselves, no matter how groaning, are no longer perceptible, having no more planetary

[7] For a fundamental treatment of this topic, see T.J. Clark, "We Field-Women," in *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999). Since the turn of the twenty-first century, a small cottage industry in studies of anarchism and the *fin-de-siècle* (terms closely connected in the academic imaginary) has developed, thanks in no small part to the resurgence of anarchist politics among the millennial Left. Remarkably, although perhaps not surprisingly, no similar burst of interest has coalesced around *fin-de-siècle* socialism, in spite of the not insignificant role of the Second International in defining the course of the twentieth century. For recent treatments focusing on Pissarro's anarchism, see Allison Jane MacDuffee, *Camille Pissarro: Modernism, Anarchism, and the Representation of "the People," 1888-1903* (Ph.D. Diss., University of Michigan, 2004); Robyn Roslak, *Neo-Impressionism and Anarchism in Fin-de-Siècle France: Painting, Politics and Landscape* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007); Allan Antliff, "Utopie vivante," in Richard R. Brettell and Joachim Pissarro, eds., *Pissarro à Eragny: La Nature retrouvée* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux-Grand Palais, 2017), 38-47.

> importance beyond the fold of terrain that shelters them than the lark's nest in the bottom of a ditch. Confronted with this new form of art, which, for the first time, restitutes nature to us in all its quivering, in its dream of daybreak [*son rêve d'initiale lumière*], we are first taken by an impression of sickness, almost vertigo, like that felt by a man kept captive in the darkness of a cave, suddenly finding himself in open space and in sunlight.[8]

For a variety of reasons, Mirbeau's account strikes me as missing its mark (although it should be noted that Pissarro approved of it); for there was little in Pissarro's art, either in *Haymaking at Eragny* or elsewhere, that suggests the full or complete subjection of humanity to nature, and even less of Mirbeau's prophesy of the destruction of the urban. But Mirbeau was simply repeating what he and his comrades believed to be inevitable: that the future of humanity lay in the revenge of country against city (of the many against the few), opening a path toward freedom from all forms of enclosure.

Pissarro, too, had once upon a time given voice to a more simplistic, chiliastic, idea of anarchy and the city. In 1889, probably not long after visiting the Exposition Universelle, he created a volume of drawings as a gift to his niece, Esther Isaacson, with whom he had been corresponding about anarchist theory and practice. Titled *Turpitudes sociales*, Pissarro's book was unvarnished in its condemnation of the corrupt ruling class, sketching a dismal view of the ultra-exploitation of the urban proletariat; indeed, the book is mostly a catalogue of the many ways a resident of the Paris slums might come to grief—whether by asphyxiation, gangland murder, undernourishment, or, portentously, insurrection: death on the mass grave of the barricade [**Fig. 1**]. *Turpitudes sociales was* equally explicit about the source of hope, and of revolution: Pissarro's frontispiece for the book removes the viewer from the boulevards and slums to the outworks of Paris, where an old man sits with hourglass and scythe (a dead ringer for Pissarro), staring placidly, and somewhat blankly, out across the city's rooftops, its belching smokestacks, its

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[8] Octave Mirbeau, "Camille Pissarro," *L'Art dans les deux mondes* no. 8 (10 Jan. 1892), 84: "M. Pissarro n'introduit dans ses motifs aucun détail oiseux qui accroche le regard et arrête la pensée. Il peint, au delà de ses horizons, la vie qui se continue à travers la vastitude cosmique. Dans ses toiles, nous avons l'idée réelle, la représentation presque physique de cette immensité où l'homme n'est plus qu'une tache à peine perceptible, une sorte de moisissure d'ombre, de champignonnement, où les villes elles-mêmes, si grondantes soient-elles, ne s'aperçoivent pas plus, n'ont pas plus d'importance planétaire, derrière le pli de terrain qui les abrite, que le nid de l'alouette au creux du sillon. Aussi, avant cet art tout neuf, qui, pour la première fois, nous restituait la nature dans son frémissement, dans son rêve d'initiale lumière, avons-nous éprouvé d'abord une impression de malaise, presque de vertige, analogue à celle de l'homme qui, longtemps enfermé dans la nuit d'une cave, se retrouve tout d'un coup dans l'espace, au soleil." Portions of this passage are translated in Martha Ward, *Pissarro, Neo-Impressionism, and the Spaces of the Avant-Garde* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 181; Ward omits several key lines, which I have supplied here.

staccato of chimneys. A slightly miniaturized Eiffel Tower, the centerpiece of the Exposition Universelle, looms tall above the haze, with a pale sun rising at its back, haloed by the word "ANARCHIE" in irradiated letters (Pissarro's letter to Esther: "The tower… tries to hide the rising star (of anarchism) and the new ideal."]. The precise image of the city broadcast (but to an audience of one) in the main body of the book was admittedly heteroglot, a mixture of themes culled from Zola's *L'Assommoir* and the *faits-divers* columns of the popular press, with captions taken from articles in *La Révolte*.[9] But the frontispiece left little room for doubt as to the meaning of these motifs and citations: the city was on its last legs—the hourglass was fast running out, and the clarion call of anarchism soon to blow from the countryside.

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Whether or not Lucien believed his father's account of business in Paris is impossible to say; we have only the father's half of the correspondence, regrettably. Still, a careful reader (as Lucien surely was) would have detected a note of self-questioning in both letters, as if the campaigns in Paris had struck him as less than entirely successful when seen installed together, and with the paintings from Eragny as foils. Pissarro was prone to exaggeration, but the self-praise heaped upon his *Pommier en fleur* [**Fig. 2**] was obviously excessive given the modesty of the painting in question; and in a similar vein, it is hard not to read the painter's admonition not to stray from "what one knows well [*ce que l'on connaît bien*]," together with the suggestion that he might soon revisit Pontoise, as signs of discontentment with his own, recent efforts at painting precisely what he had not known well and still knew at best imperfectly. (Pontoise was the anti-Paris: a place of ultra-familiarity, in contrast with the unfathomable metropolis.) Pissarro could take small comfort in the limpidity of his city views, judging them on par with Puvis' latest (it is hard to know whether this was really a boast, or whether it was Puvis who suffered by the comparison), but he could not say—at least, he did not say—that the Paris campaigns had resulted in triumph, or that his efforts at the window paid off in the end.

Of one thing we can be certain: Pissarro's exhibition was not "un succès, décidément." Not that the reviews were strictly negative: Out of eight treatments in the press, six gave Pissarro favorable marks, and the two hostile reviews seem not to have phased the painter—at least, not as far as he was willing to let on. Still, even among critics predisposed in Pissarro's favor, the Paris series proved to be something of a hot potato, yielding prose heavy with caveats and light on description. In the short-lived *Revue populaire des beaux-arts,* for example, Georges Lecomte had mostly boilerplate to offer, charting a turgid path from Pissarro's earlier Rouen series to the boulevards and beyond:

> First there was Rouen with its ports, its *quais*, the smoke of factories and of idling steamers, the picturesque archaism of its roofs and the serrations of its spires. Next came the Paris boulevards with their play of shadow and light on the apartment

[9] See Richard Thomson, "Camille Pissarro, *Turpitudes sociales*, and the Universal Exhibition of 1889," *Arts Magazine* vol. 56, no. 4 (April 1982), 82-88.

> façades, the movement of crowds and of vehicles, the touch of the light upon moving forms; finally, now, the Place [du Théâtre Français] and the Avenue de l'Opéra, seen in snow or under winter fog, in the crisp and delicate light of spring with the joy of young verdure amidst the pallid stones, showered in rain, in grey weather or under elegant sunlight. The liveliness of these works is intense, complex, full of motion. They possess, in all their charm and exactness, the light, the color, the vivacity of the Paris streets. And how audacious is the architecture of these paintings! and put together with such bold improvisation! The passersby, the beasts of burden, the carriages seen from above are seized in their true silhouette and lighting; each being, each object has its own character. And at the same time, everything is equilibrated and harmonized, forming very decorative compositions.[10]

Technically, this amounted to praise; but it was hardly adequate as a description of Pissarro's canvases, except in terms that could have been applied to any number of Impressionist and sub-Impressionist city views, avant-garde and kitsch alike. More to the point, Lecomte wished—and in this sense, his review is representative of the tenor of criticism in 1898—to have Pissarro's views of Paris tied down to his market-ready identity as a painter of the countryside, so that readers did not confuse him for some wretched *peintre de la vie moderne*; which required, in turn, a long addendum to the review—a palinode, really—in which the painter of the *Boulevards* and *Avenues* was declared a painter of the countryside first and foremost, one who, "alongside the best of the best, has concerned himself with rendering the true physiognomy of the countryside, turning out carefully observed agrarian scenes painted in all their particularity, and in bright limpid tones… He shows the land and the peasants who work it. These are not

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[10] Georges Lecomte, *La Revue populaire des Beaux-Arts*, vol. II, 18 Jun. 1898, 42-44: "Après tant de toiles, tant de chefs-d'oeuvre où le poème intime et radieux de la nature est écrit en harmonies si splendides, voici que le vieux maître a voulu nous représenter la pierre des villes, la vie grouillante des rues, la grisaille des façades, les ciels que la fumée et la poussière font si complexes. […] Ce fut d'abord Rouen avec ses ports, ses quais, les fumées des usines et des steamers en partance, le pittoresque archaïque de ses toits et les dentelures de ses flèches. Puis vinrent les boulevards de Paris avec les jeux d'ombre et de lumière sur les façades, les remuements de foule et de véhicules, toutes les caresses de lumière sur les formes en mouvement; enfin, voici la place et l'avenue de l'Opéra, par la neige ou les brouillards d'hiver, dans la fraîche et délicate lumière de printemps avec la joie des jeunes verdures parmi la pierre blafarde, par la pluie, le temps gris ou le pimpant soleil. C'est d'une vie intenses, complexe, mouvementée. C'est, dans tout leur charme et toute leur exactitude, la lumière, la couleur, le remuement des rues de Paris. Et comme l'architecture de ces tableaux est audacieuse! avec quelle hardiesse et quel imprévu ils sont bâtis! Les passants, les voitures, les bêtes, les astres vus d'en haut sont saisis dans leur vérité de silhouette et de lumière; chaque être, chaque objet a son caractère. Et, en même temps, tout cela s'équilibre, s'harmonise pour former des compositions très décoratives."

made-up figures we see posing here. Bent over the soil, they are truly bound in place by their daily labors, living within their exact and habitual frame…" etc etc.[11]

Again, Lecomte's ruralizing impulse was the rule more than the exception: it seemed that one could not write about Pissarro's paintings of Paris without insisting upon the primacy of Eragny, to the point of fairly thrusting the painter's clog-shod feet in the reader's face. Even a reviewer as sensitive to modernist dialectic as Gustave Geffroy strained to convince readers of *Le Journal* that the Paris series had more to do with nature than with anything else, in spite of the many, and obvious, hallmarks of the urban and the artificial:

> Camille Pissarro began with representations of Rouen, a city already familiar to him, treating its characteristic aspects with a certain hesitation, and expressing the scale of the forms with a degree of timidity. In the views of Paris, one can observe something of the same fine, delicate handling; one does not always have a sense of the scale or the volume of things. In any case, it is certain that a great step has been taken since the views of Rouen. While a few odd details—a fountain, a carriage, a kiosk—still appear in sheer silhouette, the faces of the tall buildings fill out the space in neat rectilinear rows and in curves, in solid profile and in elevation.
>
> Here we see the Avenue de l'Opéra on a winter's morning under a pale sun, or under cover of snow, or in the rain. There we see the Place du Théâtre Français, the Boulevard des Italiens, the Boulevard Montmartre, from autumn until springtime.
>
> What is marvelous about these canvases is their atmospheric quality. The Paris sky seen in autumn and winter, the pavement glistening after the rain, reflecting the grey of the clouds and gold gleam of the sun, the facades of the buildings marked by precipitation, all the diffracted glimmerings combined in a cascade of grey-toned light are here expressed in indelible characters. The air that we breathe is enclosed in these frames, so as to transmit the mood of our mud-slicked streets, of our rain showers, of our avenues trailing away into the fogbank. In this veridical atmosphere, the melee of cars and of passersby whirls about, intersecting, mixing together, often with a remarkable feeling for the rhythmic motion of the crowd. In so many instances, Pissarro has perceived and described this social combat apparent in the turbulent comings and goings of the street, and his representation of the unstoppable agitation of the living, set within this workaday décor, ranks among the great beauties of this series.[12]

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[11] *Ibid*.: "Parmi les tout premiers, Camille Pissarro se soucia de rendre la vraie physionomie de la campagne, de peindre, avec tout leur caractère et en clartés limpides, des scenes agrestes justements observées. […] Camille Pissarro montre la terre avec les paysans qui la travaillent. Ce ne sont pas des personnages factices qui posent. Courbés sur le sol, ils y sont vraiment attachés par le travail quotidien, ils vivent en leur cadre exact et habituel."

[12] Gustave Geffroy, *Le Journal* (Paris), 21 Jun. 1898, 2: "Camille Pissarro a commencé par des représentations de Rouen, qui lui est une ville familière, et il en a donné des

The signifiers of modernity were obvious in Pissarro's views of the street, Geffroy recognized full well—there was no doubting what the sign-language of flatness and rectilinearity had been brought on to convey; but there were other sorts of painterly effects on offer as well—effects of light and atmosphere, in the main—which seemed to counter, and even to overrule, the Haussmannian *mise-en-scène*. To Geffroy, nature remained visibly present in Pissarro's streets—not Nature with a capital N, perhaps, but there was no mistaking the imprint of the *rus in urbe*: nature billowing along the horizon, suffusing the air with a tonality and a mood, eroding the stony fixity of Haussmann's city in a ceaseless flux. As to the crowd itself, it, too, was a part of nature, its "unstoppable agitation [*l'agitation fatal*]" and relentless "social combat" evoking a pattern and rhythm of social life more Hobbesian than Marxian, a war of all against all on the order of Darwin's Galapagos.

The following pages will mostly take the form of a set of disagreements with Geffroy, and in particular with the metaphors of organic unity he supplies in reckoning with Pissarro's crowds; but for the moment, let me just point out the work these critics have done, and the toll taken on their prose, in order to cement the bond between Paris and Eragny. The reasons for this straining should be obvious: it mattered more than ever in the late 1890s, as the art market swung from public toward private patronage, for a critic to develop a strong, and consistent, acount of a painter's core identity—what we have

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représentations caractéristiques avec une certaine hésitation, une timidité à exprimer la grandeur des formes. On retrouvera un peu de cette manière fine et grêle dans les vues de Paris, on n'aura pas toujours la perception de la grandeur et du volume. Il est certain, toutefois, qu'il y a un grand pas de fait depuis les vues de Rouen. Si tels détails: une fontaine, une voiture, un kiosque, ont encore, çà et là, une silhouette mince, par contre les aspects des hautes maisons emplissent l'espace de leurs rangées rectilignes et de leurs courbes, de leur élévation et de leur profil massif.

C'est l'avenue de l'Opéra, par une matinée d'hiver, de soleil pâle, ou dans la brume, ou sous la neige, ou sous la pluie. C'est la place du Théâtre-Français, la rue Saint-Honoré, le boulevard des Italiens, le boulevard Montmartre, de l'automne jusqu'au printemps.

Le merveilleux, c'est la qualité atmosphérique de toutes ces toiles. Le ciel que nous voyons à Paris pendant les mois d'automne et d'hiver, le sol luisant de pluie qui reflète les nuées grises et les fugitives dorures du soleil, le visage des maisons rayé par les averses, toutes les lueurs éparses qui s'unifient en une grande tombée de lumière grisâtre, c'est ici exprimé en caractères ineffaçables. L'air que nous respirons est enfermé par ces cadres, à nous donner l'émotion de nos rues boueuses, de nos pluies, de nos avenues qui vont se perdant en une perspective de brume. Dans cette atmosphère véridique, la mêlée des voitures et des passants tournoie, se croise, se mêle souvent avec un prodigieux sens du mouvement rythmé des foules. A plusieurs reprises, ce combat social visible dans les allées et venues inquiètes de la rue, est aperçu et résumé par Pissarro, et c'est une des beautés de cette série de toiles que la représentation de l'agitation fatale des vivants parmi ces decors d'un jour."

learned to call the "dealer-critic system."[13] Pissarro's defenders knew they had difficult material to work with, as far as monographic criticism went; the Paris paintings were a major, and unaccountable, deviation from the painter's norm—more so than his pictures of Rouen, which at least put the critic in view of the provinces. Moreover, the paintings were contradictory: Geffroy was right to note a "certain hesitation" pervasive in Pissarro's city views; and he was putting things mildly—good soldier that he was—in failing to interrogate further the vacillations of scale and volume.

Other critics were not so kind to Pissarro's deviation. In *Le Siècle*, Pierre Aubry declared the exhibition a complete failure, refusing even the most cursory description of the paintings at issue:

> Ordinarily, Pissarro reproduces on canvas the corners of a garden, the approach to a village, rustic houses shadowed by fruit trees, fields of cabbage and potatoes, prairies painted with wildflowers, etc.; and he does so to his credit, even if one might reproach him for giving too much importance to each blade of grass, a defect he seems to have amended, it bears acknowledging.
>
> But now, breaking with his usual habits, he, too, has tried to paint Paris with its jammed-up vehicles and passersby.
>
> Sincerely, without the least bit of acrimony, it seems to us that this is not his business.
>
> Like anyone else, no doubt, he knows how to animate a crowd, to shine the rain-slicked pavement, to set the gas-lamps alight; but taken in sum, these gestures lack conviction, follow-through and resolution. During the past ten years, many artists have attempted to paint views of Paris. Some of them have succeeded. In confronting M. Pissarro's offerings, it strikes us as unlikely that he will surpass his forebears. And in any case, what would be the point?
>
> This excellent artist would be well advised, we believe, in leaving the city and in returning to the fields.[14]

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[13] See Harrison C. White and Cynthia A. White, *Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993). On the topic of Pissarro's finances between 1873 and 1887, see pp. 134-138.

[14] Pierre Aubry, "La Vie artistique: Claude Monet – Camille Pissarro," *Le Siècle: journal politique, littéraire et d'économie sociale* (Paris), 5 Jun. 1898, 2: "M. Pissaro [sic], à son ordinaire, reproduit sur la toile des coins de jardin, des entrées de village, des maisons rustiques ombragée d'arbres fruitiers, des champs de choux et de pommes de terre, des prairies émaillées de fleurettes, etc; et il s'en tire généralement à son honneur, bien qu'on puisse lui reprocher de faire un sort à chacun de ses brins d'herbe, défaut don't il paraît s'être amendé, il est juste de le reconnaître.

Mais aujourd'hui, rompant avec ses habitudes, il s'est essayé, lui aussi, à peindre Paris avec ses encombrements de voitures et de passants.

Sincérement, sans la moindre acrimonie, il nous semble que ce n'est pas son affaire.

Why Pissarro's views of Paris struck Aubry as so reprehensible will have to be answered in due course; I am not convinced, for my part, that the monographic system *required* such a put-down (in any case, we will hear from other critics who thought well of Pissarro's latest), or that the terms of dismissal were simply inevitable. In any case, Aubry was not the only reviewer to have faulted the indeterminacy of Pissarro's latest offering: For Arsène Alexandre, too, the views of Paris seemed to offend the received narrative of Pissarro's oeuvre; which meant, in turn, that the paintings could not be seen, let alone understood or described. At issue, again, was Pissarro's chosen subject: it was not obvious why the painter of Eragny had decided to relocate himself to Paris, or why, perched overlooking the *grands boulevards*, he found so little to complement his talents as a landscapist. Here is Alexandre writing in 1896, praising Pissarro's views of Rouen:

> Three years ago, an idea, which he had touched upon long ago, returned to him and led him imperiously: to paint, in their animation and fullness, the grand vistas of a city. But of quite a specific city, Rouen, which is like the heart of the Normandy whose rustic activity is given voice in all the Eragny landscapes, just as these views of Rouen speak to its industrial activity.
>
> Hence the group of canvases exhibited this season. Here, you will discover the same painter and the same man whom I have described above. In these great urban landscapes [*paysages de ville*] full of people, the soil sends up swarms of passersby in place of hay or cabbage; factory smokestacks have replaced the trees, and are coroneted, not by green foliage, but by great plumes of smoke, sculpted and shaped by the wind with as much originality and verve as the clouds in the country sky.[15]

Tout comme un autre, sans doute, il sait agiter une foule, faire luire les trottoirs sous la pluie, allumer les becs de gaz; mais, en somme, cela manque de convication, d'entrain et de relief. En ces dix dernières années, beaucoup d'artistes ont tenté de rendre les aspects de Paris. Quelques-uns y ont réussi. A voir ce que donne M. Pissaro [sic], il est improbable qu'il arrive à surpasser ses devanciers. Alors à quoi bon?

L'excellent artiste, croyons-nous, serait bien inspiré en laissant là la ville et en retournant aux champs."

[15] Arsène Alexandre, "L'Oeuvre de Camille Pissarro," in *Exposition d'oeuvres récentes de Camille Pissarro* (Paris: Galerie Durand-Ruel, 1896), 13: "Il y a trois ans, une idée, qu'il avait caressée depuis de longues années, le reprit et l'entraîna impérieusement: peindre, dans leur animation et dans leur ampleur, les grands aspects d'une ville. Mais d'une ville bien déterminée, de Rouen, qui est comme le coeur de cette Normandie dont tous les paysages d'Eragny disent l'activité rustique, comme ces vues de Roeun allaient en dire l'activité industrielle.

De là quelques tableaux exposés cette saison. Vous y retrouverez le même peintre et le même homme que nous avos tenté de vous faire comprendre. Ce sont de grands paysages de ville peuplée où le sol pousse des passants grouillants au lieu de pousser des foins ou des choux; où les cheminées d'usine remplacent les arbres, et se couronnent, au lieu de frondaisons vertes, de grandes panaches de fumée que le vent sculpte et façonne avec

And here is Alexandre in 1898, declaring Pissarro's Paris series a non-starter:

> These past few years, the painter of Eragny has been haunted by the nice idea of rendering the city's restless aspect. He has already exhibited, as we are certain to remember, a handful of Paris Boulevards, views of the Gare Saint-Lazare, streets and bridges of Rouen, which were rightly commended.
>
> This time around, M. Pissarro was seduced by another motif, which seems to have produced curious results. He installed himself in a room on the Place du Théâtre Français, where he dominated the whole of the Avenue de l'Opéra as if peering down the barrel of a gun, and from which vantage he noted the effects of light and of the crowd over months of dedicated work. These notations are exhibited at the Galerie Durand-Ruel.
>
> Is it really the case that these straight streets, with their modern buildings, are far too forbidding [*trop ingrate*] to paint? At all events, the ensemble seems a bit dry and cold, in spite of the considerable expenditure of know-how and effort.
>
> There are some curious perspectives of crowds seen from above, an amusing and successful *Place du Théâtre Français*. But our preference is for the profound and noble depictions of nature in its richness and strength. A tree, a real tree growing deep in the soil, a field, a simple cabbage are worth more under the brush of M. Pissarro than the regular and industrial façades, than the streets, which are in any case more amusing to view on foot than from above. These are not the beautiful aspects of Paris.[16]

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autant d'originalité et de verve qu'il manie les nuages dans le ciel des campagnes. Vraiment, cette série de paysages de ville fait époque dans l'oeuvre de Pissarro, mains sans aucune solution de continuité avec le reste de cette oeuvre. Il y a des parterres de toits et des vallonnements de maisons; des grues et des silhouettes de quais s'y reflètent dans l'eau sillonnnée de chalands et de steamers, au lieu de buissons et de saules. Tout cela est agissant, puissant et d'une exécution magnifique, mais, c'est là-dessus qu'il faut insister, cela fait corps avec tout ce que nous avons vu du peintre comme sentiment et comme métier, sauf peut-étre le sentiment est devenu encore plus élevé et le métier plus varié en ressources."

[16] Arsène Alexandre, *Le Figaro*, 3 Jun 1898, 4: "Le peintre d'Eragny, en ces dernières années, fut hanté par la belle idée de rendre les aspects remuants des villes. Déjà, il avait exposé, on s'en souvient, certainement, des boulevards parisiens, des aspects de la gare Saint-Lazare, des rues et des ponts de Rouen qui avaient été remarqués à juste titre.

Cette fois, M. Pissarro a été séduit par un autre motif, qui semblait devoir donner des résultats curieux. Il s'était installé dans une chambre de la place du Théâtre-Français d'où il dominait, en enfilade, toute l'avenue de l'Opéra, et là, pendant des mois de travail acharné, il notait les effets de lumière et de foule. Ces notations sont exposées à la galerie Durand-Ruel.

Est-ce que, décidément, ces rues, droites, aux bâtisses modernes, sont par trop ingrates à peindre ? Toujours est-il que l'ensemble paraît un peu sec et froid, malgré la dépense

Embedded in these lines is something bordering on a description of the paintings at issue—for example, his term "notations" seems meaningful, suggesting a sort of naïve empiricism (it was a term other critics used as well); and before too long, we will have to wrestle with the charge of dryness and coldness (does this apply to all the pictures, or just to a few?) and with the "amusing and successful" *Place du Théâtre Français*. Still, the overall gist of the review is reactive in all the predictable ways, a chastisement for Pissarro's having departed the comfortable limits of provincial Rouen for urbane Paris. The last line of Alexandre's judgment is meant to be annihilating, but also to push the painter toward friendlier territory—toward the Tuileries, for example.

Again, the problem for Pissarro's detractors in June 1898 had to do with nature, and with its apparent paucity in Pissarro's Paris views: By Alexandre's telling, Pissarro's Paris was a landscape stripped of its pastoral softness, all hard edges and workaday coldness; it was urban, meaning the opposite of the natural—all artifice and outwardness to Eragny's deep roots. Yet it was precisely the note of the natural that had so pleased Pissarro's defenders—the swirl of the crowds, the marvelous atmosphere; and all of it equalized, harmonious, decorative!

That the critics in June 1898 arrived at such different, and even opposite, appraisals of Pissarro's Paris series suggests something of the shaky ground at issue. They were all right, in a sense: the *Boulevards* and *Avenues* series were riven by contradictions, and along much the same lines as divided the reviewers: it was not always easy to tell where Pissarro's stress had been placed, or what sort of idea of Paris he kept in the back of his mind—in fact, this idea often changed, sometimes dramatically, from one painting to the next. Serial in name only, the paintings exhibited at Durand-Ruel amounted to a jumble of efforts, some more serious than others, at applying the tools of Pissarro's modernism to an exceptionally difficult subject—one that rebuffed him from the first, and which he could barely claim to have mastered in the end. Criticism was bound to have been a bit flailing in the face of such paintings; and genuine description, a fool's errand.

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More than anything, this chapter aims to play the earnest fool, and to wrest from Pissarro's views of Paris the sort of thick description that eluded even the best critics in 1898. Our errand will have to be begin at the beginning, on the eve of Pissarro's *Boulevards* series:

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considérable de savoir et d'efforts.

Il y a de curieuses perspectives de foules vues d'en haut, une place du Théâtre-Français amusante et réussie. Mais nos préférences retournent aux profonds et nobles tableaux de la riche et forte nature. Un arbre, un vrai arbre poussé en pleine terre, un champ, un simple chou valent mieux sous le pinceau de M. Pissarro que les régulières et industrielles façades, que les rues, décidément plus amusantes à voir de plain-pied que de haut. Les beaux aspects de Paris ne sont pas ceux-là."

On 8 February 1897, Pissarro announced to Lucien the commencement of his latest project—an announcement delivered almost as an afterthought, and in buoyant tones:

> I leave again for Paris on the tenth of the month, this time to do a series of Boulevards des Italiens. I've just made [six] little canvases *de cinq* based on Rue Saint-Lazare, rain effects, snow, etc. that Durand really liked. Doing a series of boulevards seemed to him like quite a good idea and it will amuse me to overcome the challenge [*cela va m'amuser à vaincre la difficulté*]. I've booked a spacious room, Grand Hôtel de Russie, 1 rue Drouot, from which I can see the whole enfilade of the boulevards almost all the way to the Porte Saint-Denis, or in any case up to Boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle.[17]

That same day, Pissarro penned a note to his son Georges, again communicating the address of his Paris hotel, and clarifying that the project had come about in consultation with his art dealer: "Durand was well pleased by the little ones I've made [i.e. the paintings of Rue Saint-Lazare], he's advised me to do the boulevards, but bigger of course."[18] Five days later, Pissarro had checked in at the hotel, dashing off a follow-up to Georges with news of his arrival and progress:

> Here I am, installed long enough to get the [Paris] canvases going; I've begun my series of *Boulevards*; to my left, I've got a stunning motif that begs to be interpreted under all possible effects; there's another motif [to my right] but this one is terribly difficult, it's almost a bird's eye view of the carriages, omnibuses, people between the tall trees, large houses in need of alignment, it's quite tough! ... there's nothing more to say, I've got to get about it all the same. [19]

The language of these letters suggests something of the learning curve Pissarro encountered in the first days of his *Boulevards* project: It was a matter, first and foremost, of getting a grip on the unforgiving architecture of the boulevards, which took the form of

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[17] CP to LP, 8 February 1897, *BHIV*, 324: "Je repars le 10 de ce mois encore à Paris, cette fois pour y faire une série des boulevards des Italiens. J'ai fait dernièrement [six] petites toiles de cinq de la rue Saint-Lazare, effets de pluie, de neige, etc. qui ont bien plu Durand. Une série des boulevards lui paraît très bonne à faire et cela va m'amuser à vaincre la difficulté. J'ai arrêté une chambre spacieuse, Grand Hôtel de Russie, 1 rue Drouot, d'où je vois toute l'enfilade des boulevards jusqu'à la porte Saint-Denis Presque, dans tous les cas jusqu'au boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle. Si tu te décides à venir à Paris j'ai deux lits dans la piece."

[18] CP to Georges Pissarro, 8 February 1897, *BHIV*, 323.

[19] CP to LP, 13 February 1897, *BHIV*, 325: "Me voilà installé ici pour assez longtemps attelé à des toiles de Rouen [note: Pissarro had just been in Rouen, and seems here to have mistaken it for Paris]; j'ai commencé ma série des *Boulevards*, j'ai un motif épatant qu'il va falloir interpreter par tous les effets possibles, à ma gauche, j'ai un autre motif mais qui est terriblement difficile, c'est presque à vol d'oiseau, des voitures, des omnibus, des personnages entre de grands arbres, de grandes maisons qu'il faut mettre d'aplomb, c'est roide!"

a perspectival chute when seen facing toward Boulevard Montmartre, while the *motif* along the Boulevard des Italiens presented something more like the floor of a canyon; we can trust Pissarro's naïve enthusiasm for the streets and their bustling crowds to have been genuine—for these were the aspects of Paris to which Impressionism had staked its claim more than twenty years prior: the terrain was familiar, in other words—Pissarro thought he had found the groove.

Among the earliest of Pissarro's *Boulevards*, if not *the* earliest, is a canvas in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Boulevard Montmartre, matin d'hiver* [**Fig. 3**]. The scene is prosaic to a fault—the term 'naïve' seems right somehow: Trees line the sidewalk at regular intervals, punctuated by the usual accoutrements of the boulevard—newspaper kiosks, *pissoirs*, Morris advertising columns; we can make out the entryway to a shopping arcade at right, its tall aperture marked by the milky globe of a street lamp. Carriage traffic files along the boulevard, drawn by one horse, or two, or three; nothing much is happening: no road accident, no letting-out of a stage performance, no disturbance of any sort—nothing about the goings-on at street level that would mark the hour as particular to the morning, either.

In any case, the painter's subject is less the social life of the city, which seems mostly to escape him, than its permeability to Nature—to weather and daylight. There will be more to say about what the term 'landscape' meant to Pissarro, but the pursuit of a painstaking unity (a watchword of Pissarro's critical vocabulary) of atmosphere was among the chief desiderata. In the case of *Boulevard Montmartre, matin d'hiver*, this was a matter of getting just right the pallid thinness of the morning sunlight, as filtered through a diffuse grey-whiteness—perhaps a lifting fog, or more likely the bright haze of low-hanging coalsmoke. For the effect to work (the effect of unity, I mean), the world at ground level had not to resist overmuch the atmospheric imprint: it was convenient, and no doubt key to Pissarro's interest in the view of Boulevard Montmartre in particular (which accounted for fourteen of sixteen paintings made during the *Boulevards* campaign), that the architecture in the foreground could be pushed easily to the margins, allowing daylight to flood the scene—indeed, Paris seems fairly to vaporize in the far background, as if Nature—thick atmosphere charged with morning light—were eating away at its stony edifice.

Pissarro's efforts to treat the city as landscape were abetted, importantly, by a quirk of the local geography, which bears description at the outset: Thanks to the wending trace of the city's old fortifications, on the grounds of which the *grands boulevards* were originally constructred (the word "boulevard" derives from "boule'werk," or bulwark), the Boulevard Montmartre and Boulevard des Italiens joined at slight obtuse angle just in front of the Grand Hôtel de Russie. As a consequence, when facing left at the window, the painter would have seen the carriage traffic coming straight toward him down Boulevard Montmartre—but then pivoting just below his nose, and continuing along Boulevard des Italiens on a gently altered course. Conceivably, Pissarro could have provided some indication of this turning-point in the *grands boulevards*; yet in every one of the *Boulevards* paintings, he allowed the illusion of a disembodied perspective to stand, giving no sign whatsoever of the spectatorial apparatus: the window is never

brought into the picture, and the 'trick' perspective never qualified as such. As a result, our eye seems to hang in midair above the street, as if suspended from a balloon—or, alternatively, as if held aloft atop a lamppost, like the one we see in the immediate foreground. Indeed, it is difficult to resist the analogy between the lamppost's placid bulb, a whorl of pearly grey, and Pissarro's eye, unblinking and immobile—perhaps even unseeing, or seeing in an unthinking way.

All of which is to spell out Pissarro's methods of 'landscapifying' the boulevards: The stress was meant to fall upon the play of light upon the natural materials of the city—its limestone and sand-covered macadam, and the trees, and the organic matter of carriages and costume—and the perspective, to recode the street as a plane receding—drawing upward, surface-ward—into evanescent limpidity. Imagine away the Haussmannian superblocks, and we would be dealing with a landscape little different from the painter's backyard at Eragny, as seen in his *Effet de neige à Eragny* of 1894 [**Fig. 4**]; indeed, the two compositions share some striking similarities: the perspectival rhyme of trees and fences mirrored in the staggering of Haussmann's sidewalk plantings and apartment facades, the same numinous sky; the awkward tree in the bottom corner singled out as repoussoir.

For all Pissarro's efforts, however, there is a noticeable disparity between his self-assured treatment of atmosphere and light and the awkward, even somewhat turgid, handling of the street and its crowds. Notice, for example, how the surfacing of the boulevard has been laid down in a manner (I mean, a manner of handling) completely separate from the surrounding sidewalks, slathered on in short, dry marks following the channel of its framing orthogonals toward the vanishing point. As to the crowd, it too marks a departure from direct observation: As critics often point out, the source material for the *Boulevards* included the painter's copy of Hokusai's *Manga*, the collection of studies drawn by the master printmaker in omniscient overhead[20]; and while the enfilade of the boulevard cuts against any straightforwardly 'Japanese' spatiality—indeed, the raking line of chimney piles at top right looms crushingly tall, as if to cement the viewers's sense of puny earthboundness—one nonetheless gets a sense of the autonomy of each bit of the city's particulate matter, its carriages and pedestrians subtly (certainly not fully, or even self-consciously) aligned with the surface plane of the canvas.

This sense of internal bifurcation would be intensified in one of the next iterations of Pissarro's motif, the National Gallery of Victoria's *Boulevard Montmartre, matin, temps gris* [**Fig. 5**], As the painting's title suggests, its subject was as much the street itself as the weather—"*matin, temps gris*" meaning something along the lines of 'Morning, Cloudy Weather.' In broad outlines, much the same premises are kept intact: the raking line of the apartment block bristles with chimneypots; and the delicate white sky is charged with wafting blues and pale coral reds: the note of morning light seen filtered through white chimney-smoke. This was a larger painting—a size thirty canvas, as

[20] See Richard R. Brettell, "Camille Pissarro and Urban View Painting: An Introduction," in Brettell and Pissarro, eds., *The Impressionist in the City*, xxvii.

opposed to a size twenty-five (a difference of a few centimers on either axis)—and Pissarro has obviously strained to master the increased scale, and also, equally visibly, to bring more of the life of the street into view, especially its peculiar forms of sidewalk commerce. Following a liberalization scheme put through in 1883, the Paris sidewalks had been laid open to commercial development in the form of rented kiosks[21]; unlike the Met's *Boulevard Montmartre*, in which the kiosks stand lumpishly inert, erect but impalpable, the NGV's canvas furnishes a veritable field guide to pedestrian distractions, with several different species of kiosks picked out in scrupulous detail, from the self-contained Morris columns to a few types of open-faced vendors (the glass-fronted kiosk at right, midway up the block, is a bravura bit of painting, and reappears in several subsequent *Boulevards Montmartre* to similar effect). The shopfronts, too, have come into much sharper focus: the awnings at left overshadow a set of market stalls, and the glass frontage at right reveal what might be a row of mannequins—and a few paces up the block, the opening of a shopping arcade, the Passage Jouffroy, no longer seems to stand against the building façade like a giant bullet, but now yawns wide, a dull opaline globe beckoning from within.

Again, Pissarro's efforts have obviously intensified in the NGV canvas, homing in on the weak point in the previous trial. The pursuit of unity no longer applies merely the play of atmosphere across large, inanimate surfaces, but now suffuses the human element as well—in particular, to the carriage traffic in the distance, where Pissarro makes much of the reflectivity of the laquered tops of the vehicle, each one picked out in a horizontal dash. Still, in spite of these fine-tunings, the foreground remains a trouble spot: Along the bottom edge of the painting, a few figures stand out larger and more carefully portrayed than the rest—in the bottom right corner, for example, Pissarro has inserted an archetype of the *boulevardier*, a bourgeois dressed in obligatory black topcoat with hat and cane, standing by a woman in a garish red hat. A few paces to their left is another woman—equally an Impressionist archetype—standing with arms akimbo, her face masked beneath a heavy hat and veil, her parasol clasped tightly at her side. Another top-hatted man stands at her back, looking on blankly, his scarf wagging along either side of a short waistcoat; what might be a newspaper, or perhaps a parcel of some kind, juts from his pocket. Each of these personae had his and her place in the legacy of nineteenth-century painting: together, they amount to human metaphors, ciphers cribbed from the work of Manet, Degas, Caillebotte, and their imitators, standing for modernity in ways immediately recognizable and easily legible. So, too, did the scarecrow figure of a worker

[21] For a contributor to the newspaper *La Paix*, writing in 1891, the problem of the streets had to do with the proliferation of kiosks, which the city opened to commercial usage in an edict of 1884—"square kiosks, round kiosks, oval kiosks—like hat boxes—kiosks for all purposes, kiosks abandoned for lack of renters, kiosks of florists spilling out over the sidewalk, kiosks for bars, kiosks for the pleasure of being kiosks since they have been closed since birth." *La Paix*, 17 Jan 1891, quoted in Norma Evenson, *Paris: A Century of Change, 1878-1978* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), 20.

at foreground right, stepping stiffly into the street like a walking caricature; and on the opposite side of the street, the pair of bourgeois conversing at the sidewalk's edge—they might be extras from Degas's *Portraits à la Bourse* [**Fig. 6**], or analogous types. Pissarro clearly struggled with the figures at bottom right, especially the top-hatted man and his interlocutor: the brush-marks mass thickly, with dark haloes suggesting alternative configurations of the couple and their peers, as if the painter were uncertain exactly where and how his bourgeois ought to stand, and at what scale relative to the anonymous pedestrians further down the street.

That Pissarro thought it necessary to seed the immediate foreground of *Boulevard Montmartre, matin, temps gris* with stock characters of the bourgeoisie—indeed, with figures lifted, if not actually then symbolically, from the kitsch image of Parisian chic—suggests the rudiments of an idea of the street and its crowds. It is tempting to reach for the old chestnuts of fin-de-siècle urban sociology: Georg Simmel's "Die Großstadt und das Geistesleben," for instance, or Gustave le Bon's *Essai sur la psychologie des foules*—both roughly contemporaneous with Pissarro's Paris projects; but the comparison seems wrong, and the discourse at issue, a shade or two less philosophical. For the kind of text Pissarro might have had in mind, we might try Jules Claretie's *Chronique Parisienne* of 8 January 1898, which takes as its pretense a measure recently proposed in the Conseil Municipal to demolish a large swathe of the Thiers Wall, the last barrier separating *intra-muros* Paris from the *banlieue*:

> The coming year seems destined to transform Paris. The gaps in the fortifications will be closed, and the rampart stones torn out, making space for boulevards and houses. These *fortifs*, hymned by Bruant, with their population of prowlers, *flâneurs*, and outlaws, are to be replaced by avenues where the quaint lodgings of painters display their whimsical facades. And just as the Parisian boulevard—by which I mean the real boulevard of the boulevardiers—takes on an inelegant character, seeming more like a succession of brasseries, an avenue of *Kneipen*, perhaps the boulevards of the future—the *boulevards surextérieurs*—will have an unmistakably Parisian grace; perhaps the fortifications will become the meeting-place of the *haut vie*.
>
> Our poor boulevard—yes, our boulevard, where we had been used to seeing all the glorious *parisiennes* perambulating, free of any pretense, conversing and enjoying the fresh air—is now just a sort of arcade where peddlers bark the news of the day, broadcasting the latest gossip and shoving the deafened pedestrians, while the brasserie tables spill over onto the throttled sidewalk. I recall the stupefaction of our friend Bartholdi, who returned from a voyage abroad to discover the Café Riche done up in faience tiles, transformed into a sort of immense, multicolored, earsplitting, rowdy bar, its decorations given their only outward note of artistry from a frieze of compositions by Forain:
>
> 'But it's no longer Paris! It's a junkheap!'
>
> And the whole difference between the old and the new morality surges into view with this substitution of beer for coffee: the café giving way to the brasserie—the café, where a Toussenel would continue to chat while sipping his steaming cup,

replaced by the brasserie, where Boubouroche stacks up the coasters from empty bocks. It's another world, another boulevard, another Paris.

At all events, the grand, polychrome bar is closed, and a handwritten notice informs us that it will not reopen until 1899. This usually luminous corner of the boulevard remains somber in the evening, and the darkness makes a gap between the boutiques. Poor boulevard of yesteryear! The Café Riche, shuttered like a theater without its crowd! [Café] Tortoni (O, the doorstep of the Tortoni, where once I saw Rossini greeting Meyerbeer!), turned into a cobbler's shop! And the *Librairie Nouvelle*, haven of conversationalists, picks up stakes in turn, quitting its familiar corner of the Boulevard des Italiens![22]

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[22] "L'année qui vient semble devoir transformer Paris. On va combler les fossés des fortifications, arracher les pierres des murailles, faire passer là des boulevards, bâtir des maisons. Les *fortifs*, chantées par Bruant, avec leur population de rôdeurs, de flâneurs, et d'*outlaws*, vont faire place à des avenues où les petits hôtels des peintres montreront leurs façades fantaisistes. Et à l'heure où le boulevard parisien, j'entends le vrai boulevard des boulevardiers, prend un caractère inélégant et semble une succession de brasseries et une avenue de *Kneipen*, peut-être les boulevards futurs, les boulevards *surextérieurs*, auront-ils une grâce parisienne toute particulière, et les fortifications seront-elles le rendez-vous de la *haute vie*.

Notre pauvre boulevard, oui, le nôtre, celui où nous nous étions habitués jadis à voir déambuler, sans façon, causant et humant le frais, toutes les gloires parisiennes, il n'est plus qu'une sorte de passage, où les camelots hurlent les événements du jour, announcent les huis clos, poussent les promeneurs qu'ils assordissent, tandis que les tables des brasseries débordent sur le trottoir étranglé. Je me rappelle la stupéfaction de notre ami Bartholdi retrouvant, après un voyage, le café Riche revêtu de plaques de faïence, transformé en sorte de bar immense, multicoloré, éclatant, tapageur, des decorations où seules les compositions de Forain formant frise mettaient à l'extérieur une note artistique.

'Mais ce n'est plus Paris! C'est un bazar!'

Et toute la différence des moeurs nouvelles entre les anciennes—le café faisant place à la brasserie, le café, où un Toussenel cause tout en dégustant sa tasse fumante, remplacé par la brasserie, où Boubouroche entasse les soucoupes des bocks avalés,--la différence éclate dans cette substitution du moka à la bière. C'est un autre monde, un autre boulevard, un autre Paris.

Ce grand bar polychrome est fermé, du reste, et des affiches manuscrites nous annoncent qu'il ne rouvrira qu'en 1898. Le soir, ce coin d'ordinaire lumineux du boulevard reste sombre, et ce noir fait trou parmi les boutiques. Pauvre boulevard d'autrefois! Le café Riche fermé comme un théâtre sans habitués! Tortoni (ô le perron de Tortoni, où j'ai vu Rossini saluer Meyerbeer!) devenu une cordonnerie! Et la *Librairie nouvelle*, asile des causeurs, déménageant à son tour et quittant son coin familier du boulevard des Italiens!" Jules Clarétie, *La Vie à Paris en 1898* (Paris: Charpentier, 1899), 7-8.

This sort of postmortem was common fare in the mainstream press of the 1890s, and provided a mouthpiece to the sort of reader who felt himself alienated from the public spaces of post-Haussmannian Paris, but who still burnished a memory of an slightly older, more innocent scene of publicness. The *grands boulevards* sat at the epicenter of the chronicler's memory palace, and were witnessed in their death-throes a thousand times. Most often, the source of the boulevard's morbidity was simply the presence, and the pressure, of other classes—the clientele who thought well of the new Café Riche as much as the working-class pedestrians, barkers, and vendors who together conspired to ruin the boulevardier's stroll. In any number of *chroniques* and *croquis parisiennes* of the late 1890s, one discovers much the same mixture of arch contempt and genuine bewilderment directed toward the Paris streets, which were said to have become so fatally cluttered with encumbrances—obstructed by café furniture, advertising columns, news kiosks, *pissoirs*, and interminable, unpredictable, construction sites—as to drive the most skillful *flâneur* to apoplexy. For a contributor to the newspaper *La Paix*, writing in 1891, the problem was with the kiosks—"square kiosks, round kiosks, oval kiosks—like hat boxes—kiosks for all purposes, kiosks abandoned for lack of renters, kiosks of florists spilling out over the sidewalk, kiosks for bars, kiosks for the pleasure of being kiosks since they have been closed since birth."[23] And in another of Clarétie's calumnies, it was the press itself—not a bourgeois mouthpiece like *Le Temps*, of course, but the sporting news popular with shopkeepers and their employees: *Paris-Sport*, *L'Auto*, *Le Vélo*, etc.—that signaled the coming apocalypse:

> Yesterday, as evening was falling, I saw the crowd precipitate itself around a kiosk on the Boulevard des Italiens, fighting for the still-humid pages, for gazettes fresh from the printer. I stepped up in turn to get hold of the much-disputed newspaper, which brought word, no doubt, of some new drama. Have the Greeks and the Turks come to blows? Has the European concert let loose its terrible *basso*, the cannon?... Ô deception! Ô the proverb of Vigny! [*Quitte pour la peur* ('Run in fear!')] It was the *Paris-Sport* that the Parisians were fighting over, and their hands, avid for new dispatches, reaching quite towards quite other horizons than the Acropolis! *Paris-Sport!*
>
> We would like to think that the perturbations of the conscious soul holds back the would-be gambler from placing his bet, or the unoccupied [*des désoeuvrés*] from seeking distraction. We dream of Athens, yet reality replies: *Paris-Sport.* And why not *Paris-Vélo*? Oh! rest assured, there is also *Paris-Vélo*, and the crowd thrills as much to *Paris-Vélo* as to the attitude of Colonel Vassos. *Paris-Sport*! *Paris-Vélo*! Such is Paris at present—the new Paris, Paris 'in training,' the American Paris, the Paris of bars and velodromes, the Paris of automobiles, skating rinks and *yachtings*, the Paris which is to the Paris of yesteryear what New York is to the Parthenon.[24]

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[23] Quoted in Evenson, *op. cit.*, 20.

[24] Jules Claretie, *La Vie à Paris en 1897* (Paris: Charpentier, 1898): "Je voyais hier la foule se précipiter, dans le crépuscule tombant, vers un kiosque du boulevard des Italiens

None of these laments sounds exactly like Pissarro's voice, or that of any anarchist—the note of Alexandrian self-congratulation as much as the screen-memory of the Second Empire would almost certainly have brought bile to his throat. While I doubt that Pissarro would not have agreed with Claretie's version of the city's history, or even that he shared its revulsion at the vulgarity of the new fleshpots, the chronicler's texts nonetheless furnish a readily available account of the city's public life—one keyed, moreover, to a position remote from the fray of the street, and resistant to the prospect of becoming yet another nameless face in the crowd. (One hardly needed to share Claretie's wretched politics to feel the urge to go 'where everybody knows your name,' after all.) On this score, readers might try tallying the bourgeois pair in the lower right of *Boulevard Montmartre, matin, temps gris* with the double pair of stick-figure pedestrians at left (roughly six inches from the lower edge): it should be obvious, I hope, that social authority rests with the former more than the latter, who are, after all, mere dust-motes in the landscape.

Pissarro's idea of the crowd—what it was, how to paint it—changed dramatically toward the end of his first month at the Grand Hôtel de Russie, a shift owed to the painter's exposure to the Mardi Gras parades at the end of February and the beginning of March. The Paris Carnaval was an ancient tradition: public revelry in advance of Lent are recorded going back nearly a millennium, and long furnished the city's laboring classes with a holiday all their own, spilling over from the *faubourgs* outside the city limits, especially Belleville, downhill to the center of Paris—a parade known as the Descent de la Courtille.[25] By the early nineteenth century, the Carnaval festivities were placed in the hands of the city's butchers and meat-mongers, part and parcel of a bid to institutionalize (and therefore stage-manage) the riotous proletarian holiday. Called the Marche du Boeuf

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et se disputer des feuilles encores humides, des gazettes toutes fraîches. Je presse le pas à mon tour pour arracher ce journal si disputé qui, sans doute, apportait quelque dramatique nouvelle. Les Grecs et les Turcs avaient-ils livré bataille? Le concert européen faisait-il entendre sa terrible *basse*, le canon?... O déception! O le proverbe de Vigny! C'étati le *Paris-Sport* que se disputait les Parisiens, et leurs mains avides de dépêches nouvelles se tendaient vers un tout autre horizon que l'Acropole! *Paris-Sport*!

Nous croyons volotniers que les angoisses des esprits pensifs arrêtent les spéculations des joueurs ou les distractions des désouvrés. Nous songeons: *Athènes* et la réalité nous répond *Paris-Sport*. Et pourquoi point *Paris-Vélo*? Oh! il y a aussi *Paris-Vélo*, n'en doutez pas, *Paris-Vélo* qui passionne autant la foule que l'attitude du colonel Vassos. *Paris-Sport! Paris-Vélo!* C'est le Paris contemporain, cela, c'est le Paris nouveau, le Paris entraîné, le Paris américain, le Paris des bars et des vélodromes, le Paris des automobiles, des skatings et des yachtings, le Paris qui est au Paris d'autrefois ce que l'architecture de New-York est au Parthénon."

[25] See Alain Faure, *Paris carême-prenant: du carnaval à Paris au XIX siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1978); and also Yves-Marie Bercé, *Féte et révolte* (Paris: Fayard, 1976).

Gras—'March of the Fatted Ox'—the butcher's parade launched a bevy of floats through the boulevards, headed by a garlanded *cortège* bearing sacrificial oxen; revelers took to the streets in costumes and masks (a custom frowned upon by anxious city officials), carrying sacks of confetti; by day's end, the streets and sidewalks were covered in great mounds of pastel paper.

It was not lost on the city's working-class militants that the Marche du Boeuf Gras, along with similar *fêtes populaires*, amounted to an apparatus of social control; nor did it escape the anarchists of Pissarro's generation, we shall see, that the resurrection of the Carnaval parade in 1896—it had been suspended since the fall of the Commune—had the ulterior motive, in addition to making money for its investors, of furnishing an alternative outlet to proletarian unrest to the radical syndicalist movements of the day.[26] The gambit to reinstate the March du Boeuf Gras had been the brainchild of Charles Zidler, the impressario of the Moulin Rouge, who proposed to expand what had previously been a one-day festival into three days of bacchanalia, starting on Sunday and terminating on Mardi Gras proper, with parades launched each day along different routes through the central *arrondissements*.

By all accounts, the resurrected Carnival was a wild spectacle: confetti rained down on the heads of passersby from the balcony of the Opéra, while crepe streamers, called *serpentins*, festooned the ordinarily staid frontage of the boulevards, obscuring Haussmann's city behind a pullulating rainbow. Unsurprisingly, the note of conspicuous expenditure—of city funds wasted on frippery—amounted to an offense in the eyes of many: In Montmartre, the illustrator Adolphe Willette and cabaret owner Rodolphe Salis staged a counter-parade, the Marche de la Vache Enragée, or simply the Vachalade (as opposed to the Mardi Gras parade's Cavalcade), answering Zidler's capitalized bacchanalia with a spectacle of noble poverty.[27] Touring the streets of the Butte, costumed Pierrots cavorted alongside the *cortège* of a skeletal ox, while parade floats decorated by satirical cartoonists, illustrators, and poster-makers—Willette, Maurice Radiguet, Chaize, Grün, et al.—elegized all manner of pseudo-folk heroes, from the

[26] See Jacques Ranciere, "Good Times, or Pleasures at the *Barrière*," in Adrian Rifkin and Roger Thomas, *Voices of the People: The Social Life of 'La Sociale' at the End of the Second Empire* (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988), 51-58; originally published as "Le bon temps ou la barrière des plaisirs," *Les Révoltes logiques* 7 (Spring-Summer 1978), 25-66.

[27] For a comprehensive history of the Vachalades, see Laurent Bihl, "L''Armée du chahut': les deux Vachalcades de 1896 et 1897," *Sociétés & Représentations*, vol. 27, no. 1 (2009), 161-191. See also Marcus Verhagen's discussion of artists' engagement with the Vachalade in *Re-figurations of Carnival: The Comic Performer in Fin-de-Siècle Parisian art* (Ph.D. diss., University of California Berkeley, 1994),154-224.

absinthe-soaked painter in his garret to Delacroix's *Liberté guidant le peuple*.[28]

What Pissarro made of Zidler's spectacle is hard to specify with any certainty. We know from his letters that he eagerly anticipated the three days of Carnaval, preparing in advance a pair of canvases, to be filled in with the crowds and streamers when the moment arrived.[29] (He might have known about the Vachalade, too, but made no mention of it to his usual interlocutors.)

In the end, however, the two pictures Pissarro produced during the Lenten festival troubled the terms according to which Zidler's Carnaval was supposed to have been consumed: The first, *Le Boulevard Montmartre, mardi gras, après-midi* [**1.7**], now in the Hammer Museum, depicts the parade *cortège* passing just below Pissarro's window, led in front by a cadre of mounted policemen, and followed by a mass of costumed marchers in green and red.[30] At the upper right, the line of chimneys carries on in a serrated path toward the horizon, same as before; yet the façades of the Haussmannian *îlots* have been completely transfigured, and partially disguised, beneath the *serpentins*, here evoked in long swoops of pastel pink, green, and yellow. More than this transfiguration of architecture into decoration, however, it is the human element—the parade *cortège* and the crowd of spectators—that takes pride of place in the first *Mardi Gras* painting. Visible only along the south side of the street (the throng along the opposite side is obscured beneath a veil of *serpentins*), the crowd is a flat field of pedestrians, each unit picked out in a greasy smear of black and beige: an oddly concrete and particular sort of crowd—not a solid mass, but an aggregate of separate elements, which Pissarro paints as if looking over a laboratory petri dish, inspecting a colony of microorganisms multiplied up to the very edges of its habitat. The crowd mobs the street, but does not 'take' or possess it: Although the cadre of mounted guards at the head of the parade makes no

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[28] Anon., *Vachalcade de 1897. Seul Programme officiel édité par le Comité. Contenant l'Itinéraire définitif et l'Enumération des Chars du Cortège* (Paris: Imprimerie Chaix, 1897), 4.

[29] See CP to LP, 13 Feb. 1897, *BHIV* 326: "Me voilà installé en train de couvrir des grandes toiles; je vais tâcher d'en préparer une ou deux pour faire la foule le jour de mardi gras; je ne sais encore ce que cela fera, je crains fort que les *serpentins* ne me gênent." Pissarro must have considered his efforts at the easel during Mardi Gras worthwhile enough to merit repetition; in a letter to Lucien dated 10 March, he insisted that he would have to "stay here [in Paris] for Mid-Lent" on the 27th of the month, in order to make a third painting of the street celebrations—and also, as he noted, on account of the changing season: "Je dois être ici pour la mi-carême et si possible je voudrais faire des arbres en feuilles au printemps; mais on m'a dit que ces arbres n'avaient de feuilles qu'en juin, c'est beaucoup trop tard car Teissier doit venir à ce moment me chercher pour aller à Mâcon" (*BHIV*, 335).

[30] Joachim Pissarro and Claire Durand-Ruel Snollaerts provide a useful account of the Marche du Boeuf Gras in relation to the Hammer's *Mardi Gras* canvas; see *Pissarro: Critical Catalogue of Paintings* (Milan and Paris: Skira/Wildenstein, 2006) 730-731.

parade makes no overt gesture to menace the crowd, their prominent position in the march makes the threat of repression hard to shrug off. Amplifying this threat, a lone policeman rides separate from the *cortège*, dispatched, no doubt, to keep revelers from swarming the street upon pain of arrest.

In the second Mardi Gras painting, *Mardi-Gras, soleil couchant, Boulevard Montmartre* **[Fig. 8**], now in the Kunstmuseum Winterthur, we look upon the same scene after the parade has come and gone, and with the sun now beginning to set. Again, the streamers hang from the apartment windows, blowing loose in the breeze—the brushwork here, especially at the lower left, is nearer to Van Gogh than to Monet, and is as unrestrained (I am tempted to say, as *arbitrary*, meaning self-consciously artificial) a passage as Pissarro had ever attempted. Conceivably, he might have wished the exuberance of this picture to answer for its counterpart's pessimism, unleashing a churn of debauch in place of the official spectacle's stupefied calm; and to some extent, the Winterthur *Mardi Gras* delivers on this score: The police have vanished, and what authority had kept the crowd from taking the boulevard no longer applies; the throng on Boulevard Montmartre, formerly divided, has become a mass in the truest sense of the term, carpeting the full expanse of the street from one side to the other. It is hard to think of another painting in which the massification of pedestrian bodies is given such literal treatment; again, Pissarro marks out each reveler with a dab or two of paint—only now, however, cast in shadow by a setting sun, this mass of strokes takes on a brilliant, deep blue hue, flecked here and there in gold and red. The metaphor of human confetti comes quickly to mind: the crowd as both the form and the content of a festival dedicated to overconsumption.

To see the mass of celebrants as so much street-level confetti, of course, to render the human object-like, or commodity-like: an instantiation of number (of *quantity*) more than the locus of individual, and inalienable, qualities. It is also, on some level, to see the theater of the street as the police see it, as a space subject to control, in which the greatest number always has the upper hand. This is not to suggest a motive on Pissarro's part (surely he did not sympathize with the deputized managers of the masses), but simply to point up the distance separating the viewer from the street party below. The crowd in the Winterthur *Mardi Gras* is as swarm-like as Pissarro ever dared to suggest; yet it is remains, in spite of the crush of numbers, an aggregate of isolated parts—a mass shaped by no common spirit, no frisson, no animating instinct; a mass that does not behave, does not *move*, en masse. In fact, there is little sense of a *felt* mass, or of a crowd swept up in a pique of feeling; at least, Pissarro makes no sign of grasping, let alone of metaphorizing, the energetic thrust of the party, or even that of the parade, which seems to go precisely nowhere.

From an old anarchist's perspective, there was good reason to take a dim view of the proceedings at street level during Carnaval. For one thing, the commercialism of the Marche du Boeuf Gras, and its seamless compatibility with the ordinary business of the boulevards, was obviously odious, and made more so by Zidler's taking charge of the so-called *fête populaire*. Then, too, the visible role claimed by the police in managing the

parades of 1896 and 1897 was new and significant, and in ways that would have struck an anarchist of Pissarro's vintage (one to whom the movement's repression at the hands of the French state in 1893 and 1894 was still a recent memory) with a heavy dose of irony. The police presence at the Marche du Boeuf Gras was more than merely a token affair: In advance of the Carnaval, the Conseil Municipal had granted broad authority over the parades to the Prefecture of the Police, which was to oversee the trajectory of the parade *cortège* and the management of the many thousands of spectators with scrupulous attention, watching above all for troublemakers—scouring the throng for telltales of terrorism. The tightness with which the prefect of police, Louis Lépine, gripped the reins in 1896 cannot have sat well with Zidler; after all, the master of ceremonies at the Moulin Rouge was hardly predisposed to letting his spectacle be orchestrated by the city's top cop, and made his ire known in no uncertain terms. Still, there was no denying the effectiveness of Lépine's methods, which involved deploying an overwhelming cohort of mounted *gardes municipaux* to keep shepherd the floats on their way. Indeed, the police took pride of position in the cortège, with a mounted battalion leading the way of the Ox, helmed by the chief of the police cavalry, Lucien-Célestin Mouquin.[31]

Zidler's struggle with, and capitulation to, the Prefecture of the Police speaks to the changed—in many ways, the expanded—position of the forces of order in shaping the

[31] How Mardi Gras continued to furnish Lépine with a laboratory of crowd control tactics is suggested by a 1904 chronicle in *La Grand Revue*, which reports the prefect's latest tactic—the deployment of a plainclothes officers, called "*suiveurs*," who served the function of a present-day 'snatch-and-grab' squad, but for cases of suspected sexual assualt. It was the *suiveur*'s responsibility to apprehend would-be criminals in the act—or even, as circumstances required, to arrest the offender *before* the act: "Il restera, cependant, de ces fêtes de carême, un souvenir joyeux: celui d'une dernière création de M. Lépine. Ce préfet de police aimable et alerte comme un clairon chasseurs à pied, a une imagination qui court aussi vite que ses jambes. [… P]our les jours gras il a crée l'agent *suiveur*. Un type encore. L'agent suiveur est un fonctionnaire chargé de rappeler ses concitoyens à la décence, dans les foules. Comme le traitement, indiqué plus haut, qui est infligé par les malotrus à la plupart des femmes s'aventurant dans ces cohues, déplaît à quelques-unes, lorsque les caresses se changent en pinçons, le représentant de M. Lépine apprécie que c'en est trop—à la fois il doit intervener au moment précis." Which raised all sorts of questions, naturally, about the abuse of police power: "Fort bien; rine de plus ingénieux, sur papier, mais quell est ce moment? Quelle horloge sonne cette heure si délicate à fixer? Une femme qui crie, meme, est-elle une femme offensé à ce point qu'on conduise au poste son gallant, considéré comme son agresseur? C'est ce qu'ont estimé, en général, les agents suiveurs, car ils se sont monstrés assez sévères pour leurs débuts, et ils ont fait une vingtaine d'arrestations, mais celles-ci n'ont pas été longtemps maintenues, précisement pour ces difficulties de toucher et de tact que les personnes intéressées—des deux côtés—faisent valoir." Paul Bluysen, "Vie parisienne," *La Grand Revue*, an. 8, no. 3 (15 Mar. 1904), 695-6.

life of the boulevards at the end of the nineteenth century. Indeed, to Parisians in the year 1897, Lépine's name far outshone that of Baron Haussmann as the primary synecdoche of street-level orderliness: for in every sense, materially as well as ideologically, the head of the Paris police had sought to present himself as chief guarantor of order in the streets.[32]

On the eve of Lépine's appointment to prefect of the police in 1893, the Paris municipal police were a reviled institution, widely seen—quite rightly—as deeply corrupt, its ranks staffed by thugs, drunkards, and military flunkees. Setting about to reform the Prefecture in deed as well as word, and to reaffirm its legitimacy as an apolitical guardian of public order, Lépine took steps to ameliorate relations with the broad public, taking it as his brief to *faire aimé la police* (to make the police be loved!).[33] As Parisians soon discovered, Lépine's project had everything to do with the streets—more particularly, with the spectacle of their pacification: It was under the watch of the new prefect, for example, that the first bicycle squads were created, and the famous *batons blancs*—traffic cops equipped with white-painted truncheons—installed at major

[32] The literature on Lépine remains little explored in Anglophone scholarship outside a handful of histories of policing; the best resource is Arthur Fryar Calhoun's study of the police repression of the revolutionary Left, *The Politics of Internal Order: French Government and Revolutionary Labor, 1898-1914* (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1973); for a more general introduction to the history of French policing, see Philip John Stead, *The Policing of Paris* (London: Staples Press, 1957); and also, more recently, Malcolm Anderson, *In Thrall to Political Change: Police and Gendarmerie in France* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). The best Francophone studies of Lépine's legacy derive from the scholarship of Jean-Marc Berlière: see in particular his *Naissance de la police moderne* (Paris: Perrin, 2011), which measures the achievements of Lépine's tenure against that of his equally renowned successor, Célestin Hennion. Lépine's own memoirs furnish a key resource—see Louis Lépine, *Mes Souvenirs* (Paris: Payot, 1929). For an excellent history of crowd control in France, see Olivier Fillieule, *Stratégies de la rue: Les manifestations en France* (Paris: Presses des Sciences Po, 1997).

[33] The question of public order had everything to do with the rising prominence of the newly institutionalized Left, and especially with the threat of mass strike activity. In the late 1890s and early 1900s, not only did the prospect of mass or general strikes, above all in the railway sector, threaten the continued functioning of the national economy and military (which had become completely reliant upon rail transport for troop deployments), they had also come to menace the means by which such strikes were repressed—that is, the national guardsmen, which the Left hoped to win to its side in the throes of a general strike. In the aftermath of the Fourmies massacre in 1891, it had become clear to the Prefecture that the presence of armed national guardsmen at strikes and rallies played easily into the hands of syndicalist demonstrators; the strategic weakness of outright repression was therefore to answered by enlarging the role of non-military forces of repression—that is, the police. On this score, see Calhoun, *op. cit.*

intersections and roundabouts. Styling himself as '*le préfet de la rue*,' Lépine cut the figure of a one-man tactician and public-relations agent, a celebrity commander who never missed the opportunity to be seen directing subordinates in person, whether in times of emergency or (what amounted to the same thing) on days of strikes and demonstrations.[34] Under his tenure, the official rules of crowd control were rewritten wholesale, shifting from a policy of outright suppression to a program of non-lethal repression—a change that required the police to mobilize in advance of (rather than in the thick of) an anticipated disturbance, cordoning off areas of political significance with serried ranks of mounted *gardes républicaines* and ordinary, foot-bound policemen, keeping the national guardsmen, with their rifles and bayonets, safely in reserve at the rear. Simultaneously, Lépine took steps to streamline the citywide chain of command, granting individual police commissioners (whose number swelled under the new system) broad powers of arrest—a policy intended, according to the awkward phrasing of one contemporary apologist, "to prevent what would otherwise befall those taking part in a public assembly were they to remain grouped together as such"—in other words, to spare the *gardes républicaines* from the political embarrassement of a massacre.[35]

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[34] "Short of siding with the strikers, which as a general policy was impossible at the time, the government could try to avoid involving the army in bloody confrontations with workers in two ways: by preventing potentially dangerous strikes, or by reorganizing the police forces and raising their effective strength considerably. The first course was followed to some extent, particularly in involving government officials more frequently in mediation aimed at forestalling or ending work stoppages. But to be truly effective, a preventive policy would have to offer concessions much more extensive than any which prewar French parliaments were willing to make. […] The only way to relieve the army of strike duty altogether, then, was to increase police power substantially. This was one of the considerations which led the cabinets of this period to take some important steps toward modernizing the French police system, though the problem of adequate non-military forces for strike duty was not solved before the war." Calhoun, *op. cit.*, 15-16.

[35] A revealing account of Lépine's reorganization of the command-structure of the Prefecture is provided in "Réforme de la police," *Le Petit Journal*, 28 Jul 1893, 2: "Les deux inspecteurs divisionnaires, qui commandaient exclusivement aux officiers de paix, sont supprimés et remplacés par quatre commissaires divisionnaires. Pourquoi cette substitution? Lors des derniers troubles, on s'est aperçu combien efficaces les sommations faites par un commissaire de police pour dissiper un attroupement. Ce système a le précieux avantage d'avertir les personnes qu forment un rassemblement de ce qui va leur arriver si ells persistent à rester groupées; il peut prévenir le plus souvent les collisions entre la population et la police. […] Chaque fois que des attroupements tumultueux se formeront sur la voie publique, le commissaire divisionnaire dans la section duquel ces rassemblements seront signalés arrivera sur les lieux avec des forces, il ceindra son écharpe et, grâce à sa qualité de commissaire de police, il pourra faire les sommations légales qui devront désormais toujours précéder l'emploi de la force.

What Lépine's reforms yielded in practice was as much a protocol as a spectacle: Ever zealous in his mission to promote the Prefecture and its agents, he often resorted to public theatrics, treating the street as a proscenium stage, and the work of policing as a matter of stagecraft first and foremost. In his memoirs, Lépine would recall the oddly carnivalesque dimension of his signature crowd-control tactics, which drew as many onlookers as hecklers on days of civil unrest—a scene recounted the in his *Souvenirs* with no small note of wistfulness:

> In the event that a protest was called, there was always one place in Paris where something bound to happen. That place was République. Seven boulevards (or large streets) descended down to it from the working-class *quartiers*: Montmartre, la Chapelle, Belleville, Saint-Fargeau and Ménilmontant. People always ended up there on the way from Temple. They would come [to Place de la République] as if to a spectacle, and it was in effect a representation that I offered them, since the crowds had no real intention of dispersing. The two traffic circles in the plaza would be occupied by troops. In the surrounding street, I had platoons of horsemen parade about at a canter, arrayed in rows of ten and in tight intervals—hussars, dragoons, the whole light cavalry, which held its footing better on the pavement (covered in sand in those days) than anything else. Nobody ever dared to get themselves mixed up with the horses. The crowd packed onto the sidewalks—it lasted until late at night. People would say: 'Let's go see Mouquin's merry-go-round [*le manège Mouquin*]' Mouquin was the name of the sub-director of the municipal police, who oversaw the maneuver.[36]

It is not hard to see why the Prefect of the Street came to blows, finally, with the impresario of the Moulin Rouge over the Marche du Boeuf Gras: Lépine was just as much a showman as Zidler, and regarded the boulevards as his sovereign territory. The three-day street parade was the closest thing imaginable to a state-sanctioned riot, at least

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Un inspecteur divisionnaire ne pourrait faire ces sommations parce qu'il n'est pas commissaire de police, et c'est pourqoui cette function a été abolie."

[36] "Il y a un point de Paris où en cas de manifestation annoncée il se passé toujours quelque chose. C'est la place de la République. Sept boulevards ou grandes voies descendent des quartiers populeux, Montmartre, la Chapelle, Belleville, Saint-Fargeau et Ménilmontant. C'est là qu'on aboutit en venant du Temple. Les gens arrivaient là comme au spectacle et c'était en effet une representation que je leu offrais, pour qu'ils n'aient pas l'idée de s'égailler ailleurs. Les deux plateau de la place étaient occupés par la troupe. Sur les chausses tout autour je faisais défiler au gallop de chasse, par rangs de dix et à court intervalle des pelotons de chasseurs à cheval, de hussards, de dragons, toute la cavalerie légère qui tient mieux que l'autre le pave, d'ailleurs sablé. Il ne venait à l'idée de personne de prendre à partie les chevaux. La foule s'entassait sur les trottoirs et cela durait jusqu'à la nuit. Les gens disaient: 'Allons voir le manege Mouquin.' C'était le nom de sous-directeur de la police municipal qui présidait à la manoeuvre." Louis Lépine, *Mes Souvenirs*, 131-132.

from a police perspective—a spectacle exactly the opposite of the *manège Mouquin*. That the parade *cortège* in 1896 and 1897 would end up being led by Mouquin himself, alongside the same cavalry officers who worked the crowds at Place de la République, was surely calculated as a show of force, signaling to the men and women of Belleville and Saint-Fargeau precisely who held sway over the boulevards. Needless to say, Lépine presided in person in person over the whole affair, marching along with the cortège like the Little Prince of the Carnaval.

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We cannot know what Pissarro expected to see in the boulevards on the three days of Carnaval, or how much of the spectacle of policing entered his mind. On some level, he was probably reminded of Monet's paintings of *Rue Montorgeuil Decked in Flags* [**Fig.9**] from the early years of the Third Republic, when a modernist could still find something to appreciate in the government's mock-confident farandole; and on another, not altogether different, level, he might have known his paintings of the Mardi Gras parades would rub his anarchist peers the wrong way. After all, one had only to get a whiff of the porcine aroma emanating from the head of the *cortège*—photographs from the era make it clear just how visibly the police took part in the Marche du Boeuf Gras [**Fig. 10**]—to comprehend whose interests the *fête populaire* was intended to serve. In any case, the anarchists made their views on the Marche du Boeuf Gras abundantly clear: in the pages of *Les Temps Nouveaux*, there was no distinction made between the various species of public spectacle trotted out at intervals for the working population's amusement—the following comes from an essay the journal ran in 1899, "Le Droit à la beauté," penned by a militant named André Girard, in which both the revenant Carnaval and its *Montmartrois* alter-ego were named among the era's many debasements:

> If occasions to jubilation and distratction are subject to the city tax, then care will be taken to present them artlessly and with sanctimonious pomp, repugnantly trivialized, in order to debase them even further, all under the guise of clarification. Free representations of the oldest rubbish of the repertory: official cavalcades in which are solemnly paraded all manner of carnivalesque frippery and carriage-laquer chintz, which alone is capable of humoring the bad taste of the government; *fêtes nationales* and *fêtes de quartier*, the veritable triumph of dancehall-type zing-boom-boom; *boeuf gras*, *vache enragée*, military parades: these are the elements of the city's aesthetic education.[37]

[37] André Girard, "Le Droit à la beauté," *Les Temps Nouveaux*, vol. 5, no. 5 (27 May-2 Jun 1899), 2: "Et si des réjouissances ou des délassements lui sont octroyés, on aura soin de les lui présenter grossiers, sans art, répugnants de trivialité, pour l'abétir encore, tout en paraissant l'éclairer. Représentations gratuites des plus vieux rossignols du répertoire; cavalcades officielles avec exhibition solonelle de toute cette friperie carnavalesque et de cette carrosserie en clinquant que seul peut enfanter le mauvais gout gouvernemental;

For Pouget, too, the brutish duplicity of the *fêtes populaires* was their strongest note: An issue of *Le Père Peinard* of 1895 included a cartoon showing the Boeuf Gras parade as a demonic punishment [**Fig. 11**], its spartan *cortège* yoked to a crew of the urban poor—a Carnaval of wretchedness, case closed.

It would be a stretch to say that Pissarro's paintings of the parade afford an anarchist view of *fête populaire*, much less an image of Lépine's crowd-control apparatus at work. Obviously they do not. But neither do they consent to wave the tricolore alongside Monet, or to condescend to the available sign languages for designating the crowd as such. The Lenten parades come to mean many things under Pissarro's eye, but they are never straightforwardly celebratory or declamatory. In fact, the parade barely coheres as such; if anything, Pissarro seems to have hesitated—quite unnecessarily, in the view of comrade Girard—to attach any narrative framework whatsoever to the view of the cavalcade. The mounted police seem not quite to know their role: on one hand, Mouquin's forces are badly, impossibly, outnumbered; and yet the crowds appear to lack the sort of purpose, the galvanizing energy, that would mark them as a genuine threat. Even without direct police supervision, the crowds remain unalloyed and atomistic, order prevailing along the margins of Zidler's spectacle without anyone having to bark directions: this, as much as anything, was the point of Pissarro's canvases. Even in the Winterthur canvas, the revelers, now thronging the forbidden street, do little more than stand around, just as they had earlier in the day, while waiting paitently for the spectacle to roll through. Such, at least, was the view from the hotel window. The scene was wild, but the wildness was comprised of undulating streamers, not the gesticulations of the crowd.

We can be certain that Pissarro continued to think, and think hard, about what he had seen on the day of 29th February, when Zidler's parade—or rather, Mouquin's *cortège*—passed just below his window, for he repeated the experiment again on 25 March, on the occasion of the Fête de la Mi-Carême (the celebration of Mid-Lent), painting yet another, somewhat less opulent, cavalcade stage-managed by Lépine. Once more, the boulevards were thronged with revelers; again, the *serpentins* were draped from the rooftops and balconies; and again, Mouquin's men kept the street firmly in abeyance. My guess is that Pissarro wished not only to give the motif another go, but also, this time, to test a different response to the boulevards, one that leaned less upon the modernist crutch. In the finished canvas, *La Fête de la Mi-Carême sur les boulevards* [**Fig. 12**], the lines are crisper, and the markers of Carnaval—the telltale *serpentins*, the crowd, the parade—merge more seamlessly with the architecture; the parade looks as if it occupies solid ground at last—well, perhaps not solid, but at least the ground plane makes itself felt, with a pale dapple of shadow playing off its dusty pitch.

Yet the view of the *Mi-Carême* is somehow less convincing, pictorially, than the two

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fêtes nationales et de quartier, véritable triomphe du zimm boum boum de bastringue; boeuf gras, vache enragée, parades militaires, voilà les éléments de son education esthétique."

that preceded it. Indeed, it is as if the more Pissarro pushed at the parade and the crowd, straining to bring it into some kind of optical coherence—to give the floats a space of their own, while cramming the spectating hordes onto their modicum of sidewalk—the less the scene hung together, and the more the city began to look as if its painter really did agree with the anarchist critics. In other words, the more Pissarro pushed toward the truth of the parade, the closer he came to seeing the note of the false in the boulevards: The chimneys are now monotonous, and the architecture wafer-thin; the street is flat; the balconies are lined with bourgeois revelers—and with no note of optical interference to interrupt the orderliness of Haussmann's city. In fact, it is hard to think of anything else by Pissarro that comes so near to Manet's way of scanning the surface of Haussmann's Paris, looking out over the Exposition Universelle of 1867 from the Chaillot Hill.

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What intervened between the first two parade paintings and the view of the Mi-Carème was a major breakthrough in the *Boulevards* series—one that would not likely have come about were it not for the experience of the *fêtes populaires*. In the week following the Mardi Gras celebrations, Pissarro put his nose back to the landscapist's grindstone: On 9 March, he wrote to Georges with news that ten canvases were underway—"it's hard, hard work and the weather's so changeable!"[38] A week later, the weather remained a headache for Pissarro, who mentioned of the lingering cloud cover in another letter to Georges:

> It's terribly expensive, I'm paying a thousand francs per month with only indispensible extras like wine and firewood included; it's a blessing that my paintings are going well and wrapping themselves up, but the devilish grey of the Paris streets is so difficult to pull off that I'll be forced to stay here a while longer. And that's not even mentioning that Durand only likes *effets de soleil*! It was only yesterday that he was telling me, apropos Dario [de Regoyos]'s paintings, that [my work] was sad and grey, and that it was more difficult to paint the sunshine—ridiculous![39]

By 21 March, Pissarro was still complaining about the weather, noting, for example, that there was no danger in scheduling a dentist's visit, since he "lacked [the] effect" he had

[38] CP to GP, 9 Mar. 1897, BHIV, 332. "Les toiles marchent, dix en train, c'est long, long et le temps si changeant!"

[39] CP to GP, 17 Mar. 1897, *BHIV*, 337-38. "Ci-inclus quatre cents francs que j'ai pu avoir plus tôt en ayant déjà demandé pour payer ma quinzaine ici. C'est terriblement cher, j'ai pour mille francs par mois sans faire d'extras que le vin et le bois indispensables; heureusement que mes tableaux marchent et se finissent, mais ces diables de gris des rues de Paris sont tellement difficiles à faire qu'il faut y revenir longtemps. Et dire que Durand n'aime que les effets de soleil! Et justement hier, il me disait à propos des tableaux de Dario que c'était triste et gris, que c'était plus difficile de faire du soleil, je t'en fiche!"

been seeking to paint.[40] However, in spite of his discontent with his dealer's advice, Pissarro seems to have agreed that the highest ambitions of his series required ample and consistent illumination—sunshine, that is. On the first of April, a week after the Mi-Carême, he wrote to Lucien with an update on his progress, singling out three works in particular that continued to keep him at the window: "My paintings are just about finished; I'm waiting for a bit of sun in order to continue three large-format canvases [that is, size-thirty canvases: *toiles de trente*]. It's a fortnight's worth of work, all told."[41]

We can be sure that one of these three *toiles de trente* is a painting a now in the Hermitage, *Boulevard Montmartre, après-midi, soleil* [**Fig. 13**]. I take this canvas to represent the summa of Pissarro's *Boulevards* campaign—the first attempt in which the binary of the natural and the artificial, the rural and the urban, was successfully sublated, or at least brought to a draw. This breakthrough was a matter, first and foremost, of eliminating the the stock figures—the carefully modeled bourgeois as well as the stick-figure pedestrians—that had populated the margins of the boulevard in Pissarro's earlier renditions. Cutting loose from the social imaginary of the chroniclers in every sense (recall Claretie's postmortem: "our boulevard … is now just a sort of arcade where peddlers bark the news of the day, broadcasting the latest gossip and shoving the deafened pedestrians, while the brasserie tables spill over onto the throttled sidewalk" etc. etc.), Pissarro now paints the crowd as totalizing the sidewalks, but as the dominated, not as popular sovereign: Air circulates between the bodies along the sidewalk at far left—Pissarro has gone out of his way, in fact, to emphasize the separateness of each pedestrian from the others, evoking an atomized mass in which each unit—each *piéton*—clings hard and fast to his and her personal space.

It was a matter, too, of getting the handling of the street and sidewalks, the ground plane, just right: In fact, it is hard to think of another canvas in which such a painstaking effort has been made to modulate the *scale* of the street in relation to the sidewalk, without having the difference in surface area or handling take on the burden of metaphor. For a painful foil, we might try Jean Béraud's absurd rendering of a carriage accident on the Boulevard des Italiens [**Fig. 14**], in which the dusty macadam seems to crawl up the picture plane at left, affirming an idea of the street as an essentially scary, disaster-prone place; or else, in a similar vein, see Jean-François Raffaëlli's pastel rendering of the *Grands Boulevards* in 1898 [**Fig. 15**], with its dizzying welter of pedestrian crossings multiplied *ad infinitum*: it is as if Raffaëlli, who had taken to painting in a covered carriage like Daubigny in his *bottin*, could not imagine the boulevard apart from the boulevardier, and felt he had to bring the latter back from the grave—a revenant drifting dead-eyed through dreamworld—in order to paint the scene at all. Whereas in Pissarro's painting, the street is simply a controlled, rule-bound terrain like any other. The brush-

[40] CP to LP, 21 Mar. 1897, *BHIV*, 340-41.

[41] CP to LP, 1 Apr. 1897, *BHIV*, 343 "Mes tableaux sont à peu près terminés; j'attends un peu de soleil pour continuer trois toiles assez importantes. C'est l'affaire d'une quinzaine."

marks designating the roadbed are the same as the ones that make up the sidewalk; the city is unitary, not bifurcated—unitary, as in *unified*: not socially, of course, but pictorially.

We are back, then, to Pissarro's watchword, and to questions of landscape. What the Hermitage canvas is about, to my eye, is less a mood, and even less a particular event in the life of the city, than an overall tonality—a color of things, earthen and ruddy, seen in the moment of the late afternoon when sunlight turns the limestone and tree foliage copper, but in a muted, undramatic way. It is the kind of illumination that brings attention to the materiality of things not otherwise appraised as such, calling the various parts of the city into a fragile, impermanent coherence, as if the whole of Paris (down to the population itself) had been fashioned out of the same basic Ur-material: the same macerated putty of quarried rock and clay, shaped by inhuman powers into the building blocks of a world—into mansard roofs and chimney piling, awnings and kiosks, tree limbs and lampposts. The painting brushes the surface of a world; indeed, it is all about surfaces—sheer facades, impalpable exteriors, buildings that seem not quite to contain anything within them). It is not quite a *human* world—at least, not a world humanized, or "spiritualized," in the Hegelian sense of the term; but neither is it an artificial wonderland *à la* Huysmans, much less a Haussmannian Potemkin Village: a hell-world. Lodged somewhere between nature and artifice, and between the organic and the inorganic (at the point, say, where stone becomes dirt), the painting is simply unhomely, describing a world utterly familiar, but one made to look subtly strange, and which the viewer can hardly imagine inhabiting, let alone entering in person.[42]

Let me sum up before striking any further. I have said already that Pissarro arrived at the Grand Hôtel de Russie hoping—it was his only chance, the only way he could lay claim to the task at hand—to paint the boulevard as a landscape. And this ambition implied, in turn, a way of seeing Paris in which the particulars of the social life were bound to matter less, in the grand scheme, than those of natural life. But nature in Pissarro was a complex thing; it was not as easy as giving the trees their bit of greenery and letting the crowd go along it way—not that this possibility had not occurred to him: It is hard not to think that the last few canvases of the series, such as *Boulevard*

[42] For an argument that seeks to ground Pissarro's paintings in the experience of what Michael Fried calls the "embodied viewer," and for which that viewer's sense of the possibility of inhabitation would be a key regulating idea, see, for example, Rachel Ziady DeLue, "Pissarro, Landscape, Vision, and Tradition," *The Art Bulletin* vo. 80, no. 4 (Dec. 1998), 718-736. I am less certain that Pissarro's highest ambition can be easily attributed to the painter's furnishing of visual/phenomenological access in the sense at issue for DeLue and Fried; at least, the ways his work *frustrates* such access (or deals with the fact of its frustration in the existing world) strikes me as equally crucial to his modernism—not least insofar as 'access' was a social category for Pissarro, to be negotiated on ground resistant to the human navigator.

Montmartre, matinée de printemps [**Fig. 16**], as much more than an attempt at wishing away the city in the city, seeing (pretending to see) the boulevard as if it were a tree-lined country road.

Again, *Boulevard Montmartre, après-midi, soleil* strikes me as a different, and far richer, more equivocal, picture—one in which the painter has found a way back, pictorially, to the crucible of Pontoise, where the fundamentals of his idea of the landscape were first laid in the late 1860s and 1870s. On this score, it might be fruitful to compare the Hermitage *Boulevard* with a painting like *Le Champ du chou, à Pontoise* of 1873 [**Fig. 17**]: What both pictures share, beyond rough similarities of composition (for example, the way in which the sky—an intensely observed, ineffable sky—has been pressed into to a compact strip along the top edge of the canvas, and played off against a bristling ridge- or skyline), is an interest in edges, margins, and thresholds. Among Pissarro's hundred or so views of Pontoise, *Le Champ du chou* is particularly relentless in its conjuring—and dissimulating—of boundaries between the visual field: between sunlight and shadow; between the tilled field and the overgrown glade; between the farmer's cabbage and the clod of earth; and, not least of all, between the marks of human habitation—the silhouettes of houses, and not farmhouses but bona-fide town dwellings, which might be occupied by the postman, or the doctor, or the Sunday painter—and the pale of the not-yet-humanized, the deep, unsympathetic wildness in the world (in every world).

The human has its place in *Le Champ du chou*, and a crucial one at that; it is telling (if typical of the idea of landscape he imbibed from the Dutch masters) that he never painted a picture without some mark of human presence or intervention. The woman standing in the foreground of *Le Champ du chou* is typical of Pissarro's handling of figuration prior to 1880: What she figures, more than anything, is a fleeting awarness about being *part* of the landscape—the flush of knowing, or realizing, if only just for a millisecond, that in the eyes of another (the painter, and for his viewers) she has become inextricable from this awkward place between the field and the cabbages. A fleeting awareness, and therefore a figure of inwardness: self-consciousness triangulated in the gap between the *je* and the *tu*. Probably the woman is a fiction; obviously Pissarro did not need any particular peasant model, standing just so at the edge of the cabbage patch, when generic anthropomorphism would do just as well. (After all, the moment of self-consciousness at issue is a product of the painting and *its* economy, telling us nothing, for instance, about the metaphysics of peasant thought. Only much later, in the early 1890s, would Pissarro address head-on the mental life of the fieldwork, and in ways that would unsettle the verities of the previous two decades in the countryside.[43]) It is fully part of the picture's balancing act that the man crouching at the far end of the field, whom Pissarro has positioned to the left of the standing woman but far back at the edge of the field, does not look up to meet our gaze, and makes no sign of mirroring back the viewer's interest in the scenery. In the crouching peasant, Pissarro figures the limit keeping its secret, refusing to

[43] See T.J. Clark, "We Field-Women," *op. cit.*

be unfolded into topographic lucidity; for the landscape is, at its most potent, a question mark, the form of an uncertainty about distance, or temperature, or time of day. What is it that causes the branches of the tree nearest to our standpoint to darken in certain areas, but not in others? A disease? A fire? A shadow cast by another, unseen tree? Or none of the above?

We shall never know—nor will we be able to say much, in the end, about cabbages and their cultivation. And that was surely the point: A landscape, in Pissarro's hands, is not the product of knowledge about the visible world, but a form of asking. Materiality for Pissarro took the form of a moment—a questioning of things thought to have been familiar, but which painting makes just strange enough so as to place a wedge between the sign and its referent, while still retaining the rough framework of the symbolic order in its ordinary, everyday guise. And nature, in turn, just *was* this indeterminacy—this of not knowing quite how one belonged in and to the world, or of how the world was put together, and of having to make do anyway.

I come back, now, to *Boulevard Montmartre, après-midi, soleil*. Some readers will want to see it as a lesser thing than *Boulevard Montmartre, matin, temps gris*; since it is in the latter picture (the earlier of the two paintings, I mean) that we are given such a scrupulous display of learned understanding—a *knowledge* of the boulevard, of its kiosks, and of its social pecking order. Notice, on this score, how the limpid box of the newspaper kiosk has gone slightly dark in the Hermitage canvas: information has undeniably been lost, and lessons of the tourist's guidebook, subtly discounted. Yet this is precisely the point: in Pissarro's value system (at least, as that system crystallized in the early 1870s), information was nothing special: anyone could *know* what was going on down in the street, but it was only a rare sort of mind and eye, working in combination, that could convincingly unsee the existing web of meanings—the forest of signs—without ceasing to see the city as such. And just this, I am claiming, would turn out to be Pissarro's achievement in the painting of sunny weather, the Hermitage *Boulevard*, begun in the weeks after Mardi Gras.

This accolade is admittedly fine-grained; the achievement at issue is hardly a matter of showy theatrics. My point is to suggest that the city glimpsed in the Hermitage canvas no longer looks quite Haussmannian, or even obviously Parisian, at least, not in the ways one expects. The accomplishment is a matter of estrangement, but not of its generalization: the strange will be local, Pissarro insists, or it will be nothing at all. Of course, there can be no mistaking the markers of local geography: a scrupulous viewer will pick out the chalky ark of the Porte Saint-Denis at the boulevard's vanishing point, and there is little room to doubt that a Haussmannian apartment is what it is, or a kiosk a kiosk, an omnibus an omnibus, or the acorn-shaped cap of the *réverbère*—etc. But it is hard to see that these aspects of the urban landscape bear their usual symbolic weight, except perhaps for the lampost along the bottom edge, stoic as ever. The pedestrian is not the foil of the taxi; the plane tree with its canopy is not the counter-term to the tin-roofed apartment building; the clouds gusting overhead do not throw into relief the dusty flatness of the macadam. Extraordinary care has been taken *not* to let Paris look like itself, while

at the same time, not letting it look like anything else. There is a maniacal sort of rigor to Pissarro's pursuit of the boulevard-as-landscape—not a refusal to know, or to wish to know, what the view from the window was about, but a refusal to impress that knowledge upon the picture in the form of a language. Pissarro's interest attaches, again, to the limits and edges of the street, but without forcing the edge or the limit to signify a gap, or a fissure, or a site of fragmentation, or even the bare minimum of a relation—a denial of what semiologists might call the associative axis of meaning: the concretization of identity-in-difference (of *this-not-that*). The painting comes quite near, in fact, to denying language itself, so that we almost miss the cryptic lettering at the top of the façade at right, spelling out the name of photography studio: REUTLINGER.

Lest these claims shade over into a truly unweildy account of *Boulevard Montmartre, après-midi, soleil*, let me take issue with a passage in the lower left corner, where Pissarro has positioned (I hesitate to say juxtaposed) a tree just a few paces before a kiosk [**Fig. 18**]. We have seen this kiosk in operation once before: in *Boulevard Montmartre, matin, temps gris*, the front grille looks to be open and available to commerce, although of what sort—newspapers, victuals, tickets to see the wax dioramas at the Musée Grévin (located just down the block and to the left, inside the Passage des Panoramas)—we cannot say. The tree is Pissarro's standard repoussoir, of course, and makes an appearance in every one of the views of *Boulevard Montmartre* (obviously it is absent from the two paintings of *Boulevard des Italiens*, about which I shall have more to say below): Tree and kiosk, as stalwart a Haussmannian duo as there ever was.

In the hands of any other painter, these elements would have been irresistible fodder for metaphor—as in Béraud's *Kiosque* of the early 1880s [**Fig. 19**], for instance, in which the rachitic tree plays foil to the Morris column's eye-catching erection. In Pissarro's painting, to the contrary, the pair is anything but metaphorical. It is barely even a pair, in fact: The trunk of the tree has been scraped from top to bottom, casting into doubt the layering of volumetric solids: is the tree in front of the kiosk? or behind it? or is there simply no difference at all? As to the body of the kiosk (which now seems to have closed to business), Pissarro seems almost to have split it in two, laying on the top part in flat planes of rust-red and umber, while leaving its bottom half barely coherent as such, an olive patch of paint that clings insistently to the picture plane, and cannot easily be put back into optical alignment. A viewer without much prior knowledge might mistake the kiosk for something else entirely: perhaps an odd looking cistern, the mother of all fire hydrants; or perhaps a public (meaning, male) washroom or urinal—not an uncommon apparatus in the boulevards of the 1890s. In any case, we have long since moved over into Cézanne's territory: The kiosk seems to be listing just slightly to the right (or is it to the left?), as if sapped at its foundations; while the tree, for its part, becomes flatter and less object-like as the eye descends from canopy to base, until the trunk slips away into darkness: not shadow, but simply the black tone of the under-layer. Try as one might, the two things—tree and kiosk—are impossible to hold together in space, at least, not when one looks long and hard.

Similar questions, and similarly hard looking, could be brought to other passages as well: to the the otherworldly monumentality of the Haussmannian rooftop, and especially

of its peaked chimney piles, which jut tall above the sloping mansard, fairly dominating the urban landscape like the crenellations of a fortress, or a city's outworks. We would be getting Pissarro wrong, however, were we to overestimate the weight of the strange, or the otherwordly, or even the *un*worldly, in his picture's economy, leaping toward the obvious, and facile, totalizations—modernity as ruin, Paris coming apart at the seams, etc. Strangness is kept to its place in *Boulevard Montmartre, après-mid, soleil*; the sense of the *Unheimlich* is local and particular; the forces of un-worlding are not let to contaminate the whole of the picture, as they might have for Cézanne. In any case, one could easily propose counter-passages, counter-worlds, that conform quite adequately to the viewer's ordinary expectations: kiosks standing up straight, sun glinting on the tops of the carriages, horses going two by two. The breakthrough was not a matter of the painter's grasping a deeper order of things—not an issue of totality, in other words—but a dawning sense of the compatibility of the strange and the ordinary, the worldly and otherworldly, the orderly and disorderly; that is to say, a realization that the city was neither the one thing nor the other—that the moment of indeterminacy did not overrule, or even interfere with, the counter-moment of determinate clarity; and that disorder, too, could be organized, provided that the disorderly was preserved as such (provided, in other words, that the imposition of order in no way impinged upon the disorderliness of its subject parts). The city, finally, was just these things at once: organized disorder, insensible sense, a multiverse of non-worlds, other-words, un-worlds.

All of which is to imply, if not exactly to declare outright, that the received idea of the boulevards and their crowds—the chroniclers' *récit* as much as the anarchist's screed—had got things profoundly wrong. Whatever had become of Paris in the age of Zidler and Lépine was described only superficially by such terms as "junkheap" or "carnivalesque frippery"; the real story—the material stratum of history—was not in the content of the spectacle—not in the vulgarity of its public life—but rather in the changing forms of social control. Order would prevail in Paris *in spite of disorder*, not against it: such was the meaning of the Marche du Boeuf Gras, no less than the Moulin Rouge itself; and, too, of Lépine's spectacle of invincibility—what we would now wish to call "repressive tolerance" in its blithe accomodation of dissent, but on the condition that the dissenters agree not to disrupt the orderly flow of traffic and commerce. It was much the same meaning of the term "spectacle," not incidentally, that resurfaced six decades later under the heading (too often dismissed by Debord's readers) *la séparation achvée*: "separation perfected"[44]—unity in unfreedom, the production and management of worldlessness in the name of social peace.

For all these reasons, the street could not be represented as such; for in falling under the powers of the police, it had became something other than a space—had became, in reality, only the *possibility of space*, but a possibility aggressively withheld from the public, which occupied the street only on the condition that it not seek to territorialize the

[44] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* [1967], trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994).

pavement on which it walked or tarried. The fluency of the street had already been organized in advance, in other words; there was no longer any question of a different order emerging at the pedestrian's whim (or the insurrectionist's clarion call). That the boulevardier had been stripped of sovereignty, demoted to the status of a *piéton* among *piétons*, did not necessarily require that another sovereign emerge in his place. And that was precisely the situation of the late 1890s: order prevailed, but without a visible master.[45]

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It would make my story tidier, and much briefer, had Pissarro devised in April 1897 a stable, reproducible method of painting Paris in the guise of a landscape. That he did not, and would continue to wrestle with the questions broached at the Grand Hôtel de Russie for at least a year longer, speaks to the difficulty of the project Pissarro had taken on—and ultimately, to its intractability. It is telling, on this score, that even a year later, Pissarro's description of his efforts at the hotel window leaned heavily upon an old, Baudelarian language of the modern; here he is, for example, at the end of a long letter to Lucien on 15 December 1897, again nearly "forgetting" to mention what he was about to get up to:

> I forgot to mention that I've found a room at the Grand Hôtel du Louvre with a superb view over the Avenue de l'Opéra and the corner of the Place du Palais Royal!—It's going to be beautiful work! It's not very aesthetic, perhaps, but I'm delighted to be able to try to do these streets of Paris that people often call ugly, but which are so silvery, so luminous and so lively, they're such different boulevards!—it's the modern in full!!![46]

What this final interjection meant to Pissarro is hard to say (and hard, too, to square with the rhetorical temper of *Turpitudes sociales*). On some level, Pissarro probably believed himself capable of making good on the modern, pictorially, now that Monet and the rest of the Impressionists had long since abandoned Paris for more exotic or rustic climes; after all, if no one else believed Paris worth painting anymore, and if the public consensus had turned against the boulevards ("*que l'on a l'habitude de dire laides, mais qui sont si argentées*…"), then what was there to prevent him from trying his hand? And who was to say, besides, that modernity could not be dealt with other than via the art-

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[45] It matters for my argument that Lépine was precisely *not* the hidden master. In a way, by making such a show of his presence in the street, Lépine sustained the illusion of his own fungibility; the prefect was just flesh and blood, after all, and could not therefore be the puppet master.

[46] CP to LP, 15 Dec. 1897; *BHIV*, 418: "J'oublie de t'annoncer que j'ai trouvé une chambre au Grand Hôtel du Louvre avec une vue superbe sur l'avenue de l'Opéra et du coin de la place du Palais Royal!—C'est très beau à faire! C'est peut-être pas très esthétique, mais je suis enchanté de pouvoir essayer de faire ces rues de Paris que l'on a l'habitude (de) dire laides, mais qui sont si argentées, si lumineuses et si vivantes, c'est tout différent des boulevards—c'est le moderne en plein!"

language of Manet, Degas, and the others? Was it not the very premise of modernization to abolish the binary of city versus country—to "batter down all Chinese walls," as Marx had written a half-century before? Was not Pissarro doing his humble part?

Pissarro's correspondence becomes less regular in the summer of 1897: It seems that he had been planning to exhibit the series at Durand-Ruel's, perhaps as early as July, but was interrupted by news that Lucien had suffered a stroke at his home in Chiswick, outside London, prompting his parents' displacement to Britain for the rest of the season. In September, after Pissarro and his wife had returned to Eragny, another of Pissarro's sons, Félix, fell prey to tuberculosis, declining rapidly over the autumn and expiring in a sanitorium in Kew on 25 November. On account of his own poor health, Pissarro, who had been sufferring a delibitating eye infection for nearly a decade, was unable to visit Félix on the eve of his death, and learned of his child's passing by telegram.

This rapid succession of near and actual tragedies would have been hard for any parent to bear; but to Pissarro, the ramifications were equally emotional and artistic. Again, painting was not his hobby but a trade—indeed, a matter of life and death. That he was barely able to work during the months of family emergency, painting only a few *motifs* while abroad, which Durand-Ruel then refused to buy, meant he would have to make up his losses in the coming year, to the likely tune of another Paris series.[47] It was therefore with large ambitions in mind, and out of real financial need, that he planned a return trip to the French capital in late December 1897, choosing for the location of his second series the Grand Hôtel du Louvre. He had been considering a few other location as well: the Trocadero, Passy, and Cours-la-Reine, which might have offered unambiguously picturesque motifs; but all things equal, the Hôtel du Louvre was a safer bet (at least, it was of a piece with the location of the *Boulevards* series), furnishing a magnificent *point de vue* overlooking the Avenue de l'Opéra from across the Place du Théâtre Français, an oval-shaped plaza that was home to the Comédie Française.

The scene of the street was altered in the first weeks of Pissarro's campaign, when a relatively minor scandal involving the disgraced army captain Alfred Dreyfus exploded into a fully-blown national crisis, prompted by the publication of Émile Zola's

[47] Janine Bailly-Herzberg offers a useful account of Pissarro's possible motives; see *BHIV 419*, fn. 2: "Au cours de cette correspondance, nous avons appris à connaître Pissarro et à le juger. S'il est bien un sentiment que Pissarro n'éprouve pas, c'est l'indifférence. Ce paragraphe où éclatent son enthousiasme et son impatience à l'approche d'une nouvelle campagne parisienne—ceci peu de temps après la mort de son fils—cache sans doute aussi une grave préoccupation: celle de préparer sa future exposition en mettant toutes les chances de son côté, afin d'y vendre bien et rapidement. Les vues de Paris rentrent dans cette catégorie et Pissarro le sait. Et puis, pourquoi ne pas se demander s'il n'essaie pas de déclencher à nouveau chez Lucien le goût du travail après cette longue période d'inertie, et ceci par son propre exemple?"

publication now-famous exculpation, "J'Accuse," in *L'Aurore* on 13 January. The following days saw the outbreak of anti-Semitic demonstrations and rioting across France, with further violence—indeed, fully-blown pogroms—breaking out in Algeria, resulting in at least two deaths (one Jew and one demonstrator) and many hundreds of thousands of francs worth of damage. In Paris, the clamor of popular unrest grew darkest around 18-20 January: On the 18th, a rally had been organized in the evening by the *Ligue antisémitique*, scheduled to take place at the Paris amphitheater on Rue de la Douane, with Henri Rochefort slated to give a speech to the hall. Several hundred anti-Dreyfusards were in attendance, many of them university students; but in the event, Rochefort failed to arrive, and the meeting was set upon by anarchist counter-demonstrators, who stormed the auditorium and were able to pull down the spiral staircase to the balcony before the audience managed to expel them; punches and slurs were exchanged on both sides, with violence spilling out into the streets. For several hours, a running street battle was waged between demonstrators and the police, resulting in seven arrests and numerous injuries—a surreal scene, in which the crowd of nationalists chanting "Vive l'Armée" and "Conspuez Zola!" was confronted by Mouquin's cavalry and a detachment of the Gardes Républicaines.[48] In the following days and weeks, further anti-Semitic demonstrations were held in Paris, flaring up again during the weeks of Zola's trial, some organized by the *Ligue*, others launched more or less spontaneously by students in the Latin Quarter, recalling the fires and barricades that had wracked the neighborhood five years earlier, in 1893, following the suppression of the *Bal des Quatz'Arts*.[49]

Of course, there were other narratives of the Dreyfus Affair; too many to recite in these pages. The riots of late January and their repression strike me as the history that mattered most for Pissarro's project—for it was the part of the Affair that had most to do with the streets, their crowds, and the thin line between social control and social chaos.

It would be difficult, with hindsight, to underestimate the mixture of fear and expectancy felt in the streets during the first weeks of 1898; and not only in Paris, but across the whole of France. In Lyon, for example, the newspaper *Le Peuple* put the matter plain: "We are in an extremely perturbed situation. Days like these have not been witnessed since 1871."[50] Peasants traveling to market in the town of Laval, along the eastern border with Germany, were rattled by the sight of an anti-Semitic poster, which

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[48] Many Anglophone newspapers ran lengthy reportage of these events, pieced together from foreign correspondents, French newspapers, and the wire services. For a representative account, see "The Dreyfus Affair: Diary of a Troubled Week," *The Jewish World*, 21. Jan 1898, 310-311.

[49] On this episode and its representation in the French press, see Richard Thomson, *The Troubled Republic: Visual Culture and Social Debate, 1889-1900* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004) 106-7.

[50] *Le Peuple*, 19 Jan. 1898, quoted in Stephen Wilson, "The Antisemitic Riots of 1898 in France," *The Historical Journal*, vol. 16, no. 4 (Dec. 1973), 802.

they took as a sign that another war was in the offing; similar fears—of war, or revolution, or both at once—were reported elsewhere in the eastern *départements*, and speak to the general mood.[51] Still, such rumblings were only that: tremors at the base of the social order—an order that remained intact, in the end, in spite of the damage done to its legitimacy. The crisis of 1898 was ultimately a different thing than that of 1871, or even 1892: the shipwreck of the Republic was a slow-moving train, going around in a closed loop—from the courts to the press to the parliament to the presidency, and back around again. There is no use denying that the major protagonists of the Left waffled on the issue of anti-Semitism: Jaurès came around to the anti-Dreyfusard cause quickly enough, but other elements of the trade-union movement declared against Zola and the intellectuals, who they saw as apologists of Jewish capital. On an altogether different level, there was a temptation to sympathize with the rioters—not with their call to 'Death to the Jews,' much less in their harassment of Zola, but simply in their running up against the wall—the shock absorber—of Lépine's police, and thus against the real, and debilitating, limits of street-level politics: limits the Left knew all too well, and which the Right was now to discover.

In any case, there is no doubting that Pissarro was Dreyfusard; his correspondence is unflinching in its contempt for the anti-Semites (he was a Jew by birth, after all)—indeed, he had written Zola personally to congratulate him and wish him well in advance of his libel trial. It would seem, too, that Pissarro found himself briefly caught up in the street-level politics of the Affair, although as a mere bystander. As recounted to Lucien in a letter of 19 January (erroneously dated to November), he had run into a group of anti-Semitic demonstrators two days before, while en route to see Durand-Ruel:

> Don't worry yourself about my security here, for the moment the only trouble is from a few Catholic upstarts of the Latin Quarter, whom the government favors. They shout: 'Down with the Jews,' but that's it. The saner part of the population … and it well understands that they want to bring down the Republic, or rather, that the Jesuits wish to become absolute rulers. I believe and I hope that freethinking men will end up with the upper hand. Yesterday while making my way on the boulevards toward Durand's, around five o'clock, I found myself in the middle of a band of little schoolboys trailed by gawkers, shouting: 'Death to Jews, down with Zola!'. I passed unobtrusively through the middle of this heap all the way to rue Laffitte [where Durand-Ruel had his gallery]; they didn't even take me for a Jew!… Petitions regarding the Dreyfus case flow in from all corners. Intellectuals of every stripe are in uproar. And now the socialists are holding rallies. The day before yesterday, the anarchists and socialists made a huge stink against the rally called by Rochefort and the Jesuits! Rochefort—who would have thought? What an idiot, he really has gone off the fence this time.
>
> France is truly sick—will she ever recover? We'll see after Zola's trial! I've written him a couple of words testifying to my wholehearted admiration. Yesterday I

[51] These incidents are glossed in Wilson, *op. cit.*, 801-2.

> received a letter from Mirbeau begging me to sign the petition along with Monet, him, and many others. In spite of the grave events unfolding in Paris, I am obliged, despite my own preoccupations, to work at my window, as if nothing were going on. Let's hope that it all works out happily in the end![52]

Again, there was no question on whose side Pissarro stood: the anti-Semites were plainly the enemy—deluded fools led on by charlattans and idiots. There was a difference, however, between siding with Zola on paper (penning the right letter at the right moment) and joining the ranks of the activist intelligentsia, as had Mirbeau, for example. On this score, Pissarro's position was several times more equivocal: his anarchism—that is to say, his disgust with the wielding of social privilege in all forms, and his contempt for bourgeois self-righteousness—recommended him at best poorly to the politics of 1898,

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[52] CP to LP, 19 Jan. 1898; *BHIV*, 434-35: "Ne t'inquiète pas trop pour ma sécurité ici, pour le moment il n'y a que quelques braillards catholiques du quartier Latin, favorisés par le gouvernement. Ils cris: 'a bas les Juifs,' mais rien de plus. La population saine commence à se ressaisir et sent bien que l'on veut renverser la République, ou plutôt, les Jésuites veulent être les maîtres absolus. Je crois et j'espère que les hommes libres finiront par avoir le dessus. Hier en allant chez Durand à cinq heures sur les boulevards, je me suis trouvé au milieu d'une bande des petits potaches suivis de voyous, criant: 'Mort aux Juifs, à bas Zola!'. J'ai passé tranquillement au milieu du tas jusque'à la rue Laffitte, ils ne m'ont même pas pris pour un Juif!… Les protestations (sur) le jugement Dreyfus affluent de toutes parts. Tout ce qu'il y'a d'intellectuals proteste. Voilà les socialistes qui font des réunions. Avant-hier les anarchistes et socialistes ont fuit un boucan terrible contre la réunion Rochefort et les Jésuites! Qui aurait dit cela de Rochefort? Quel idiot, il a manqué le nord cette fois.

La France est bien malade, en sortira-t-elle? Nous verrons cela après le procès Zola! Je lui ai écrit quelques mots pour lui manifester tout mon admiration. J'ai reçu hier une carte de Mirbeau me priant de signer la protestation avec Monet, lui, et beaucoup d'autres. Malgré les événements graves qui se déroulent à Paris, je suis obligé, malgré mes préoccupations, de travailler à ma fenêtre, comme si de rien n'était; enfin espérons que tout cela finira par des chansons!."

As to the letter's erroneous date: it can only have been written on 19 January, since, as Janine Bailly-Herzberg observes, Pissarro was in Eragny on 19 November 1898; and in any case, the events recounted—the rally where Rochefort was to have spoken, the anarchist backlash, etc.—are quite clearly those of 18 January, a singular moment in the long arc of the Dreyfus Affair. That the month of November impressed itself upon Pissarro's mind might be explained, at least in part, by the fact that his son Félix had passed away in November 1897. In spite of his protestation to the contrary, Pissarro was sure to have been shaken by the previous day's drama, and, indeed, by his own, unexpected run-in with the anti-Semites; it would be understandable, were his mind to have leapt from one trauma to another, crossing the wires, as it were, between 27 November 1897 (the date of Félix's death) and 19 January 1898.

with their unceasing slew of petitions and newspaper calumnies. He was quick to protest to Lucien that in spite of the uproar in the press, there was no real danger to the public order in the offing (no popular uprising to fear, or to cheer on), and certainly no good reason to think that he might become a target of anti-Semitic recriminations.

Pissarro believed, and did not mind telling Lucien, that the outcome of the Affair was to be dismal no matter which side emerged on top. On 27 January, he wrote again to caution Lucien against lending too much credence to the news from Paris:

> You're right not to trouble yourself overmuch on account of all the noise being made over the Dreyfus Affair. For the moment, it's nothing more than a few small-time muckrakers, but under the cover of this affair, a second *Seize Mai* is in the offing, a coup d'état of the clerics and a coup d'état of the army; it remains to be seen how the elections will play out. Unfortunately the man of the street doesn't grasp the least of it. He has a sense that a social struggle against Capital is unfolding without worrying over who will be beaten; he has no love for the Jewish bank, and for good reason, but he takes a shine to the Catholic bank, which is idiotic.[53]

Pissarro was watching the streets closely, attentive to murmurings from below, straining to read the wind however it blew: By the third of February, his appraisal had begun to shift just slightly—it now seemed, he thought, that the masses were no longer such dupes as to support a coup d'état, although it remained inevitable (indeed, it *was* inevitable) that Zola would be found guilty:

> Naturally, everything has ground to a halt; there's too much going on to remain focused on art. There seems now to be a bit of a détente, though, and one begins to reflect. I do not believe Zola will be acquitted, though, it would be extraordinary were twelve jurors to be able to see their way clear in this affair. It takes one's breath away to hear the reasoning of those who are talking about it; the *Indépendants* [i.e. the Neoimpressionists] are about the only ones to see things properly, but they're the minority; thankfully the bedrock of the population hasn't been swept up yet, one can only hope that it will see clearly where the path leads.[54]

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[53] CP to LP, 27 Jan. 1898; *BHIV*, 441: "Tu as raison de ne pas trop te troubler pour tout le tapage que l'on fait à propos de l'Affaire Dreyfus. Pour l'instant, il n'y a que des petits braillards, mais sous cette affaire il y a un second Seize Mai qui se prépare, un coup d'état clérical et un coup d'état de l'armée, reste à savoir comment se feront les élections. Malheureusement le peuple n'y voit plus goutte. Il se doute qu'il y a une lutte sociale contre le Capital sans se préoccuper qui sera vaincu; il n'aime pas la banque juive avec raison, mais il a des faiblesses pour la banque catholique ce qui est idiot."

[54] CP to LP, 3 Feb. 1898; *BHIV*, 446: "Naturellement, tout est arrêté, on est trop excité pour s'occuper d'art. Cependant il me semble qu'il y a un peu de détente, on commence à réfléchir. Cependant je ne crois pas que Zola sera acquitté, ce serait extraordinaire que douze jurés vissent clair dans cette affaire. On est abasourdi par le raisonnement de ceux qui en parlent, il n'y a guère que les Indépendants qui voient juste, mais c'est la minorité, heureusement que le fond du peuple n'a l'air de s'en émouvoir, on peut espérer qu'il

A week later, however, Pissarro had come back around to pessimism, despairing over the fate of France in an anguished letter to Lucien, and wondering how art could continue to limp on under conditions of such universal bankruptcy:

> Poor France! Who could have imagined this nation, after so many revolutions, enslaved by the clergy as in Spain! It's a slippery slope. And now I see that you are right to stay in England, where you can expect a little more justice and common sense. I fear the end has come. There will be nothing left but the Symbolists. Can you see art represented by Schuffenecker?[55]

Art, like politics, would be left to rot in the twilight of the *fin-de-siècle*—this was the sum of Pissarro's pessimism, and the lower limit of his correspondence in the winter of 1898.

We should not let ourselves be deceived, then, by the painter's commitment to his work without distraction from his perch at the window, or by his reluctance—ultimately, his refusal—to jump headlong into the Dreyfusard fray. That he burnished, as ever, a deep hatred of the ruling order can be gleaned from a letter dashed off to Mirbeau on 16 January, following a performance of the novelist's five-act play *Les Mauvais Bergers* (a tale of striking factory workers massacred by the French army):

> Madame Pissarro and I thank you for the two tickets to *Mauvais Bergers*. It is obviously the most remarkable revolutionary piece that you have written. The emotion one feels in it is poignant, our interest is sustained from beginning to end.
>
> Admirable, the denouement, terrible!
>
> How was it that the official critics had questions about your conclusion!? There is no other ending than the end of the bourgeois class! How great and good it is.[56]

At the time this letter was written, 16 January, the backlash against Zola's exculpation had only just begun to be felt—in Paris, for example, the most violent bouts of rioting would not begin in earnest until the following night. Yet the jubilant tone of Pissarro's letter to Mirbeau suggests a mind capable, at minimum, of keeping separate track of the spectacle of politics and the specter of popular unrest. The breaking of bourgeois power was the real desideratum of Pissarro's anarchism, and from this perspective, the Affair

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verra clair où on le mène."

[55] CP to LP, 10 Feb. 1898; *BHIV*, 451: "Pauvre France! Qui aurait dit cela après tant de révolutions, la voilà inféodée aux cléricaus comme l'Espagne, la pente est glissante. C'est à présent que je vois que tu as bien raison de rester en Angleterre où, il faut espérer, on aura un peu plus de justice et do bon sens. Ici c'est fini, je le crains, il n'y aura plus que les symbolists! Vois-tu l'art représenté par Schuffenecker?"

[56] CP to Octave Mirbeau, 16 Jan. 1898; *BHIV*, 434: "Madame Pissarro et moi vous remercions des deux entrées aux *Mauvais Bergers*. C'est évidemment la plus remarquable pièce révolutionnaire que l'on ait faite. L'émotion que l'on en resent est poignante, l'intérêt se soutient du commencement à la fin.

Admirable, le dénouement, terrible!

Comment des critiques autorisés ont-ils pu demander la conclusion! Il n'y en a pas d'autre que c'est la fin de la classe bourgeoise! C'est beau et grand."

was bound to be a massive diversion, and ultimately a hoax, no matter which side prevailed. (On this score, it was surely meaningful that Pissarro did not tell Lucien whether or not he had signed Monet's petition. Probably he had—Mirbeau's encouragement would have been meaningful, especially given their common anarchism; but Monet's exhortations alone were unlikely to have changed his mind.) The picture that emerges from Pissarro's correspondence is as depressing as it is familiar; for the Affair was a crisis of the republic in which the underclass had no genuine stake, and none but the most cynically opportunistic champion.

In any case, Pissarro could ill afford to give time to activism during his stay at the Hôtel du Louvre: Unlike Monet or Mirbeau, who were both wealthy men in 1898, there was simply no financial floor for Pissarro to fall back upon, and no choice but to keep his head down, pushing forward with his work on the *Avenues* series, for which he had already paid through the nose in hotel bills. The vigil at the window had therefore to continue; he was, as he remarked to his doctor a few years later, "a prisoner, chained to my window as always."[57]

I am obliged, despite my own preoccupations, to work at my window, as if nothing were going on. But how? Judging by the results, not easily. We know that Pissarro had arrived at a fairly standard operating procedure for serial projects by the time it came to painting the *Boulevards* and *Avenues*—a method first tested in Rouen in 1896, which involved working between eight to ten pre-stretched canvases, moving from one to the next as light and weather effects permitted.[58] In 1897, this procedure had required subtle modification: It is clear, I have been arguing, that Pissarro worked sequentially more than serially, groping from first trials—the early *effets d'hiver*—toward the triumph of *Boulevard Montmartre, après-midi, soleil*.

By the end of the *Boulevards* campaign, as I have been arguing, Pissarro had attained a far clearer sense of his object—of Paris—and a keener notion of the actual power-structure governing the street and its subjects. In the *Avenues* series, there was to be no reversal of course—in other words, no question of representing the roadbed in long, fluid brushstrokes, or planting stock figures of bourgeois autonomy along the foregroun margins. By the same token, however, the sharpening of Pissarro's senses meant that the mystery of the boulevard, and the rush of pictorial discovery, was now lost, or at least sharply diminished; the struggle of the previous year had led him to the brink of

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[57] Letter from CP to M. Parenteau, 26 Jan. 1899, sold at Bloomsbury Auctions, *English and Continental Letters*, 31 March 2015, Lot 0154: "[J]'aurais bien voulu aller vous souhaiter tout espèce de prospérité et de bons souhaits, mais je suis prisonnier, enchainé à ma fenêtre comme tous les ans à pareil époque..." The metaphor was apt: Pissarro was a prisoner indeed, not only to his aging body, which had forced him to work indoors, but also to Durand-Ruel and the art market.

[58] Joachim Pissarro, "Pissarro's Series: Conception, Realisation and Interpretation," in *The Impressionist in the City*, xlvii-xix.

disillusionment, and it would be difficult, if not wholly impossible, to put the genie back in the bottle—to will the reenchantment of the street, reanimating the boulevardier's corpse.

The paintings of 1898 suffer, to my eye, from this stripping-away of illusions. As a group, they are colder in tone and attitude, surer in their sense of the crowd's atomization, and more pessimistic concerning the prospect of freedom at ground level. As landscapes, the *Avenues* are predominantly wastelands, more radically dehumanized than anything Pissarro had done in the year before; the scale of things is smaller-than-life, and the painter's look unsparing in its examination of the territory, as if interrogating the grounds of an ant colony more than a city of his countrymen. Even under overcast weather, the light of Pissarro's skies scours the floor of the street with a totalizing completeness, sparing nothing (standing in shadow makes no difference). The landscapification of the street is still a matter of edges and limits; but the edges of things are now scrupulously clean, and drawn with Haussmannian precision—an architecture of walls, curbs, façades, and awnings; and, too, an apparatus of law, which no one would dream of disobeying.

These remarks beg to be tied down to a representative example—a difficult task, admittedly, as the *Avenues* are more genuinely serial than the *Boulevards*, offering little in the way of a narrative arc from beginning to end. (In fact, we shall come to find Pissarro beating a retreat in the last of his *Avenues*, recoiling from his own calcified procedure, and returning to first principles.) My case study is a canvas in Philadelphia, *L'Avenue de l'Opéra, soleil du matin* [**Fig. 20**], which I reckon to have been made by or before the halfway mark of Pissarro's campaign.

The family resemblance of the Philadelphia *Avenue* with its *Boulevard* predecessors should be clear: again, Pissarro provides a disembodied vista overlooking the expanse of pavement, pushing the city's framing architecture to the edges. Yet the vantage of the *Avenues* is noticeably more elevated than that of the *Boulevards* series—higher by a factor of at least a story, aligning the apex of vision with the upper balcony of Garnier's opera house (the same balcony from which the punch-drunk members of the Club de l'Opéra tossed confetti at the crowds during the Marche du Boeuf Gras). And this heightened elevation of Pissarro's standpoint goes along with the overall hardening of the distance between the painter and his *motif* in the *Avenues* series*:* Not only is the Avenue de l'Opéra visibly distant from the viewer's standpoint, buffered by the expanse of the Place du Théâtre Français, the picture concatenates this distancing-effect in a set of binary relations, playing the plaza *against* the avenue, and flatness *against* perspectival depth. As seen in contemporary photographs [**Fig. 21**], the apartment blocks bracketing the Avenue de l'Opéra were arranged nearly perpendicular to one another, compressing the oval-shaped plaza into the space of a wedge, like the bindings of an open book. In Pissarro's handling, however, the bindings has been splayed apart, and made into the wings of a theater. Notice, for example, how the two apartment blocks on either side of the Place du Théâtre Français appear neatly parallel with one another (although not quite aligned with the framing edges of the picture: the apartment block at right seems just a hair lower—nearer to our vantage—than its counterpart); and ditto for the two traffic circles and their attendant satellites, which, if not quite parallel, nonetheless arrange

themselves nicely with the picture's lower edge.

It is tempting to see the thrust of Pissarro's space-manipulations in *L'Avenue de l'Opéra, soleil du matin* as mirroring the symbolic order—the contest of metaphors—at issue in this particular node in the urban system. Constructed over the late 1860s and early 1870s, the Place du Théâtre Français served as a sort of hinge between two regimes of urban modernization, linking the old Paris of Palais Royal and the Louvre to the new Paris of the *deuxième réseau*. From the perspective of Baron Haussmann, it was equally important that the plaza should provide a theatrical setting, staging the pedestrian's first glimpse of Garnier's opera house—to which end the Avenue had been designed without the usual row of tree plantings, so as not to impede this all-important view.

If the purpose of Pissarro's manipulations was to theatricalize the plaza, and to set the stage-space of the foreground (really, the middle ground) off against the sluice-like Avenue in the background, the subject of this intervention—this theatricalization—was not at all the Ur-boulevardiers of the Rue de Rivoli, much less the *incroyables* of the Tuileries, but rather, and squarely, the post-Haussmannian crowd—the pedestrian masses, which is now represented in much finer, more personalized detail than in the *Boulevards*. Granted, figuration is at best a perfunctory affair in *L'Avenue de l'Opéra, soleil du matin*, and the figures in question are miniature (again, the metaphor of the petri dish presents itself); but even so, the social texture submits itself easily to interpretation. Take the passage in the bottom left, for example, where we see a grouping of three figures milling about a passing wagon [**Fig. 22**]: To the left, a worker might be ambling in the direction of a traffic circle, his white smock forming a stiff triangle above stick-like legs, with a woolen cap to ward against the cold of an unheated worksite; whereas, across the other side of the wagon, two women, both garishly dressed, have come to loiter in the roadway, the one in red facing the wagoner, her companion looking askance. Of course, there is a definiteness to my description that the painting lacks; but the grouping does hang together as such, and there is no doubt that Pissarro wished to set into motion the viewer's social intelligence—forcing questions (the old modernist questions) about the selling of labor-power, including the powers of seduction; and moreover, about the outwardness—the externality, and therefore the malleability—of the markers of social class, and the role of the street as a theater of self-estrangement, a universe of poses.

It is just that the questions resolve themselves as soon as they are asked: the figures of modernity in *L'Avenue de l'Opéra, soleil du matin* belong fully to their wasteland, and no one's claim to ambiguity—no one's claim to an identity, or to an interiority, apart from the landscape's outwardness—holds water anymore. The spell of circulation is totalizing: the particulate matter of street traffic (pedestrian and vehicular alike) drifts across the smooth surface of the plaza, clinging to its hard edges like dust on a hardwood floor. The morning sun is already high in the sky—not the falling comet of anarchism, but the daystar of disenchantment. The hour is secular, in other words; the old redoubts of uncertainty and obduracy have been disinfected—swept clean, disenchanted. The inwardness of the peasant woman, hesitating at the edge of the cabbage patch, has no place here; for the inward or the ambiguous would require some kind of genuine margin in the city—a corner of darkness, a sliver of doubt—where none appeared forthcoming.

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Taken individually, the *Avenues* are colder, brighter, and more clinical than anything Pissarro had done previously. As a group, however, the series bears signs of restlessness, as if the painter remained uncertain whether he had really solved the problem at hand: In Pissarro's correspondence with the family, the margin of uncertainty about the *Avenues* seems just a bit wider than usual: for example, on the fifth of March, we find him boasting to Julie of having knocked out an *effet de neige* in a single sitting, a version now in the Pushkin Museum [**Fig. 23**]; however, a few weeks later he writes to his daughter, Cocotte, to say that he had only just been able to finish the Pushkin painting, along with another *effet de neige* as well, thanks to a late-winter squall.[59] Over the course of the series, we see him trying at different formats, painting three vertical views of the Rue Saint-Honoré, a street off to the left side of the plaza [**Fig. 24**]; and, most of all, we find him struggling to determine how to frame the Avenue de l'Opéra and the Place du Théâtre Français in the composition—should the latter be included as a repoussoir? or cropped out entirely? And to what degree should the avenue be allowed to dominate the view? Would it be necessary to hedge against its 'enfilade effect,' mobilizing the Comédie Française as counter-weight, as in *La Place du Théâtre-Français et l'avenue de l'Opéra, hiver, effet de soleil* [**Fig. 25**]? What was the real subject of the series, anyway? The avenue or the plaza? The flat plane of the surface or the deep dive into the background? The poor *piéton* or the private coach?

I am not certain that Pissarro ever found answers for these questions. But I am sure that he asked them—privately, of course. For Pissarro was not the sort of painter—nor the sort of father—to air the train of his self-doubt in letters to his adult children. That he nevertheless came to doubt, or at least to question, his sense of the street and its representation in the winter of 1898 seems to me the implication of the *Avenues*, with their flailing toward all ideas and none.

It is also the gist of a remarkably candid self-portrait (one of only four Pissarro made during his lifetime) painted during the first weeks of his stay at the Hôtel du Louvre [**Fig. 26** There is no question as to the mood of the self-portrait: The painter stands in three-quarters profile before his easel, his posture slackened into a hangdog slouch, his expression—indeed, his entire face—deflated. Worked up in an uncharacteristically gelatinous impasto, Pissarro features are pallid and sallow: the aquiline crook of his nose has been reduced to matte flatness, and his eyes, sunken into the deep-circled sockets of a

[59] CP to Julie Pissarro, 5 Mar. 1898; *BHIV*, 456: "Ce matin, j'ai fait un effet de neige, toile de vingt-cinq en une fois… Je crois qu'il est réussi, j'en suis très content, la toile était préparée, mais je l'ai repeint d'un bout à l'autre dans une séance!!...aussi je me répose."; and CP to Cocotte Pissarro, 26 Mar. 1898; *BHIV*, 463: "J'ai eu aussi de la neige à Paris, et ce matin cela retombe en plein, j'ai pu finir mes deux effets de neige. Je n'ai plus que trois effets de soleil qui traînent en longueur."

tired face, partly hidden behind a pair of half-moon spectacles. The infection of his tear duct is angry and red, painted in a malevolent whorl. As best we can tell, Pissarro was never able (or willing) to bring the picture to completion: Dark blue contours toward the picture's bottom edge suggest phantom edges of the painter's heavy cloak, where Pissarro must have equivocated about his placement in the room, perhaps worrying over whether he should not loom a bit larger in comparison to his surroundings. Other aspects of his person—not incidental ones—are left unfinished as well: the hand that holds up the thin sliver of a palette is more a crude red claw than a palpating fist, and emerges from a phantom sleeve (the other hand—the painting hand—is left entirely out of frame). Still, even in its incompleteness, the *Self-Portrait* furnishes a workable idea of Pissarro's constitution in the moment of the *Avenues* series: it is hardly the image, as one commentator puts it, of a "bent but indefatigable old man" in command of his materials, painting a scene from the window that was "anything but grim."[60] The painting begs comparison with a photograph taken at Eragny in 1895, also a kind of self-portrait, in which Pissarro stands proudly with his portable easel, confidently presiding over both canvas and landscape [**Fig. 27**]—an image of the artist in his element and on his mettle. By contrast, the *Self-Portrait* of 1898 shows a man badly out of joint with his surroundings: The window above Pissarro's shoulder looms uncomfortably high, and the Haussmannian façade across the way presses claustrophobically near (in reality, it would have faced the painter from across the far side of the Place du Théâtre Français). Even the paint itself seems to conspire against Pissarro: the encrustation of his beard and smoke-stained moustache seem almost to bury the face below, and the blue-black beret hangs flaccid atop his head, begging an obvious sort of comparison with the stiff-brimmed hat worn in the Éragny photograph. Needless to say, it is hardly the image of an artist capable of effusion about his charge: *"It's going to be beautiful work! … it's the modern in full!!!"*

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[60] Linda Nochlin, "Camille Pissarro: the unassuming eye," *Studies on Camille Pissarro* (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), 13: "In the last years of his life, a bent but indefatigable old man with a prophet's beard and ailing eyes, he returns to the deep perspectives and apparently spontaneous perceptions characteristic of the Pontoise landscapes of the 1870s, but this time, chooses to immerse himself in the variegated motifs offered by the boulevards and avenues of Paris. How little sense there is of the grimness of urban reality in these panoramas, viewed, generally rather distantly, from the height of a hotel window! It is not that the painter has avoided the issue, it is just that what he sees before him is anything but grim. 'Ce n'est peut-être très esthétique,' he writes to Lucien near the turn of the century, 'mais je suis enchanté de pouvoir essayer de faire ces rues de Paris que l'on a l'habitude de dire laides, mais qui sont si argentées, si lumineuses et si vivantes…. C'est [le] modern en plein!' Allées of trees are now replaced by vistas of stone façades, peasants by pedestrians, hedgerows by carriages, cabbage fields by cobblestones, or, at times, nature is permitted to intrude, mingle with, enrich the cityscape."

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It is tempting to think that Pissarro grasped on some level the difficult straits toward which the *Avenues* were heading; of course, we shall never know what he thought in the moment.[61] Yet there is no doubting that that something did begin to change in the final weeks of his stay at the Grand Hôtel du Louvre, as the painter grew increasingly desperate to bring the series to an end—a point underlined in several letters, which suggest a growing concern with the sluggish pace of progress. As with the *Boulevards*, Pissarro had saved his large-format *effets de soleil* for the final weeks of his stay; and once again, the sun refused to shine.

We know that there were three *effets de soleil* still in process by late March, one of which Pissarro singled out as a source of difficulty, begging out of a meeting with Durand-Ruel on 21 March in order to keep working at an "*effet de soleil couchant*."[62] Eventually, he must have wrestled the painting to completion, since a size-thirty canvas titled *Place du Théâtre Français, effet de soleil couchant* is listed in a shipping manifest sent to the gallery at the end of April.[63] However, no picture in the *Avenues* series as we now know it corresponds to this description: no painting of the plaza under crepuscular skies, and none that retains in its title the suffix, *effet de soleil couchant*.[64]

My proposal is this: that the painting originally labeled a 'sunset effect' is in fact—indeed, it can only have been—the version of *Place du Théâtre Français* now at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and which the painter's catalogue raisonné records as *Place du Théâtre Français, les omnibus* [**Fig. 28**]. For one thing, this canvas was by far most densely worked of the series, and bears all the telltale marks of a torturous gestation: its surface has been worked and reworked, especially in the upper left corner, where brush-marks verge on incoherence, and also in the passage where the tree branches screen over the sidewalk beyond, an equally intractable moment in a picture rife with scumbled over-painting. Part of the unusual density (unusual in the context of the other *Avenues*, I mean) of surface in the LACMA canvas has to do with Pissarro's decision, probably late in the process, to paint over much of the picture's first state, especially the roadbed of the plaza (also the sidewalk plateau to the right), in a layer of pale beiges and cosmetic pinks, applied in a welter of *taches*. The evidence of this change is unambiguous from close-to: particularly along the canvas's bottom edge [**Fig. 29**], one can still make out the earlier state of the street, its surface an acidic, yellow-tinged paste,

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[61] Appraising the series toward the end of his stay, the most Pissarro could say was that "il y en a deux ou trois [canvases] qui me paraissent assez réussis." See CP to LP, 11 April 1898; *BHIV*, 469.

[62] CP to Paul Durand-Ruel, 21 Mar. 1898; *BHIV*, 461.

[63] CP to Paul Durand-Ruel, 25 Apr. 1898; *BHIV*, 475.

[64] On the significance of the setting sun (as a motif, I mean) for Pissarro in the early 1890s, especially vis-à-vis Monet's *Grainstacks*, see Clark, "We Field-Women," 112-13.

laid on more evenly and smoothly than the in the final state. Held in the mind's eye, the tonality of the sub-layer chimes with the otherwise incongruous palette of Pissarro's figures (vehicular and pedestrian), which have been picked out in purplish blue, ochre, and acrid green—a range of tones visibly at odds with the lighter, less lugubrious, cast of the over-painting, but right at home in an *effet de soleil couchant*. Then, too, along the sidewalk plateau at right, beneath the stand of plane trees, one has a vague (but nonetheless definite) sense that Pissarro has tried to homogenize what had previously been a field of mottled, blue-tinged shadows—hence the subtle halo surrounding the newspaper reader standing alongside the omnibus station, and even more visibly, that of the couple directly to his left—the two promenading bourgeois in frock coat and red-feathered hat.

All of which is to suggest that *Place du Théâtre Français, les omnibus* must have at some point veered from its intended course as an *effet de soleil couchant*, and for reasons we can only guess at. Perhaps it was simply a matter of the interminably cloudy weather, which would have made the kind of sour yellow light Pissarro seems initially to have wanted to capture particularly fugitive; or perhaps there were deeper currents at play. In any case, we know that the three *effets de soleil* continued to bedevil Pissarro until the very last; and my instinct tells me that it was the LACMA canvas in particular which prolonged his imprisonment at the window, forcing him to work and re-work the surface up until the bitter end.

The question remains why Pissarro decided that his original motif had to be hammered into something altogether different, and what this difference amounted to in the end. Any description of the final state of *Place du Théâtre Français, les omnibus* painting is bound to make hay with the upper left corner, where the traffic becomes weirdly miniature, the carriages falling out of scale—out of joint—with their counterparts at right. Terms like 'flatness' and 'surface-orientation' come quickly to mind; it is tempting to think of the painting's turning-point as a moment of levelling—a decision to do away with the signifiers of depth and deepness, getting rid of the Avenue de l'Opéra entirely and homogenizing the surface of the street, bringing the whole expanse of the plaza in alignment with the picture plane. On some level, too, it is tempting to read into this dispersal of incident from depth to surface an even more dark-sighted account of the social consequences modernization than in the previous *Avenues*—a view of the city as gearworks of mass alienation: a space (rather, a non-place) of spectacle in precisely Debord's sense of the term.

This is the just sort of reading I shall want to resist. For one thing, it seems to me that other, more contradictory, terms might be applied just as readily to the passage in question—the strip of ten or so inches running up the left edge of the canvas—which have nothing whatsoever to do with flatness, least of all in its modernist valence: the ground plane lurches and tilts as the eye rises from bottom to top, dispersing almost to the point of non-existence; but the tilting and lurching hardly brings the traffic closer, closing the gap between surface and depth—to the contrary, the plaza becomes increasingly irreal and mirage-like, more dreamworld than literal, material surface, as it nears the unseen mouth of the Avenue de l'Opéra. In any case, the fact that the Avenue cannot be seen

does not mean its presence is not felt: like the nozzle of a vacuum, Haussmann's enfilade exerts a suction force along the picture's top edge, drawing the particulate matter of the painting toward the brink of dissolution. In other words, there is a danger in overestimating the impact of Pissarro's over-painting of the picture surface, as if the picture's point had been to ratchet up the alien-effect of the previous months' work—for the surface is barely unified; indeed, it only just manages to hang together, if at all. The world remains a non-world, and the street, at best a disorderly, unaccountable unity; but it is hard to be convinced by the spell of its homogenization. *Things cannot go on this way*.

Let me reiterate this last point: The bonds of separation are not broken in *Place du Théâtre Français, les omnibus*. Pissarro's idea of the city has not changed, and the spectacle continues to hold fast: the crowd remains atomized, each unit preoccupied with its own business, with no figure of resistance—no crowd of demonstrators, pro- or anti-Dreyfusard—emerging from the woodwork in protest. Yet the margin around each subject appears subtly wider and thicker; there is more space allowed for conscious decision-making (although not quite enough for self-consciousness in the vein of *Le Champ de chou à Pontoise*); the crowd is unorganized, isolated, but its subjects have begun to converse—perhaps even conspire—along the edge of the street, taking decisions about whether and how to strike out into the plaza, or whether, instead, to remain planted on the sidewalk plateau, a refuge of pedestrian security in an otherwise nonsensical surround, from which vantage the city—the streets, the traffic, the whole *grand guignol* of modern life—begins to take on a somewhat unreal, unbelievable aspect. A rift seems on the verge of opening up in the landscape, its fault-line marked by the shift in tone from fore- to middle-ground, tracing a diagonal line from the nose of one of the omnibus draft-horses down to the picture's bottom edge. It is tempting to see the figure in blue and red—the lone person standing stock-still on the lighter side of the diagonal (but a light that casts no shadows)—as a municipal policeman, or even a *garde républicaine*, come to throw his flimsy weight around. Or perhaps it is a child, a teenager, playing the cop; or perhaps someone else entirely. In any case, it is hard to see how this figure will not be crushed, the way things are going. And that, again, strikes me as the picture's overall attitude: its sense of the city as something untenable, impossible—an order that cannot last, not indefinitely. Somehow, for good or ill, another order will have to be made.

Near the beginning of the chapter, I mentioned that Pissarro had already painted the Paris streets prior to the *Boulevards* campaign: In fact, between early January and mid-February 1893, he undertook a mini-series, or half-series, while visiting the capital on business, staying for a fortnight at the Hôtel-Restaurant Garnier, just across the street from Gare Saint-Lazare. There was nothing impressive about these lodgings—the rooms were cheap (always a key factor for Pissarro) and proximate to the train line servicing Lower Normandy, including Gisors, a town a short carriage ride from Eragny—except for the view, which happened to be unusually good, affording a genuine panorama of the surrounding streets, sweeping from the entry courtyard of the Gare Saint-Lazare across to

the Place du Havre, where the Rue du Havre emptied out into a delta-shaped traffic plaza.[65]

In 1893, and again in 1897, Pissarro made several views of Place Saint-Lazare, one of which, *Place du Havre, l'omnibus, effet de soleil* [**Fig. 30**], immediately suggests itself as a prototype of the LACMA canvas. Indeed, the resemblance is quite striking—it is roughly the same omnibus, for example, that we see in both canvases; and the same carter, hauling his colorful load; and even the same taxi cab in the immediate foreground, led by the same top-hatted coachman. Most of all, however, it is a sense of *space* that the paintings share in common—a sense of the flat plane of the plaza beginning to buckle at the edges, and of the coherence of the street falling precipitously apart. Painted during the very first session at the Garnier, in January or February 1893, *Place du Havre, l'omnibus, effet de soleil* centers upon a traffic island, with its solitary lamppost, around which the whole mad fracas of the city seems to revolve. This was a theme near to something Caillebotte had done in 1880—his *Refuge, Boulevard Haussmann* [**Fig. 31**]—but in an entirely different vein: For Caillebotte, the pedestrian plateau is a microcosm of alienation, whereas for Pissarro, the plateau is a space of negotiation, and even tender mutuality—a terrain bustling with face-to-face commerce in spite of the surroundings: On one side of the island, a pair of women have set up an ad hoc greengrocer's stand, while on the other, a young girl sells flowers to a passerby. A couple might be linking arms, or else carrying on a conversation at the sidewalk's edge; other pedestrians drift along the margins of the circle; and in the street just beyond, the omnibus has stopped to let off its human cargo, the passengers exiting from the second-class seats of the upper deck, called the *impériale*, via the spiral stair at the rear of the bus.

Once seen, the similarity between *Place du Théâtre Français, les omnibus* and *Place du Havre, l'omnibus, effet de soleil* cannot easily be wished away. In order to get at the possible meaning of this kinship, something will have to be said—quickly, I realize—about the omnibuses as a Parisian (a Haussmannian) institution, and about their significance in the cultural imaginary of the late 1890s. To the generation raised under the Second Empire, the omnibuses represented the main form of mass transit in Paris: privately financed and operated from the very beginning, the omnibus system consisted of massive carriages pulled by teams of two or three horses, capable of hauling upwards of thirty to forty passengers at a time, which could be entered and exited at any point along the route, as well as at required stops and purpose-built wait stations. By the 1890s, however, the omnibuses were clearly earmarked for replacement by some form of post-equestrian conveyance; the system was painfully slow, and by all accounts, massively

[65] On this episode, Richard R. Brettell, "*Cat. 13 The Place du Havre, Paris, 1893: Curatorial Entry*," in *Pissarro Paintings and Works on Paper at the Art Institute of Chicago* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2015).

overtaxed.[66] In 1889, plans had been floated in the Conseil Municipal to expand the network of tramways further into the city center; and although this project was ultimately defeated (for fear that it might invite a flood-tide of proletarians from the *banlieue*), the Métro quickly surfaced as the obvious alternative, to be augmented in the 1910s by autobus service.[67]

All of which goes to highlight the antiquarian status of the omnibus system in the spring of 1898; for with the construction of the first Métro line slated to begin in a matter of months, the plodding carriages were not long for the world—and this death notice, in turn, lent to them a note of poetry. To the poet Gustave Kahn, for example, the omnibus was essentially Janus-faced, a miserable imposition (indeed, a "groaning working-class riot") for those who had to ride it daily, yet picturesque for the observer across the boulevard. The covered omnibus station—the subject of the LACMA *Place du Théâtre Français*, visible at far right beneath the plane trees—seemed to concentrate these miseries and pleasantries, bottling them up within the glazed walls of the waiting room:

> For those consigned to circulate ceaselessly into and out of the heart of Paris, all the way to the extremity of the city's laborious fingers—when all the crowd tries to hail the same carriage, and where families cruelly waste their precious time—you are the locus of sadness, and of unbearable waiting.
>
> But to the poet, resolute pedestrian, who never takes the omnibus, you are a place of gaudiness, at turns predictable and unpredictable, monotonous and a bit varied; and it is sometimes pleasurable to watch through your large, bright windows from the vantage of a café the people waiting and the people moving about and the people filing through on their fine bicycles.[68]

Kahn's disclaimer that he himself would never himself have been found riding the omnibus, is worth underlining. There was an exotic appeal to the omnibus, with its

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[66] On the attempted transition from omnibus transport to tramways, See Peter S. Soppelsa, *The Fragility of Modernity: Infrastructure and Everyday Life in Paris, 1870-1914* (Ph.D. diss, The University of Michigan, 2009), especially pp. 191-212.

[67] See Mathieu Flonneau, "Victoire modale, victoire morale? Le système automobile dans le jeu des transports publics parisiens au début du XXe siècle," *Histoire urbaine*, no. 33 (April 2012), 107-117.

[68] Gustave Kahn, "Le Bureau d'omnibus," in Octave Uzanne, ed., *Baduaderies parisiennes: Les Rassemblements: Physiologies de la rue* (Paris: Henri Floury, 1896), 8: "Tu es sans doute pour ceux qui doivent fluer et refluer sans cesse do coeur de Paris jusqu'à l'extrémité de ses doigts laborieux, le lieu triste d'attente pénible, quand toutes les foules sollicitent la même voiture, et que de familles y perdirent cruellement du temps précieux.

Mais pour le poète, piéton résolu, et qui ne prend jamais d'omnibus, tu es l'endroit criard, à la fois prévu et imprévu, monotone et peu varié, on l'on aime parfois s'asseoir en un café pour voir, par les larges fenêtres claires, des gens qui attendent et des gens qui s'agitent et ceux qui filent sur leurs fines bicyclettes."

randomized crowds of commuting workers thrown in with more affluent folk; but the wait station was also a site of rude awakenings, in which the rider, reduced to a mere number, encountered the forces of social abstraction in the raw. Riders wishing to transfer from one route to another were constrained to do so using a system of numbered tickets, called *numéros*, which set the order according to which the crowd queued to board the next available bus; and it was with this bureaucratic inflexibility in mind that Mirbeau satirized the omnibus system in a short story of 1896, "En attendant les omnibus," in which the author, straining against the clock to meet a colleague on the other side of the city, finds his effort delayed ad infinitum (typically tongue-in-cheek, the comedy begs to be quoted at some length):

> For an hour, on the boulevards, at a station, I waited for the Batignolles-Montparnasse omnibus. I had scheduled an urgent and important business meeting—a meeting, my word!—which it would have been disastrous for me to have missed, since my small fortune, acquired by hook and by crook, was on the line. But my means didn't permit me to hail a cab, and I wouldn't have allowed them to in any case. It would have been a waste. To think that there exist people, even heads of household, so eager to shell out for a cab fare, when Paris is covered from one end to the other in omnibus lines, and well! it hardly suggests a high-minded idea of domestic virtues.
>
> And so I waited for the omnibus. And I waited fully respectful of all the administrative regulations, fully submitted to all forms of authority, working hard to restrain my stirrings of impatience, and to silence these revolts, obviously atavistic, which, over the hour I had waited, commenced once more to rumble within me, barbarous vestiges of which it was embarrassing that republican civilization, no less than the diligent practice of universal suffrage, had not yet in any way abolished. Yes, I worked hard to silence these revolts: don't think for a moment that I am anything other than that inexpressible, that ovine and bovine comedic person—go on! go on! laugh at yourselves!—that we call a brave voter, an honest French taxpayer, and that France, which possesses of this biped the most perfect examples, is so justifiably proud to demonstrate before turbulent foreigners.
>
> And so I waited for the omnibus, having been given the number 364,998, a lovely number, is it not? and thanks to which I risked, were I to persevere in waiting—and persevere I did, quite proudly—, arriving at my meeting in a month or two. With the admirable system of the *Compagnies de transports parisiens*, which transport just barely three in every hundred persons who wish to be transported, we have seen many surprising things. We often see the following: the streets where one is trying to get to, demolished and reconstructed in the time it takes to wait at the station, and so completely that, when one arrives at last, the streets are no longer recognizable, nor the people, the latter having taken the time either to die of long-suffered sicknesses, or to make their fortune or to go bankrupt, and thereby to retire to the countryside, equally rich and happy, just as it ought to be!
>
> And so I waited for the omnibus. The rain fell heavy and cold, kicked up by a wind blowing from the northeast, penetrating the skin like a multitude of tiny glass needles. We stamped in the mud, speechlessly. Every ten minutes, an omnibus would

pass by, completely full. And the conductors from the platform, the drivers in their seats, and even the ticket-checkers behind their gates, were bent over laughing at the sight of this crowd rush in around the omnibus in a tidal wave, deceived every time, only to withdraw—ah, so pitiably!... You should hear with what mocking joy these powerful functionaries cry: *Full!* as if to better inform us of the ridiculousness of our situation. A handful of recriminations were launched in return, here and there, but so timidly as to warrant no mention at all. In sum, the attitude of the crowd was excellent, just as one would expect of good Frenchmen, voters and taxpayers all.

Just once, a tiny little pastry chef, carrying atop her head an enormous architecture of confections, descended from the *impériale*, and they began to call the numbers.

—Number 66!

Number 66! …And me, with number 364,998!

I went up to one of the ticket checkers, making sure to remove my hat, to bow and to scrape, to speak in low tones, so as to affirm my respect for his tasseled helmet, and asked:

—Monsieur Ticket Checker, my number is 364,998… Can I hope to catch the omnibus soon?

To which the ticket checker responded:

—Well! my good fellow, you can hope to catch it around Easter or Saint Trinity!

And, seeing as he had the nerve to make fun at me, I felt it was my obligation to cajole him with special pleading, adding:

—It's not a question of impatience, Monsieur Ticket Checker… it's that I have a very important meeting!... Which achieved nothing: I continued to wait, and to wait!…[69]

And wait… and wait… The story comes to a head, finally, when an irascible young man—the archetypal Mirbeau protagonist—attempts to force his way onto the *impériale*, refusing the ticket checker's entreaties to descend. Incensed, the crowd ultimately succeeds in tearing the young rebel down from the double-decker, subjecting him to a savage, blood-spattered beating:

—Seize him! Seize him! Throw him over the railing! demanded the crowd.

And the conductor, aided by the ticket checker and the inspector, aided by the

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[69] *Ibid.*: "J'avisai un contrôleur, et, la tête découverte, l'échine arquée, la bouche humble, afin de bien affirmer mon respect de la casquette galonnée, je lui demandai:

—Monsieur le contrôleur, j'ai le numéro 364,998… Puis-je espérer prendre bientôt l'omnibus?

À quoi le contrôleur répondit:

—Eh bien! mon petit père, vous pouvez espérer le prendre à Pâques ou à la Trinité…

Et, comme il avait l'air de se moquer de moi, je crus devoir pour l'amadouer et en manière d'excuses, ajouter:

—Ce n'est pas que je m'impatiente, monsieur le contrôleur… mais j'ai un rendez-vous très pressé!… Cela ne fait rien, j'attendrai, j'attendrai!…

voyagers on the *impériale*, in the interior, and on the platform, aided by the crowd, which had taken the omnibus by force, aided by twelve *gardiens de la paix* tipped off by the noise of the punch-up, threw himself courageously upon the young man, who in the next instant found himself tossed upon the pavement like a package, suffocated, ripped apart, blinded, torn to pieces and bloodstained.

In a frenzy, we applauded this act of justice, this conquest of right order according to revolutionary principles, and, having reestablished calm, with each of the voyagers back in his place, the omnibus took off, symbol of social peace, triumphant affirmation of the hierarchy…[70]

What Pissarro made of the omnibuses is more difficult to say. He had painted two further studies of the omnibus queue the previous year in a pair of views of Boulevard des Italiens—these were the two "terribly difficult" motifs mentioned in his letter to Georges of 13 February 1897. In the version now in the National Gallery of Art, in Washington D.C., *Boulevard des Italiens, matin, lumière de soleil* [**Fig. 32**], a crowd has gathered at the edge of the boulevard, wending its numerical way toward the rear staircase of the waiting omnibus. The light—rather, the shadow—is sober and even-toned, broken only by a few patches of sunlight at bottom right, which slant across the sidewalk, lighting up the edge of a newspaper kiosk: a moment of sudden, and surprising, illumination that clarifies the double-sidedness (the Janus face) of the painting. If the achievement of *Boulevard Montmartre, après-midi, soleil* had to do with unity, the theme here is division, and even stark opposition. The signifiers of bourgeois Paris are unmistakable: the rectilinear grid of Haussmannian façades (recall Pissarro's note to Georges: "it's almost a bird's eye view of the carriages, omnibuses, people between the tall trees, large houses in need of alignment, it's quite tough [c'est roide]!") has been brought parallel with the picture's upper edge, flatness begetting flatness in the old modernist way. Likewise, the street itself has become a linear channel, in which the carriages travel along as so many units in flux. Across the boulevard, a Morris column seems to hover in midair, its cylindrical shape reduced to a flat plane of Bonnardian ochre and grey; it takes a long second for the eye to adjust, and to realize that the sense of hovering flatness is the product—but a controlled, calculated product—of a passing carriage, the top of which has momentarily obscured the base of the column. It is to that side of the world—the

[70] *Ibid*.: "—Enlevez-le! Enlevez-le! Jetez-le par-dessus la galerie! ordonna la foule.

Et le conducteur aidé du contrôleur et de l'inspecteur, aidé des voyageurs de l'impériale, de l'intérieur et de la plate-forme, aidé de la foule, qui avait pris d'assaut l'omnibus, aidé de douze gardiens de la paix survenus au bruit de la bagarre, se rua courageusement sur la jeune homme, qui, en un instant, étouffé, déchiré, aveuglé, mis en pièces et tout sanglant, fut jeté comme un paquet sur le trottoir.

Nous applaudîmes frénétiquement à cet acte de justice, à cette conquête du règlement sur les principes révolutionnaires, et, le calme s'étant rétabli, les voyageurs ayant repris chacun sa place, l'omnibus s'en alla, symbole de la paix sociale, affirmation triomphante de la hiérarchie…"

groundless, atomizing part of the painting—to which the omnibuses belong: the crowd submitting itself to the ticket-checker's count stands at the threshold of abstraction. The light on the sidewalk is a last reminder of the world the would-be rider is constrained to leave behind.

In *Place du Théâtre Français, les omnibus*, Pissarro's subject is again the omnibus stand—in this case, a freestanding building located adjacent to the Comédie Française—and the queue at the sidewalk's edge. Yet the whole mood of the scene has changed: The riders no longer line up neatly in order, but instead drift toward the bus casually and in no particular order; indeed, it is hard to tell exactly who is queuing to ride and who is simlpy loitering on the plateau. The crowd does not strike me as a figure of submission-to-abstraction; nor, for that matter, does the logic of the omnibus seem obviously to contradict the order of the pedestrian world glimpsed along the sidewalk plateau. Rescued from condescension, Pissarro's riders figure something almost like a collective, and in the twentieth-century sense of the term: a group aggregated from isolated, randomized individuals, brought together by the very machinery of mass separation. It is not a utopian image, of course; yet there remains a poetry to this image of the street, and in precisely the sense described by Hazan's epigraph: a flickering into view of a restive, perturbable spirit—a mood of collective ease in disorder, and a determination not to let the fact of separation get too much under one's skin. "A certain gentleness" is how Hazan puts it, sketching the sense of Place de la Chapelle in the twenty-first century: *une certaine douceur*: a softening of the edges, and even a sweetness, in an otherwise impossible landscape. In Pissarro's plaza, too, one senses a note of *douceur*—not quite sweetness (at least, not saccharine-sweetness), but a modicum of breathing room opened up at the edge of the street and along the nodes of the mass-transit system, in which one can just glimpse the contours of a larger, more generalized sort of freedom: a hallucination of rupture. It is only a hallucination, a shimmering of the dust, of course; but it is something nonetheless.

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There remained one further view of the plaza yet to be finished, even after Pissarro had bundled off the rest of his *Avenues*—a canvas he would take with him to Eragny to complete in time for the June exhibition at Durand-Ruel. This was *La Place du Théâtre Français, les omnibus, printemps, soleil* [**Fig. 33**] (another of the Hermitage's Pissarros), the only one of the *Avenues* series to show the trees with their spring greenery. Shadows dapple the pavement of the plateau, and nature appears, unexpectedly, to have reterritorialized the epicenter of Haussmannian artifice. Again, the focus falls upon the omnibuses and their riders, who now look to have taken over: there is no city but that of the crowd—no sense whatsoever of the titanic maw of the Avenue de l'Opéra, much less the pressure of traffic in the plaza nearby. Token signs of Paris can still be picked out along the margins: the columnation of the Comédie Française marks the hard limit of the little world (are not the striped awnings a note of *douceur* in Hazan's sense?); yet its marginality is total, and decisive. The day has been won by the trees, a riot of greenery, each one slightly different: to the left, a burst of disorderly marks, which add up to a

foliage just slightly transparent, with branches and trunk visible at the core; to the right, a solid mass of greenery, laid on in a rhythmic hatchwork of dark greens and yellows. It is a world transformed—made right again. Things *can* go on, this way.

But it was a fiction: The plane trees adjacent to the Comédie Française did not yet have their summer foliage in late April, when Pissarro departed Paris for the countryside. The painting would have to have been refinished in the Eragny studio, painted from a different window, perhaps using the stand of trees at the edge of Pissarro's property as his model.

By way of a conclusion, let me bring on one last painting, *Les Jardin des Tuileries, après-midi d'hiver* [**Fig. 34**], from the *Tuileries* series of 1899. By the time he set to work on this canvas, painted from a room along the Rue de Rivoli, Pissarro's finances were beginning to stabilize at last: a group of collectors had begun to buy up his work in bulk, providing him with the much-needed leverage to improve his position in the market. Not surprisingly, the family mood had improved considerably with the paterfamilias' changing fortune; and politically, too, the Dreyfusards had consolidated their position at the moral center of the Republic, and would soon have a head of state to show for it in the person of Émile Loubet.

The painting of the Tuileries shows Pissarro returned to his comfort zone: The broad lawns and avenues soak in the afternoon sun, with the bulk of foot traffic through the gardens shunted to the left edge, wending here and there in long chains of pedestrians too distant and miniature to be surveyed in any detail. At the rear of the garden, the promenading crowd disappears under a far stand of trees, vanishing into dusty sunlight; and beuond, the hazy ridge of trees along the embankment truncates the caesura of the Seine, joining the Right Bank with the Left in a visual ellipsis. The *rus* and the *urbe* meet, finally, but with a thick buffer placed between them. Along the horizon, we can make out the shape of the Basilique Sainte-Clotilde, with the dome of the Assemblé Nationale silhouetted behind it; yet the gardens ultimately stand opposed to the monumentality of the city's architecture, asserting the primacy of the turf over and against the stony heights. The winter sun has begun to sink from its high place in the sky, marking the garden paths with long blue shadows; the sky is numinous, its dominion over the earth below, indubitable.

Modernity would make its mark on Pissarro's *Tuileries* series, but the mark was subtle, and contrived to be savored as a kind of visual syncopation—not a dialectical counter-blow, in other words. The mark is present in *Les Jardin des Tuileries, après-midi d'hiver*, although mostly in the negative sense: it would take a painstaking urban geographer to identify the source of the vapor—smoke? steam?—rising across the Seine as the worksite of the new Gare d'Orsay, one of several major infrastructural projects visited upon Paris in preparation for the Exposition Universelle. In a few weeks time, the skyline above the Seine would bristle with construction equipment; the window of opportunity to paint the horizon as seen in *Les Jardin des Tuileries, après-midi d'hiver* was therefore short-lived, and amounted to a chance to imagine one's way back to the moment of the garden's creation—back to the world of 1667, that is, when the outlines of

the Tuileries were first traced in the soil adjacent to the Louvre, more or less contemporary with Ruysdael's *Bleaching Fields at Haarlem*. The moment's brevity is fundamental to the picture's meaning, and to Pissarro's *Tuileries* series as a whole: Dark inchoate forces mass along the edges of the landscape, and the painter does his best to hold them at bay. Pissarro was an old man in 1899, but he was still nobody's fool: he knew the Paris of the Gare d'Orsay was not be paintable with the tools available to him, and did not try again to force the issue. He had battered enough against the city walls; it would now remain for others to take up nature's hammer—or else, as in the next chapter, to invent a new nature in compensation for the old.

CHAPTER TWO

PORTABLE HORIZON

Quietly the street shoves pain along.
Out of its gullet a yell sticks up.
Fat taxis and bony cabs
swell, stuck in its throat.
Its tubercular chest
is pedestrianed flat.

—VLADIMIR MAYAKOVSKY[71]

Near the center of Le Corbusier's book *Urbanisme* (1925), in chapter comprised of newspaper clippings, is a cartoon by humorist Marcel Arnac, titled "Le Piéton fautif," originally published in *Le Journal* on 16 December 1924 [**Fig. 35**]. The scene of Arnac's cartoon is set in the middle of a Paris boulevard, where an elderly man has been run over in a car accident, cleaved neatly in two—a clean blow, severing his lower from upper body, with the middle part nowhere in sight. A policeman, holding up a fragment of the victim, wonders aloud how he should write up the citation, since—here is the punch-line—"He's missing the part where he kept his papers!" The cop grins idiotically; bus passengers leer wide-eyed through the window-glass; even the motorists responsible for the accident taken an interest in this spectacle of dismemberment. 'At fault,' or 'culpable,' is one way of translating *fautif*. 'Faulty,' as in defective, like a broken appliance, is another.

Aspects of Arnac's scenario will strike a familiar chord. Once again, we confront the legacy of Haussmannization as a flattening and homogenizing of social space. The city is "pedestrianed flat," per Mayakovsky's epigraph, just as the wandering instincts of the *flâneur*, per Walter Benjamin, would soon be subsumed to "the monotonous, fascinating, constantly unrolling band of asphalt," and thus snuffed.[72] To fathom the gulf separating the inaugural years of Haussmannization from the situation of the 1920s, suffice it to compare Arnac's cartoon with an earlier image of the same genre: Honoré Daumier's caricature of "Le Nouveau Paris," published in *Le Boulevard* on 6 April 1862 [**Fig. 36**]. Although the impasse of the Haussmannized boulevard is the theme of Daumier's cartoon—with no small dose of sarcasm, its caption reads, "How good it is for people in a

[71] Vladimir Mayakovsky, "A Cloud in Trousers," in *Russian Poetry: The Modern Period*, eds. John Glad and Daniel Weissbrot (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1978), 15.
[72] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Michael Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 519.

hurry that we have widened the pathways of transportation [*les voies de communication*]"—the picture nonetheless remains wedded to a view of the street as a social space: the society of the sidewalk more than the boulevard itself is Daumier's main event. The spectator looks on from the curbside at a crowd of anxious bourgeois, the fracas of high-volume traffic unfolding in the background like a horrific mirage: blinkered hell-horses rush forward at full trot while omnibuses careen through billowing dust. The crowd's attention is directed at a lone man darting through the vehicular barrage; caught between two oncoming carriages, he seems half-frozen, half-bolting—his shoes barely scrape the surface of the pavement; he might be running or falling. As for *our* crowd, we remain affixed to the sidewalk, and to the firmament afforded by the pictorial ground. Notice the fusty bourgeois at left, who, fingering his pocket watch and prodding the ground with a tapered cane, seems wholly unmoved by the near-death spectacle unfolding only yards away, concerned only for the waste of his time. Compare him with the small child at right, the subject-in-training of Haussmannian spectacle: gripped by his guardian, the boy stares at the street as if from a shoreline, his gaze passing over the unsteady field, captivated by nothing in particular—a figure of distraction.

The difference between Daumier's and Arnac's cartoons, and between the street circa 1862 versus 1923, is glaring, and meaningfully so (the difference cannot be reduced to Daumier's obvious superiority as draftsman and observer of modern life). Whatever slim margin of ground-space had existed in Daumier's rendering of the boulevard has dissipated in Arnac's streetscape, wherein the figure can appear—indeed, can be figured at all—only two-dimensionally, relocated from the picture's depths to the surface-level of the page, congruent with the typesetter's plate. Granted, the policeman appears to stands erect, towering over the dismembered victim, but even he cannot claim a place *in* the picture; he rather stands at its threshold, his feet balanced on a horizontal line level with the wheels of passing cars, like a paper cutout. Foreground and background are two worlds apart, with litter hope of mediating their difference, except as slapstick. As for the sorry pedestrian, what remains of him is a parody of depth and death: the figure of the victim as sliced salami—a body unfit to circulate.

The history of the *piéton fautif* is far older than Haussmann or Napoleon III. In France, the vestiges of a national traffic code date to the late seventeenth century, when, aided by Jean-Baptiste Colbert's newly-conceived Ingénieurs des Ponts et Chaussées, Louis XIV began construction of a tentacular system of roads and canals, radiating outward from Paris to the far corners of the kingdom. As envisioned by the Sun King's chief engineer, Sébastien Prestre de Vauban, the circuits of sovereign communication were to function like the blood vessels in the body of State, an organism in which Paris was "what the heart is to this same body […] the principle of life, the source and seat of

natural warmth."[73] This novel 'organ' was to operate continuously, enabling essential foodstuffs and other necessities of social peace—including military personnel—to be ferried wherever the exigencies of governance demanded. Between 1705 and 1731 the legislative framework of Vauban's circulatory system was set in place, standardizing the methods of road construction, maintenance, and policing, and fixing the width of the roads, as well as the maximum weight of vehicular traffic. The laws enacted in the eighteenth century were of two kinds: On one hand, *disciplinary* ordinances, such as those proscribing, for example, "all rubble collectors, plowmen, wine growers, gardeners, and others from filling in the ditches and cutting down the embankments that line the major routes," or prohibiting the denizens of Paris from digging up its cobblestones, violators of which answered directly to a newly created traffic police[74]; on the other, a body of jurisprudence aimed at *controlling* the contact between wheel and road surface, thereby restricting the conditions of access to the sovereign domain.[75] For much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this latter category of laws centered on the technical specifications of carriage construction; a paradigmatic example being the restriction of narrow *jantes*, or wheel rims, the enlargement of which augmented the number of horses that could be attached to a cart or carriage, enabling far larger loads to be carried without excessively damaging the road surface. To reduce this complex legal history to a simple principle, we can observe that whereas disciplinary jurisprudence defended against external threats to the road system, the jurisprudence of control aimed to accelerate the speed of transport, thus favoring the growth of commercial shipping and other large-scale industries.[76]

The control of road traffic was overhauled on 30 May 1851, nine months prior to Louis-Napoleon's coup-d'état and two years before the appointment of Baron von Haussmann as Prefect of the Seine, with the passage of a law regulating traffic across the

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[73] S. de Vauban, *Oisivetés de M. de Vauban* (Paris: J. Corréard, 1843), 139. Quoted in Armand Mattelart, *The Invention of Communication*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996 [1994]), 8.

[74] M. Gauthier (architect, engineer, and inspector of the kingdom's routes, bridges, and roadways), *Traité de la construction des chemins* (Paris: Chez Laporte, 1778), quoted in Mattelart, *The Invention of Communication*, 9.

[75] I draw the distinction between discipline and control from Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," *October*, vol. 59 (Winter 1992), 3-7. For a more recent treatment, see Alexander R. Galloway, *Protocol, or How Control Exists After Decentralization* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004).

[76] For a contemporary study of these issues, see "Procès-verbaux des essays des chariots à larges jantes, faits d'après les orders de M. le préfet de la Seine-Inférièure" [27 September 1807], in Th. Ravinet, *Code des Ponts et Chaussées et des Mines, ou Collection complete des lois, arrêtés, décrets, ordonnances, réglemens et circulaires concernant le service des Ponts et Chaussées et des Mines*, tome 1 (Paris: Carilian-Goeury, 1829), 388-399.

much of the national transportation system. Bearing the official title, "Loi sur la police du roulage et des messageries publiques" (Law Governing the Policing of Traffic and of Public Messenger Services), this revision to the legal code placed additional controls on vehicle construction and outfitting, from the shape and dimensions of hubs, axles, and wheel surfacing to the placement and size of identification plaques and the number of horses permitted per carriage; it also removed older regulations, permitting "all vehicles, horse-drawn or not, that serve to transport people or commodities […] to circulate on national, departmental, and vicinal roads designated for *grande communiation* [travel over long distances], without any regulation of weight or of the size of wheel rims," thereby ending the dispute over wide or narrow *jantes*.[77] The following year, on 10 August 1852, the bourgeois Emperor issued an additional decree on traffic control, among the provisions of which was an article forbidding "any vehicle, horse-drawn or otherwise, from unnecessarily parking on public roads"—a vague prohibition, but which could be mobilized against any vehicle obstructing the flow of movement, even if only temporarily. Another article dictated: "When another vehicle approaches, all carters or drivers must move to the right, in such a manner as to leave half the street free."[78] Although these lines did little more than revise an earlier decree, according to which "[w]agoners, carters, and haulers [were] obligated to cede half of the roadway to vehicles belonging to, or conveying, travelers,"[79] they amounted to a sea change in the juridical conception of traffic. No longer did the legal code distinguish between different strata of traffic, whether fast or slow, horse-drawn or human-powered, long-distance or local; instead, all vehicles were considered as equivalent units of traffic, reduced to abstract quanta of movement and mass, with the barriers to their consistent flow removed far from the main arteries of commerce, lodged in the sub-network of vicinal roads, and in the hands of rural magistrates.

From a legal perspective—but from that perspective only—the roads of France had already attained their full degree of abstraction, or liquefaction, between 1851-52; after this point, the blockage of traffic flows would be discussed as a *contradiction* of the

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[77] Law of 30 May 1851, Title 1, Article 2. Reprinted in *Loi du 30 mai 1851 et règlement du 10 aout 1852 sur la police du roulage et des messageries publiques* (Paris: Léautey, 1893), 4-6. For a cursory overview of the law's impact, and, ultimately, its reform in 1954, see Anne Kletzlen, *L'automobile et la loi: Comment est né le code de la route* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000). A more complete treatment of the Law of 1851 can be found in Séverine Decreton, "La rue saisie par le droit: L'automobile et la réglementation juridique à la Belle Époque," in *La rue, lieu de sociabilité? Rencontres de la rue: Actes du colloque de Rouen, 16-19 Novembre 1994*, ed. Alain Lémenorel (Rouen: Publications de l'Université de Rouen, 1997), 123-132.

[78] Regulation of 10 August 1852, Title 1, Articles 9-10. Reprinted in *Loi du 30 mai 1851 et règlement du 10 aout 1852 sur la police du roulage et des messageries publiques*, 24.

[79] "Decret concernant les voitures publiques allant a destination fixe," Article 16. *Bulletin des lois de la République Française*, vol. 207, no. 4005. 28 August 1808.

normal, or normative, logic of transportation, rather than as the inevitable effect of competing social, commercial, and governmental interests, all vying for control of the roadway. Evidence of this paradigm shift from competition to contradiction can be found in the Decree of 10 March 1899, the first comprehensive regulation of automotive traffic in France. Whereas the legislation of 1851-52 sought to standardize the conditions of road traffic, but without governing that traffic directly, the Decree of 1899 acknowledged that certain behaviors, especially concerning speed, could not be controlled except through aggressive policing. The velocity of circulation on France's road system had not previously been an object of concern; the de facto limit of eight miles per hour, top speed for a cart-laden horse, was rarely exceeded. With the acceleration of the vehicular stock, however, a new species of regulation was necessary: the Decree of 1899 restricted motorists to a maximum of 20 km/hr in populated areas and 30 km/hr in the open countryside (Article X); and, more vaguely, required drivers to maintain "constant control of [their] speed at all times" (Article Y), a provision that gave magistrates wide leverage to prosecute drivers involved in accidents.[80]

This last point is crucial: Although accidents were frequent in Haussmann's boulevards, they rarely mounted an existential threat to the road system as a whole. With the advent of the automobile, however, the very fluidity of the road system became an obstacle to its continuity, forcing the legislation of 1851-52 to an impasse. On one hand, street traffic was stymied in absence of a mechanism to regulate, not merely the dimensions or outfitting of vehicles, but the *behavior* of individual drivers; in this regard, the automation of street traffic—that is, the employ of feedback loops and informational signals to diminish the risk of high-velocity and -volume circulation—marked an internal limit to the abstraction of road-space. On the other hand, the figure of the pedestrian, as an ineradicable vestige of the road's former status as social space, represented an external limit to abstraction; apart from direct intervention by the police, there existed few viable methods of controlling pedestrian behavior in a city renowned for insurrectionary violence. For the planners of Paris, the conflict between these two regulatory priorities—one disciplinary, the other punitive—would come to dominate the agenda of urbanism in the years to come.

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How does modernism come to grips with the loss of the street? This question looms small in Arnac's work—"Le piéton fautif" was a one-off gag, intended to be consumed as such—but large for Le Corbusier, in whose architecture and theoretical writings of the 1920s the sight of traffic was a leitmotif. Most famous is his preface to *Urbanisme*, a long anecdote of traffic along the Champs-Élysées, which locates the book's origins in the apocalyptic violence of the automobile:

[80] "Décret de 10 Mars 1899," *Bulletin des lois de la République Française*, série XII, tome LXIII, b. 2286, p. 696.

momentary ellipsis in the life of the big city, this calm, brought it home to me that I was getting carried away by the grandeur of my subject, carried away from reality.

October 1st arrived. At the Champs-Élysées, at the twilight hour of six o'clock, everything suddenly went mad. After the void, traffic returned with a vengeance. Each passing day accentuated this agitation. The moment we set foot past the door of our home, without transition, we find ourselves thrust into mortal danger: the cars speed by. Twenty years ago, when I was still a youth, the streets belonged to us: we sang there, we held conversations… the horse-drawn omnibus rolled softly by.

This October 1st 1924, at the Champs-Élysées, I participated in the emergence—the titanic renaissance—of the new spirit, which had been quieted by three months of vacation: traffic. Cars, cars, faster, faster! We're caught in its grasp, seized by enthusiasm, by joy. Not by enthusiasm for the sight of brilliant bodyworks sparkling under the spell of lights. But by the joy of power [*force*]. The candid and ingenious pleasure of being ensconced in power, in potency [*puissance*]. We partake of this potency in the street. We become a part of this society still in its infancy. We trust in this new society; it has not yet discovered the magnificent expression of its force. We believe in it.

Its power is like a torrent swollen by storms: a destructive fury. The city crumbles, the city can last no longer, the city can't go on. The city is too old. The torrent overflows its banks. It's thus a sort of cataclysm. It's absolutely anomalous: disequilibrium increases with each passing day.

The danger is now felt by all. Let us note in passing that in the span of several years, we have already forgotten the joy of living (the good secular joy of letting oneself be carried tranquilly by one's own legs); we take on the attitude of a hunted beast, the daily *sauve-qui-peut* [Le Corbusier's footnote: "This is precisely true; we risk our lives with each step. Suppose that your foot should slip, that you should fall out of weakness…"]; the sign has changed; the normal condition of existence is demolished, affected by the negative sign.

We propose timid remedies… You know of the puerile ardor that leads the inhabitants of a village, panic-stricken, to erect improvised roadblocks to stem the torrent swollen by the tempest, and which already sows destruction in its furious eddies…[81]

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[81] Le Corbusier, *Urbanisme* [1925] (Paris: Flammarion, 1995), ii-iii: "L'an dernier, je travaillais à ce livre dans le vide de l'été parisien. Cette carence momentanée de la vie de la grande ville, ce calme, finirent par me suggérer que je me laissais emporter par la grandeur du sujet, emporter au delà des réalités.

Arrive le 1er octobre. Au crépuscule de six heures aux Champs-Élysées, ce fut fou, tout d'un coup. Après le vide, la reprise en furie de la circulation. Puis chaque jour accentua d'avantage cette agitation. On sort de chez soi, et, la voûte passée, sans transition, nous voici tributaires de la mort: les autos passent. Vingt ans en arrière me

Taken at face value, this narrative would seem to position Le Corbusier in the role of demagogue, frightening the reader into assenting to a total transformation of the urban environment, as proffered in his *Plan Voisin* for the center of Paris, which had been unveiled in the autumn of 1925 at the Exposition des Arts Décoratifs. At the rhetorical level, however, the passage betrays an ambiguous relationship with urban traffic. On one hand, Le Corbusier plays on the reader's sense of imposture: far from mastering the deadly machine, the pedestrian becomes a "hunted beast," displaced from streets that were formerly sites of social intercourse ("we sang there, we held conversations"). Elsewhere, on the other hand, the architect seems to take his cue from F.T. Marinetti's *First Manifesto of Futurism*, citing the destructiveness of automotive traffic as a source of purification, or "potency"—having impregnated the city's defenses, the sudden onrush of cars must inevitably give rise to a new, fully motorized, society; at least, such is the author's promissory note. In one passage, a wave of cars seems to wash over the narrator, sowing in its wake the "joy of power"; yet in the next breath, this joyous force has become an unmanageable danger, threatening the city and its inhabitants with

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reportent à ma jeunesse d'étudiant; la chaussée nous appartenait: on y chantait, on y discourait… l'omnibus à chevaux roulait doucement.

Ce 1er octobre 1924, aux Champs-Élysées, on assiste à l'événement, à la renaissance titanesque de cette chose neuve, dont trois mois de vacances avaient brisé l'élan: la circulation. Des autos, des autos, vite, vite! L'on est poigné, l'enthousiasme nous saisirait, la joie. Non pas l'enthousiasme de voir luire, sous les jets des phares, les carrosseries brillantes. Mais la joie de la force. La candide et ingénue jouissance d'être au milieu de la force, de la puissance. On y participe à cette puissance. On fait partie de cette société dont point l'aube. On fait confiance à cette société neuve; elle trouvera la magnifique expression de sa force. On y croit.

Sa force est comme un torrent gonflé par les orages: une furie destructrice. La ville s'émiette, la ville ne peut plus durer, la ville ne va plus. La ville est trop vieille. Le torrent n'a pas de lit. Alors c'est une façon de catacysme. C'est une chose absolument anormale: le déséquilibre s'accroît chaque jour.

Le danger est maintenant ressenti par chacun. Notons en passant qu'en quelques années, déjà l'on a oublié la joie de vivre (la bonne joie séculaire de se laisser aller tranquillement sur ses jambes; on s'absorbe en une attitude de bête traquée, sauve-qui-peut quotidien [footnote: C'est exactement vrai; on risque sa vie à chaque pas. Supposez que votre pied glisse, qu'une faiblesse vous fasse choir…]; le signe à changé; le normal de l'existence est démoli, est affecté du signe négatif.

On propose des remèdes timides… Vous connaissez cette puérile ardeur que mettent les habitants du village à dresser des barrages improvisés dans la hâte et l'affolement, pour endiguer le torrent qui s'est gonflé sous la tempête et qui déjà roule la destruction dans ses remous furieux…" The paragraph trails off with this ellipsis, leaving the reader to imagine what sort of catastrophe might befall those cities that continue to fabricate merely temporary solutions to the traffic crisis.

annihilation. This ambiguity of attitudes extends to the *spatial* context of Le Corbusier's preface as well: at certain moments, we seem to drift freely through the mounting flow of cars, as if wading into the floodwaters; yet, at other, more sobering, moments, we stand transfixed at the threshold of the sidewalk, where the specter of instant death confronts us "without transition"—a key turn of phrase—awaiting us "[t]he moment we set foot past the door of our home."

Ultimately, I will want to test Le Corbusier's description of the 'torrential' street against the experience proffered by his own architecture. What was the lesson of the street, and of the *piéton fautif*, to an architect sensitive to the changing forces of urban modernization? What did it mean to locate the non-transition from building to sidewalk, and from sidewalk to pavement, at the center of his architectural practice?

But I am getting ahead of myself. For the moment, let me pose a more modest question of origins and influences. The state of road transportation in Paris during the early 1920s was indeed abominable for motorists and pedestrians alike; but few observers at the time would have agreed that congestion posed a problem *for architecture* per se. Only in the work of Eugène Hénard, an architect and planner for the Travaux de Paris, can we find comparable attention paid to traffic patterns as a matter of architectural concern; and although his proposals to modernize the circulatory system of the French capital, as collected and published in *Études sur les transformations de Paris* (1906), provided the inspiration for many of Le Corbusier's own interventions, from the plan of a "grand croissée" bisecting the city from East to West to the installment of traffic roundabouts at major intersections, Hénard never dreamed of demolition projects on the scale of the latter's *Plan Voisin*, which required razing some six hundred square acres of the city center. Where, then, and from whom, did Le Corbusier derive his image of traffic and its discontents? In relation to what—what discourse, what profession, what body of ideas—did he frame his solutions? How did the architect find his way to the street?

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In the spring of 1923, when Le Corbusier began work on the text of *Urbanisme*, the gulf separating the domain of architecture from the management of street traffic was glaringly evident. That year, two highly-publicized international meetings of planners were held more or less back-to-back: first, in May, the Association Internationale Permanente des Congrès de la Route (Permanent International Association of Road Congresses; AIPRC), which met in Seville to discuss matters related to traffic control; and then, at Strasbourg in June, the Congrès International d'Urbanisme et d'Hygiène Municipale, a conference sponsored by the Société Française d'Urbanistes (SFU), focusing on urbanization projects in the suburbs, colonies, and so-called *îlots insalubres* (impoverished zones of Paris designated for reconstruction). These two separate gatherings highlighted the professional division between architectural planning and traffic engineering in the immediate aftermath of World War I. Although founded at roughly the same moment, each organization represented widely divergent constituencies and programs. Headquartered in Paris, the AIPRC served as the coordinating body of a

global pool of road and traffic professionals: convening its first Congress in 1909, it forged a cross-Atlantic dialogue between European engineers and their American counterparts, who led the field in pioneering the use of signalization and signage.[82] For its part, the SFU emerged from within the orbit of the Musée Social, a Paris-based archive and advocacy organization devoted to improving urban "hygiene," a euphemism for the appalling squalor of working-class neighborhoods in a city dominated by real estate interests. Founded in 1911 by planners associated with the Musee, including Hénard, the SFU was broadly influenced by the English Garden City movement, advocating humane housing schemes and improved traffic access for the *îlots insalubres* (an effort that would ultimately be stymied by the real estate lobby).[83]

Le Corbusier belonged to neither constituency, strictly speaking: Born and raised in the Swiss Jura, he received his architectural training from a maverick arts-and-crafts revivalist, L'Eplattenier, before apprenticing under proto-modernists Auguste Perret and Peter Behrens. Through L'Eplattenier, Le Corbusier became converted to the anti-Haussmannian urbanism of Camillo Sitte's *Der Städtebau* (1899), a treatise on city planning that advocated winding pathways and semi-enclosed plazas over the linear geometry of the *grands boulevards*.[84] By the early 1920s, however, he had repudiated this youthful allegiance: having lauded Sitte's theories in his own unfinished treatise on city planning, *La Construction des villes* (1910/14), Le Corbusier switched to the opposite camp by war's end, applying an unyieldingly right-angled street grid in his plan for a *Ville contemporaine de trois millions d'habitants* (Contemporary City for Three Million Inhabitants), which he unveiled to much fanfare—and derision—at the 1922 Salon d'Automne.[85]

Following this *succès de scandale*, Le Corbusier was invited to lecture at the SFU's Strasbourg conference, the theme of which was to be "the present state of urbanism in France in abroad." The audience could hardly have been more auspicious: in addition to

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[82] Renamed the World Road Association in 1995, the AIPCR (PIARC in English) has long been, and remains, the world's foremost international organization of road experts. The full history of its conference proceedings, beginning with its second congress, in Brussels, 1910, can be accessed on its website at http://www.piarc.org/en/publications/Congress-Proceedings. For the proceedings of the 1923 Seville congress, see *Association Internationale Permanente des Congrès de la Route: IVe Congres, Séville 1923: rapports généraux* (Rennes: Oberthur, 1924).

[83] For an exhaustive account of the history, platform, and politics of the SFU and its founding body, the Musée Sociale, see Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 15-52.

[84] See Camillo Sitte, *The Birth of Modern City Planning*, ed. and trans. George R. Collins and Christiane Crasemann Collins (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1986).

[85] The notes for Le Corbusier's unpublished treatise have been published as Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier), *La Construction des villes* (Paris: L'Age d'homme, 1992).

several French mayors, legislators, and engineers in a variety of building fields, it included British planners Ebenezer Howard and Raymond Unwin, co-progenitors of the Garden City movement, Hubert Lyautey, who was then Resident-General of French Morocco, and SFU co-founders Henri Sellier, Louis Bonnier, Léon Jaussely, and Augustin Rey, among others.[86] Although a relative newcomer to this crowd—indeed, he was quite an unknown quantity—Le Corbusier addressed his more established colleagues in a frankly accusatory tone, faulting them for ignoring the fundamentals of urban planning, and insinuating that the "heart" of Paris had been permitted to decay on their watch:

> At present city councils and local officials have concerned themselves with the problem of the suburbs and are seeking to chase out the populations that have swarmed into the capital city with the force of invading hordes; their quest is praiseworthy; it remain incompletes, leaving aside the root of the problem which is what to do about city centers. We are taking care of the athlete's muscles; but we don't want to know that his heart is seriously ill and that his life is in danger. It is absolutely essential that we consider the problem of the city centers.[87]

As Le Corbusier saw it, the urbanist's task was to maximize access to the "equipment" of urban infrastructure—not to suburbanize the city, but instead to decongest its clogged arteries; this, and only this, would change the situation in the suburbs. With the boom in urban populations, the centers of major cities had become "almost inexploitable tools; the necessary connections can be established only with precarious exactness through the network of encumbered streets."[88] Castigating his fellow architects for failing to pose "the problem of traffic," Le Corbusier reserved special vitriol for his former mentor and frequent sparring partner, Auguste Perret, who had proposed building a ring of towering skyscrapers in place of the recently demilitarized fortifications of Paris, a plan that closely echoed Le Corbusier's own plan for a city of skyscrapers.[89] In a rejoinder to Perret, Le Corbusier observed that while the skyscraper "has the potential to relieve

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[86] On the context of this conference, see Tim Benton, *The Rhetoric of Modernism: Le Corbusier as a Lecturer* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2009), 94-105. In addition to Le Corbusier's lecture, which was titled "Le centre des grandes villes," speakers gave presentations on hygiene and postwar reconstruction, noise reduction, the future of housing developments in the Paris *banlieue*, and workers' gardens, with case studies focusing on regional, international, and colonial contexts. The conference proceedings were pubished as *Ou en est l'urbanisme en France et a l'etranger* (Paris : L. Eyrolles, 1924).

[87] Le Corbusier, Typescript of lecture at Strasbourg, July 1923; original copy in the Getty Research Institute, reprinted in Benton, *op. cit.*, 192. I follow Benton in understanding the typed text to refer to Le Corbusier's spoken presentation, whereas handwritten passages and crossed-out sections (including portions of the text cited above) indicate changes intended to be included in the conference proceedings. Translation modified.

[88] *Ibid*.

[89] *Ibid.*, 196.

congestion, *must* relieve congestion, in the city centers; there is no need to relieve congestion on the periphery of towns, which is not congested."[90] There was, he believed, only one possible solution to the problem of urban congestion: namely, total *decongestion* of the "sick" heart of Paris through the implementation of four points of contemporary urbanism:

1. Unblock the congestion in city centers [to accelerate the] speed of traffic.
2. Increase the density of city centers in order to ensure the connections demanded by business.
3. Increase traffic flow, that is to say, entirely modify the present conception of the street, which is ineffectual faced with the new phenomenon of modern means of transport, subways or automobiles, tramways, airplanes.
4. Increase planted surfaces, which are the only means to ensure sufficient good health for the inhabitants of the city and the tranquility necessary for attentive work that the new rhythm of business demands of each person.[91]

One wonders how the audience of the SFU digested these imperatives, if at all. Although couched in rhetoric of social reform, Le Corbusier's recommendations bore little relation to the concerns of the Musée Social and its adherents, for whom public health crisis brewing in the tuberculotic suburbs and colonies took precedence over the traffic-jammed Champs-Élysées. However, there was more to Le Corbusier's proposals than mere "flawed logic," as historian Timothy Benton glosses the Strasbourg lecture; we cannot understand the importance the architect attributed to the motif of decongestion without recognizing the particular—and political—origins of his position on urbanism.[92]

The grandiose vision of architectural deracination broadcast at the 1922 Salon d'Automne had its origin in the autumn of 1915, when, in the aftermath of the German bombardment of Reims, Le Corbusier devised a campaign to market a system of ferroconcrete slab construction he called "Dom-Ino," applicable at low cost in zones devastated by war. A novice in the field of mass housing and low-cost construction, Jeanneret spent six weeks in Paris at the Bibliothèque Nationale immersing himself in a diverse selection of titles on city planning and rural modernization, including Charles Lucas's *Étude sur les habitations à bon marché en France et a l'etranger* (1899), Luigi Einaudi's *La municipalisation du sol dans les grandes villes* (1898), and Alfred Foville's *Enquête sur les conditions d'habitation en France: Les maisons-types* (1894), among others.[93] Although these authors hailed from disciplines far afield of architecture, they

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[90] *Ibid*. Translation modified.
[91] *Ibid*., 193. Translation modified.
[92] *Ibid*., 98.
[93] See respectively: Charles Lucas, *Étude sur les habitations à bon marché en France et a l'etranger* (Paris: Aulanier, n.d. [1899]); Luigi Einaudi, "La municipalisation du sol dans les grandes villes," *Le Devenir social: revue internationale d'économie, d'histoire et de philosophie*, vol. 4, no. 1 (Jan 1898), 1-44; Alfred Foville, *Enquête sur les conditions d'habitation en France: Les maisons-types* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1894).

shared a social-scientific perspective on the history of cities, framing modernization as a dialectical process, neither straightforwardly beneficial nor essentially corrupting.

For Le Corbusier's purposes, Einaudi's and Foville's contributions were especially topical, offering a materialist perspective on the theme of deracination. The former was an Italian political economist and, in the 1890s, a socialist (he would later migrate to the political Right, becoming President of the Italian Republic between 1948-55); the latter, a demographer by training; yet their work overlapped, unexpectedly, on the terrain of spatial politics. Published in the French socialist journal *Le Devenir social*, Einaudi's essay on the "municipalization of the ground" offered a trenchant critique of the commodification of landed property, focusing on patterns of urban development in the United States, which was then the world's foremost real estate market. Armed with voluminous statistical data on property values and rents in the U.S. and Western Europe, Einaudi took aim at the theory that these figures indexed the proprietor's industriousness and parsimony, arguing instead that

> [t]he value of this or that parcel of bare land is the necessary and inevitable consequence of the extraordinary growth of the population, the intensification of commerce, and the possibility of directing a high volume of transactions from the confines of an office situated in the center of a large city, with great rapidity and at a cost lower than the rate of inflation prompted by [rising] ground rents. In the city, rent is the exact price of the landowner's *monopoly*; without pain or difficulty, without abstinence, without any risk whatsoever, without the least bit of accumulated labor, this monopoly gives him the ability to extort from his fellow citizens a tribute inevitably destined to increase as the population grows, as the social fabric becomes more and more complex, and as economic transactions multiply, it being ever more necessary to centralize the various motors of the grand mechanism that give life to all the innumerable channels of human activity.[94]

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[94] Luigi Einaudi, "La municipalisation du sol dans les grandes villes," *op. cit.*, emphasis added: "La valeur de cette parcelle de terrain nu est la conséquence nécessaire et inévitable de l'accroissement extraordinaire de la population, de l'augmentation des affaires, de la possibilité de manier dans le petit espace d'un bureau situé dans le centre d'une grande ville une énorme masse d'affaires, avec une très grande rapidité et une économie de frais supérieure au surenchérissement provoqué par la rente du sol. Le propriétaire vend aux enchères, au plus offrant, le droit de se servir de son terrain pour pouvoir accomplir une multitude d'opérations utiles à la société. La rente est dans les grandes villes le prix exact du monopole dont jouit le propriétaire du sol, et celui-ci sans aucune peine, sans aucune abstinence, sans aucun risque, sans la moindre apparence de travail accumlé, est en mesure d'extorquer à ses concitoyens un tribut destiné à croitre fatalement, tant qu'augmentera la population, que la trame de la vie sociale ne cessera pas de devenir plus complexe et que les transactions économiques continueront à se multiplier, tant que se fera sentir la nécessité de centraliser tous les moteurs du grand mécanisme qui donne la vie à tous les innombrables canaux de l'activité humaine."

For Einaudi, the uprooting of landed property was a tool in the service of class struggle: deurbanization as the 'expropriation of the expropriators' (per Marx). Of course, he did not intend property to be literally unbuckled from the earth; his aim was not to destroy cities per se, but to liberate the class of renters from their *rentier* overlords. To unleash the productive capacities of the urban machinery, Einaudi proposes that municipalities wrest proprietary control of their territories, collectivizing the total sum of rents without devolving ownership to the renters—an act of expropriation that falls short of communization, but which was nonetheless justified, he argues, insofar as monopoly rent "is not only unproductive, but deleterious," a negative constraint on the full development of human activity in its most characteristic and concentrated form.[95]

More than a shadow of Einaudi's politics informs Le Corbusier's plans for wholesale urban renovation—not only his *Ville contemporaine*, but also, and moreover, his project to apply this model of urban rationalization to the heart of Paris in his *Plan Voisin* of 1925. However, for Le Corbusier, unlike Einaudi, there could be no transformation of property relations in the metropolis without remaking the metropolitan housing stock. Architecture was not, in his view, a neutral apparatus in the "grand mechanism" of the city: to become liberated from monopoly rent would necessarily entail attacking the *source* of that monopoly, the commodity-unit of the Haussmannian row apartment—a project for which Le Corbusier's ferroconcrete patent could fulfill a useful, and even a radical, purpose.

There would remain, however, the question of individual and social needs, and of architectural morphology: If access to urban habitation were to be radically democratized, exploded across the entire terrain of the nation, as Le Corbusier's "Dom-Ino" project indicated, how much square footage would the average dweller—whether peasant, worker, or artisan; single or *en famille*—require? Likewise, how should the architect/planner accommodate regional variations on the standard 'need-type,' given the diversity of climates, customs, and occupations in a territory as heteroglot as France? In these respects, Alfred Foville's study of vernacular architecture, or *maisons-types*, offered a potential guide to the would-be modernizer, providing detailed statistics and description of construction protocols, methods of weatherproofing, and customary patterns of use in rural areas in each of France's ninety-six departments. Although purporting to treat the history and customs of rural habitation, Foville launches his *Enquête* with a treatise on rural modernization, citing the role of rail transportation in altering the social horizons of construction and habitation. Inevitably, he argues, the expansion of means of transportation has a deracinating effect in the countryside, sowing the expectation—if not exactly the opportunity—of an urban quality of life in even the most rural corners of France, where

> each household wishes to have its own *chez-soi*, its separate lodgings. One hears this refrain from every province, save perhaps for those in the far West; and we would not be speaking seriously if we pretended to be saddened by this unanimous desire for

[95] *Ibid.*, 32.

> independence. After all, the more a house becomes individualized, the easier it is to modernize in the best sense of the term.[96]

Foville's observations were retrospective not projective: he was trying to grasp the conditions and motives that had spurred rural households to move their dwellings progressively farther apart, building upwards from ground-level, as access to markets, supplies, and means of communications improved and became generalized. The railroad had played an obvious role in decreasing the cost of building materials, enabling families not merely to enlarge and improve their dwellings, but to rebuild from the ground up, using materials sourced from metropolitan factories rather than local quarries. Quite literally, Foville suggests, the modernization of construction and transportation had enabled the peasant to liberate himself from the crust of the earth,

> climb[ing] a rank in the social hierarchy when he places an interval of twenty or thirty stairs between his bed and the multiple service entrances of a ground floor open to the dust and mud, to foul odors, and to the coming and going of animals. Two rooms below and two or three above count for more, from a certain point of view, than an equal surface at ground-level, and one can rate highly any country where a second story is the rule rather than the exception.[97]

Foville's discussion of rural modernization evidently struck Le Corbusier with particular force, as he borrowed the term "maisons-types" for his Dom-Ino patent, which was to offer a selection of types built from a stock set of basic compositional modules: Type-A, Type-B, Type-AB, etc. He also recorded several passages from the *Enquête* in his 1915 sketchbook, writing, "Foville notes regretfully that the ground stories only rarely have tile (North and South) or parqueted floors. 'One must give a high mark to those places where the two-story house is the rule and not the exception.'"[98] These jottings include a suggestive paraphrase of Foville's remarks on the *morality* of peasant habitation: "The coarseness of customs might be said to be exactly proportionate to the degree of intimacy between men and animals, in our various types of rural dwellings.

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[96] Alfred Foville, *Enquête sur les conditions de l'habitation en France: Les maisons-types*, xl: "[C]haque ménage veut avoir son chez soi, son logis séparé. C'est le refrain qui nous est venu de toutes les provinces, sauf peut-être de l'ouest, et nous ne serions pas sincère si nous nous montrions attristé de cet unanime désir d'indépendance. Plus la maison, d'ailleurs, devient individuelle, et plus il lui est facile de se moderniser, dans la meilleure acception du mot."

[97] *Ibid*., xxx: "Le paysan monte en grade, dans la hiérarchie sociale, lorsqu'il met l'intervalle de vignt ou trente marches d'escalier entre son lit et les multiples servitudes d'un rez-de-chaussée ouvert à la poussière, à la boue, aux mauvaises odeurs, aux allées et venues des passants et des bêtes. Deux pièces en bas et deux ou trois pièces en haut valent mieux, à plus d'un point de vue, qu'une égale surface au niveau du sol et il faut donner une bonne note aux pays où l'étage est la règle et non l'exception."

[98] Le Corbusier, Sketchbook A2, 6; in *Le Corbusier Sketchbooks, vol. 1, 1914-1948* (London: Thames and Hudson; Paris: Fondation Le Corbusier, 1981).

Proximity should not degenerate into cohabitation."[99] This quotation has the sound of a kind of dictum, and even an ethic: To live well, one must not be forced into contact with others; only a modicum of togetherness is desirable if squalor is to be avoided. Le Corbusier's citations from Foville can be read, too, as a reply to the incompleteness of Einaudi's project, answering the question of social needs with empirical evidence of the future morphology of modern dwelling-types: liberation from the soil must invariably mean liberation from the ground plane, accompanied by the *atomization* of the community of dwellers. A Fourierist phalanstery could be one mode of achieving, and organizing, a society of the deracinated; we know that Le Corbusier found it a compelling model.[100] Yet Foville's Enquête leaves open the possibility of capitalism leading towards atomization of its own accord: Perhaps it was enough to let the already-existing forces of circulation do their work. Perhaps, to usher in full modernization, one had only to remove the obstacles blocking society's course towards equilibrium. Perhaps the city itself—as constructed through the nineteenth century—was all that stood in the way.

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Such were the concerns that led Le Corbusier to criticize contemporary urbanists for erected roadblocks to circulation where they should, quite literally, have cleared them away. It was at Seville, not Strasbourg, that the partisans of decongestion were hashing out the future of the Paris street system; and it was not Le Corbusier but another Parisian who was leading the charge to unclog the city's roadways: one Émile Massard, a municipal councilor who had become, more or less overnight, France's foremost expert on traffic policy.

The story of Massard's ascendency begins in the watershed period of 1906-1913, when Paris began to phase out its equestrian vehicle fleet in favor of what historian Mathieu Flonneau has termed the "système automobile," the matrix of legislation and technology necessary to ensure the automobile's predominance over equestrian traction.[101] The first motorized omnibus was tested in Paris on 12 April 1906, with the promise of transforming an allegedly fallible—because mammalian—means of

[99] *Ibid*.

[100] See Peter Serenyi, "Le Corbusier, Fourier, and the Monastery of Ema," *Art Bulletin*, vol. 49, no. 4 (Dec 1967); for a more extensive treatment of Le Corbusier's rapport with utopian urbanism, see Brian Brace Taylor, *The City of Refuge, Paris, 1929/33* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).

[101] Mathieu Flonneau, "Victoire modale, victoire morale?," *op. cit.*, 107-117. This article builds on Flonneau's doctoral thesis, *L'Automobile à la conquête de Paris, 1910-1977. Formes urbaines, champes politiques et representations*, 3 vols. (Paris: Universite de Paris I, 2002).

transportation into a "purely industrial, rational enterprise."[102] A mere four years later, on 9 March 1910, the city formally forbade the Compagnie générale des omnibus from the use of equestrian power; and in 1913, the last horse-drawn omnibus was retired from service to much public fanfare—the smell of gasoline being preferable to that of feces.[103] Aside from matters of odor, however, the advent of the *système automobile* did little to improve the condition of the Paris pedestrian. The rate of traffic accidents in Paris was alarmingly high even prior to the introduction of the "système automobile": in the year 1906, there were 48,268 accidents reported in the capital, out of a total fleet of 75,824 vehicles (declared or registered); this figure leaped to 76,573 out of 80,582 vehicles, and from there, reports historian André Guillerme, to a factor of one accident yearly per vehicle from 1910 on.[104] Accidents in the streets of Paris could take myriad forms: absent the generalized use of traffic lanes, crosswalks, and mechanized signals, the streets were collision-fields studded with slow- and fast-moving obstacles, from hand-carts and horse-drawn wagons to trams and omnibuses. As for pedestrian carnage, the newspaper reports drafted by Félix Fenéon in the first decade of the new century provide a suitably telegraphic portrait of the regularity with which foot- and motor traffic intersected:

> Yesterday, in the streets of Paris, cars killed Mme Resche and M. P. Chaverrais and gravely wounded Mlle Fernande Tissedre—M. Linz-Veren fractured his skull when his motorcycle, on Avenue Philippe-Auguste, encountered M. Lardy's car—An automobile, which quickly fled, knocked over a coach, in Neuilly. The coachman, Charles Jacques: fractured skull; M. Dumot: broken legs—In a hurry to catch up with his father, Pierre Colmar, 5, of Ivry, left his mother and tried to cross the street. A streetcar ran him over.[105]

And so on. To a large extent, these accidents were owed to the poor provisioning and clutter of sidewalk space, which remained a site of sociability and commerce despite the deadly proximity of high-speed traffic. In fact, the rise of pedestrianism was itself a relatively recent phenomenon in Paris, especially in the dense fabric of the medieval *quartiers*, where streets had long been made to serve purposes wholly unrelated to circulation.[106] Although the noun *piéton* predates the automobile by several centuries, it

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[102] L. Saint-Martin, Conference of 6 February 1904, *Bulletin technologique de la société des anciens éléves des écoles nationales d'arts et métiers* (April 1904), n.p. Quoted in Flonneau, "Victoire modale, victoire morale?," 109.

[103] Ibid., 113.

[104] André Guillerme, "Autophiles et autophobes: La congestion urbaine dans les grandes villes au début du XXe siècle," *Conférences Mellon au CCA* (Montreal: Canadian Center for Architecture, 2006), 2.

[105] Félix Fenéon, *Novels in Three Lines*, trans. Luc Sante (New York: The New York Review of Books, 2011). The quoted passages can be found on the following pages, in order of appearance: 6, 56, *idem*., 76.

[106] It is important not to attribute to the street an *essentially* "social" function; in their seminal article on the history of European streets, Francois Bedarida and Anthony

was not employed as a normative term for foot traffic until the nineteenth century. In fourteenth-century France, the term *piéton* was used exclusively in a military context, as a synonym for *fantassin*, or infantryman, the lowest in a series of military ranks as determined by access to vehicular transportation. What defined the pedestrian was less the fact of his going by foot than the involuntary nature of his travel, under circumstances where the mounted rider, his superior officer or adversary, had the plain advantage.

As with the production of vehicular space, so too can we identify a process of the production of pedestrian space in Paris: Until the Second Empire, the large majority of Parisian streets had no sidewalks to speak of—there were only 16 kilometers total of paved footways as of 1830, as compared to 195 kilometers by the end of the July Monarchy—and no system whatsoever for regulating pedestrian traffic.[107] A rapid increase in vehicular traffic at the turn of the century lent new urgency to the renovation of sidewalk space: In 1901, there were 3,900 chauffeured vehicles, 34,000 commercial vehicles, and 110,000 bicycles, as compared with 8,200, 47,000, 300,000, respectively, as of 1910.[108] Motorists were among the first to demand the regulation of sidewalk traffic in the same manner as the roadway; for example, in his influential 1905 handbook for would-be drivers, Louis Baudry de Saunier advocated that the pedestrian

> learn to drive himself in the streets just as the motorist learns to direct his car. The pedestrian proceeds by chance maneuvers, by reflexive gestures. He goes from one sidewalk to the other like a ball dancing between two electrified plates. For the driver of an automobile, the pedestrian is danger incarnate; an omnibus drawn by three horses is far less dangerous. And the hesitant pedestrian, who, having barely launched in one direction, brusquely changes his orientation and returns from where he came: he is simply *unavoidable*; a handcart pushed by a child would knock him over. No driver in the world would be able to evade the hesitant pedestrian, the incoherence of whose movements effectively lead him to suicide.[109]

Sutcliffe note that the socialization of the street resulted, historically, from the enclosure of common or cultivated spaces that had previously served as sites of public gathering, commerce, and discourse, including courtyards and other semi-public spaces located in the interior of housing blocks. See François Bedarida and Anthony Sutcliffe, "The Street in the Structure and Life of the City: Reflections on Nineteenth-Century London and Paris," *Journal of Urban History* vol. 6, no. 4 (Aug 1980), 384.

[107] William Stearns Davis, *A History of France from the Earliest Times to the Treaty of Versailles* (New York: Chautauqua Press, 1920), 450.

[108] André Guillerme, "La mise en pas du piéton à Paris au temps de l'autophilie (1900-1930)," in *Le piéton et son environnement: Quelles interactions? Quelles adaptations?*, eds. Marie-Axelle Granié and Jean-Michel Auberlet, Actes INRETS no. 115 (May 2008), 33-4.

[109] Louis Baudry de Saunier, *L'art de bien conduire un automobile* (Paris: Bibliothèque Omnia, 1905), 237-8: "Le piéton devrait apprendre à se conduire dans les rues comme l'automobiliste apprend à y diriger sa voiture. Le piéton procède à des manoeuvres de

Baudry de Saunier's view was shared widely among motorists and politicians alike; yet it was by no means obvious what legal protocols could be levied against the divagating *piéton*. By the 1920s, the sidewalks of Paris were fatally encumbered by all manner of obstacles, including café furniture, commercial wares, planters, trees, mud-scrapers, urinals, kiosks, and miasmic crowds of theater and moviegoers; worse still, the installation of water, gas, and electrical mains frequently required that sidewalks be excavated for days and weeks at a time, rendering the pedestrian universe at best haphazardly traversable.[110] The pressure to ameliorate this situation flowed and ebbed, reaching a critical pitch on the occasion of high-profile pedestrian deaths—as when, in 1920, a motorist struck and killed the Minister of Justice, Louis Nail, while he was crossing rue de Castiglione just north of the Tuileries.

Yet it was an open question whether the sidewalk could be brought under the same program of legal regulations as the road; or whether, to the contrary, pedestrian circulation would be wielded *against* the flow of vehicles, staggering and segmenting what had been intended, ideally, as a fully continuous circuit. In 1910, the Municipal Council of Paris commissioned Massard to lead a commission on the current state of urban traffic.[111] Making exhaustive use of statistics collected by the Prefect of Police, the fruit of Massard's research dwarfed all previous literature on the topic: nearly three-hundred pages in length, his "Rapport sur la circulation générale des voitures et des piétons à Paris" (Report on the General Circulation of Cars and Pedestrians in Paris) recast the traffic issue as a grand dialectic of irreconcilable forces and statistical limits, warning that the rate of traffic accidents would continue to rise unless drastic measures were taken; or, to quote Massard's typically urgent phrasing: "*the number of accidents increases not proportionally with the number of vehicles, but exponentially*."[112] Drawing

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hasard, à des gestes réflexes. Il va d'un trottoir à l'autre comme une balle de sureau qui danse entre deux plateaux électrisés. Le piéton, c'est, pour le conducteur d'une automobile, le danger par excellence; un omnibus à troix chevaux est moins redoutable. Quant au piéton qui hésite, qui, à peine engagé dans une direction, change brusquement d'orientation et revient en arrière, c'est un obstable *inévitable* je le reconnais; une charrette à bras trainée par un enfant le renverserait. Aucun conducteur au monde ne saurait éviterle piéton hésitant que l'incohérance de ses mouvements mène positivement au suicide."

[110] See Norma Evenson, *op. cit*.

[111] For an overview of Massard's career, see Mathieu Flonneau, "La sécurité des rues parisiennes aux origines de l'automobile: Le rapport Massard de 1910 et la définition des problèmes de la ville moderne," in *Les Cahiers de la sécurité*, no. 58, 2005, p. 159-172; also see Flonneau, "City infrastructures and city dwellers: Accommodating the automobile in twentieth-century Paris," *The Journal of Transport History* 27, no. 1 (Feb 2002), 101-2.

[112] Émile Massard, "Rapport sur la circulation générale des voitures et des piétons à Paris," *Conseil Municipal de Paris*, no. 17 (1910), 61.

liberally from Hénard's speculative studies of the Paris road system, Massard proposed that the circulation of vehicles should be regulated architecturally as well as disciplinarily (via the Parisian traffic police, or *batons blancs*), through the generalized use of *carrefours à giration*, or roundabouts, with under- and overground passages designed to shepherd pedestrians safely from one side of the street to the other. Moreover, he argued, the public had a right to be educated in the "rules" of pedestrianism, first among which was the imperative that the pedestrian keep to the right—*tenir sa droite*—always moving in the same direction as the vehicular current. Accompanying this rule, Massard proposed four additional recommendations: "(1) Look to the left when stepping into the roadway, and to the right before stepping onto the opposite sidewalk; (2) Cross the street perpendicularly not diagonally; (3) Never run; (4) Whenever a cyclist approaches, come to a full stop, facing forward."[113]

The outbreak of World War I halted efforts to implement Massard's recommendations, temporarily unclogging the arteries of Paris by relocating the vehicular fleet from city to Front: between 1914-1919, the public automobile fleet was reduced by half, from 21,214 vehicles in 1913 to just 11,879 in 1914.[114] Traffic at the city's four busiest intersections fell by a sum of eighty thousand vehicles between May 1914 and February 1919, returning to its prewar apogee by the May of that year.[115] As the rate of traffic—and, with it, of accidents—continued to rise, the Municipal Council tapped Massard to head up a second commission on congestion timed to coincide with the Seville Congress of the AIPCR, where, with Louis Biette, he co-presented on behalf of France, focusing his remarks squarely on the situation in Paris, and on the plight of its pedestrians. Summarizing their joint address to the Congress, Massard warned of the resurgent dangers posed by the mounting traffic volume:

> The authors [Massard and Biette] present statistics concerning traffic in certain sectors of Paris during the years 1910-1912-1914-1919 and 1921 (at the four largest intersections: Rivoli-Boulevard de Sébastapol, Champs-Élysées-Place de la Concorde, rue Royale-rue Saint-Honoré, rues Richelieu et Drouot-Grands Boulevards) collected over the course of a week, between the hours of 3:00-7:00pm. The number of vehicles was sometimes 6,544 per hour. They also offer a statement broadcasting the number of accidents occasioned by vehicles of all categories; the figures are literally terrifying. This simple lesson leads me [Massard] to think that in the middle of such traffic one could remain alive only by miracle.[116]

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[113] *Ibid.*, 169.

[114] Flonneau, "Victoire modale, victoire morale?," *op. cit.*, 114, tab. 1.

[115] Émile Massard, "Rapport au nom de la 2e commission sur le compte rendu du Congrès de la route a Séville…," *Conseil Municipal de Paris: Rapports et documents*, no. 103 (1923), 13.

[116] *Ibid.*: "Les auteurs présentent une statistique concernant le traffic existant dans quelques secteurs de Paris pendant les années 1910-1912-1914-1919 et 1921 (aux quatre carrefours les plus importants: Rivoli-Boulevard de Sébastopol, Champs-Elysées-Place

The report's tone is exhortatory throughout: Massard calls for "*regulated liberty* [*liberté réglementée*]" in place of the "anarchy" of the present, with the aim "of giving to all the necessary room on the public thoroughfares, where each can occupy his place without seeking to impinge upon that of others."[117] To achieve this, he urged the Muncipal Council to adopt recent traffic-control technologies developed across the Atlantic, including the entirely modest proposals that Paris employ painted crosswalks and mechanical traffic signals—a solution illustrated with photographs taken in American boulevards and parking lots [**Fig. 37**]. By restricting access to non-automotive vehicles on certain high-volume streets, designating others for one-way traffic only, the Council could begin to rationalize the anarchic melee of rush hour; above all, it would need to marshal the political will to oppose the *aesthetic* priorities of urban elites, who had previously balked at the introduction of signage and signals in the already cluttered streetscape.[118] For Massard, as for the other delegates of the AIPCR, *information*, not demolition, was the only viable way forward for urban traffic control.

We know that Le Corbuiser followed Massard's trail closely, borrowing liberally from the Seville Congress proceedings in the pages of *Urbanisme*, and ranking the councilor among "the most active personages to have thrown himself against the inextricable machine" of municipal bureaucracy.[119] However, beneath the veneer of admiration, there remained a deep division of opinion between the two planners and their respective views on the future of Paris. Addressing Massard directly in *Urbanisme*, the architect frames his project as an explicit answer to the latter's research:

> I aim to position myself outside [the purview] of your innumerable precise truths; I have no desire to learn the bitterness of the interests involved in your struggle, the astonishing dossier of the *Bureau of Property*, etc.; I only want to elaborate on the basis of your statistics, and with a disinterested attitude, a clear and healthy program, beautiful as well as useful; to research pure, galvanizing principles; to isolate the problem on its own terms, outside of any specific case study; and to arrive at a formulation of the fundamental principles of modern urbanism. With these principles, which will be certitudes, anyone would be able to imagine various case studies, the

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de la Concorde, rue Royale-rue Saint Honoré, rues Richelieu et Drouot-Grands Boulevards) et relevée pendant une semaine, de 15 à 19 heures. Le nombre des véhicules a été quelquefois, par heure, de 6,544. Ils donnent également un état faisant connaître le nombre d'accidents occasionnées par les véhicules de toutes catégories; les chiffres en sont littéralement terrifiants. Cette simple lecture m'a donné à penser qu'au milieu d'une telle circulation on ne peut rester en vie que par miracle: les pouvoirs publics doivent prendre des mesures aussi urgentes qu'énergiques dans le but d'éviter un si grave dommage."

[117] *Ibid*., 4-5.

[118] *Ibid*., 5-6.

[119] Le Corbusier, *Urbanisme*, 102.

case of Paris, for example.[120]

Le Corbusier cannot have missed Massard's lengthy explication of the many and numerous ways of regulating urban traffic; yet his citations from the 1923 report ignore most, if not all, of its key contributions, focusing narrowly on the councilor's recommendation of an optimal intra-urban speed limit of sixteen kilometers per hour, the median "useful" speed for ensuring fluid traffic flow [**Fig. 38**].[121] Scoffing at this unimpressive figure, Le Corbusier retaliates, referring to the graph in Massard's report:

> The entire mechanism [of the city] is organized in favor of speed. However, given the present state of the streets, a denunciatory graph proves that the speed admissible for cars in contemporary cities is 16 kilometers per hour!!! The factories (in industrial nations) struggle tirelessly to exceed speeds of 100 to 200 kilometers; the present state of the city imperatively cries: '16 kilometers, Gentlemen!'[122]

Le Corbusier had his own improvements in mind, which contrasted sharply with Massard's recommendations. Under the aegis of the *Plan Voisin*, the center of Paris was be organized as a rectilinear grid, with major streets laid down every four hundred meters in the interest of minimizing the number of intersections, and thus the potential for collisions. At bottom, however, this pattern represented the culmination of an aesthetic, not a technocratic, argument; the primary target of his critique was not the traffic pattern per se, but rather the problem of the "rue-corridor," the side streets and warrenlike alleyways that were both the arena of social life in the *quartiers populaire* and the mechanism of working-class self-defense—since they could easily be barricaded. Surprisingly, however, it is neither the streets themselves nor their frontage that attracts Le Corbusier's scorn, but rather the narrow skyline as seen from below, a "line broken, brutal, wounded, bristling with obstacles."[123] This "line" is the subject of a chapter oxymoronically titled "On the Urban Landscape," in which the architect offers the

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[120] *Ibid*.: "Je veux me tenir en dehors de vos innombrables vérités précises; je ne veux pas connaître l'âpreté des intérêts qui sont en lutte, le dossier effarant des *Domaines*, etc.; je veux tout simplement, sur vos statistiques, élaborer avec un esprit dégagé une conception saine et claire, d'utilité et de beauté, rechercher des principes purs, directeurs, isoler le problème sur lui-même hors des cas d'espèces et arriver à formuler des principes fondamentaux d'urbanisme moderne. Avec ces principes qui seront des certitudes, chacun alors pourra envisager les cas d'espèces, le cas de Paris, par exemple."

[121] See Le Corbusier, *Urbanisme*, 110-112; and Massard, "Rapport au nom de la 2e commission sur le compte rendu du Congrès de la route a Séville…," *op. cit.*, 56-8.

[122] Le Corbusier, *Urbanisme*, 110: "Tout ce mécanisme est agencé en faveur de la vitesse. Or, dans l'état actuel des rues, un graphique dénonciateur donne la preuve que la vitesse admissible pour les voitures des villes contemporaines est de 16 kilomètres à l'heure!!! Les usines (industries nationales) livrent des luttes acharnées pour passer à des vitesses de 100 à 200 kilomètres; l'état de la ville impérativement crie: '16 kilomètres, Messieurs.'"

[123] *Ibid.*, 220.

garden-city district of his *Ville contemporaine* as the model for a reformed streetscape; narrating the erection of this district as if ex nihilo, Le Corbusier begins and ends with the motif of the horizon:

> The line of the city's profile against the sky [will be] pure, thereby permitting us to organize [*ordonner*] the expanse of the urban landscape. And that is capital. I repeat that this line against the sky determines [the spectator's] sensation; it is no different than with statuary, the profile, the contour.
>
> I would immediately affirm that this reconquered purity of the urban horizon is not sufficient if the *rue-corridor* should remain. Breaking the *rue-corridor*, we must, properly speaking, create the *breadth* [*étendue*] of the urban landscape. Breadth rather than the singularly constricted depth of the corridor. By designing '*lotissements à redents*' [note: Le Corbusier is referring to his proposal for serrated housing blocks], I spread this horizon outward to the right and to the left, and, by returning to the longitudinal axis, I compose architecturally: the formerly barren line of the corridor now encloses prisms, accentuates recesses or overhangs; the arid and enervating canopy of the corridor is replaced by the juxtaposition, the extension, and the combination of volumes, creating a lively and monumental urban landscape.[124]

What is striking about this passage is the point of view Le Corbusier seeks, again and again, to impose on the reader/viewer, urging her to look up from the street, lifting her gaze to the edge of the corridor rim, roofward and skyward. It is against this line, Le Corbusier argues, that the architectonic qualities of the *lotissements à redents* are to be judged: the line accentuates volumes of the intersecting blocks, throwing promontories and setbacks into relief, and so on. However, to see this city this way, checked against the "pure" horizon of the unbroken roof line—one could not possible be situated in the street; for, looking upward toward the "line" of rooftops, the pedestrian would still be confronted by the jagged edge of the *redents*. A few pages later, Le Corbusier provides an image that corresponds point for point to his description of the horizontal skyline [**Fig. 39**]: In this sketch of the *Ville contemporaine*, the viewer seems to stand at the edge of a

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[124] Ibid., 220-21: "La ligne qui profile la ville sur le ciel est pure et par elle il nous est loisible d'ordonner avec ampleur le paysage urbain. Et ceci est capital. Je répète que cette ligne sur le ciel est déterminante de la sensation; ce n'est pas autre chose qu'en statuaire, le profil, le contour.

Immédiatement j'affirmerai que cette pureté reconquise de l'horizon urbain n'est pas suffisante si la rue-corridor demeure. Brisant la rue-corridor, il faut, à proprement parler, créer l'*étendue* du paysage urbain. Étendue et non pas toujours cette unique profondeur étriquée du corridor. En dessinant les 'lotissements à redents,' j'étale cet horizon loin à droite et loin à gauche et, par des retours sur l'axe longitudinal, je compose architecturalement: la ligne autrefois sèche du corridor enferme maintenant des prismes, accuse des enfoncements ou des saillies; la paroi aride et énervante du corridor est remplacée par des volumes qui se juxtaposent, s'éloignent, se rapprochent, créent un vivant et monumental paysage urbain."

one of the housing blocks, peering across the cityscape from a rooftop terrace. The ample parkland of a garden city spreads out below, with tennis courts in each cell of pedestrian territory; massive roadways interpenetrate the looming edifice of the *lottisements*, trafficked by a loose array of miniscule automobiles; the housing blocks themselves; cantilevered across the street grid, the housing blocks provide their own, alternative system of pedestrian corridors. Yet there is no evidence (none visible, anyway) of a human presence at ground-level, and no sign of what pattern of destinations, if any, might attract a person beyond the perimeter of the housing block and into the gardens beyond. Fixing on what is surely the drawing's most salient feature, Adolf Max Vogt points to the way the viewer's line of sight "glides precisely along the top line of the uniformly high buildings," an alignment of vision and horizon that saps the *lotissements* of their volume; they might be "hanging from a clothesline," as Vogt puts it, weightless and paper-thin.[125]

The employ of a horizontal perspective—a viewpoint aligned with the horizon—was by no means unique to the *Ville contemporaine*. In a recent article, historian Richard Difford locates the origins of a horizontal perspective in the trompe-l'oeil dioramas that accompanied the *Ville contemporaine* and *Plan Voisin* exhibitions, the dimensions of which were formatted to height and scope of an average visitor's visual field, which lines up with the far horizon, skating over the building tops and skirting the city proper.[126] Likewise, scholar Xavier Monteys interprets Le Corbusier's manipulation of horizontal sightlines as the architect's way of "sweeping clean" the physical landscape, thus framing the view in an imitation of photographic cropping.[127] For my part, Le Corbusier's horizontal treatment of the "urban landscape" furnishes a kind of answer, and perhaps even a counter-model, to the program of traffic control sketched in Massard's 1923 report—an alternative that pivots on the question of the ground plane. For Massard, any viable solution to the congestion of Paris, and to the pedestrian's plight therein, must necessarily entail a compromise between the street's circulatory function and its social function—that is, between fluidity and stability, the horizontal motion of traffic and the upright ambulation of the human animal. Although he hoped eventually to reduce this spectrum by phasing out the Paris tramways and restricting access to carters and wagoners,[128] Massard nevertheless thought it both possible and necessary to mediate the antagonism between pedestrians and motorists (vertical versus horizontal); he believed,

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[125] Adolf Max Vogt, *Le Corbusier, the Noble Savage: Toward an Archaeology of Modernism* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998), 105.

[126] Richard Difford, "Infinite Horizons: Le Corbusier, the *Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau* dioramas and the science of visual distance," *The Journal of Architecture*, vol. 14, no. 3 (Jun 2009), 317.

[127] Xavier Monteys, "El hombre que veía vastos horizontes: Le Corbusier, el paisaje y la Tierra," *Massilia: anuario de estudios lecorbusierianos*, Special issue on Le Corbusier and the landscape (2004), 20.

[128] Massard, "Rapport au nom de la 2e commission sur le compte rendu du Congrès de la route a Séville…,", 7.

like Baudry de Saunier, that the *piéton* could, and must, be educated in the proper use of the street, even at the cost of sullying the urban edifice with signs and signals.

All this is to say that, with Massard, the pedestrian still had some hope of retaining possession of the street *as space*, albeit a space restricted to crosswalks and sidewalks, its currents controlled by automatic timers and police whistles. Le Corbusier professes no such faith: in his city, the pedestrian would lose access to the street in its entirety—even the sidewalks would be abolished; and while this gesture smacks of pure deracination, it comes sweetened by a peculiar sort of compensation: for, in losing the ground plane of the city, the subject of the *Ville contemporaine* and *Plan Voisin* gains a second-order, optical ground: the ground of the horizon.

An explanation of this bargain can be tracked to Le Corbusier's first book, *Vers une architecture*, and to the architect's slogan, "Le dehors est toujours un dedans" (the outdoors is always an indoors).[129] What Le Corbusier meant by this formulation must be deduced from a long, and weird, passage of first-person description, which traverses in slow motion the several stages of the phenomenology of architectural perception:

> The human eye, in its investigations, is always turning and man also turns to the right, to the left, clear round. It takes in everything and is drawn toward the center of gravity of the site as a whole. Suddenly the problem spreads to the surroundings. The neighboring houses, the near or distant mountain, the low or high horizon are formidable masses whose cubic volumes make a powerful effect. The *apparent* cubic volume and the *real* cubic volume are gauged instantaneously, anticipated by the intelligence. … The elements of the site rise up like walls rigged out to the power of their 'cubic' coefficient, stratification, material, etc., like the walls of a large room. Walls and light, shadow and light, sad, cheerful, or serene, etc. It is necessary to compose with these elements.[130]

Beginning at the "center of gravity," i.e. the center-point of the site, the viewer turns outward, discovering the domineering forms and volumes of the physical landscape; then, suddenly, inexplicably, the distance between near and far space is bridged, and the outside terrain—here, a "distant mountain"—becomes part of the architectural interior, "like the walls of a large room." Of the several examples of this effect described and illustrated in *Vers une architecture*, all trade on the substitution of natural elements (hills, plains, seas, etc.) for the components of interior architecture, in particular floors and walls. For example, from atop the Acropolis at Athens, observing the Propylaea from the east, "the sea … makes a composition with the architraves"—a scene composed, the author effuses, "with the infinite resources of an art full of perilous riches, which produce beauty only when brought into order."[131] In Le Corbusier's accompanying sketch [**Fig. 40**], we see a thin band of shoreline through the columns on the east side of the

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[129] Le Corbusier, *Toward an Architecture* [1924/28], trans. John Goodman (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2007), 225.
[130] *Ibid.* Emphasis added.
[131] *Ibid*. Translation modified.

Propylaea; it is this strip of distant land that rhymes, visually, with the contour of the architrave, as if to suggest that, between viewer and horizon, there lies nothing but glistening sea. Likewise, at Hadrian's Villa in Rome, Le Corbusier finds "the floors set at levels concordant with the Roman plain"; whereas, in the distance, a range of mountains "close[s] off the composition, which indeed is based on them" [**Fig. 41**].[132] As Le Corbusier illustrates it, the floor of the villa seems to tilt upwards at the viewer, making it difficult to tell where the ground of the interior ends; intellectually, we might realize that the ledge of the building several paces before us constitutes an absolute limit, but optically, the horizon seems easily approachable—the "apparent cubic mass" taking precedence over the real, traversable surface.

Looking again at the drawing of the *Ville contemporaine* as seen from the rooftop terrace, it now seems obvious why Le Corbusier placed such high stakes on *this* view of the city. Our alignment with the horizon has been staged to mitigate the fact that we cannot possibly traverse the space set before us; not on foot, anyway. To have attained the view in the first place, we have had to step to the uppermost edge of the *lotissement*; it is from this space beyond which pedestrian space ceases that the city as a whole becomes visually coherent, unified by the "pure" line of the horizon; here, and only here, do we recover our footing, although optically, not spatially. The entire purpose of Le Corbusier's theory of traffic planning is to produce this singular view: it is for this reason that the streets must be trafficked at speeds of one- and two-hundred kilometers per hour, and faster still, without any impediments to the circulatory flow. The street must be de-spatialized, even liquefied, and the pedestrian's claim to the road renounced, so that the city might equal the Acropolis in grandeur—its surface as sheer and sun-dazzled as the Aegean Sea.

Le Corbusier's favorite quotation from Massard was this: "In Paris, the circulating surface (vehicles) is larger than the circulable surface (pavement)."[133] Yet no matter how wide and fast one built the street system, the road surface was always bound to be limited, not only spatially, but also socially, fought over by antagonistic forces—pedestrian and motorist, carter and trucker, jaywalker and cop, etc. Unlike the streets at ground level, there was no limit to the horizon above: *this* ground could be shared by all, if not collectively, then as an aggregate of monads, with each subject figured as the sovereign of a personal landscape. If a motto were wanted for this method of urbanism, it could be: *To each his portable horizon*.

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The occlusion of the ground plane of the city was not Le Corbusier's invention per se. Historian David Leatherbarrow tracks this motif to some of the first images of the modern city, originating with Leon Battista Alberti's *Descriptio urbis Romae* (1443-55),

[132] *Ibid*., 225.
[133] Le Corbusier, *Urbanisme*, 108.

a study of the topography of Rome conducted with the aid of a device of Alberti's own invention, known, not coincidentally, as a Horizon [**Fig. 42-43**].[134] Like an astrolabe, the Horizon was a simple metal disc with regular degree markings on its outer edge and a movable arm, or radius, that permitted the user to sight and plot any given point of terrain relative to a fixed point in space. Aided by this device, a surveyor could measure the intervening distance in identical numerical units, using his findings to draw a proportional map of the city from center to periphery. Although Alberti could theoretically have surveyed the terrain of Rome in its entirety, Leatherbarrow notes that his aim—literally, the aim of the Horizon—was limited to "key points on the perimeter and a number of significant places [e.g. buildings, monuments, etc.] in the expanse between," with the vast majority of urban space deemed "insignificant in the survey."[135] In order to grasp the city, not in its ordinary—we could say, its *pedestrian*—guise, but as supersensory data, Leatherbarrow argues, Alberti "overlook[ed] the city he already knew—the middle ground,"[136] privileging the near and the far over the thickness of the in-between. In doing so, however, he enabled planners to treat the ground plane of the city as epistemologically distinct from the upright volumes of buildings, monuments, and walls. While land measurements were most often denominated in measures of time, not space, with distances assayed in units of walking, or of work (the duration of sowing or plowing, etc.), sailors had employed techniques of metric plotting and triangulation for centuries, as befit the smooth topography of seafaring; indeed, the "loss of the ground" has a literal meaning for maritime space. Applied to Alberti's Rome, Leatherbarrow argues, these methods yielded a distinctively thalassic topography: "land- and cityscape become as level as seascape," with the variegations of earthly terrain falling "into a kind of darkness, a blind spot."[137]

Not coincidentally, Leatherbarrow identifies the paradigm of the Horizon with Le Corbusier, whose architecture frequently manipulates the occupant's standpoint and sightline in such a way as to occlude "large measures of intermediate depth […] rendering near and far compacted into closely tangent proximity."[138] As a paradigmatic example, Leatherbarrow points us to the roof deck of Le Corbusier's *Unité d'habitation* at Marseilles (1947-52) [**Fig. 44**], where the upper edge of the peripheral parapet aligns with the base of the surrounding mountain range, as if the latter "were modeled within the spread of the roof deck."[139] For Leatherbarrow, Le Corbusier's occlusion of the middle ground is symptomatic of what would become a programmatic disinterest in the building/site dyad in the architecture of the International Style and its antecedents. By

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[134] David Leatherbarrow, *Uncommon Ground: Architecture, Technology, and Topography* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000).
[135] *Ibid*., 5.
[136] *Ibid*., 6.
[137] *Ibid*., 11.
[138] *Ibid*., 17.
[139] *Ibid*.

treating the landscape as mere window dressing for a "post-perspectival" society, Leatherbarrow argues, Le Corbusier and his followers exempted themselves, and their clients, from the *ethical* horizon of Renaissance humanism—"the plane of vision on which there occurs 'a meeting of the eyes,' […] the horizon of face-to-face encounter."[140]

Let me suggest, to the contrary, that the deep entwining of space and subjectivity in Le Corbusier's work, as in architecture more generally, cannot be grasped using the analytic he supplies—an ethical imperative reducible to the slogan: *Architect, attend to the middle ground!* As far as urban space is concerned, this "middle ground" is not an immanent category, but is rather *produced*, as Lefebvre puts it—and, in the case of road-space, produced by the only actor capable of *regulating* its everyday use: namely, the State. In the first half of this chapter, I argued that Le Corbusier's contrarian view of the city and its planning stemmed from his belief in modernity's liberatory potential—specifically, in the promise of deracination as a leveling force internal to, and synonymous with, the improvement of means of transportation. We have seen, however, that the acceleration of transit had led to an impasse by the year 1923, with the mounting bill of accidents and bottlenecks on one hand; and, on the other, the methods recommended by Massard and his colleagues, which would necessarily slow and segment the flow of traffic in order to preserve the traditional footprint of the Paris street system. Although Le Corbusier would frame his program of full motorization as a reply, and even a corrective, to what he saw as the inherent undesirability—indeed, the *unmodernity*—of the AIPCR's brand of traffic control, I do not mean to suggest that we must accept this framing. To return to my argument with Leatherbarrow, let me put my claim this way: Le Corbusier's occlusion of the middle ground must be understood in relation to the history of abstraction alluded to above—a history of traffic law, and, codified therein, of the subordination of road-space to the fluid circulation of cars and capital. Where Leatherbarrow sees the architect abstracting the ground plane of architecture, I see him essaying to respond to that ground plane's *real* abstraction, using what limited means were at his disposal. This is not to suggest a monolithic reading of Le Corbusier's 'post-terrestrial' architecture: my sense is that he responded in different ways and with varying results. In the remainder of this chapter, I survey the dialectic of ground and horizon in his work between 1917 and 1923, beginning with his practice as a painter, the original matrix of his 'horizontal perspective,' and ending with the studio-apartment he designed for Amédée Ozenfant, a building that, more than any other, incorporated the contradictions of traffic planning into its interior geometry.

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In February 1917, Charles-Édouard Jeanneret—he would not become 'Le Corbusier' until 1920—had just arrived in Paris from La Chaux-de-Fonds, aged thirty years old. His emigration had been orchestrated by Max Du Bois, a childhood friend and sometimes

[140] *Ibid*., 15.

collaborator, who had promised Jeanneret employment through the company he co-owned, SABA (Société d'applications du béton armé), a construction firm specializing in ferroconcrete. After staying with Du Bois's family for several months, Jeanneret found permanent lodgings in an apartment in the Latin Quarter, at 20 rue Jacob, an address that was once home to Adrienne Lecouvreur, the famed seventeenth-century actress and lover to Maurice Saxe. As of Jeanneret's tenancy, Lecouvreur's apartment was inhabited by Natalie Clifford Barney, an American expatriate and lesbian, who was renowned as a hostess of raucous soirees—a fact that would figure largely, if somewhat obliquely, in Jeanneret's artistic practice of the following year.[141]

The architect's lodgings were a world removed from the glamorous milieu of his downstairs neighbor: his apartment was a simple two-room garret (he estimated that it would have housed Lecouvreur's maid), with a small alcove in the bedroom for sleeping and a main room that doubled as kitchen and salon. When not working at his office, Jeanneret spent much of his free time at home alone, where he devoted himself to painting, keeping this hobby a secret from his colleagues. By the winter of 1917, economic conditions had improved to the point that fuel was once more in supply—it had been scarce the previous winter, and would disappear again in the following year's *crise de charbon*. In late November, buoyed by the modest comforts of his domicile, which included radiant heat, Jeanneret wrote to his parents of the tasteful coziness of his apartment:

> My bedroom is wallpapered in pitch black [*noir absolu*], with baskets of fruit and assorted foliage, era Louis XV, in the alcove. Three striped rugs white rust-red and black completely cover the floor. Numerous cushions serve as seats and there's an enormous divan in the alcove. It's the most comfortable salon, a place of total intimacy. Surrounded by the absolute calm of this dwelling, I have only to await the waking of Sleeping Beauty. The gas radiator keeps me at a temperature of eighteen degrees. What wretches [we] are!"[142]

These aspects of this physical environment evidently struck Jeanneret as worthy of further emphasis, for, just two weeks later, he wrote nearly the same lines in another letter to his parents, with only slight differences in phrasing and description:

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[141] Jorge Tárrago-Mingo, "20 Rue Jacob. Le Corbusier, las fotografías de Brassaï y Ms. Barney," *RA. Revista de Arquitectura*, no. 11 (2009), 37-50.

[142] Charles-Édouard Jeanneret to his parents, 22 November 1917, reprinted in *Le Corbusier correspondance: Lettres à la famille 1900-1925*, ed. Rémi Baudouï and Arnaud Dercelles (Paris: Fondation Le Corbusier, 2011), 417: "Ma chambre à coucher est tapisée d'un noir absolu avec des corbeilles de fruits et des rinceaux assortis au Louis XV de l'alcove. Trois tapis à rayures blanc roux et noir couvrent complètement le sol. Des coussins nombreux servent de sièges avec l'énorme divan de l'alcôve. C'est un salon de tout confort et de l'intimité la plus complète. Entouré du calme absolu de cette demeure, je n'ai plus qu'à attendre que s'éveille la Belle au bois dormant. La radiateur à gaz me maintient à une température de dix-huit degrés. Pauvres que vous êtes!"

> For my darling little mother: this evening for example: her guy in Paris is in his wintry abode, that is, the third room of my apartment building, ensconced in opulent black studded with birds and baskets of fruit, the floor blanketed to the moldings in a striped rug yellow white rust-red and black. Multiple cushions, my enormous divan. Invariably silent. The radiator purring. Lying on my side on the floor, I ate the three fatidic eggs on my plate (fifty cents per egg) and my apple trifle – no sugar (we've been without sugar for the past twenty days of the month).[143]

One consistent theme of Jeanneret's missives is the hermetic character of the bedroom, its impermeability to light and sound—"total intimacy," "invariably silent," "opulent black"— and climatic comforts, the radiant heat tuned to just the right degree, and the wall-to-wall rug protecting his feet from the bare floor. In contrast with these amenities, however, the garret appears to have lacked chairs or a table—or at least, they seem not to have merited mention in Jeanneret's otherwise meticulous correspondence. When he did, finally, acquire a writing surface in early December 1917, illustrating it in a letter to his parents [**Fig. 45**], it was a mahogany podium—"This will permit me to write standing up, which I've always dreamed of doing."[144] True to his description of the room, the drawing shows a pair of cushions festooning the room's edge, with a striped rug covering the full span of the floor.

The dyad of horizontal and vertical dominated Jeanneret's artistic pursuits as well: In these early months in Paris, his bedroom doubled as the backdrop of a series of quasi-pornographic watercolors, in which the horizontal axis of human comportment—namely, copulation—became an obsessive motif. Not long after arriving in Paris, Jeanneret had begun frequenting brothels in Montmartre; his correspondence suggests that these excursions appear to have left him in a state of self-loathing, and rarely satisfied. In May 1917, he wrote to his friend and mentor, Swiss writer William Ritter, berating himself for his recent misadventures:

> I feel taken by a thirst to touch everything. To paint, but it's a planet of painters here, [yet] I must paint; I paint sometimes until eleven in the evening before turning in. …But one feels that, always bothering over yourself, life goes on down the street without you. You'd like to live a big full life, like everyone else, like every grocer's assistant, like all the honest lads and good girls, trustworthy or easy [*confiantes ou*

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[143] Charles-Édouard Jeanneret to his parents and Albert Jeanneret (his brother), 5 December 1917, reprinted in *Le Corbusier correspondance: Lettres à la famille 1900-1925*, 426: "Pour la petite mère ceci: par exemple ce soir: son gars de Paris est dans ses pénates d'hiver, soit la troisième chambre de mon appartement, tendue d'un noir opulent avec des oiseaux et des corbeilles de fruits, depuis le ras du sol couvert jusqu'au bord d'un tapis à rayures jaune blanc roux et noires. Des coussins multiples, mon énorme divan. Un silence invariable. Le radiateur ronronnant. J'ai mangé par terre, étendu sur le flanc, mes trois fatidiques oeufs au plat (cinquante centimes l'oeuf) et ma charlotte aux pommes – sans sucre (les vingt derniers jours du mois sont sans sucre)."

[144] *Ibid.*, 427.

faciles], on Saturday night—these Saturday nights where the lower-class boulevards flow with life and with embracing. But you can't give your body to the easy girls; one has to fear them; there's no lust, only pity and affection, and rather than cast one's seed into this public washtub, you'd like to caress them softly. That'd give them a laugh![145]

The paintings Jeanneret made in the afterglow of Montmartre were hardly platonic—explicitly erotic, they belonged more to the realm of ejaculatory material than to the sublimated strata of the Apollonian. As he effused to Ritter, this spate of work was urged on by the sense of touch, not sight; the pictures were surrogates for a carnal life that existed only outside his apartment, and as an object of payment. Describing his pictorial output in another letter to Ritter, he judged them "formless, disappointing. […] I want a clarity, a sheen, a sharpness that tolerate only pure pencil, discipline and rhythm, and moderation of color. Yet I paint filth. My women are bestially lascivious, prurient, in heat."[146] This "filth" comprised roughly a dozen erotic watercolors, which locate the viewer in an imaginary harem purged of the presence of men. Several images are clearly set in Jeanneret's apartment—for example, in one watercolor [**Fig. 46**] we can make out the decorative molding of the alcove at the top left, as seen in a photograph of the architect in his bedroom [**Fig. 47**]; below, on the "enormous divan," two muscular women embrace in a mutual performance of oral sex, one fair-skinned, the other, caramel-bronze. Neither figure's face is visible—this was a regular feature of Jeanneret's drawings and watercolors, in which faces are almost always reduced to a perfunctory scrawl or smudge, if not effaced entirely.[147] Likewise, the hands tend to disappear as well—in the picture discussed above, the bronze-skinned woman seems to have lost her forearm within (or beneath?) the genitals of her lover, whose leg strains for the wall as if guided by its own animus. A still life in the foreground, comprising a bottle, a lamp, and a bowl of fruit, marks the viewer's distance from the alcove proscenium, as if calling the viewer back to the "discipline and rhythm" of the tabletop. In another watercolor [**Fig. 48**], two women lie together in the corner of the apartment (notice the striped rug), one burying her head in the other's loins, her face obscured beneath a mound of ginger hair. The woman slumped against the wall leers with an inhuman face: her eye sockets are smeared and blotched with dabs of brown, and her mouth, a twist of saccharine pink. I use the pronoun "her" with caution: the figures in these watercolors are at best tentatively gendered, with only perfunctory effort given to the visual evidence of sex. When the

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[145] Charles-Édouard Jeanneret to William Ritter, 3 May 1917. Quoted in Naima and Jean-Pierre Jornod, *Le Corbusier: Catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre peint, vol. 1* (Milan: Skira, 2005), 85.

[146] Charles-Édouard Jeanneret to William Ritter, 12 May 1918. Reprinted in *Le Corbusier Le Grand*, eds. Tim Benton and Jean-Louis Cohen (London: Phaidon, 2006), n.p.

[147] Several formal portraits, including a self-portrait, contradict this rule. For obvious reasons, facelessness was more a feature of Jeanneret's figure painting than his portraiture.

painter wrote to Ritter confessing his desire to touch, and to touch everything, I think we must take him at his word: the watercolors are more an index of erotic *feeling* than of visual titillation, sampling the range of bodily affects of a subject animated by sexual desire—a subject who was, tautologically, the artist himself, who made no effort to practice on a live model.

Dredging up these images entails an obvious hermeneutic risk. It would be too easy to propose them as a hidden key to the architect's oeuvre, or if not a key, then a sinkhole into which the entire Corbusian edifice is dragged.[148] My point is emphatically *not* to interpret Jeanneret's "erotic" watercolors as the unconscious (because repressed) content of Le Corbusier's architecture, but rather to propose the topography of his apartment interior as a foil to the interiors he would construct for clients in the years to come. As constructed in his watercolors, this interior topography was defined more through the conflict of absolutes—self/other, horizontal/vertical, male/female, etc.—than through their resolution, pictorial or otherwise; indeed, I am not sure that Jeanneret really considered himself capable of resolution in any straightforward sense. In yet another letter to Ritter, the architect-painter vowed to constrain his sexual and pictorial impulses architecturally:

> I'm an architect, a builder. I like my drawing tables on their trestles, my telephone, my typewriter. I like the hiss of automobile tires and the clamor of the street. I'm not a castrato. I'll pay my visits to that seething Montmartre sloping up toward Saint-Augustin. I won't withdraw from life, I'll do what everyone else does. And I'll rent a big room, a workroom in which my furniture will shrink to nothing, and then the big walls will impose a grand design on me, in which my chaos will espouse the kinds of violence oriented toward a geometry as deliberately inscribed as the wheels and pulleys of a machine, and with the same lucidity, the same fantasy, the same concision."[149]

Far from a paladin of urbanism, Jeanneret emerges in these passages as a city-dweller unsure of his place in the outside world, but certain of the limits of his private life and obsessed by figures of alterity, his imaginary lesbians, as overheated and extreme as they were unreal, a flimsy fiction of otherness. Apart from a watercolor showing the view through the apartment window [**Fig. 49**], Jeanneret's pictorial topography was tightly circumscribed by the limits of the indoors; possessing as yet no method for mediating the chasm between inside and outside, he instead evokes the interior as a site of abjection, simultaneously desirable and repulsive. While it is not hard to foresee him turning away from this so-called "filth," fashioning his professional identity within the axial geometry of windows and walls, the watercolors offer no clear path from the boudoir of 20 rue Jacob to the Athenian vistas of the *Ville contemporaine*.

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[148] Readers seeking this reductive, but salacious, account of Le Corbusier's creative life are advised to consult Nicholas Fox Weber, *Le Corbusier: A Life* (New York: Knopf, 2009).

[149] Quoted in Nicholas Fox Weber, *op. cit.*, 133.

The solution to this impasse would depend in large part on Amédée Ozenfant, with whom Jeanneret would join forces in 1918, becoming co-inventors of 'Purism,' a movement they conceived as the logical inheritor of Cubism.[150] Take, for example, Jeanneret's breakthrough work, *La Cheminée* (The Mantlepiece, 1918) [**Fig. 50**], which the artist would later claim, apocryphally, as his "first" oil painting. The canvas depicts a corner of the artist's studio, a garret apartment in the Latin Quarter, at 20 rue Jacob, where he resided from the year of his emigration, 1917, until 1934. Were it not for the title, this canvas might easily be mistaken for a landscape: Painted in late October or early November 1918, immediately following his vacation with Ozenfant at Andernos, *La Cheminée* confronts the viewer with what seems, at first glance, a monumental edifice, its flat expanse punctuated by a massing-together of cubic architectural volumes: earth-toned slabs at left matched against the central white cube. Yet two relatively subtle details cue us to read the painting as a still life: the shadow cast by the knuckle-like column volute at left plainly falls on a vertical plane, not a ground; this mustard-colored expanse must be a wall, then, and the grey strip above, a ledge. Likewise, the uncanny doubling of the central white cube, which looks to be partially reflected (but how?) in the ground below, breaks the coherence of the ledge-space, making it difficult to decide which, if any, of the horizontal bands (each a slightly different tone of grey/mauve) is the ground plane. These ambiguities are intensified by Jeanneret's canny manipulation of the viewpoint, which rests just below the top edge of the cube, and seems at moments—but not overall—to align with the edge of the mantel.

In notes drafted many decades later, Jeanneret placed *La Cheminée* under the sign of Athens, describing it as an experiment with "space, light, intensity of composition [… and] behind all this, the site of the Acropolis is present."[151] At the time of painting this inaugural Purist canvas, however, his assessment of his work was less grandiose; in his journal on 2 September 1918, contrasting his confident mastery over still-life objects "bottles, books, inkpots, simple monochromatic materials"—with his incapacity when confronted with landscapes, and, more enigmatically, with objects and "organisms" rooted to the ground:

Seduced by a landscape, a site where a light gives color to the outlines, [by] an

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[150] Although scholars tend to gravitate toward the micro-movement's theoretical statements, from the booklet/manifesto *Après le Cubisme*, published in 1918 as accompaniment to the inaugural Purist exhibition, to Jeanneret/Ozenfant's jointly authored contributions to their co-edited journal, *L'Esprit Nouveau*, it was in Jeanneret's paintings circa 1919-20 that the horizontal perspective was first announced, and only later codified theoretically. For an English translation of *Après le Cubisme*, see "After Cubism," in *L'Esprit Nouveau: Purism in Paris, 1918-1925*, ed. Carol S. Eliel (New York: Harry Abrams, 2000).

[151] Le Corbusier, Notebook E20, Bogota, May 1951, no. 451. Quoted in Naima and Jean-Pierre Jornod, *Le Corbusier: Catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre peint*, vol. 1 (Milan: Skira, 2005), 329, n. 2.

> organism issued from the ground, raised up like a prism, animated by the play of shadow and light, I no longer have any desire to paint them [note: Jeanneret must mean 'organisms' in the plural], since I feel them rise out of the ground, but I know that they'll be cut adrift [*désemparés*] on canvas; they'll dirty my canvas, inappropriately rending and staining it; I [have to] discipline myself; and how easily is fantasy put to death! My still-lifes sometimes have verve, noblesse. Or else, failing, they're inept. Abandoning disorderly ardor, I create like the good Lord, with wisdom. The constricted heart does better at encouraging the spirit; the hand becomes a mere tool.[152]

Although awkwardly worded, these jottings point to a problem at the level of the ground plane, and its solution at the level of surface composition, the Purist maneuver par excellence. Jeanneret's complaint has less to do with the outdoors per se than with the relationship of objects ("organisms") to the ground, which, although rooted to the earth in life, become unmoored and uprooted when deposited on, or into, the blank canvas. As for the wisdom of *le bon Dieu*, this was a matter of rationalizing the process of composition: we know, for example, that Jeanneret and Ozenfant employed a method of geometric 'regulation' (les traces régulateurs) in their Purist compositions, reproducing these patterns in *L'Esprit Nouveau*, as if to prove, mathematically, their joint fidelity to disciplinary regime of Purism [**Fig. 54**].

Despite their united front, there is a subtle difference between Jeanneret's and Ozenfant's respective contributions. Compare, for example, the Jeanneret's *Nature morte à la pile d'assiettes et au livre* (Still Life with Stack of Plates and Book, 1920) [**Fig.55**] with Ozenfant's *Nature morte à la guitare et aux bouteilles* (Still Life with Guitar and Bottles, 1920) [**Fig. 56**]: Both canvases depict tabletops littered with an assortment of household items, including plates, glasses, books, pipes, guitars: all standard Cubist fare. Critics often point to the use of axonometric perspective in this period of Purist painting; true to form, both artists treat their respective cache of objects as planes parallel with the picture surface, each thing (each plane) stacked on a vertical axis, uncoupled from the viewer's apex of vision, and without foreshortening.[153] Yet there remains in Ozenfant's painting an echo of a less Manichean (less *Corbusian*) spatiality: Notice the disparity between the bottle at right, imposing, monumental, rigorously planar, and the wine glass and carafe at left; to my eye, the latter seem to tilt just slightly in the viewer's direction, as if swaddled in space. It seems possible to imagine grasping the wine glass—picking it up, placing it down again on the tabletop; there is just enough of a nod to the spectator's phenomenological orbit. Not so with Jeanneret, in whose *Nature morte* no iota of heft or gravity remains. Yet, for all its flatness and frontality, Jeanneret's picture is not entirely

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[152] Le Corbusier, Notebook, 2 Sept 1918. Quoted in Naima and Jean-Pierre Jornod, *op. cit.*, 332.

[153] See Rosalind Krauss, "Léger, Le Corbusier, and Purism," *Artforum*, vol. 10, no. 8 (Apr 1972), 50-53; see also Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky, "Transparency, Literal and Phenomenal," *Perspecta*, vol. 8 (1963), 45-54.

without ground: half emptied of its ruby fluid, the bottle at top right appears to sit on a different plane than the other objects in the picture, its bottom resting improbably on the rear edge of the table, which now reads—no surprise—as a horizon. For Jeanneret, unlike Ozenfant, the absence of a ground plane in depth yielded a compensatory, second-order ground. Failing to conjoin organism and soil, Jeanneret permits their reconciliation as an optical effect, as if reducing the lesson of the Acropolis to the scale of his studio mantelpiece. This sheer horizon cues us not to take the space of the picture, or *in* the picture, too seriously: no one need wring his hands over the airless atmosphere of *Nature morte à la pile d'assiettes et au livre*, because a promise of *real* space looms portentously in the distance—a place of solid footing, although deferred. I see no simple way of deciding which gesture came first, the liquefaction of the picture's near ground plane or the displacement of that ground to an impossibly far remove, yet in a way that appears proximate. That is the point: the missing middle ground sends us looking for a substitute; but with no dialectical mediation of here/there, the eye can only shuttle back and forth from one term to the other.

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Keeping this trajectory of paintings in view, let me telescope forward, again, from Jeanneret to Le Corbusier and from the Purist experiments of 1918-20 to the Salon d'Automne of 1922, an auspicious moment for the young architect-painter. Although he had been a resident of Paris since 1917, he had as yet received no architectural commissions in France, apart from relatively unglamorous commercial projects, and none whatsoever in Paris (save for a minor addition to a client's garden terrace). Those who recognized the name Le Corbusier would have thought him more an essayist than an architect; the name had first appeared in the pages of *L'Esprit Nouveau*, usually sharing a byline with a 'M. Saugnier,' a pseudonym for Ozenfant. It was not until he aired the *Ville contemporaine* that Jeanneret's pseudonym became identified with a real-world architectural program.

The poster object of this program was a plaster maquette of Le Corbusier's Maison Citrohan [**Fig. 57**], a speculative design for a standardized housing stock not unlike the Dom-Ino project of 1915, although far less innovative in terms of structure and morphology.[154] Shortly after his co-founding of the journal *L'Esprit Nouveau* together

[154] In a passage that deserves to be quoted at length, Colin Rowe reads the Maison Citrohan project as a backward step from the "new beginning" of the Dom-Ino patent: "Like the primitive hut of the Abbé Laugier, Maison Dom-Ino appears to declare the primacy of columns and the largely superfluous nature of any opaque enclosure; and, going beyond Laugier, it then appears to announce the 'inevitable' nature of a space conditioned by a 'modern' structure. Horizontal planes predominated; the building becomes something like a club sandwich or a Neapolitan wafer; and, when these enticing suggestions become allied with ensuing deductions about plan and 'free plan,' then it

with Ozenfant and Paul Dermée, Le Corbusier resumed work on the theme of affordable housing, developing the Citrohan project in hopes of profiting from what he expected would be a national campaign of postwar reconstruction. In December 1921, he published an early iteration of the Citrohan prototype in an article for *L'Esprit Nouveau* titled "Les Maisons en série" (Mass-Production Housing), taking care to distinguish the name "Citrohan" from that of auto-maker Citroën (which had declined the architect's request for sponsorship) [**Fig. 58**]. Although resembling the sort of double-height ateliers that were common across much of working-class Paris, the Citrohan house was to be installed in a rural or suburban setting—the drawing published in *L'Esprit Nouveau* places it in an open field, with little indication of the local topography save for an umbrella and beach chairs. Rhapsodizing over this latest project, Le Corbusier emphasizes the scheme's portability, emphasizing its usefulness in the shifting terrain of postwar mobility. In twenty years' time, he predicts, the "inevitable evolution" of society

> will have transformed relations betweens renters and proprietors, will have modified our conception of habitation and the cities will be organized not chaotic. The house will no longer be this heavy thing that pretends to defy the centuries, the opulent object by which wealth is manifested; it will be a tool in the same what that the car becomes a tool. The house will no longer be an archaic entity, heavily rooted [*lourdement enracinée*] in the ground by deep foundations, built 'to last,' and in devotion to the cult of family, race, etc., which has long attached to it.[155]

Pivoting between a straightforward presentation of the cost-saving benefits of industrial building materials and a long-sighted appraisal on the relationship between dwelling and ground (with shades of Einaudi and Foville), these lines summarize the argument for architectural deracination. The claim about escaping the "heavily rooted" dwellings of the past must be taken literally: because lightweight, the Citrohan home

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might seem that the whole box of tricks has also been presented. But, alas for so facile a route from Maison Dom-Ino to Villa Savoye. For there are horrible road blocks to be negotiated. There is, first of all, Maison Citrohan, a general statement which, contrary to Dom-Ino, proposes a space with restricted horizontal extension, an open-ended tunnel space; and then, as something supremely difficult to cope with, in terms of the critical clichés of modern architecture, there is the magisterial surface [of Villa Stein] at Garches." Colin Rowe, "The Provocative façade: frontality and contrapposto," in *Le Corbusier, Architect of the Century* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1987), 26.

[155] Le Corbusier, *Vers une architecture* [1923] (Paris: Flammarion, 2005), 193: "L'évolution sociale fatale aura transformé les rapports entre locataires et propriétaires, aura modifie les conceptions de l'habitations et les villes seront ordonnées au lieu d'être chaotiques. La maison ne sera plus cette chose épaisse et qui prétend défier les siècles et qui est l'objet opulent par quoi se manifeste la richesse; elle sera un outil comme l'auto devient un outil. La maison ne sera plus une entité archaïque, lourdement enracinée dans le sol par de profondes fondations, batie de 'dur' et à la devotion de laquelle s'est instauré depuis si longtemps le culte de la famille, de la race, etc."

would be perfectly transportable, its components capable of being hauled at comparatively low cost, carried by train or truck far from their place of manufacture and assembled on site.

Portability was even more the theme of the Citrohan house shown at the Salon d'Automne, a version several generations removed from the 1920 precedent. Fully half of the building was now lofted above ground level, its weight supported by thin ferroconcrete pillars, called *pilotis*, with the entire ground floor relocated a level up, making space below the home for a car to be parked. Instead of rising to the top floor, the exterior staircase now terminated at the piano nobile, segueing to a terrace bounded by a chest-height parapet. In a sketch of the updated project [**Fig. 59**], the south wall of the Citrohan house, which had formerly been designated as the rear, now faces a narrow roadway, such that the atelier window looks out onto the rear yard, away from what would have been the main access route. Although we possess no corresponding view of the interior, the outdoor perspective shows two figures leaning on the terrace parapet, again, facing *away* from the house. The site illustrated here is nondescript, but nonetheless identifiable: the home sits in a country field, perhaps an orchard, with regularly spaced fruit trees bordering along the front and garden sides, as if marking the property line; the plot is flat, with low hills rising in the far distance. It is not clear whether the paved entryway at left describes a road or driveway; in any case, there is no feature of the plot that would prevent a visitor from appreciating the home in the round, in the same way as a visitor to the Salon d'Automne might have perambulated the maquette.

Some combination of the these features must have aroused the interest of Georges Besnus, who saw the Citrohan model at the Salon d'Automne and requested that a similar version be constructed in the Paris suburbs, although he would settle for a lot in Vaucresson, a village near Versailles.[156] Whereas the Citrohan house had been designed for installation in a level, open lot, with no significant urban infrastructure in its vicinity, Villa Besnus [**Fig. 60**] was to be situated at a major intersection in Vaucresson, at the corner of Allouard and Route de Versailles, occupying a small, split-level lot sloping abruptly from street-level to terminate in a raised yard. Le Corbusier drew up a first set of plans between January and March 1923, with minor alterations continuing over the summer[157]; from the beginning, the front façade was to be aligned with larger of the two streets, Route de Versailles, which lined the plot on the north side, while the garden front would be treated as a façade in its own right, the atelier window of the Citrohan model reduced to half-height and an additional strip window added above, both positioned symmetrically at center. In his initial sketches [**Fig. 63**], there was to be a third façade oriented along rue Allouard, facing west, its surface treated asymmetrically, with the two long windows at

[156] Le Corbusier, *Oeuvre Complète 1910-1929*, 48.

[157] For a comprehensive study of the design history of Villa Besnus, see Tim Benton, *The Villas of Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, 1920-1930* (Boston and Basel: Birkhauser, 2007), 27-33.

left counterbalanced by a vertical strip of glazing at right, the latter indicating the upward path of a staircase inside. However, on 5 April, Le Corbusier rotated the staircase block ninety degrees—a decision he narrates in his *Oeuvre Complète*:

> An evening at the 'Vel[odrome] d'Hiver' during the 'Six Days' [a week of bicycle races] – a magisterial spectacle of grandeur and unity. As I emerged, in the mental silence produced by the street [*dans ce silence mentale que vous donne la rue*], it suddenly dawned on me that the staircase block at right angles to the house was an antagonistic rhythm, breaking the unity of the composition. The staircase makes a 45° turn and aligns itself along the façade, extending it, *amplifying* it. It's the kind of intense moment which teaches lessons for a lifetime: you must turn your back on the accidental, sacrifice the piquant detail, go for unity. You must exploit *the whole site*, you must always make use of the largest dimension, etc.[158]

To decipher these lines, it helps to recall the layout of the plot, which, sloping sharply toward a linear roadway, gave the architect only two options for organizing the main volume of the building: either to force a L-shaped house onto the split-level site, with the bottom of the front façade a full level lower than its West-facing counterpart; or else, by artificially widening the front façade, to disguise the side volume, affirming the priority of the north- and south-facing planes—thereby creating the illusion that the house occupies only a wafer-thin volume parallel with the street. On 5 April, Le Corbusier decided on the latter, having initially sketched plans for the former. That he credits the "mental silence" of the street, and the circulation of cyclists in the Velodrome d'Hiver, in explaining the significance of this decision is, even if apocryphal, nonetheless deeply meaningful; for the layout of the Vaucresson site in relation street plays a decisive part in shaping the project's final morphology. Arranged asymmetrically, employing *traces régulateurs* to govern the proportions and location of the fenestration, the north façade includes several motifs specifically calibrated to the traffic pattern, including a rectangular bay window and long gangway, or *marquise*, the latter projecting from the first-storey stairwell to reach the far limit of the plot, terminating directly above an entry gate.

These features, like the design of Villa Besnus overall, did not emerge ex nihilo; yet their nearest precedent can be found, not in either version of the Citrohan house, but rather in a little-remarked project which Le Corbusier devised around the same moment, between 1920-22, for a "Villa au bord de la mer" (Seaside Villa; several views and a plan of which he later published in *Vers une architecture*) [**Fig. 65**].[159] Le Corbusier's interior

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[158] Le Corbusier, *Oeuvre Complète, 1910-1929*, 49-50.

[159] The identification and dating of this project has long been a source of controversy: In Le Corbusier's *Oeuvre Complète*, the house is identified with a project for couturier Paul Poiret, on the basis of correspondence in 1916 in which Le Corbusier mentions a "villa au bord de la mer." This strikes me as exceedingly flimsy evidence; I follow H. Allen Brooks in dating the project much later, to the period of the Citrohan scheme and other speculative villas; the perspective drawings, both interior and exterior (FLC 14711 and

renderings of the main atelier space in each project [**Fig. 66 and 67**] offer a strikingly similar orientation, not only of viewpoints, but also of walls, windows, and even furnishings. An identical grand piano is stowed in the right-hand corner of each image; with a bit of imagination, we can see the spiral staircase of the seaside house as predecessor of the sinuous chimney in the Besnus house. Although this pattern of similarities becomes less clear-cut once we adjourn to the exterior, there are nevertheless several key points of congruence, especially as concerns the relationship of building to site. As seen in aerial perspective, the *Villa au bord de la mer* sits atop the edge of a steep sea cliff, probably in imitation of the rocky shoreline of the Côte d'Azur; for poetic flourish, Le Corbusier draws a staircase leading from the cliff's edge to the sandy beach below, where a small dinghy is moored. However, despite its maritime setting, it is not the sea but the *road* that determines the axial orientation of *Villa au bord de la mer*. In both plan and perspective, a street is shown passing through the site in an unbending line, terminating in a patch of scrub at far left [**Fig. 68**]. One wonders—indeed, it is quite an enigma—why the architect decided that the road should be positioned on the sea-facing side, rather than in the rear so as to preserve the view. And why, having thus sullied the view, does he then sheath the ground floor of the house in a curtain wall, denying himself the use of his signature horizontal windows, or *fenêtres en longueur*—why else, if not precisely to *limit* the view from the ground, making the perspective from the second-floor loggia all the more precious?

To make sense of the design of the *Villa au bord de la mer*, we must understand its weird spatiality, and Le Corbusier's insistence of framing sea-space in terms of road-space, as an act of displacement: By aligning house with road and sea, Le Corbusier implies that the solution to the one problem—the problem of the seashore—can be applied to the other: in both cases, the topography confronts the occupant/spectator with a territorial limit, beyond which no further ambulation is possible. To see in Villa Besnus the rudiment, reconfigured, of the earlier experiment with displaced horizons is to grasp the stake, as well as the modernity, of Le Corbusier's first Parisian project: contra von Moos, there was no possibility of applying the Citrohan model to the Vaucresson site; it was rather a question of making productive use of the road's delimitation of that site. Despite a generous sidewalk bordering the Route de Versailles, which could have mitigated the lurching profile the plot, Le Corbusier instead treats the boundary between home and road as a territorial absolute, the urban equivalent of a seashore: the garden level takes the place of the plateau, while the sidewalk approximates the sandy beach. Even the sea cliff has its analogue in the Vaucresson design: by compressing two piles of loose earth on either side of the north façade, Le Corbusier creates a sort of artificial embankment, with a steep ramp at right leading the visitor from ground-level to the rear garden. Completing the maritime metaphor is a gangway, or *marquise*, jutting out over

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FLC 30280, respectively), match the style of similar sketches made between 1920-22. See Brooks, *Le Corbusier's Formative Years: Charles-Édouard Jeanneret at La Chaux-de-Fonds* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 500, fn. 30.

the entry door, providing the occupant with a perspective from which the road might appear (even if only symbolically) as a literal torrent.

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In March 1923, while still engaged with plans for Villa Besnus, Le Corbusier began work simultaneously on another private residence: an apartment-atelier for his collaborator, Ozenfant, to be located on the southwest edge of Paris near Parc Montsouris, a neighborhood adjacent to the recently demilitarized glacis. The site of the Ozenfant project again confronted Le Corbusier with a road-oriented landscape, overlooking the intersection of Avenue Reille, a major traffic artery situated along the north side of the lot, and rue de Square Montsouris, a narrow cobblestone street, to the east [**Fig. 69**].[160] Standing in the empty lot, a spectator's view to the north would have been obstructed by the high retaining wall of the Reservoir de Montsouris, which rose sharply from across Avenue de Reille. Ultimately, we shall see, Le Corbusier elected to give each of the project's two street-facing façades—north and east, respectively—equal priority, offering a self-sufficient composition of windows and planes to visitors approaching from either direction, to the point of including an extra door at ground-level on the north façade.[161]

Drawing up a first set of plans for (and, possibly, *with*) Ozenfant concurrent with the final scheme for Villa Besnus, between March and April 1923, Le Corbusier applied a modified Dom-Ino framework to the site, treating the two lower floors of the house as adjunct to the third-floor studio, a massive cubic atelier that doubled as Ozenfant's living quarters.[162] Peering upward from the entry courtyard, visitors would glimpse the top of a luminous cube inset into the ceiling, the glazed floor of a dog-toothed skylight; one would guess that the floor plan of the house mirrored the right-angled proportions of its façade. Once indoors, however, the angular shape of the lot would have become immediately apparent, and nowhere more so than in open-plan studio, which tapers into a narrow *poché* at rear [**Fig. 72**]. For the first time in Le Corbusier's work, notes Tim Benton, we can identify a relatively continuous route of ascent: matching the spiral entry stair,

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[160] Wendy Redfield, "The Suppressed Site: Revealing the Influence of Site on Two Purist Works," in *Site Matters: Design Concepts, Histories, and Strategies*, eds. Carol J. Burns and Andrea Kahn (London: Routledge, 2005), 197.

[161] On this point, Tim Benton notes: "The purpose of the front door seems more to declare 'house' than to provide useful access." Tim Benton, *The Villas of Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, 1920-1930* (Zürich: Birkhauser, 2009), 41.

[162] Owing to the close working relationship between Ozenfant and Le Corbusier, the extant drawings for this project might well represent a late stage of what could have been a longer process of discussion and planning. In any event, the sequence of projects in the early months of 1923 is less important for my argument then the specifics of site in each project.

another spiral staircase takes the visitor from ground-level to Ozenfant's studio and living quarters on the third floor, with cutaways offering a vista of a small studio/gallery on the second floor.[163] Having reached the top of the stair, it was possible to ascend a level further, climbing a stair to the mezzanine, from which a steep ladder offered access to the roof via a trap door. Across the room, suspended above a white mantelpiece in the northwest corner, a monkish library/study was accessible via another ladder, its single, small window framing a view over the Reservoir.

The intersection of roadways at Maison-Atelier Ozenfant played a far more ambitious, if ambiguous, role than at Vaucresson. In the earlier project, confronted with the strong axis of the Route de Versailles, Le Corbusier had fallen back on the metaphoric shoreline of his *Villa au bord de la mer*; thus dominated by the road, the Besnus house relinquishes its interior volume, trading on the wafer-thinness of its lengthened front façade. By contrast, the intersection of Square de Montsouris and Avenue Reille furnishes the architect with two contradictory axes—not north/east, as Redfield suggests, but horizontal/vertical, the axes of Purist hieratism. Conceived as an intersection in its own right, the interior of the studio floor amounts to a topographic riddle: Facing north, Redfield notes, the viewer's gaze would skirt the upper edge of Reservoir Montsouris, exactly parallel with the top of the plateau[164]—a line echoed by the window's lowermost row of panels. Looking east, however, the occupant would have been able to see far down Avenue Reille, facing directly into the two-way traffic flow, recalling *Urbanisme*'s breathless hymn to "cars, cars, faster, faster," and to the spectator "ensconced in power, in potency" (an experience which would have been appropriate to Ozenfant, who was, in addition to being a painter, writer, and occasional couturier, an avid motorist as well).[165] However, neither of these perspectives is exactly the answer, or the solution, to the other: the north side aligns the occupant with the horizon, but erases the middle ground of the road; whereas, facing east, the horizontal vista becomes dislodged, and with it, the spectator's optical footing. Only from the standpoint of the mezzanine, facing diagonally across the room, would the difference between the two axes be brought to order: as with the Vaucresson *marquise*, a steel railing wraps around the contour of the observation platform; not coincidentally, the right-angled railing points in a straight line toward the window mullion, thereby articulating an intermediary northeast axis.

My point is not to imply a secret causality behind the dimensions and axial alignment of the Ozenfant studio. I am simply insisting, as Le Corbusier himself would have, and did, that the external site—in this case, the traffic intersection—was an essential part of the *interior* plan. Le Corbusier had digested enough of the traffic-planner's discourse to

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[163] Benton, *The Villas of Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, 1920-1930*, 38-9.

[164] Redfield, "The Suppressed Site: Revealing the Influence of Site on Two Purist Works," 198.

[165] On Ozenfant's *autophilie*, see Françoise Ducros, "Amédée Ozenfant, Purist Brother," in *L'Esprit Nouveau: Purism in Paris, 1918-1925*, 72-99.

know how much rested on the architecture of intersections: Hénard devoted an entire chapter of his *Études sur les transformations de Paris* to their design, with diagrams that showed the various ways carriages might cross each other—and careen into each other—in the street [**Fig. 74**].[166] Le Corbusier knew these images intimately, having reproduced one of Hénard's drawings of a traffic roundabout in *Urbanisme*; he might well have thought of them—especially the diagrams of right-angle street crossings—while working on the Ozenfant scheme, not least because the project required a modicum of traffic engineering in its own right: a garage had to be shoehorned into an already cramped ground floor, with room enough for Ozenfant to enter and exit through the narrow entry. Looking from Hénard's drawings to the plan of Ozenfant's studio, we could consider the non-coincidence of its two equivocal axes, and the architect's refusal to prioritize one over the other, as an architectural translation of the ideal traffic pattern—an intersection without accidents.

The street was an unstable element in Le Corbusier's topographic thinking; and in Ozenfant's case, the instability of these two perspectives combined in a way that made it difficult to answer some rather basic question about the ground plane of the room. The architect has gone out of his way, I am arguing, to obscure the axial guidelines that would assist the client/occupant in coordinating his use of the space, beginning, for example, with the question of *standing*. Where does the room ask the viewer to position himself? This was a matter of no small importance for Ozenfant, who could not simply linger on the observation platform during the working hours of the day; it was crucial that he be able to decide where and how to place his easels, or how to arrange tables to make drawings, or prepare canvases, or perform the many other tasks of a painter's studio.

The question remains what kind of an effect the street-oriented layout was intended to have on its occupant, who was not just any client, but Le Corbusier's most intimate collaborator. I can think of two possible explanations, both of which turn the means of architecture to pedantic ends, involving the painter *as* painter in the displacement of street plan to floor plan. On one hand, Le Corbusier seems to have drawn on the model furnished by the Acropolis (to which, as noted above, he credited the vital shift in his own mastery of pictorial space) in order to dictate a positive content, or function, for his collaborator's residence. As the architect would surely have known, the term 'acropolis' can refer to either the "topmost" or the "outermost" urban agglomeration, a separate *polis* overlooking the city below. Like the Athenian temple mount, the Ozenfant site sits at the southern edge of Paris, less than a mile from the former *glacis* and within sight of a plateau (the Reservoir); to a literalist, it would be as good a candidate for a Parisian acropolis as any. To see how this metaphor might be applied indoors, it will help to recall Le Corbusier's gloss on architectural phenomenology from *Vers une architecture*:

> The human eye, in its investigations, is always turning and man also turns to the right, to the left, clear around. He takes in everything and is drawn toward the center of

[166] Eugène Hénard, *Étude sur les transformations de Paris et autres écrits sur l'urbanisme*, ed. Jean Louis-Cohen (Paris: L'Equerre, 1984), 237-296.

> gravity of the site as a whole. Suddenly the problem spreads to the surroundings. The neighboring houses, the near or distant mountain, the low or high horizon are formidable masses whose cubic volumes make a powerful effect. The *apparent* cubic volume and the *real* cubic volume are gauged instantaneously, anticipated by the intelligence.[167]

Following a similar pattern of ambulation and observation, we ascend the Ozenfant house from ground level to studio, our path terminating in the rear of the open room, facing the stairway to the observation platform. *Turning clear around*, we are drawn to the cubic space articulated by the windows and skylight—not the center of the footprint, but central to "the site as a whole." From here, *the problem spreads to the surroundings*, the interior embracing a landscape composed, not of sea and hill, but of road and retaining wall. Although we are in Paris, not Athens, this path from rear *poché* to luminous, outward-facing center follows closely the plan of the Parthenon as reproduced in *Vers une architecture* [**Fig. 75**]: One of Le Corbusier's many appropriations from Auguste Choisy's illustrated history of Western architecture, the plate marks the sight-line from the eastern gate of the Propylaea (the ceremonial entrance to the temple complex) to the statue of Athena Promachos. The Parthenon looms to the right, resting on-axis with the Propylea, but misaligned with the towering bronze; yet this misalignment is a crucial aspect of the plan, revealing the volume of the temple to the ambulating viewer.[168] Transposed to the Ozenfant studio, the ceremonial gateway of the Propylaea becomes the protruding mass of the mezzanine, orienting the viewer at an angle offset from the north-south axis. Likewise, for the Parthenon itself, we must substitute the negative space of the traffic intersection—a rectangular solild space defined, as in Hénard's studies, as much by the weft of vehicular movement as by the intersecting streets themselves.

On the other hand, however, the studio's effect can be framed negatively, in terms of the implicit—and, by the year 1923, explicit—antagonism between two collaborators whose partnership (and friendship) had begun to spoil. I have sketched an account of the difference between Jeanneret and Ozenfant as painters; let me suggest a reading of Le Corbusier's studio for his "Purist brother" as machine of *discipline*, forcing Ozenfant toward Jeanneret's own pet solution—the horizontal perspective—and away from his typical handling of objects in depth. One measure of this antagonism, and of the studio's pedantic function, is the relative discomfort with which Ozenfant appears to have occupied it. In photographs taken after the client had set up his residence, we see a curiously sparse studio (see figs. 37-39): Ozenfant seems to have equivocated about the problem of axes, setting up his two trestle tables perpendicular to one another, so as to

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[167] Le Corbusier, *Toward an Architecture,* 224.

[168] Choisy's influence on Le Corbusier has been studied exhaustively in the past two generations of scholars; for a foundational treatment, see Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1980 [1960]), 23-34.

benefit from the views through both windows (a single stool sits between them).[169] But his easel rests against the wall like a homeless prop, as if the painter were unsure how else it should be placed; and the few paintings we see displayed have the look of exploratory gestures, experiments in finding a place for pictures in a room lacking a reliable ground plane. A large still life put below the suspended library—Ozenfant's *Nature morte aux bouteilles* (Still Life with Bottles, 1922) [**Fig. 76**]—seems to test the trompe-l'oeil effects of Purist composition, its strong orthogonals carving a niche in the wall, and thereby echoing the cubbyhole chamber directly above. Yet this strikes me as a flimsy way of repurposing the canvas, which had been completed over a year before its installation here; to insist on the veracity of the painting's shallow depth is to offer its contents as real things in the world, capable of being manipulated in the round. But the bottles are huge—ludicriously so—and the pictorial ledge thrown into relief, unfavorably in my view, by the ledge of the mantelpiece adjacent to it. The same can be said of a painting hung opposite, *Rome, Rouges* (Rome, Reds, 1920-25) [**Fig. 77**], which had been exhibited as early as 1920, but is here shown having been substantially reworked, its volumes reduced to matte planes, and the drama of the work shifting to the balancing of tones on the surface.

My hunch—it can only be an educated guess—is that Ozenfant was forced to respond to the pictorial conditions of his new studio; foremost among which was the absence, or unbinding, of the ground plane. One could not continue to make still-lifes from atop the Acropolis, or in the middle—the displaced middle—of a traffic intersection; that is the point: by its very architecture, the Ozenfant house forces its occupant to confront a surroundings changed by the automobile, and rendered inhospitable to the small world of the studio. Of course, it would have been possible for Ozenfant to retreat into the darkened chamber of the crow's-nest study, or to the sheltered laboratory; but "retreat" is precisely what these structures seem built to convey: a turning-away from the streetscape, and from the field of contradictions—between horizontal and vertical, horizon and wall—which Le Corbusier regarded as most pressing. To seek the horizon: such is the studio's ethic, and its challenge to painting. There was no guarantee, however, that it would be possible to paint at all in view of *this* "Nouveau Paris."

[169] I grant, of course, that the barrenness of the painter's studio might simply describe his preferred conditions of work. Early in his career with Jeanneret, following a divorce with his first wife, Ozenfant is reputed to have cleared out all his furniture save for a handful of bentwood chairs, a sofa bed, and a mahogany table. However, that this divestment resulted from the collapse of his marriage does not suggest that he aimed, or wished, for a studio such as the one Le Corbusier designed him. On Ozenfant's divorce, see Nicholas Fox Weber, *Le Corbusier, a Life*, 162-3.

CHAPTER THREE

TERRA INCOGNITA

> *Observe the tourist embarked upon his junket: initiative escapes him; he has not even the initiative to commit an error, to take the wrong path, to lose himself in the streets of an unknown city. For him, travel has been stripped of its essential characteristic: adventure. And adventure engenders discovery. During his travels, our tourist discovers nothing.*
>
> —JEAN CASSOU[170]

In April 1934, Fernand Léger mounted a small show of drawings and gouaches at Galerie Vignon, a one-room venue in the vicinity of La Madeleine. Bearing the unassuming title *Objets*, Léger's exhibition centered around a suite of pencil and ink drawings made in September 1933, while the artist was on holiday at his family farm, called 'La Bougonnière,' in Lisores, a village in the Calvados region of Lower Normandy. It was a show unlike anything he had done previously, starting with the poster announcement [**Fig. 78**], which listed the exhibition's contents as if itemizing the wares of a bric-a-brac shop: "Roots – Flints – Quarter of Mutton – Corkscrew – Vase – Pants – Piece of Beef – Cheese – Nuts – etc." This was just the sort of unspectacular stuff one might find along the edge of a country field, or in a butcher's shop window, or at the house of a peasant—not branded commodities, in other words, but objects marked by use and time, to which any number of still-life painters could have laid equal claim.[171] Nothing in the poster's inventory even vaguely suggests the themes of Léger's art of the previous two decades, with its dreams of the big city and its elegy to the "object-spectacle" in myriad mass-produced forms; to the contrary, we seem to have escaped modernity entirely, retreating to the country and to time immemorial.

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[170] Jean Cassou, "Du voyage au tourisme," *Communications* no. 10 (1967), 25-34: "[V]oilà le touriste embarqué dans un circuit: l'initiative lui échappe; il n'aura même plus celle de commettre une erreur, de se tromper de chemin, de se perdre dans les rues d'une ville inconnue. Le voyage s'est pour lui dépouillé de ce caractère essentiel: l'aventure. Et l'aventure engendre la découverte. Notre touriste ne fera, durant son voyage, aucune découverte."

[171] How Léger understood the relationship between his drawings and the commodity-form can be gleaned from a catalogue essay he contributed to the exhibition of his student, Elizabeth Blair, at New York's Becker Gallery in 1933: "The essential is the object. Error consists in forgetting that grain, cotton, wool are vital objects and in being interested in them only because of their value in gold, their speculative value. The economic purpose is not 'to make millionaires out of gasoline' but to distribute gasoline according to demand and need. Wall Street is an abstraction." Quoted in Matthew Affron, *Fernand Léger and the Spectacle of Objects* (Ph.D. diss, Yale University, 1994), 165. Affron's dissertation is essential reading for any study of the painter's career between 1925 and 1935.

In the arc of Léger's career, the Galerie Vignon show marked a rare moment of pessimism on the part of an artist ordinarily given to wild optimism about modernism and modernity alike. The conditions of his work at La Bougonnière were frankly primitive, and purposefully so: absent both electricity and telephony, he trained his sights upon his immediate surroundings—a practice initiated several years earlier, beginning in 1928, and which had become something of a ritual for Léger as of the early '30s. With a few exceptions, the trove of objects advertised on the exhibition poster derived from the farmhouse and its environs, as sourced by Léger himself: Flint was abundant in the soil of Calvados; mutton, beef, and cheese were important agricultural products; gloves, pants, and corkscrews touched on the peasant's dress and drink; excavated tree roots were a common sight along the edges of fields and roadways, pulled up and left to bleach in the sun.

Art historians have come to read these drawings, not without reason, as expressions of Depression-era austerity—artworks in which nature, the countryside, and organicism are variously proffered as answers to the decrepitude of postwar capitalism. As one recent study puts it, Léger's object drawings attest to "a new communion with nature," in which machine symbols would be traded for rope, stone, and meat, putting paid to "the cold detachment of his earlier work" in a retreat to "naturalism and empathy – a new romanticism almost."[172] Yet the drawings are more complex, and far more difficult to pin down than this account allows. For one thing, the way Léger handled his titular objects, centering each one on a blank page without ground plane or horizon, and omitting the landscape entirely, owes everything to modernism—in particular, to Cubism—and little to the atavism that led other painters (including Léger's close associate, Le Corbusier) back to nature in the early '30s.

In Léger's drawing of "corkscrew fragments" (*Tire-bouchon fragment*) [**Fig. 79**], for example, the objects at issue are hardly naturalistic or comfortingly organic. To the contrary, we would be hard-pressed to describe these torqued bits—made of what? metal? flesh? putty? carved wood?—in terms of functionality, or even tangibility; they have none of the obduracy or uniformity of lathed metal. Indeed, the screws are more *bodily* than tool-like, nearer in physiognomy to an intestinal parasite than any bottle-opener. Much the same could be said about Léger's drawing of a "flower vase" (*Vase à fleurs*) [**Fig. 80**], which, with its three weird ventricles at the top, resembles an organ of the body—a beef heart, perhaps—more than any household decoration. How the vase would stand upright on a table, let alone hold water, is anyone's guess; same, too, the source of the otherworldly reticulation of light and shadow that plays across the surface of these objects. The tools and tactics of naturalism hold little purchase in these drawings; which has not stopped Léger, however, from deploying them to excess.[173]

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[172] Romy Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France Between the Wars* (New Haven and London, 1995), 69-70.

[173] In a similar vein, Picasso and Braque, too, deployed the tools of naturalism toward anti-naturalistic ends in the moment of high Cubism. See Clement Greenberg, "Collage"

Let me propose, as a starting place, that Léger's engagement with objects in 1933 had something to do with the predicament glossed in Cassou's epigraph—that is, with modernism's effort to come to grips with mass tourism, and to take on its spatial effects (its estrangement of traveler from destination) for its own ends. For Léger, the refashioning of Normandy in the 1920s as a touristic playzone, standing between Paris and the beachfront resorts of the Channel Coast, was a predicament in the most literal sense. Although born in Normandy, Léger had long since become a Parisian; his studio on rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs was a lifelong refuge and the immovable center of his personal universe. But he was also a *Normand*, a man of the northern grasslands, who never shed his affinity with, or affection for, the peasants and cultivators of his native Calvados. Like many expatriate provincials, Léger stood with one foot on each side of the binary of mobility and alienation, toeing an awkward, and increasingly difficult, line. As this chapter argues at length, the moment of September '33 marked a nadir of the painter's disillusionment with tourism; yet even in the depths of this bout of pessimism, Léger's drawings were never fully gripped by despair, and never given over to facile atavism. The broken bits of the landscape drift by, homeless and alien, yet their brokenness continues to remain visible as such—as fragments in want of totality, parts in search of a whole, and objects in search of a subject. Figures without a ground, too. But the idea of the ground still beckoned to Léger, and for all his attempts to channel the force of placelessness, his art would remain conflicted about modernity and organicity. In a way, the year 1933 was to be the moment of his, and modernism's, last stand.

Something of these contradictions shines through in the critical response to Léger's *Objets* show, beginning with Léger's own first-person reaction—a letter to his confidante and lover, the painter Simone Herman, written a few days shy of the exhibition's closing, in which the painter reports on his success in oddly equivocal terms, characterizing the show as "strong and *very interior* [*très intérieure*]. It has stunned many people, it is severe but very taut on the inside."[174]

These were strange superlatives, and had something to do, most likely, with the conditions of viewing at the diminutive Galerie Vignon, which had to be entered via an opaque revolving door installed by architect André Lurçat [**Fig. 81**]. In any case, Léger's description echoed the wider consensus in the art-world press: The few critics who saw fit to review the *Objets* exhibition celebrated the drawings' cold remoteness and quasi-

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[1959] in *Art and Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971) 70-83; and T.J. Clark, "Cubism and Collectivity," in *Farewell to an Idea*, 169-223.

[174] Fernand Léger to Simone Herman, 23 Apr. 1934 (hereafter cited as FL to SH); reprinted in Christian Derouet, ed., *Fernand Léger: Lettres à Simone* (Zürich, 1987), 106: "Je voudrais parler de ma petite exposition dont je suis très content, forte et très intérieure. Elle a étonné beaucoup de gens, c'est sévère mais très tendu en dedans." Further references to this text will be cited as *LS*.

scientific estrangement of thing from place.[175] In fact, on the basis of their descriptions alone, one would hardly have guessed that the objects in question were 'natural' at all, let alone rural in origin. In the journal *Beaux Arts*, for example, the reviewer described Léger as a latter-day Platonist, who

> brings the same attention, intelligent and cold, to whatever he wishes to represent, whether it has to do with a 'pair of gloves,' a 'pear-tree root,' or a 'pebble of flint.' A certain appearance of mystery results from [the] excess of exactitude and dryness. It is less to the objects drawn than to their quasi-mathematical transcription that he attaches himself. The name given to the exhibition constitutes one of these subtle equivocations, of a sort enjoyed by fervents of pure intellection or by polytechnicians. Léger is never so cold as when he applies himself toward loving things: but this intimite refusal [*ce refus intime*] comes off well and gives to these works an atmosphere that his larger compositions sometimes lack.[176]

Léger's drawings were thus to be distinguished, not by the mythic warmth and roughness of peasant life or outdoor rusticity, but by their refusal of such values—a refusal so total, indeed, as to preclude any acknowledgement of functionality or use-value. Of course, there were readers to whom any suggestion of "quasi-mathematic transcription" and emotionless *froideur* smacked of reductivism—and worse still, of *materialism*: a limiting

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[175] I realize this chapter gives short shrift to Léger's gouaches, which were no less a part of the *Objets* exhibition. Partly the reason has to do with the gouaches' scarcity: we know of only a handful—at most two or three—gouaches from the period between August 1933 and April 1934 that could have been included in the Galerie Vignon show. Absent an exhibition checklist or gallery manifest, there is no way of knowing precisely which artworks the painter chose to display; but the preponderance of Léger's drawings, not only in extant collections, but in his correspondence as well, suggests that these works were at the heart of the show. Then, too, there is the question of the gouaches' quality: it does not seem to me that any of the works we know of rise to the high ambitions of the '33 drawings. Most likely, the gouaches were done afterwards, in Léger's Paris studio, as a means of valorizing—literally, making lucrative—his work of the summer recess. I have a feeling Léger realized that these paintings fell far short of the drawings' benchmark; which is one reason, among others, why he did not seek to pursue the lessons of the drawings further.

[176] Anon., "Compte rendu de l'exposition Fernand Léger." *Beaux Arts*, no. 68, 20 Apr. 1934: "F. Léger porte la même attention intelligente et froide à tout ce qu'il veut représenter. Une certaine apparence de mystère nait de cet excès de sécheresse. C'est moins aux objets qu'il dessine que s'attache Fernand Léger qu'à leur transcription quasi mathématique. Le nom qu'on a donné à l'exposition constitue une de ces équivoques subtiles, telles que les aiment les fervents de l'intelligence pure ou les polytechniciens. Fernand Léger n'est jamais plus froid que lorsqu'il s'applique à aimer les choses: mais ce refus intime paraît mieux alors et donne à ces oeuvres une atmosphère que ses grandes compositions n'ont pas toujours."

of the object-world to quantifiable measures. The *Beaux-Arts* reviewer was therefore careful to ascribe Léger's abstracting impulse to a higher, purer form of object-appreciation, suitable to minds of impeccable spotlessness, and not simply to some terrifying materialist deskilling of representation.

Yet there was no denying the basic operation at issue in the object drawings: a stripping away, not only of *meaning* from the object, but also of *color*, the essential term of Léger's modernism—his "secret weapon," as Clement Greenberg put it a generation later.[177] To the painter's supporters, Léger's stripping-away of meaning and color from the object-world in the object drawings had to be shown as a positive, not a negative. In *L'Intransigeant*, the critic Maurice Raynal praised Léger's *Objets* as a triumph of Zen-like sensitivity, in which the artist, by suppressing any hint of his own subjectivity, freed the object to sing a song of its own:

> The nature and the role of the object are neglected to the point that the quantitative measures the artist attributes to it are left without any relation to their habitual usage. And it is in this sense that the artist paints [*sic*], whether a fragment of bark or a ring of keys, or even the leaf of a tree, in the manner of that ancient Japanese who would take many years to paint… a tuft of grass. […] No subjectivism for our artist. The only rationale for keeping a grip on the object is its plastic value. If the primitive artist creates a poetry of the object, Léger creates a plastic lyricism. In place of traditional composition, the perfection of the chosen theme."[178]

Again, the critic's imperative was to defend, and even to exaggerate, Léger's pursuit of objectivity without verging over into materialism. "Plastic lyricism" was an appropriately unmeaningful formulation, suggesting a simply erasure of the painter's subjectivity, and thus evoking the kind of decorative abstraction which no one, and especially no buyer (not that there were many buyers left in the market in 1934), could have found remotely

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[177] Clement Greenberg, "Master Léger," *The Partisan Review*, vol. XXI (Jan.-Feb. 1954), 96. A revised version of this important essay was printed in Greenberg, *Art and Culture*, 96-104.

[178] Maurice Raynal, "Fernand Léger et l'objet," *L'Intransigeant*, April 19, 1934: "La nature, le rôle de l'objet sont négligés au point que les mesures quantitatives que l'artiste lui attribue peuvent être sans relation avec son usage habituel. Et c'est dans ce sens que l'artiste peint, soit un fragment d'écorce, soit un trousseau de clefs, voire une feuille d'arbre, à l'instar de cet ancien japonais qui prit plusieurs années pour peindre… un brin d'herbe. […] Pour notre artiste, pas de subjectivisme. La seule raison qui fait retenir l'objet demeure sa valeur plastique. Plus de composition traditionelle mais le perfectionnement du thème choisi. L'armature générale de l'oeuvre consiste en une direction plastique générale que l'artiste n'a pas cherché mais qui lui est imposée, par le sens de l'ordre qui organise d'une manière inconsciente tout son oeuvre. Le tableau devient lui-même un objet, c'est-à-dire qu'il se suffit entièrement à lui-même et que le lyrisme qui le vivifie reste déterminé par cette sûreté d'oeil qui fait de Léger l'un des plus puissants coloristes du temps."

controversial. Yet this argument held water only so long as one paid no attention to the particular things Léger chose to paint: after all, the inventory of objects at issue in the exhibition was far from random or "objective," and had clearly been chosen by a particular subject—by Léger—even if the criteria of selection were less than obvious.

By far the most extensive coverage of Léger's *Objets* show was to be found in the journal *Cahiers d'art*, which reproduced eight of the drawings along with an extensive treatment by the editor, Christian Zervos. For Zervos, a longtime supporter and friend of Léger's, the drawings of September '33 marked a return to first principles—back to the fundament of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, and to "the object in-itself," shorn of color and without the "trickery" of chromaticism—in order, finally, to liberate the object-world from the grip of illusionism.[179] However, whereas Raynal saw Léger's drawings as returning poetic license back to the world of things, for Zervos, Léger's drawings endowed that world with a more-than-material animacy,

> giv[ing] to the object a new life […] in adding to it the events of his soul and a whole bevy of possibilities necessary to excite a train of associations in each of us, according to our capacities and the attunement of our spirit.
>
> Léger's latest drawings are characterized by the way the objects are described on paper without any pretense of combination. They are isolated objects expressive in themselves. While the artist has sought to figure real objects in his drawings, he does not find himself humiliated by the world of things. To the contrary, he has triumphed over it by penetrating it with his spirit and in letting it be seen that it is he who has communicated to these objects their evocative power. [180]

Again, implicit in this reading of Léger's drawings was a disagreement between critics; but the difference would prove minor in the end. To Zervos, no less than Raynal, the object was merely a pretext for one or another kind of abstraction, achieving in the end the desideratum of a purely lyrical expression—"une pure évocation poétique," per Zervos.[181]

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[179] Christian Zervos, "Fernand Léger et la poésie de l'objet," *Cahiers d'art*, no. 1-4 (1934).

[180] *Ibid*.: "L'essentiel pour nous, c'est qu'en effet le peintre puisse donner à l'objet une nouvelle vie, qu'il réussisse à y ajouter des événements de son âme et une foule de possibilités propres à susciter des associations en chacun de nous, selon ses capacités et la tournure de son esprit.

Ce qui caractérise les derniers dessins de Léger, c'est que les objets sont décrits sur le papier sans aucun souci de combinaison. Ce sont des objets isolés qui trouvent en eux-mêmes leur expression. Bien que l'artiste ait cherché à figurer dans ses dessins des objets réels, il ne se trouve pas humilié par le monde des choses. Au contraire, il en triomphe en le pénétrant de son esprit et en laissant voir que c'est lui qui communique aux objets leur pouvoir évocateur."

[181] *Ibid.*

Yet there was a further dimension of Zervos's 'reading' of Léger, beyond the purview of his essay-cum-review. Included in the same issue of *Cahiers d'art* were eight of the *Objets* drawings, each reproduced at full-page height, and at roughly one-to-one scale, including the shell of a nut (*Fragment de noix*) [**Fig. 82**] and the impalpable *Vase à fleurs* [**Fig. 80**]. For many readers, these images would have stood in place of the gallery exhibition, at once extending and subtly altering its curatorial premise. One further image, not of Léger's making, was added at the end of the spread, probably at Zervos' own editorial behest: a plate from Ernst Haeckel's *Kunstformen der Natur* of 1894, which depicts an ancient species of zooplankton called calocyclas [**Fig. 83**]. The plate is remarkable, not least for the absence of any resemblance between it and Léger's drawings: Against a pitch-black ground, the delicate fossil remains of the calocyclas loom eerily bright, their bodies (rather, their exoskeletons) constructed of lacelike shells of silicate—pulverized flint—in shapes resembling thorny crowns and nightmarish samurai armor. Aside from the caption "poésie des objets," no other explanation was given for this plate, leaving readers to wonder, perhaps, whether Léger's drawings, too, were supposed in some way to catalogue the biodiversity of the object-world, rendering animate the mute things of everyday life (animate, but also uncanny: a world made up of alien lifeforms "penetrated," against all odds, by the artist's subjectivity).[182]

By the same token, however, the Haeckel plate suggests a different, and even an opposite, reading of Léger's *Objets*—a depiction of nature that hardly 'natural' in the colloquial sense: an alien, unimaginable nature, at once prehistoric and ultra-futuristic, hardly distinguishable from science fiction. In this way, whether consciously or otherwise, Zervos's appropriation from *Kunstformen der Natur* calls up a scene from one of the founding texts of French sci-fi literature, J.-H. Rosny 's novella of 1887, *Les Xipéhuz*, which might conceivably have had some bearing upon Léger's work at the farmhouse (at least, it strikes me as likely an Ur-text as any other).

In Rosny's story, a tribe of prehistoric nomads comes into contact with a group of alien lifeforms, the Xipéhuz—the narrator calls them "les Formes," or 'The Shapes'—who have appeared, as if from thin air, in a forest clearing, their bodies fashioned of a crystalline, mineral substance:

> The clearing came into view […] and a phantasmagoria was revealed to the nomads. First was a large circle of blueish cones, translucent, pointed at the top, each one a bit more than half the volume of a man. A few bright stripes, several somber convolutions, were scattered across theese surfaces, and each one had toward its base a blinding star, like the sun at midday. Further afield, and just as strange, were strata

[182] On the question of Léger's animation of inorganic matter, see Spyros Papapetros, *On the Animation of the Inorganic: Art, Architecture, and the Extension of Life* (Chicago and London, 2012), especially Chapter 4: "Nudes in the Forest," pp. 161-209. For an account of Haeckel's biological aesthetics, see Scott Ferguson, "The Face of Time between Haeckel and Bergson; or, Toward an Ethics of Impure Vision," *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 19, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2010), 107-151.

> posed vertically, roughly similar to the bark of a birch tree and figured from multicolored ellipses. And beyond, here and there, were quasi-cylindrical Forms, varying one from the next, some tall and slim, others short and squat, all of a bronze color with spots of green, all possessing, like the strata, the characteristic point of light.[183]

Inorganic yet sentient, these "Formes" ultimately turn deadly: Rosny's narrative veers quickly toward *War of the Worlds* territory, pitting the protagonist nomads against their implacable crystalline adversaries—a schoolboy's daydream run wild. Of course, the scenario begs to be interpreted in view of the real-world conflict between city and country—the peasant versus the Parisian—playing out in the French provinces at much the same moment: a conflict that was to take an increasingly hard-edged and asymmetrical turn, as the first automobiles, metallic monsters in their own right, began to chug, puff, and smash their way through the rural roadways. Whether Rosny knew it or not, his novella would provide something like a template through which to regard the politics of the automobile in the French countryside, as seen from the perspective of the imagined (although hardly the real) peasantry.

Not that Zervos was likely to have had in mind matters of rural modernization, let alone alien invasion, when selecting the Haeckel plate for *Cahiers d'art* in 1934. But the ghostly drawing of the calocyclas nevertheless speaks to an extreme of modernity and modernism—extreme powers of microcscopy, from which the illustrator derives a frankly terrifying vision of inorganic-yet-animate life—apposite to Léger's *Objets* show, telescoping of past and future, the natural and the artificial, in ways at once disorienting and familiar. It is possible, this chapter argues, to see Léger's project in September 1933 as stemming from a similar line of inquiry as produced *Les Xipéhuz*: an interrogation of the alien in the everyday; but also, and more importantly, an exploration of the conflict-zone between modernity and the countryside, and (what amounts to the same thing) between the way of traffic and its territorial surround.

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Léger's exhibition at Galerie Vignon culminated a sequence of pictorial thinking begun six years earlier, in the late summer of 1928, during Léger's yearly retreat to La

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[183] J.-H. Rosny, *Les Xipéhuz* (Paris, 1887), 7: "C'était d'abord un grand cercle de cônes bleuâtres, translucides, la pointe en haut, chacun du volume à peu près la moitié d'un homme. Quelques raies claires, quelques circonvolutions sombres, parsemaient leur surface, et tous avaient vers la base une étoile éblouissante comme le soleil à la moitié du jour. Plus loin, aussi excentriques, des strates se posaient verticalement, assez semblables à de l'écorce de bouleau et madrés d'ellipses multicolores. Et il y avait encore, de ci, de là, des Formes quasi-cylindriques, variées d'ailleurs, les unes minces et hautes, les autres basses et trapues, toutes de couleur bronzée, pointillées de vert, toutes possédant, comme les strates, le caractéristique point de lumière."

Bougonnière.[184] He had already been working toward a less visibly modern iconography in his paintings of the previous year, incorporating leaves, branches, and shells into his still-life compositions—see, for examlple, his *Feuilles et coquillage* of 1927, now at the Tate Modern [**Fig. 84**]. At some point during his sojourn at the farm in late August and September, Léger took up the subject of a holly leaf [**Fig. 85**], its pointed edges drawn folded over in an echo of the paper-thinness of the pictorial support; as best we can tell, this sketch, *La feuille de houx*, was conceived as a study for a painting of the same motif, which the artist immediately squared up and executed against a vermillion ground (the grid lines are still visible in the finished canvas) [**Fig. 86**]. Léger must have thought the experiment worth repeating, as he painted another, similar, canvas around the same moment, *Troncs d'arbre* [**Fig. 87**], centering a tangle of bare tree trunks, partly stripped of bark, upon a pale background. This suite of works would set the pattern for his late-summer labors at the farmhouse, marking a separate, episodic track of his art—a space apart from his studio work during the rest of the year—and suggesting a way of treating the Normandy landscape without having to depict it *as* a landscape.

In both paintings of August-September '28, Léger's decontextualization of his focal motif, and its isolation against a blank and undifferentiated ground, reflect back something of the conditions of his holiday. By choice, Léger had isolated himself, both from his friends and family (including Simone Herman), and from modernity writ large: The flux of history in the newspaper and on the radio bypassed Léger during his retreat to the farm, and to reach the outside world by telephone (also, to restore one's supply of cigarette tobacco) required a bicycle ride of two kilometers to the *café-tabac* in the commune of Saint-Foy-de-Montgommery.[185] Moreover, there was no question of Léger's coming or going at will: the painter had never learned to drive, and had to be ferried to and from the farmhouse, either by his wife, Jeanne, or by a motorist friend.

Granted, La Bougonnière was not always an isolating environment: During the main part of the year, the Légers often weekended in Lisores, welcoming neighbors to supper and hosting a rotating cast of visitors, including art-world types—Le Corbusier and his wife Yvonne Gallis, brothers Blaise and Raymond Cendrars, Constantin Brancusi, critics Raynal, Zervos, and André Salmon, among others—as well as writers and performers, including poets Jacques Prévert and Robert Desnos, for example, and several troupes of acrobats, most notably the Marcellos and the *frères* Fratellini.[186] Léger's late-summer holiday was intended as a period of voluntary solitude (friends were not encouraged to come visit during this span of weeks), and of work—but an inward-looking, personal kind of work: "*très intérieure* … très tendu en dedans," per the terms of his letter to Herman. A photograph taken of Léger's summer studio at the farmhouse around 1935 shows the site of this isolation [**Fig. 88**]: the artist's workspace, a repurposed kitchen, was

[184] For a comprehensive history of this property and its usage by Fernand and Jeanne Léger, see Benoit Noël, *Fernand Léger: Un Normand planétaire* (Paris, 2015), 78-129.
[185] *Ibid*., 82.
[186] *Ibid*., 87.

utterly primitive, its wooden door warped, and the floor and walls bare save for a handful of Léger's pictures, which the artist has pinned up unframed. Several of these pictures derive from the campaign of 1933: the three dark, slightly illegible works are in fact gouaches made either during or shortly after Léger's bout of drawings that September, and must have been deemed worth keeping on the walls, either as reminder of the intensity of that summer's work or as unfinished detritus (or for reasons unknown). A study of a piece of flint hangs on the far wall, while above the cluttered desk are two similar attempts at transposing the drawings into color, one patterned after the *Tire-bouchon fragment*, the other, the *Vase à fleurs*—pictures now lost to us.

There is no denying the escapist impulse underlying Léger's retreat to the farm, and his attempt, in the object drawings, to reclaim a landscape untouched by modernity. Yet there was more to this impulse than simple nostalgia or unreconstructed primitivism; indeed, Léger's courting of isolation—and not simply isolation, but a remoteness verging on utopianism (a utopia of one)—had much to do with the forces of modernization at work in the region.

To grasp this point, it should help to review a bit of the local geography in the moment of the late '20s: Seen from close up, the *bourg* of Lisores was both remote and miniscule, an agglomeration of the smallest order, comprising just a few buildings clustered around the intersection of two country roads. However, Calvados itself had long since shed its backwater status: Normandy had been served early and amply by the railway lines, two of which cut through to the Channel Coast as early as 1850. By the 1920s, the departmental map, like that of France as a whole, had been crisscrossed in a fine-knit meshwork of rail corridors, encompassing the primary network as well as secondary, tertiary lines [**Fig. 89**]—which is not to say that the majority of these capillary lines ran frequently, or even at all; indeed, the story of rail transport in the '20s is a bill of failures and loss leaders (much of the system had been created for political, rather than financial, purposes, argues historian Joseph Jones).[187] In this sense, the 'remoteness' of the countryside was more a symbolic affair than a geospatial reality.

The modernization of Calvados, and of Normandy as a whole, was to accelerate rapidly with the spread of motor transport after World War I, as agricultural producers adapted their business to the new potential afforded by trucking. Between the years 1913 and 1927, the number of automobiles in circulation on the French road system, including personal and commercial vehicles, had risen eightfold, from approximately 100,000 to 800,000.[188] Car ownership had already passed from an aristocratic sport into a bourgeois necessity; it was fast becoming a marker of middle-class belonging writ large, abetted by

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[187] Joseph Jones, *The Politics of Transport in Twentieth-Century France* (Kingston and Montreal, 1984), 28. For an interesting account of the vulgarization of bicycle ownership in Calvados in the late 1890s, see Gabriel Désert, "Aperçus sur la vélocipédie calvadosienne en 1894," *Annales de Normandie*, vol. 17, no. 3 (1967), 253-264.

[188] F. Honoré, "La Route moderne," *L'Illustration: L'Automobile et le tourisme*, 4 Oct. 1930, n.p.

a large secondary market in used and refurbished vehicles. By 1931, Normandy ranked among the regions of France most heavily saturated by motor vehicles [**Fig. 90**]; it was also, increasingly, the site of a growing traffic crisis, as the boom in motor tourism between Paris and the Channel Coast clogged the royal road, or Route Nationale, running through the countryside via Lisieux.

To proponents of motor tourism, as with all other matters of transport policy during the interwar years, the main axis of debate fell between the road and the rail: In his *causerie* on the state of the automotive industry of 1928, published anually in *L'Illustration*, Louis Baudry de Saunier declared the "triumph of the automobile" over its iron-bound competitor, juxtaposing the independence of the motorist, who embarks "whenever he wants or needs to," with the fixity of the railway system, "symboliz[ing] subservience, obligation, discipline: it is itself the prisoner of its rails and schedule."[189] Sketching a view of the future of motor tourism, Baudry de Saunier predicted that the inevitable modernization of the French road system, abetted by steady improvements to vehicular traction and suspension, would soon render the railway system obsolete:

> Once we have improved the suspension of the automobile to the point that road travel proceeds without bumps […], making it possible for voyagers to spend their time on the road standing or sleeping without feeling a single shock, and above all the shaking felt on switchbacks experienced on even the best-suspended trains, what case for survival will be left the railroads?
>
> At last, the automobile has become eminently perfectible on its own terms. Once we are in possession of special throughways—*autoroutes*—where vehicles of every size and speed will be possible and practical, as in America and Italy, what then will become of the rail?
>
> From the present vantage, one can draw the parallel between road and rail to the point of showing that from absolutely no perspective can the rail network be, or ever have been, more than a stubbornness turned (for some) into a routine—a provisional solution to the immense problem of transportation. *To each his own express train*. Such is the inevitable solution of the future.[190]

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[189] Louis Baudry de Saunier, "Causerie sur le Salon de 1928," *L'Illustration: L'Automobile et le tourisme*, 7 Oct. 1928, 20: "L'automobile symbolise l'indépendance: par elle, de jour ou de nuit, on part quand on veut et quand on a besoin de partir. On va ensuite où l'on veut. – Le chemin de fer symbolise l'assujetissement, l'obligation, la discipline; il est lui-même prisonnier de ses rails et de ses horaires."

[190] *Ibid.*: "Lorsque aussi on aura trouvé pour l'automobile une amélioration importante de la suspension, où le transport sur routes se fera à peu près sans heurt (et l'automobile s'allégeant sur des ailes comme un glisseur constitue peut-être une solution d'avenir du problème), où toute la vie à bord pourra, pour les voyageurs se passer debout ou couché sans qu'ils éprouvent aucun choc, et surtout pas les coups de lacet que donnent dans les courbes les trains les mieux suspendus, quels éléments de survie resteront aux chemins de fer?

The rail passenger's "subservience" extended to the geography of the city as well: he had to factor into his journey at least two additional trips by taxi or rented coach, from home to station and from station to hotel. Albeit comparatively slower than railway journey, the trip from city to coastline by luxury car could be likened to a seamless leap from garage to concierge, and from there, to any number of additional destinations. Granted: I am describing the tourism of the Parisian elite; there was as yet no such thing as "mass tourism" in the 1920s. But the phenomenon was real and striking: In 1928 alone, France played host to more foreign tourists than ever before, welcoming approximately two million visitors and vacationers, a figure equal to nearly five percent of the national population; it would not see such droves again until after World War II.[191]

That Normandy emerged as ground zero for the development of motor tourism was due in large part to a single span of Vauban's road system, Route Nationale 13, which connected Paris with the seaside town of Pont-l'Evèque, and from there, by another smaller, departmental road, to the resort and spa town of Deauville. Originally constructed to handle equestrian traffic, this span of the national road system was among the very first to be colonized by motorists on a regular, and eventually a permanent, basis, as Parisian drivers flocked to their weekend or summer getaway. Statistics collected in 1928 give us some measure of the volume of traffic in the northwest of France: circulation in the countryside between Paris and Evreux, a way-station along the road to Deauville-Trouville, numbered 750 cars in an average twenty-four-hour period; nearer to the Paris city limits, at the town of Saint-Germain, the figure was far higher, with 2,200 cars jamming the road into and out of the capital daily. By comparison, the Routes Nationales immediately south of Paris saw much sparser traffic, with only twenty-seven cars and five trucks in the Lot valley en route between Paris and Toulouse, and a mere nine cars and zero trucks in the High Alps.[192] By the late 1920s, Route Nationale 13 had become one of the most heavily trafficked roads in all of ex-urban France: smooth, of relatively even grade, paved in asphalt (a rarity at the time), and boasting some of the first roadside fillings stations in France—structures designed to resemble squat *bidons* of

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Enfin l'automobile est éminemment perfectible dans sa voie même. Quand nous aurons, comme l'Amérique et l'Italie, des autoroutes, des voies spéciales où toutes les grandeurs de voitures et toutes les vitesses seront possibles et pratiques, que deviendra le rail?

On pourrait à perte de vue poursuivre le parallèle entre le chemin de fer et l'automobile et montrer qu'à aucun point de vue le réseau ferré ne peut être, ou n'avoir été, quelque entêtement que donne à certains la routine, qu'une solution provisoire de l'immense problème des transports. *A chacun son petit express*. Telle est la solution fatale de l'avenir."

[191] Marc Boyer, *Le Tourisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1982).

[192] F. Honoré, "La Route moderne," *op. cit.* According to the census, these figures represented an increase of four- to six-fold over the year 1921, testifying to a boom, not only in motor tourism, but also in road commerce more globally.

gasoline [**Fig. 91**]—, it was, as journalist Robert de Beauplan put it in 1927, a true "route autodrome," its pitch given over completely to motorists [**Fig. 92**], where equestrians traveled at their peril.[193] Indeed, the road between Paris and Deauville road was so well appointed, and indeed, so *modern*, wrote De Beauplan, that one could easily forget that rural France lay just beyond the shoulder: "Who would believe that this was the countryside? The cars trail along, one behind the other, passing and cutting each other off, the same as in Paris on the *grands boulevards*."[194]

The predicament of the touring motorist was already a matter of lively interest on Léger's part in the months immediately prior to the Wall Street crash. At Raynal's invitation, Léger had begun to contribute occasional essays to the newspaper *L'Intransigeant* in April 1928, publishing under the rubric of "Voyages d'artistes."[195] Among the earliest of these articles was an essay of 8 October 1928, "Le Gloire du métal," published on the occasion of the twenty-second annual *Salon de l'Automobile*, the car show held at the Grand Palais during a span of weeks formerly taken up by the *Salon d'Automne*. Recounting his visit to the *Salon de l'Auto*, Léger laced into the changing conditions of motor tourism, excoriating manufacturers and bodyworks makers (emerging out of the carriage industry, they were called *carrossiers*) for suppressing the view of the landscape in their quest to perfect the hermetically sleek form of the luxury sports car. Echoing a broad-based complaint among automotive journalists, Léger groused at the way the latest automobiles were marketed and outfitted, not as machines of vision, but as extensions of the domestic sphere (and therefore, both implicitly and explicitly, as spaces of femininity), fully self-contained inside an impermeable metal shell:

> …Incontrovertible renaissance of metallic bodyworks [*carrosserie*], end of bodyworks in leather, shagreen, ruberoid, etc., that is to say feminine bodyworks. Do not forget, after all, that 'these Ladies' have also attempted the 'laying on of hands.' The automobile fattened up, the car inside an étui. It was on their account that all our major *carrossiers* labored…
>
> …Renaissance of beautiful metal, hard, fixed, gleaming. The car becomes once more a beautiful polished mechanism, clean, striking, living (the reflection of light is the 'sign of life' of metal)…
>
> …And then it becomes more and more elongated, lowering itself to the ground, gluing itself to the road. One hunches over to get a look at it. In this race towards the

[193] Robert de Beauplan, "En regardent passer les autos." *L'Illustration: L'Automobile et le tourisme*, October 1, 1927: n.p.
[194] *Ibid.*
[195] Raynal and Tériade had been added to the editorial staff in 1928; both critics had been supporters of Léger's art in the earlier part of the decade. Léger's first essay for the newspaper was a Berlin travelogue, "Voyages d'artistes: Berlin 1928," published on 16 April 1928.

horizontal, the doors become flattened, the windows diminished, nothing more remains except the eye that drives. Nothing more to see, to look at. To see what? The landscape? End of the Landscape. Ask a modern painter what a landscape is. He doesn't know. He knows a tree, a branch, a leaf. He knows the objects of the landscape, that's all. The motorist is modern, he has a perfect object to lead him quickly towards his destination. He shuts himself inside. He goes towards his destination, but—a curious thing—to the extent that the car is elongated, flattened, he loses 'his views.' Advertising billboards rise up, growing automatically, becoming vertical; they isolate the roads like a living wall, exploding with colossal letters in red and yellow.

…End of the Landscape. It timidly frames this immense multicolored partition, which dominates everything, which wants to be seen …

Here and there, like feudal lords, distributors of gasoline, enigmatic beings ruling over this new order… We wait for them to move, to act… not yet; that will come… Just you wait…

Poor Landscape! Poor *Societé de protection des paysages*![196]

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[196] Fernand Léger, "Au Salon de l'Automobile: Gloire du métal," *L'Intransigeant*, 10 October 1928, 6: "...Renaissance indiscutable de la Carrosserie métallique, finie la carrosserie de cuir, de galuchat, de ruberoïd. etc., c'est-à-dire la carrosserie féminine. Car n'oubliez pas que 'ces Dames' ont essayé aussi de 'mettre la main là-dessus.' L'auto étoffée, la voiture dans un étui. C'était pour elles que tous nos grands carrossiers travaillaient...

Renaissance du beau métal, luisant, fixe, dur. L'auto redevient une belle mécanique astiquée, nette, criante, vivante (le reflet est 'le signe de vie' du métal)....

...Et puis, elle s'allonge de plus en plus, elle s'abaisse, elle se colle à la route, On se courbe pour la voir. Dans cette course à l'horizontale, les portes s'aplatissent, les fenêtres diminuent, il ne reste plus rien que pour l'œil qui conduit. Plus rien pour voir, pour regarder. Pour voir quoi? Le paysage? Fini paysage. Demandez à un peintre moderne ce que c'est qu'un paysage? Connaît pas. Il connaît un arbre, une branche, une feuille. Il connaît les objets du paysage, c'est tout. L'automobiliste est moderne, il a un objet parfait qui l'emmène vite à ses buts. Il s'enferme dedans. Il va à son but et, chose curieuse, à mesure que l'auto s'allonge, s'aplatit, perd 'ses regards.' La publicité elle, monte, grandit automatiquement, elle de vient verticale; elle isole les routes comme un mur vivant, éclatante de ses lettres colossales jaunes et rouge.

...Fini Paysage. Il encadre timidement cet immense paravent multicolore qui domine tout, qui veut être vu...

...De place en place, comme des Seigneurs, les distributeurs d'essence, personnages énigmatiques, commandent à cet ordre nouveau... On s'attend à les voir bouger, agir... pas encore, cela va venir... Attendez...

Pauvre Paysage! Pauvre Société de protection des paysages!..."

At issue in these lines were several complaints: First, that the new machinery of tourism, the automobile, was becoming increasingly closed off to the outside world, its interior designed to be plush and ultra-comfortable—in a word, *feminized*—so much so as to distract interest from the outdoor scenery. Second, and relatedly, that the motor tourist's disinterest in the landscape reflected, and indeed aggravated, a more general decathexis, in which the Frenchman no longer understood—could no longer even *see*—the landscape as such. Third, that this disappearance of the landscape was abetted by new morphologies of advertising design, which literally walled off the scenery beyond the road's edge. And finally, that the newly voided landscape had become, in turn, a province of monsters—an enchanted world presided over by strange infrastructural overlords: not just the gasoline pumps, but the whole weird armature of branded homgenization, from the cars themselves to the commodities hawked on billboards and placards.

These charges might seem mandarin in retrospect; after all, they describe in aggregate a system long since cemented at the heart of the post-twentieth-century landscape. At present, the era of the monocoque automobile, and the demise (or marginalization) of unenclosed car bodyworks has been a *fait accompli* for nearly eighty years; however, in France of the 1920s, the concretization of these traits into the combined form of a *system* remained nugatory at best, and the side-effects of systematization—in particular, the automobile's transformation from a machine of rugged physical exercise (as its first enthusiasts understood it) to a device of effortless, interiorized conveyance—were still hotly debated in the popular and specialist press alike.

Léger knew the terms of this debate as well as anyone; after all, he himself was the "modern painter" who "knows a tree, a branch, a leaf … the objects of the landscape, that's all." He was also the target audience of the auto industry of the late '20s, a member of the cultural elite with a vacation home in the Normandy countryside. By 1928, the luxury market had reached a point of oversaturation, with six- and eight-cylinder vehicles standard fare at the *Salon de l'Auto*. The newest models were invariably sleek, low-slung, fully enclosed, and extravagantly comfortable, sporting the sort of lightweight, hermetically enclosed bodyworks, or *carrosseries*, that had been patented several years earlier by the firm of Charles Weymann [**Fig. 93**].[197] Likewise, the super-low bodyworks, or *carrosseries surbaissées*, first introduced by Ettore Bugatti in 1923 [**Fig. 94**], had been broadly vulgarized, in spite of its considerable inconvenience to drivers (the bottom rim of the Bugatti-style sports car was so near to the roadbed, joked one journalist, that "en cas de chute, on est tout de suite arrivé"[198]).

Again, Léger's review of the *Salon* follows the mainstream of criticism in the late '20s. Although elegant, the prototypical luxury car proved badly adapted to the practical needs of drivers, especially where visibility was concerned, on account of the lenthening

[197] For an account of the innovations introduced by the Weymann patent, see Henri Petit, "La Carrosserie Weymann," in *La Vie Automobile* (May 5, 1922): 155-157.
[198] Fernand Geugère, "Au XXIe Salon de l'Automobile: La visite d'un piéton," *La Croix* (Paris), October 7, 1928.

and lowering of the vehicular profile. This narrowing of the visual field was no small matter for motorists: as one master *carrossier* later recounted, "[u]nder such conditions, one would see drivers hunched forward, breaking contact with the back of the seat, craning their necks and lifting their chin in order to see. As far as the rear passengers' visibility was concerned, it was simply nonexistent."[199] In his *causerie* of 1933, Baudry de Saunier complained that the most recent bodyworks placed the driver "so low that it becomes impossible for him to see below the top of the front fenders."[200] A suite of illustrations accompanying Baudry de Saunier's article of 1933 shows drivers in various states of contortion—for example, a husband hunched pitifully at the wheel while his wife, hoping for a better view of the landscape, peeks her head out of the open roof [**Fig. 95**].[201] The poverty of visibility was considered so severe that one reader of the industry journal *La Vie Automobile* penned a long, tongue-in-cheek letter to the editor, propsing to augment the next year's run of bodyworks with a periscope, thanks to which

> the new cars will be more car than the car has ever been before. No more apertures, no more glass, neither in front, nor on the sides, nor in the rear; the ideal of bodyworks: a chassis, a marvelous, hermetically enclosed box, a single line, the triumph of form. Commodiously installed, seated on cushions of an undreamt-of comfort, supported up to the nape, the passengers will have access to all the admirable landscapes of France, so varied, so picturesque, so striking, a vision as remarkable as it is comfortable; nothing will escape their enraptured gaze in these cars as silent as the grave.[202]

The hermeticism of the luxury car was not a new issue in 1928. As early as the first decade of the twentieth century, French *carrossiers* had began to outfit the interiors of closed cars to resemble private sitting rooms and boudoirs, even to the point of installing actual chairs and sofas in the capacious rear cabins of touring limousines—a shift

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[199] Jean-Henri Labourdette, *Un siècle de la carrosserie française*. Paris: Edita, 1972: 313.

[200] Louis Baudry de Saunier, "Causerie sur le Salon de 1933," *L'Illustration: L'Automobile et le tourisme*, 7 Oct. 1933, n.p.

[201] The caption reads: "'Something marvelous on the horizon! Open the roof!' – 'Sure, but the crossbar cuts the landscape in two!' – 'Well stand up, then! Me, I'll stay down here and keep hunched over… You can tell me afterwards what you saw!'"

[202] J. Lagrange, "Les carrosseries modernes vues de l'intérieur," *La Vie Automobile*, December 25, 1927, 675: "Fermées, grâce à moi, les nouvelles carrosseries le seront plus que voiture ne l'a jamais été. Plus d'ouvertures, plus de glaces, ni devant, ni sur les côtés, ni derrière; l'idéal des carrosseries: un châssis, une merveilleuse boîte hermétiquement close, une ligne, triomphe définitif de la forme.

Commodément installés, étendus sur des coussins d'un confort inespèré, les soutenant jusqu'à la nuque, les passagers auront des admirables paysages de France, si variés, si pittoresques, si prenants, une vision aussi inattendue que confortable; rien n'échappera à leur regard émerveillé dans ces carrosseries aussi silencieuses que la tombe."

motivated in part to capture the interest of a growing population of women drivers, and also, concomitantly, by technological advances in bodyworks design and fabrication. The first generation of closed cars, or *conduites intérieures*, were tall, boxy contraptions, with enough headspace to accommodate a seated woman wearing a hat, as dictated by contemporary fashion.[203] Outfitted to look like sitting rooms, the bespoke interiors of these bodyworks often including a remarkable—and hugely expensive—array of domestic comforts: tufted leather or mohair banquettes, swivel chairs, cabinetry for books and magazines, hat and luggage racks, mirrored vanities, perfume cases, cigarette dispensers and ashtrays, dictographs, radio, and even wireless telegraphy. As early as 1911, the women's magazine *Fémina* enthused that the fashionable motorist could inhabit her *conduite intérieure* like a "*Home sur la route,*" describing the car as "a hotel in miniature where one can eat, make a cup of tea, write a letter, powder and fix one's hair; and if the road becomes unpleasant or boring, one can even play a game of bridge… or sleep."[204]

For obvious reasons—cost and weight, mainly—closed bodyworks remained exceptional until the early 1920s; most cars, including the products of mass manufacturers like Citroën and Ford, were at least partially opened to the elements. However, with the decline of chauffeuring and the rise of the casual motorist, the domestication of the automobile continued apace, fueled on one hand by genuine advances in automotive technology (the automatic starter, for example) and on the other hand, by the imbrication of luxury car design and *haute couture*.[205] The desideratum of comfort was often blamed upon the "feminine influence" of female car buyers, an argument Léger parroted more or less verbatim; whereas, in reality, the touted

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[203] See Alexandre Buisseret, "Les femmes et l'automobile à la Belle Époque," *Le Mouvement social* no. 192, Circulations (Jul.-Sep. 2000), 41-64.

[204] Anon., "Le Home sur la route," *Fémina* no. 253, Aug. 1911, 413: "[L'auto] devient un hôtel en miniature où l'on peut manger, faire une tasse de thé, écrire un mot, se poudrer et se recoiffer, et au besoin meme, si la route est laide et monotone faire un bridge… ou dormir."

[205] The rapport between *carrosserie* and *haute couture* was more than metaphorical: French *carrossiers* often drew inspiration from the latest colors and styles of the Parisian fashion houses, especially around 1926, when, according to the testimony of car designer Alexis de Sakhnoffsky, several major American car manufacturers courted the assistance of French couturiers following the slowdown of domestic sales, hoping to attract make inroads in the European luxury-car market: "D'autres maisons se tournées vers l'Europe en se disant que, vu que la vente baisse en Amérique, il faut adopter les couleurs aux goûts de cette autre clientèle, qui a toujours été un peu négligée. C'est ainsi qu'elles sont arrivées à demander le concours des grands couturiers parisiens pour l'établissement des coloris nouveaux, et il paraît que Poiret, Patou, Premet et Jenny ne sont pas étrangers à certaines 'créations' des carrossiers outre-Atlantique." See Alexis de Sakhnoffsky, "Les Tendances américaines," in *L'Equipement automobile*, no. 116 (Feb. 1927), 896.

domestication of the automobile had less to do with women's entry into the marketplace than with the shifting role and function of driving in everyday life. By the early '20s, industry specialists were willing to admit that "women drive well or poorly case by case, just like men; one's ability to drive is entirely a matter of self-confidence."[206] As of the later part of the decade, one could insist, as one journalist wrote in 1927, that a woman "will either be attracted or displeased by the depth of the seats, the angle and softness of the seat backs, the presence or absence of armrests, and the fabric of the interior decoration, and this will suffice to determine the success or failure of a sale."[207] Yet it was increasingly apparent that the watchword of comfort—*le confort*—mattered to all buyers, male and female alike; after all, comfort was key to the vulgarization of the automobile, and key, too, to its sapping of gender difference. To some writers, Léger included, the domestication of the car interior was tantamount to an assault on masculinity; while to others, the increasing ease of driving was evidence of a growing proximity, and even an equality, between the sexes, in the course of which

> the smile of coquetry and the prudish motions of timidity alike cede to an expression of seriousness and decisiveness. To the most submissive, to the most *bourgeois* of housewives, the automobile procures the transformative intoxication of independence.[208]

To which one could add, with Raymond Williams, changing this analytic just slightly, that the automobile would come to procure for *all* its operators, male and female alike, an essentially bourgeois mode of personal transportation—a machine of independence, but in the most limited and socially corrosive sense:

> private, enclosed, an individual vehicle in a pressing and merely aggregated common flow; certain underlying conventions of external control but within them the passing of rapid signals of warning, avoidance, concession, irritation, as we pursue our ultimately separate ways but in a common mode.[209]

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[206] Paul-Adrien Schayé, "Pourquoi n'avons-nous pas davantage de conductrices de taxis?" *L'Auto*, 5 Jul. 1923: "Les femmes conduisent bien, ou mal, suivant les cas comme les hommes… La conduite d'une voiture est tout entière dans la confiance que l'on a de soi-même."

[207] Anon., "L'influence féminine sur les carrosseries fermées," *L'Équipement automobile* (Paris), May 1923, 641: "La profondeur des sièges, la présence ou l'absence de repose-bras, le tissu de la garniture l'attirent ou lui déplaisent et suffisent à décider de la réussite ou de l'échec d'une vente."

[208] Robert de Beauplan, "En regardant passer les autos," *op. cit.*: "La sourire de la coquetterie comme l'émoi pudique de la timidité ont fait place à une expression sérieuse et décidée. A la plus soumise, à la plus bourgeoise des épouses, l'auto procure la passagère griserie de l'indépendance."

[209] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 296.

As to the question of the landscape, this, too, was a matter of debate. There was no question, on one hand, that the rise of motor tourism amounted to a huge boon to the economic situation in towns and villages otherwise ill serviced by the railway system. Yet the flood tide of motorists came at a steep cost: The sheer volume of traffic was well beyond what the road system, including the Routes Nationales, were built to handle, with bottlenecking already severe along the roads leading into and out of Paris. Likewise, the presence of motorists in the countryside was seen as a golden opportunity for advertising: by the late '20s, advertising companies had begun renting out wall-space along the outskirts of inhabited areas and setting up billboards in marginal lands, hoping to attract the attention of wealthy tourists. In a richly documented article of 1930, published in *L'Illustration*, the writer Roland Engerand took aim at what he called the "leprosy of the road," decrying the fatal encroachment of poster advertising in and upon the rural landscape. The malady of motor-age advertising, Engerand warned, had already enwrapped the villages of France in "a horrible Harlequin's cloak, a chaos of boundless letters, a scandal in the middle of the field."[210] Now the open countryside stood in the crosshairs as well, no less secure than the provincial *bourgs*—indeed, less so on account of its isolation:

> Surely the landscapes will be spared, located far from any habitations: Here, one can hope, the rage of the demolishers will reman impotent. What naïveté! At these spots—all the more valuable to advertisers, since the gaze remain fixed there longer—have been built, in order to mask the view, gigantic panels, two and three stories tall, painted in the most garish colors as if on a mission to blind the passersby and to annihilate the panorama. How many examples we could cite!... On the road between Paris and Caen alone [Route Nationale 13], advertisers have thus camouflaged, to the great sorrow of tourists, the Seine Valley between Paris and Mantes, and the charming descent toward Lisieux, which used to provide the loveliest *points de vue* overlooking the famous wooden houses [….] Where will it end? Already, on grounds as yet unviolated, cement posts have been ranged in rows, ready to receive an ever-changing supply of posters. Along the Côte d'Azur, entire walls [of billboards] destined to be covered in advertising panels have gone up between the beautiful sites of Provence. And now the banks of the Loire are succumbing, in turn, to the cruelest affronts. Unless something is done, the roads of France will become no different than the hallways of the Métropolitain. For, after imprisoning the traveler between two uninterrupted walls of advertising, a way will most certainly have been discovered for utilizing—for commercializing—the sky.[211]

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[210] Roland Engerand, "La lèpre des routes," *L'Illustration*, 6 Sep. 1930, 6.

[211] *Ibid*., 7: "Mais il restait les paysages, les sites éloignés de doute habitation. Là, on pouvait espérer que la rage des démolisseurs resterait impuissante. Quelle naïveté! A ces endroits—d'autant plus intéressants pour la publicité que les regards s'y arrêtaient longuement—on édifia, pour masquer la vue, de gigantesques panneaux, d'une hauteur de deux ou trois étages, où les couleurs les plus criardes avaient mission d'aveugler le

The ‘leprous’ landscape at issue in Engerand’s screed was Léger’s home territory: the trip by car to La Bougonnière passed from the Seine Valley through Caen and Lisieux—an itinerary the artist diagrammed (albeit loosely) in a drawing mailed to Herman in August 1931 [**Fig. 96**] commemorating one of their early escapades, in which a double-headed arrow connects Paris with Lisieux, surrounded by a quasi-abstract comet and cow, totemic symbols from the painter’s work at the farmhouse that summer. Léger cannot have missed the transformation of the landscape along either side of the Route Nationale; it was from personal experience, after all, that he derived his withering prophecy of the “end of the landscape” in October 1928, two years before Engerand’s article went to press.

Yet the thrust of Léger’s critique was personal, and even self-implicating. After all, he and his fellow readers, as well-to-do Parisians en route to vacation, were the privileged subjects of this new system of space-annihilation—it was in their interest, after all, that the roads were transformed on the model of the Métropolitain underground, and at a breakneck pace. In turn, Léger’s art of September ’28 reflects something of this anxiety—in particular his drawing, *La feuille de houx*, which might be interpreted as a sort of endgame: the last leaf from the last tree, as seen—or collected—by the last motorist en route through the last unobstructed country landscape. The drawing is equally, and perhaps more convincingly, a *modernist* endgame, depicting a leaf, but which has been made to furnish a metaphor for the medium of drawing itself—for the flatness and two-dimensionality of the pictorial support, for the stiffness (or flexibility) of the page, and for the paper’s capacity to bear the marks of the pen in rough illusion of dappled light.[212]

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passant et d’anéantir le panorama. Que d’exemples seraient à citer!... Sur la route de Paris à Caen, on a ainsi camouflé, pour le plus grand dommage des touristes, la vallée de la Seine entre Paris et Mantes, et la charmante descente sur Lisieux ménageant autrefois de si jolis points de vue sur les célèbres maisons de bois… […] Où s’arrêtera-t-on? Déjà, sur les espaces encore inviolés, l’on aligne des rangées de pénibles édicules en béton, uniquement destinés à recevoir des affiches sans cesse renouvelées. Sur la Côte d’Azur, des murs entiers, destinés à être recouverta de panneaux-réclame, ont surgi parmi les plus beaux sites de Provence. Et voici que les bords de la Loire subissent, eux aussi, les plus cruels affronts. Si nulle réaction ne se produisait, les routes de France deviendraient semblables aux couloirs du Métropolitain. Car, après avoir emprisonné le voyageur entre deux murs ininterrompus de publicité, l’on aura certainement trouvé le moyen d’utiliser, de commercialiser le ciel.”

[212] It matters for my argument that these effects are borne by the drawing of the holly leaf rather than by the painted version, *Feuille de houx sur fond rouge*.

The late summer of 1928 marked a pessimistic turn in Léger's thinking, opening a view onto a near future in which the national territory as a whole, from Paris to the smallest *bourgade*, was to be swallowed up by the maw of modernity—a landscape totally and completely transformed. Partly this had to do with the novelty of the forces at work: The boom in motor tourism had been manifested with little planning or oversight, reaching a level of intensity—indeed, a historic apogee—in the year 1928 for which rural authorities were mostly unprepared. The chaos along the Routes Nationales produced by this influx of some two million tourists was all the more glaring for its generality: as the journal *Normandie-Tourisme* reported in October 1928, the main roads lacked the sort of modern signal-systems needed to prevent basic traffic accidents at intersections and turns, especially at railway crossings, "an inexhaustible source of accidents, which grow more frequent by the day, and are as dangerous as they are numerous."[213] The carnage of modern traffic had been a mainstay of the *faits divers* since Haussmann's day; but it was only around 1928 that the popular press began to issue sensational reports of accidents along country roads, often illustrated with police photographs, depciting cars battered, splintered, and overturned. The vista of rural modernization was extreme in 1928: it seemed that all of France was falling victim to the automobile. The extraordinary lucidity—the forthright modernism—of Léger's first, peremptory object drawings should be understood in light of this extremity: for they emerged as the repository of a broad-based fear that the French landscape had already been lost, and with it, all memory of nature and naturalness.

The fear was to prove overstated in the end, as the tide of tourists ebbed sharply during the first years of the Depression. But the incompleteness of the project of rural modernization suggested, in turn, a scale of change vastly exceeding the existing road infrastructure; and this partiality left open room for hope, and even utopianism. In a pamphlet of 1927, the novelist Paul Morand urged his Parisian readership toward the forgotten regions of the deep countryside, insisting that it was the automobile's destiny to recover

> the pastures, the roads, the hostels, the adventure and use of those empty spaces between the cities, which had been lost to us for centuries, abandoned to the cultivators. The baggage on the rear of the automobile is more than just fashionable: it is a sign that frequent displacement has become a part of our morals. No one can remain in the city anymore, working hard, for more than two or three weeks without feeling the need to get out. Now that mechanical breakdowns and flats have become rare, and thanks to the silent, luxurious comfort of the new enclosed bodyworks, any one of us can launch himself across France, and indeed all of Europe.[214]

The countryside remained to be taken—seized, infiltrated, colonized—Morand urged, the work of its exploration having only just begun. In comparison with the great plenitude of

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[213] H. Gallois, "La Signalisation des routes" *Tourisme, art et sports dans l'oeust et la Normandie*, an. 3, no. 1 (15 Jan 1899), 11.
[214] Paul Morand, *Le Voyage* (Paris, 1927), 49.

"adventures" afforded the touring motorist, the loss of the landscape-as-panorama was a small price to be paid, per this calculus. This was roughly the point of Baudry de Saunier's dictum, "*To each his own express train*": the automobilist gained the rural landscape as a scene of adventure and exploration, enjoying its hotels and its restaurants, its scenic vistas and its catalogue of monuments. No matter that the kinds of 'adventure' at issue were pre-scripted and thoroughly commodified; or that, as Siegfried Kracauer put it in an essay of 1926, "The significance of travel amounts to nothing more than that it allows people to consume their five o'clock tea in a space that just happens to be less deadeningly familiar than the space of their daily affairs."[215]

The following year, in 1929, Léger came around to Morand's position, albeit with significant reservations. In a second tourism-themed essay for *L'Intransigeant*, "Si tu n'aimes pas les vacances," published toward the end of the *Salon de l'Auto*, Léger revised his opinion on motor tourism: it was now a matter of reform, not despair—a question of modulating the tourist's speed, in other words, and of rerouting her travels toward alternative ends. Whether or not one enjoyed going on vacation, Léger pleaded,

> [i]n any case, one should go less quickly along the road to Deauville. Look to your right and left and bit. It's always a race to the finish, to the rendezvous, to be on time. A pitiless mechanics of time stripped of all fantasy, all taste for adventure. Even women have succumbed to this taylorization of exactitude. It's a curious revolution from the way things once were; they [*les femmes*] had been able to retain, as a species of supremacy, [the privilege] of not being on time. This used to be an incontestable superiority over the level of the 'man-slave.' The men have played them a villainous turn by inventing the watch-bracelet; armed with this bit of jewelry, they have fallen into the trap… The most charming and intimate conversations cut short by a discrete glance at the wrist…
>
> Everything is arranged in advance. Era of organization. Do you know anyone who would step out of his car one morning in order to take a promenade?!... One always has to be 'going somewhere.' […] We spend our vacations with the same people. They're two hundred miles away, they have changed pants, but that's all.
>
> Take a pause every now and then. Follow the little road straight down the way. I know all too well how a breakdown [*un panne*] might save the situation: it throws the whole program of the day up in the air, although we are headed toward cars that will have none of it…
>
> Go ahead, then, and strike off down the little vicinal road; it is in very good condition in Normandy. Touch the inhabitants: they are people like you and me. Just as crafty as you, moreso than you, but differently. Always something new up their sleeve. No need to go all the way to China. Do not figure on finding a generation of

[215] Siegfried Kracauer, "Travel and Dance" [1926], in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. and trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge and London, 1995), 66.

peasants on their hands and knees. No more. They all stand up straight and have ceased to salute the rich: for they too are rich…[216]

In other words, take advantage of the automobile's range, and make the most of its promise of independence. Deauville is a bore, and the trip by car, a wasted opportunity. Normandy beckons: the roads are in excellent repair.

And yet, this exhortation to take the road less travelled came with a warning to the Parisian, and a riposte to would-be adventurers of Morand's type. The Normandy countryside was certainly worth the trip, Léger insisted, but not if undertaken in the fashion of a safari. The peasantry was anything but primitive or archaic, the countryside's "abandon[ment] to the culivators" having done little to slow the dissemination of modern ways; to the contrary, the cultivators were as modern as anyone, Léger argued—in fact, they were the moral anchor of national politics:

> Don't forget that they make the law of the land. They're the majority. It is they who make you pay your taxes, yes, madame! Perhaps one day they will condescend to diminish it a bit. We will have to see! So give them a closer look. They're astonishing with their irony always ready to let loose the *mot juste*, just as in Belleville. Open the

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[216] Fernand Léger, "Si tu n'aimes pas les vacances," *L'Intransigeant* 21 Oct. 1929: "Il faudrait tout de même aller moins vite sur la route de Deauville. Regarder un peu à droite et à gauche. C'est la course au but, au rendez-vous, à l'heure. Une mécanique du temps impitoyable enlève à la vie toute fantaisie, tout goût d'aventure. Même les femmes ont subi cette taylorisation de l'exactitude. C'est une curieuse révolution d'ailleurs; elles avaient su garder cette espèce de suprématie de ne pas être à l'heure. C'était une supériorité incontestable sur le plan 'esclave-masculin.'

Les hommes lui ont joué le villain tour d'inventer la montre-bracelet; armées de ce bijou-menotte elles sont tombées dans le piège… Les conversations les plus charmantes et intimes sont cassées par le coup d'oeil discret au poignet…

Tout est arrangé d'avance. Epoque d'organisation. Connaissez-vous quelq'un qui un matin sorte sa voiture pour aller se promener! … Il faut toujours 'aller quelque part.' […] Passer ses vacances avec les mêmes gens. Ils sont à deux cents kilomètres, ils ont changé de pantalon, c'est tout.

Arrêtez-vous donc un peu. Prenez à droite le petit chemin. Je sais bien que la panne peut sauver la situation: elle fiche en l'air le programme de la journée, mais on va vers des voitures qui n'en auront plus…

Alors enfoncez-vous dans le petit chemin vicinal; il est en très bon état en Normandie. Touchez les habitants: ce sont des gens comme vous et moi. Aussi malins que vous, plus que vous, mais autrement. De la nouveauté sous la main. Pas besoin d'aller en Chine. Ne vous figurez pas trouver une génération de paysans à quatre pattes. Fini. Tout ce monde-là est bien debout et commence à ne plus saluer les riches: ils sont riches aussi…"

gate. Enter within. The dogs have long since announced you. It's their electric doorbell…[217]

There remained life in the deep country: modern life. At the end of the day, rural Normandy was not so different from proletarian Belleville: the locals were *paysans* in name only, men and women of the land, the *pays*. Far from peripheral, however, they were central to the affairs of the nation, and to its modernity. At least, this was a position from which Léger could productively operate: a vision of the countryside less absolute and apocalyptic in its idea of the rapport between the *Normand* and the Parisian, and open to a modicum of discovery—to the possibility, as Léger put it in the final lines of his essay, that the tourist might learn, by experience, "how to change the figures, the objects, the landscapes, the animals; how to adventure in the unknown just a stone's throw away."[218] (To which he added, so as not to be taken for a blind believer: "Thus, in returning [to Paris], you will have something new and droll to recount."[219])

These lines would furnish Léger with a sort of mantra during the next two summers, guiding his choosing of objects for his drawings, yet without veering too far toward the pessimistic extreme—the ultra-materialism—of *La feuille de houx*. From 1929 until the summer of '33, Léger's object drawings testified to a faith that travel could yield its own kind of modernism, provided that the means and ends of tourism were used against the grain, in the interest of getting closer, materially and socially, to the places and objects forgotten (overlooked) in the trajectory from one destination to the next. In the following years, a few drawings would bear inscriptions suggesting itineraries far afield of La Bougonnière: for example, a drawing of a stone from August 1933 is marked "caillou, pierre lisse, route des alpes, '33" [**Fig. 97**]; and a jumble of *Troncs d'arbre* drawn while staying with Gerald and Sara Murphy at a hunting lodge in Bad Aussee, bears the annotation: 'Ramgut 31' [**Fig. 98**]. For the most part, however, there was no direct indexical impulse at work in the drawings, and, indeed, no great sense of geographic specificity on the painter's part; for the objects involved were by definition placeless—literally uprooted, in the case of the trees at Bad Aussee, which Léger described to Herman in an evocative passage: "Climbed 2,000 meters in the mountains yesterday, hard going but spent among beautiful overturned tree trunks, stripped of their bark, magnificent, gleaming, metallic, smooth like serpents and elephants, very animal and expressive."[220]

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[217] *Ibid.*: "N'oubliez pas qu'ils font la loi du pays. C'est la majorité. Ce sont eux qui vous font payer les impôts, oui, madame! Peut-être vont-ils condescendre à les diminuer. On verra ça! Alors regardez-les d'un peu plus près. Ils sont épatants avec leur ironie toujours prête à lâcher le mot juste, comme à Belleville. Ouvrez la barrière. Entrez donc. Vous êtes annoncé depuis longtemps par les chiens. C'est leur sonnette électrique…"

[218] *Ibid.*: "Apprendre à passer ses vacances, à changer de figures, d'objets, de paysages, d'animaux, s'aventurer dans l'inconnu qui est à côté de vous…"

[219] *Ibid.*: "Alors, en rentrant, vous aurez quelque chose de neuf et de drôle à raconter."

[220] FL to SH, 1 Aug. 1931; *LS*, 19: "Monté 2000 mètres en montagne hier, assez dur, mais vécu dans les beaux troncs d'arbres bouleversés, dépouillés de leur écorce,

It is tempting to hear in this letter, with its note of Romantic sublimity, a hint of atavism, as if the tree trunks represented for Léger everything the rootlessness of modern life denied its subject: authenticity, power, expressivity, and even unrestrained phallic self-composure—the trunk of the tree calling forth other metaphorical pudenda: snake-body, elephant-trunk, etc. However, the painter's treatment of these objects—we know of several other *Troncs d'Arbre* from his sojourn in Austria, including a drawing in the collection of the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris [**Fig. 99**]—was tentative in the extreme, his stick of graphite reducing the thick, denuded volumes of the trunks to a nearly flat, and wafer-thin, tracery. In other drawings, too, Léger's ministrations reveal a strange universe of impalpable flatness: see, for instance, the painstakingly ethereal drawing of *Draperie* [**Fig. 100**], perhaps figuring a smock hung on a peg, or else simply a painter's cloth bunched in a corner, dated 1930; and from the same year, a flaccid *Ceinture* [**Fig. 101**].

The point of these estrangements, by my reading, was less to declare the landscape dead and lost than to approach the scene of the countryside—a *modern* countryside—as if it were genuinely *terra incognita*: a world yet to be discovered, pieced together object by object, form after form, putting aside preconceptions as to how each particular thing ought to be named or understood. There emerged something like an empiricist procedure in Léger's drawings after 1930, as exemplified by his *Silex* sequence of August-September '32, a group of drawings retouched with gouache—see, for example, *Silex blanc sur fond jaune* [**Fig. 102**] with *Les Deux silex* [**Fig. 103**]—in which the painter limits his attention to the object's contour, drawn in a single line of ink with a cartographer's precision, and its tone, evoked in a glacial scalloping of hatch-marks.[221] In both drawings, the flints are of indeterminate scale: we can only guess whether the stone is hand-sized or a mere pebble. No effort has been made to *measure* the objects in question—there is no seeking after a standard of comparison: no hierarchy, in other words. Yet the stones are lively in a way, and even subtly acrobatic, as if each morcel of flint were endowed with its own weird personality. Exploiting the apertures and hollows in his flints to maximum effect, Léger comes near to the shores of figuration, especially with *Les Deux silex*: it is hard not to see the shapes of the two stones as describing a pair of mouths, one leering, the other barking or baying. But not human mouths. We remain in an animal world, or something like it. The relationship between painter and flint is more a question of the meeting (but not the touching) of incompossible worlds: an instant in which the artist glimpses the object—the alien Form—for the first time.

It should not surprise us, then, to find Léger writing Herman with an exuberatnt description of life in the country, as opposed to the stultifications of the resorts along the coast. In a letter of 29 August 1932, after an enervating weekend at Deauville (spent in

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magnifiques, brillants, métalliques, lisses comme serpents et éléphants, très animal et expressif […] fait quelques dessins."

[221] To be clear, these were simply rocks found on the roadside, not prehistoric tools; none of Léger's drawings show evidence of man-made chipping or fracturing.

the company of his wife, presumably, although the painter omits this detail from his letter), where he found himself surrounded by "faux matelots," or phony sailors, referring to the striped shirts and dock-wear worn by men on holiday, Léger goes on to describe a luncheon with "des vrais paysans" in the vicinity of La Bougonnière:

> The following day an afternoon at the home of some real peasants – in a working farm – everything is marked by labor – the fold of their bodies and clothing, every trace shaped by the repetition of the same movements the same efforts – naturally, you know my tastes – I like these people so much better […] – ate cheese with a big loaf of bread and drank cider – saw sheep – learned a thousand things about the animals; attacked by the geese, a massive attack – *en groupe* – very headstrong the male honking like a siren…[222]

Yet it was the darker side to the country, where the violence of its modernization bled through, that interested Léger most. Not long after returning to the farm from Deauville, for example, Leger wrote again to Herman, describing a traffic accident he had witnessed along the Route Nationale: "Came back through Lisieux – a car in the ditch with a man's finger severed by the windshield, lofted gently by the wind – blood in the grass it's complementary red on green – It's gray [gris] – and the whole finger hanging by a shard of broken glass."[223] The next day, Leger reported a dream to his confidante in which the same man—the accident victim—approached him along the roadway by bicycle, his head bandaged, his finger replaced with a blue prosthesis, asking him the way to Berlin.[224]

The summer of 1933 marked a breaking point for Léger, in the course of which his disgust with modernity and contempt for the modernizers of the provincial landscape would emerge fully restored. As best we can tell, this bout of pessimism was sparked in July, when Léger joined Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret, and Charlotte Perriand aboard

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[222] FL to SH, 29 August 1932; *LS*, 57: "Le lendemain une après-midi chez des vrais paysans – dans une ferme brute – tout est marqué par le travail – les plis des figures et des vîetements, les traces quelconques sont usées par la répétition des mêmes mouvements des mêmes efforts – naturellement vous connaissez mes goûts – j'aime mieux ces gens-là parce que (je peux ramasser quelque chose) – mangé du fromage avec du gros pain et bu du cidre – été voir les moutons – appris mille choses sur les bêtes; attaqué par les oies, une attaque massive – en groupe – très décidée le mâle en tête sifflant comme une sirene …"

[223] FL to SH, 29 Aug. 1932; *LS*, 57: "Retour vers Lisieux – une voiture dans le fossé avec un doigt de l'homme tranché par le pare-brise et qui flottait doucement au vent – le sang dans l'herbe c'est complémentaire rouge sur vert – C'est gris – et ce doigt à l'ongle propre accroché par un angle de glace brisée…"

[224] FL to SH, 2 Sep. 1932; *LS*, 58. "J'ai fait un rêve extraordinaire pour moi qui rêve peu – le type au doigt coupé de l'auto apparu en bicyclette un bandeau sur le front un doigt artificiel bleu foncé (je travaille à des gouaches ou j'emploie du bleu). Il m'a simplement demandé la route de Berlin et a disparu! (une lettre de Berlin la veille au courrier)"

the passenger ship S.S. Patris II as a participant in the now-legendary fourth Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne (CIAM), convened in order to discuss the theme of "The Functional City." Invited to present remarks on the rapport between painting and architecture, Léger mounted a rebuttal of Le Corbusier's aesthetics and a rejoinder to his architect colleagues and friends, taking the side of the "petit bonhomme moyen" over and against the dictatorship of the Wall:

> You now take leave of the elegant and well-informed minority in order to attack the problem of the 'everymen [*les moyennes*],' who until now have lived with their furnishings, their house-paint, their bibelots, always garnishing the surface of the walls to the maximum, always blocking up the windows with drapes. These people, simple, slow, and timid, you have stripped down and posted up kicking and screaming before the 'wall.' This wall that you have come to resuscitate, their grandfathers spent their time dissimulating. You impose the wall radically. They find themselves brusquely enveloped in light and surrounded by slick new surfaces, where there is no longer any chance of hiding, where shadow itself is out of place.
>
> Our earnest little everyman, 'the Urbanite [*l'Urbain*],' to call him by his name, is seized by vertigo. He is not prepared for this turn of events.[225]

In some ways, this salvo was long overdue: historian Jan de Heer notes that Léger had found himself irritated with Le Corbusier over the latter's venture to create a collection of wallpapers, called 'Salubra,' which the architect had countersigned with Léger's name.[226] Moreover, the collaborations between architects and painters envisioned by the CIAM group seemed mainly to relegate the latter to a subservient, decorator-type position; and in the case of Le Corbusier's architectural program, there was simply no place any longer for autonomous easel painting—a position he would make definite later in the decade, proposing the construction of a *Musée à croissance illimité* ('Museum of Unlimited Growth') in 1939 as a means of concentrating the world's stock of paintings into a single, ever-expanding warehouse [**Fig. 104**].

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[225] Fernand Léger, "Discours aux architectes," reprinted, among other sources, in *Le Journal général des Travaux publics et Bâtiment en Oranie*, 14 Oct. 1933: "Vous quittez cette minorité élégante et acquise pour vous attaquer aux 'moyennes,' qui jusqu'alors ont vécu dans les meubles, les teintures, les bibelots, qui ont toujours garni au maximum la surface des murs et bouché les fenêtres avec des rideaux. Ces gens-là, simples, lents et timides, vous les déshabillez, et vous les collez complètement ahuris devant le 'mur.' Ce mur que vous venez de ressusciter, leur père et grand- père avaient passé leur temps à le cacher. Vous l'imposez radicalement. Ils se trouvent brusquement enveloppés de lumière devant les surfaces lisses, neuves, où on ne peut plus se cacher, où l'ombre elle-même ne trouve plus sa place.

Le petit bonhomme moyen, 'l'Urbain' pour l'appeler par son nom, est pris de vertige. Il n'est pas préparé à cet événement."

[226] Jan de Heer, *The Architectonic Colour: Polychromy in the Purist Architecture of Le Corbusier* (Rotterdam, 2009), 12.

Of course there were other reasons as well why Léger's mood might have darkened in the year 1933. Following the burning of the Reichstag on 27 February, Adolf Hitler moved swiftly to consolidate his position as German chancellor, suspending parliamentary rule (with parliamentary consent) with the Enabling Act of 23 March, effectively guaranteeing his Nazi Party a governing dictatorship. Economically, too, the situation looked bleak. The Depression had begun to take a decisive toll on Léger's art: Although he remained in a plum position compared to many of his modernist colleagues, his paintings had lost a great deal of their former value—roughly two-thirds, he estimated in a letter of October 1933.[227] More generally, the market for modern paintings had all but dried up, leaving Léger to seek alternative sources of income abroad, especially in the United States—which meant, in turn, a schedule packed with foreign travel.

On 25 November 1933, Léger wrote to Herman with a dark premonition, likening the conditions of everyday life to a life-or-death struggle, the slings of which he and his fellow modernists were all visibly suffering:

> Everything continues to harden around us, the pressure is slow but tenacious – what a life – we have to multiply our means tenfold. To return to the state of a hunter-gatherer – we hunt in the deep jungle deep in virgin forest – like wolves – the struggle between us – we watch each other closely we spy on each other. Whoever collapses is immediately buried in the Virgin-Forest, that's all – All the men I know who are engaged in this battle have changed physically – they're all leaner – Picabia – Brancusi – I too am leaner I believe –
>
> Wild beasts – cut at a hard angle, to exacting inspection, thrown back upon our resources, an economy of gestures, of everything, an incredible hardening worse than during the War, where we were at least led forward – now we are each of us 'our own general,' it's another story entirely –
>
> I've never known such a battle. How many will perish of it! A few will survive, we are all thrown into the water, our heads and arms appearing and disappearing. What a disaster! and all around us daily life [*la vie moyenne*] rolls on peaceably ignorant of this incredible drama unfolding unseen in its midst.[228]

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[227] See Affron, *op. cit.*, 121, fn. 11.

[228] FL to SH, 25 Nov. 1933; *LS*, 98: "Tout continue à se durcir autour de nous, c'est une pression lente mais tenace – quelle vie – il faut décupler nos moyens. Revenir à l'état sauvage chasser – on chasse en plein maquis en pleine forêt vierge – comme les loups – la lutte entre nous – on se guette on s'épie. Celui qui tombe aussitôt on l'enterre la Forêt-vierge, c'est ça – Tous les hommes que je connais qui sont engagés dans cette bataille ont changé physiquement – tous ont maigri – Picabia – Brancusi – maigri moi aussi je crois –

Des fauves – à l'ongle dur, à l'oeil exact, un ramassement sur soi-même une économie de gestes, de tout, un endurcissement incroyable pire qu'à la Guerre où l'on était guidé – ici on est 'notre général' c'est une autre histoire –

Jamais connu pareille bataille. Combien vont en crever! Lesquels surnageront on est tous dans l'eau, avec des têtes et des bras qui apparaissent et disparaissent. Quel

Three days later, on 28 November, Léger alerted Herman with a further presentiment of crisis, pivoting abruptly from his lover's discourse into a prophecy of doom: "How half-empty I am without you! I turn in my cage in search of you whom I miss – days and nights lost, yes lost – I have a sort of feeling that a catastrophe, I don't know quite what, is on its way – and time our time is precious."[229]

It is possible that Léger had politics in mind when writing these lines, thinking, perhaps, of the turn of events in Germany. Of course, his thoughts were centered first and foremost upon the everyday struggle for bread and dignity: Brancusi and Picabia were distinguished, after all, not by their opposition to fascism (indeed, the latter would quietly collaborate with the Vichy regime during World War II) but by their hewing to an intransigently modernist position under exceptionally hostile economic conditions. Soon enough, however, Léger would be swept up in the politics of Left-wing anti-fascism: By the following April, the rudiments of a compact between French communists and socialists, mortal enemies after the betrayals of World War I, had begun to be knit together from below, mostly at the local level, in response to the threat from homegrown fascists; and in just a few weeks time, beginning in June 1934, the Third International would adapt itself to the project of a "United Front from Above," paving way for the short-lived collaboration between the bourgeois center with the Stalinist Left in the years of the 'People's Fronts.' In France, the glimmerings of the Front Populaire were visible as early as July 1934, when the signing of a unity pact between the SFIO and the PCF allowed for the erection of a jointly sponsored monument to the late Jaurès.[230]

In 1934, Léger would join the Association des Écrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires as an enthusiastic and loyal supporter, cementing his allegiance to the political Left in the decades to come. It matters, however, that the Left with which Léger would soon become alloyed had not clarified a position—at least, not one with which the painter saw his interests aligned—in the summer and autumn of 1933. What drew Léger's ire in the weeks immediately following the CIAM meeting was less political or economic than geographic and artistic: again, his mind turned to the landscape and its decrepitude. In a letter from his hotel in Nice, Léger noted with astonishment the volume (in both senses) of traffic along the littoral roadway, a sonic barrage comparable, he believed, to the artillery fire he had witnessed at Verdun—shades of the war soon to come—and which continued apace at all hours, day and night:

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naufrage! et autour de nous paisiblement la vie moyenne roule ignorant ce drame formidable qu'elle roule dans elle sans le voir."

[229] FL to SH, Nov. 28, 1933; *LS*, 98: "Comme je suis à moitié vide sans vous! Je tourne dans ma cage à la recherche de vous qui me manquez – des jours et des nuits de perdus, oui perdus – J'ai comme le sentiment d'une catastrophe qui vient je ne sais pas quoi – et le temps notre temps est précieux."

[230] On this episode, see Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press 2002), 261-276.

> Tonight I suffered through an infernal round of noise – situated exactly along the Promenade des Anglais the 15-16-17 August between Cannes and Nice – Here's the situation – Along 20 kilometers there's nothing but a pitch where cars roll two by two [….] At 10 to 11 o'clock in the evening it's at the maximum. Yesterday I left a window open to take in the spectacle – it's unforgettable – The half-dreaming position I described to you is totally reversed – Suddenly it's objective clear – shattering – only certain situations in Verdun can hold up before that modern thunder – a battle of the Gods. It's not situated on the ground level it has an aerial air but the variety is deafening, interspersed with the rumbling noise of 50 menageries is the grapeshot of motorcycles which blares like a machine gun.[231]

Upon returning to Paris at the end of the month, driving (presumably with Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret, and Charlotte Perriand) back via the Route des Alpes, Léger reported to Herman a sense of total exhaustion:

> Completely disgusted with this country. And also with traveling – in the end everything is the same and too 'general' – too spread-out – Our little promenades, just a few kilometers of Paris but yes more high-keyed, much better; there's no spectacle, rather the eye falls across whatever it may discover – our imagination at work we create together – While traveling it's the subject that is developed – a few beautiful 'things' naturally but I much prefer the butcher shop on Rue Ménilmontant seen together one evening, perhaps it's all in my head but that was much more stunning than the Acropolis in rotting pieces.[232]

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[231] FL to SN, Aug. [19 or 20], 1933; *LS*, 80: "Cette nuit j'ai subi la ronde infernale des bruits - cela se situe exactement sur la Promenade des Anglais le 15-16-17 août entre Cannes et Nice - Vous voyez d'ici la situation - Sur 20 kilomètres c'est rien qu'une piste où les voitures roulent à deux de front dans les deux sens. A 10h - 11h. du soir c'est au maximum. Hier j'ai laissé une fenêtre ouverte pour ramasser le spectacle - c'est inoubliable - La position demi-rêve que je vous ai décrite est totalement renversée - Alors c'est clair objectif - brisant - seules certaines situations de Verdun peuvent tenir devant ce tonnerre moderne - une bataille de Dieux. Ça ne se situe pas au sol cela à l'air aérien mais la variété est inouïe, dans l'ampleur des ronflements de 50 ménageries il y a le cassant des grappes de motocyclettes qui claironnent en mitrailleuse."

[232] FL to SH, 28 Aug. 1933; *LS*, 84: "Dégoûté à fond de ce pays. Et aussi des voyages – finalement c'est égal et trop 'générale' – trop étendue – Nos petites promenades, à quelques petits kilomètres de Paris mais oui plus aiguës, beaucoup mieux; pas de spectacle, mais l'oeil sur ce qu'on découvre – notre imagination en travail on crée ensemble – Dans le voyage c'est le sujet qui se développe – quelque beaux 'faits' naturellement mais j'aime mieux la Boucherie de la rue Ménilmontant vue un soir ensemble, peut-être on a tout inventé mais c'était beaucoup plus épatant que l'Acropole en morceaux pourris."

In the first days of September 1933, Léger had returned to La Bougonnière—to "ma Normandie," as he put it in a quick missive to Herman—and set about working on a new suite of drawings. Abandoning the gouache backgrounds of the previous year's work, he now churned out ink drawings at break-neck pace—studies of flints, ropes, window glass, carcasses of sheep and cow, hands and feet, and so on. Léger's correspondence during during the three weeks of his stay in the countryside suggest a period of quasi-demonic productivity on the part of the enervated painter, who at last found himself on stable footing after weeks of travel (weeks of nausea, as well: Léger took seasick during much of the CIAM proceedings).

In fact, Léger seems to have been mulling over the beginnings of a theoretical *parti pris*, sketching in his correspondence the outline of a lecture he would deliver the following winter at the Sorbonne, under the heading "De l'Acropole à la Tour Eiffel."[233] In a letter of 3 September, his first day back at the farmhouse, Léger offered a first test of this argument, which would come to hinge upon the pursuit of *objectivity* in art:

> Plunged into white and black – drawings and drawings and still more drawings I've had my fill of it – […] Sprawled in the grass I mull over the question of 'objectivity' – I would like to arrive at a position, at once theoretical and human, to this problem which has bothered me for several years – one part of our epoch is very 'objective,' the majority I should think – alongside which a minority is in reaction and supports itself by way of poetical or religious evasions. It seems to me that I rendered color 'objective,' the colored plane, in [19]18 - 20 - 21 – We find the feeling for objectivity among all the great primitives – but 'in terms of the subject' there is no solution to the object – it has so much value in itself that it is 'damaging' and destroys its neighbors if they are not realized in the service of its self-valorization.[234]

Objectivity is a slippery term, of course. In Léger's usage, during the first days of his September vacation, 'objectivity' had to do with the object seen and understood "in itself," and with the artist's will to confront the object-world in its particulars, without

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[233] "De l'Acropole à la Tour Eiffel," lecture before the Groupe d'Etudes Philosophiques et Scientifiques pour l'Examen des Idées nouvelles, at the Sorbonne, 8 Feb. 1934. An excerpt of this lecture was published simultaneously as "Le beau et le vrai," *Beaux-Arts* vol. 73, no. 58 (9 Feb. 1934), 2.

[234] FL to SH, 3 Sep. 1933; *LS*, 86: "Plongé dans le noir et blanc – des dessins et encore des dessins j'arrive à me remplir – […] Le dos dans l'herbe je fouille la question de 'l'objectivité' – Je voudrais arriver à une position théorique et humaine à la fois de ce problème qui me tracasse depuis quelques années – Une partie de notre époque est très 'objective,' je pense la majorité – à côté de cela une minorité est en réaction et s'appuie sur des évasions poétiques ou religieuses. J'ai le sentiment d'avoir rendu 'objectif' la couleur, le plan coloré en [19]18-20-21 – On trouve un sentiment d'objectivité chez tous les grands primitifs – mais 'dans le sujet' l'objet ne peut être solutionné – il a une telle valeur en soi qu'il est 'brisant' et détruit les voisinages s'ils ne sont pas réalisés pour sa mise en valeur."

resorting either to abstraction or to "poetical or religious evasions"—without metaphysics, in other words. The remainder of his letter of 3 September pushes this argument a few paces further, affirming the artist's sacred duty to confront the object head-on and without preconceptions:

> Each object has a plastic value in itself, which has to be discovered, yet without destroying more than 50% of its average 'life' value once it's held in hand – the interpretation should be *restrained* I believe. It's thus completely anti-romantic by virtue of this acceptance of constraint – for it's *so easy* to follow the path of evasion to the finish – one rises very quickly, the ascension is 'crazy' but the higher up you go the more you feels the isolation of cold and solitude […] Vitally, instinctively, out of the worst pridefulness even, you search for points of support, points of comprehension […] It's 'nervewracking' this obligation to remain human and not to pass over to the plane of *cerebral purity* which is so intoxicating – An 'objective' art such as I conceive it should confront this horrible obligation – it's quite a stretch and very difficult […] it's hard – but one has to 'hold tough' for the truth, I believe, is that high quality 'in the long run' is a matter of this position 'kept' 50% controlled.[235]

These were gnarled thoughts, indeed; they rank high among the more densely wrought of Léger's wide-ranging correspondence with Herman (by the end of the letter, he was apologizing for annoying her with his gratuitous theorizations). But the core idea, concerning the challenge of the object, has a rough sort of sense, and helps to clarify something of the tone and direction of Léger's art in September '33. Indeed, I doubt we can really understand the body of drawings that would come to anchor the *Objets* exhibition without recognizing the import of his letter of 3 September.

What Léger was describing, conceptually and artistically, might best be understood by analogy to the art of the late 1960s. I have in mind a remark made by Robert Smithson in 1969, probably conceived in reply to Michael Fried's essay "Art and Objecthood," to the effect that modernism—rather, contemporary art—would have to make hay with a

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[235] *Ibid*., 87: "Chaque objet a une valeur plastique en soi, il faut le trouver, et lorsque on la tient ne pas détruire plus de 50% de sa valeur 'vie' moyenne – l'interprétation doit être je crois contenue. C'est tout à fait anti-romantique par cette décision de contrainte car s'est si 'facile' de pousser l'evasion jusqu'au bout – on monte très vite, l'ascension est 'folle' mais à mesure que l'on s'élève on sent l'isolement le froid de la solitude, on est plus que quelques-uns plus que 10 - 8 - 2 ou 3 on peut arriver à être seul, on en crève parce que il n'y a absolument pas de confiance telle en soi qu'on ne désire qu'elle soit au moins partagée un peu –

Vitalement, d'instinct, on cherche même dans le pire orgueil des points d'appui, de compréhension – […] C'est 'angoissant' cette contrainte pour rester humain et non passer au plan cérébral pur que est si enivrant –

Un art 'objectif' comme je le conçois doit envisager cette horrible contrainte – c'est très calé et difficile […] – c'est dur – mais il faut 'tenir' car je crois que la vérité 'de durée' de grande qualité c'est cette position 'tenue' 50% contrôlée."

denaturalized, and denatured, view of the object-world, letting go of its implicit (and often explicit) preference for anthropomorphism:

> I think in terms of millions of years, including times when humans weren't around. Anthony Caro never thought about the ground his work stands on. In fact, I see his work as anthropocentric cubism. He has yet to discover the dreadful object. And then to leave it. He has a long way to go.[236]

For Léger, too, the stakes of modernism were bound up with the dehumanization of the object-world—more particularly, with the artist's capacity to withstand exposure to the *non*-anthropocentric side of nature. Suppressed in his art of the previous three summers, this trial-by-objectivity, and the dance of death with the "dreadful object," as Smithson had it, was now front and center in his mind. There was no question of triumphing in this contest; it was rather a matter of survival—of coming away from the encounter with even a portion (50% was his benchmark) of the object's strange vivacity and disorienting foreignness held in tow.

Needless to say, the way Léger staked for himself (or imagined as such) in September '33 was narrow and hard, a path bounded by atavism on one side and by abstraction on the other. Two days after first sketching his new "theory," on 5 September, Léger reported his progress to Herman with a mixture of enthusiasm and apprehension: "New and bitter for me, these things. 25 drawings in 5 days, pen drawings very finished 'genre Dürer'! compact hard—explosive … even mean – they're mean – I attacked a butcher's shop – I've got elements of 'beef' a quartered cow – all mixed together with shells and calipers and cords, saws, everything…"[237] By the middle of the month, Léger continued to vacillate between enthusiasm and exhaustion: on 16 September, he praised the forcefulness and complexity of his black-and-white drawings, claiming to prefer the "grisaille" of his surroundings, to the "saccharine" color of his previous work: "What strength in the colorless; the harshness of an old pair of pants from which hangs an enormous deformed hand, gray – stones – tree trunks – I've rediscovered them, not a bit of seduction … Color disgusts me, – it's too simple…"[238] Three days later, he wrote of

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[236] "Discussions with Heizer, Oppenheimer, and Smithson," in Jack Flam, ed., *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings of Robert Smithson* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: The University of California Press, 1996), 248.

[237] LS to SH, 5 Sep. 1933; *LS*, 88: "Nouveau et âpre pour moi ces choses. 25 dessins en 5 jours, dessins au trait très fini des 'genre Dürer'! serrés durs – éclatants tout cela à cause de nous – même méchants – ils sont méchants – J'ai attaqué une boucherie – j'ai des éléments de 'boeufs' des quartiers de viande – tout cela se mélange avec des échelles des compas des cordes, des scies, de tout –"

[238] FL to SH, 16 Sep. 1933; *LS,* 90: "[J]'adore la grisaille d'ici – les tons pas francs – des bonshommes et des femmes et des chevaux – tous ça rien que des valeurs un peu teintée(s) – quelle force dans le décoloré; l'âpreté d'un vieux pantalon sur lequel pend une main énorme déformée, grise – les cailloux – les troncs d'arbres – je les retrouve, pas un sou de séduction rien – c'est beau ou c'est rien – La couleur me dégoûte – c'est trop

feeling "submerged" in his work, no longer able to count the number of drawings he has produced.[239]

Finally, on 21 September, Léger claimed to have crossed a threshhold. After two weeks of uninterrupted work in the summer studio, his objects had finally left him cold, and the flush of protean potency, begun to fade:

> I feel that I am at the end of my work and of my 15 days of isolation – I'm seized by fatigue, by exasperation. All my objects are exhausted – on account of which life diminishes all around – thus I reap all the profits, everything is seen from close up. I haven't bought a single book, I leaf through the old ones and reread them – so many things poorly read – we are truly degenerated by speed, one has to have the strength to resist – to go by foot – to follow through an *effort* at length without pulverizing it with other activities. In sum an apologia for life as it was 100 years ago – and thus a religion of poverty, of privation – hardly anything around oneself – but *one must make the best of it* – Weakness of the intensity [faiblesse de l'intensité] that draws life from living *surfaces* in place of *volumes*. We've lost the sense of heaviness in general. For example the state of poverty obliges you to draw out your interest in a thing or sentiment that would have been abandoned had you been able to distract yourself. Naturally thus mechanism is only permitted to the 'living,' I am being tested just now and the results will roll in slowly but surely throughout the year. It's going to be a very difficult year – difficult to know if one is strong enough to profit by it or if it will make one 'fold.' I'd rather be in prison for example, isolated and I'd only have paper and pencil to follow the ordeal to the end – That's my story, 'to live on the spot' [*vivre sur place*] but in the smallest place possible [*minimum de place*] almost empty-handed but always *objectively*, not in a reverie. I've known the tension that comes of wastefulness and now I appreciate the other side which is infinitely richer.[240]

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facile – c'est comme si on criait – tout le monde peut crier – c'est rien du tout la couleur – c'est le sucre tout le monde naturellement aime que 'ça soit sucré'."

[239] FL to SH, 19 Sep. 1933; *LS*, 92.

[240] FL to SH, 21 Sep. 1933; *LS*, 92-3: "Je sens que je suis au bout de mon travail et de mes 15 jours d'isolement – je suis dans la fatigue, exaspération. Tous mes objets sont épiusés – autour de cela une vie réduite – alors j'en découvre tout le bénéfice, tout est vu de plus près. Je n'achète pas de livre, je fouille les anciens et je relis – des tas de choses mal lues – on est vraiment dégénérés par la vitesse, avoir la force d'y résister – aller à pied – continuer un effort longtemps sans le pulvériser par d'autres actes. En somme apologie de la vie d'il y a 100 ans – et puis religion de la pauvreté, de la privation – peu d'éléments autour de soi – mais en faire bien le tour – Faiblesse de l'intensité qui s'alimente de surfaces vives au lieu de volumes. On a perdu le sens de l'épaisseur en général. L'état de pauvreté par exemple vous oblige à prolonger l'intérêt sur un fait ou un sentiment que l'on aurait abandonné si l'intérêt sur un fait ou un sentiment que l'on aurait abandonné si on avait pu s'en distraire. Naturellement ce mécanisme ca n'est permis qu'à des 'vitaux' je suis à cette épreuve en ce moment et cela va s'accuser lentement mais durement toute cette année. Ça va être une très difficile savoir si on est assez fort pour en

This was Léger's Smithson moment *in nuce*: his attempt at going through the narrows of the "dreaful object" to the other side of objectivity, perservering (or trying as much) in the face of the inhumanity of the object-world, and in view of nature's deep resistance to artistic appropriation. Léger's drawings of flints from September '33—see, for instance, the two *Silex* drawings in the collection of the Musée National Fernand Léger at Biot [**Fig. 105-106**]—are especially remarkable, not only for the density of their hatching, testament to their maker's extreme fixation on the minutiae of natural (non-man-made) form, but also, and simultaneously, for their uncannny translucidity, as if recreating on paper the subtle materiality (the porosity to light) of his stones. And although none of these flints bore signs of prehistoric use, it is difficult not to see them in the hand of a primordial *Homo faber*—humanity on the cusp of realizing what good a sharpened rock can do.

Yet on some level Léger might have sensed his efforts leading him in a direction *opposite* the values he sought to preserve—away from "la vie d'il y a 100 ans," its peripatetic cows and petite bourgeoisie, and toward the bleeding edge of the contemporary: toward the road accident on the Route Nationale, and the deafening roar of traffic along the Promenade des Anglais. It is notable, on this score, that Léger's drawings of September '33 were the first to be designated as *fragments*, suggesting both an absent totality—a missing 'nature,' or a lost (a forgotten) landscape, in which the objects might each take their place—and a world blasted apart, its constituent materials thrown into violent disarray. Objects remain at the center of this diffracted universe; yet Léger is emphatic, as never before, about the impossibility of wresting from their inspection any sort of knowledge. Even a year earlier, in 1932, his drawings from La Bougonnière still had about them something of Morand's spirit of adventure: a sense that

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profiter ou si elle va vous 'plier'. J'aimerais être en prison par exemple, isolé et que seulement on me donne papier et crayon pour faire l'épreuve jusqu'où je pourrais tenir- Ça c'est mon histoire de 'vivre sur place' mais alors dans le minimum de place avec preque rien mais toujours objectivement et pas dans la rêverie. J'ai connu la tension dans le gaspillage maintenant j'apprécie l'autre infiniment plus riche. Si il n'y a vait pas vous – au bout de tout cela! mais avec vous – c'est trop difficile vraiment il y a une limite aux contraintes en amour, aux sacrifices – tant de choses magnifiques pourraient se réaliser à nous deux, avec plus d'aisance. Je crains l'hiver qui vient chérie de ne pas être assez serré près de vous, à cause de ces misérables difficultés que je prévois. N'en causons pas trop – on va voir. Laissons courir et ayons du courage mais je crains le retour tout de même. Assez causé de cela n'est-ce pas. Ça ne s'écrit pas ces choses là. –

Il se passe quelque chose je crois d'extrêmement nouveau dans l'évolution des esprits et dans le monde mais c'est à l'intérieur c'est une révolution sous la peau – peu perceptible en dehors – très dure beaucoup plus que les cassures précédentes. Nous sommes enchaînés à tout ce mécanisme mystérieux et un peu inquiétant – y voir clair là-dedans – Impossible c'est la mer, le vent – l'énorme fantaisie des forces naturelles – Chérie comme je vous aime en écrivant cette drôle de lettre comme je pense à vous tout entière – quel désir de vous avoir malgré tout."

the countryside, in its simultaneous foreignness and nearness, could furnish the artist-tourist an occasion for learning, even if only of a minimal sort. In *Silex blanc sur fond jaune* [**Fig. 106**], for example, we are made aware of the stone's unlikely conformity to the physiognomy of the human body—its strange anthropomorphism—as suggested by the play of shadow around an aperture in the stone.

In 1933, however, all sense of the anthropomorphic would be completely purged from Léger's drawings. One this score, the Biot *Silex* might be compared with another pair of drawings from September '33: *Les gants* [**Fig. 107**] and *Quartier de mouton* [**Fig. 108**] (the former derives from the collection Douglas Cooper, the latter, from the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris): The gloves are no more glove-like than stone-like; the quarter of mutton could be carved from stone, and resembles nothing so much as a Stone-Age arrowhead or chopping tool. Flint was the natural (in the sense of self-evident) material for this procedure, in its simultaneous scalloped hardness and quasi-translucency. In a sense, whatever Léger set about to draw in September '33 turned to flint. What Léger had discovered, however, was not nature but *art*—not the capital-T Truth of an objective procedure, but the (small-t) truth of pictorial convention: the drawing as mediator of light and shadow, and of presence and absence, translucent in its own imperfect way. None of the drawings makes this point more emphatically than *Fragment de vitrage* [**Fig. 109**], a drawing of a section of window-glass, but which does not so much transmit light as absorb it. It is a picture of the limits of pictorial epistemology: a drawing calculated, even if only naïvely, to affirm the artificiality of art over and against any claim to its objectivity.

I am suggesting a dark horizon to Léger's sequence of object drawings; but also—and this is key—a recursion back to the sequence's starting-place: back to the position staked with *La feuille de houx* of 1928. By way of explaing this backwards turn, I shall not try to claim for Léger's experience along the Côte d'Azur—his exposure to the full force of modernization, and to traffic in its truly modern, and horrific, form—too much authority; after all, much else besides travel and tourism would have been on his mind as well in September '33, from fascism and the Depression to his affair with far-away Simone Herman. Still, it would do to acknowledge the ways the tourist imaginary had shifted as of 1933, and in ways that inflected the social geography of Léger's art, putting an abrupt end to the sort backroads adventurism he had advocated in 1929 ("Alors enfoncez-vous dans le petit chemin vicinal; il est en très bon état en Normandie. Touchez les habitants: ce sont des gens comme vous et moi.").

Although motor tourism had exploded into visibility in France with a disorienting force in the late 1920s, to the point of threatening the national territory on a total scale, by 1933, the rudiments of a new settlement had been clarified, and in a shape widely held to be definitive. In his annual *causerie*, Baudry de Saunier, asserted that there was "only one solution" to the predicament of interurban traffic:

> to adapt the road as quickly as possible to the modern automobile, by making special roads for these special vehicles; to open up new roads for our cars—straight, large, surrounded by guard-posts—and for cars alone, without horse-drawn carriages,

> without pedestrians, without animals, without bicycles, even without motorcycles (per American and Italian regulations), without crossing through country roads, without railway crossings, where they can circulate in one direction only, having the right to all the maxima of thiat quality which makes the automobile what it is: speed.[241]

Baudry de Saunier was calling for a national highway system, patterned after similar projects in Italy, German, and the United States. France would have to countenance a new round of infrastructural works, on a scale equal to Vauban's original circulatory system: apart from purpose-built *autoroutes*, there was simply no way of marrying the power of the automobile with the many, and too-diverse, claimants to the roadway. "Les autoroutes s'imposent," declared the caption to this section of the *causerie*—a fittingly Corbusian slogan for the highways of the future.

The *autoroutes* furnished an end, finally, to the teleology of automotive modernization, but along lines that were to prove incompatible with utopian and dystopian visions alike. Accompanying Baudry de Saunier's prescription in *L'Illustration* was a plan sketched by the illustrator W. Janko, envisioning a system of elevated *autoroutes* connecting the entirety of the French territory, to be erected on pillars directly above the preexisting network of railway lines [**Fig. 110**]. This plan had the advantage, Baudry de Saunier noted, of eliminating the need "to purchase terrain and to undertake expropriations" in advance of its construction (much the same argument was deployed by Fulgènce Bienvenuë in the planning of the Métropolitain, but on a vastly larger scale).[242] Of course there was no chance that this plan would be put through: on that point Baudry de Saunier was adamant. The image's power, and its relevance to this chapter's subject, had to do with its overall idea of the infrastructural landscape, a panorama of northern France spanning Brest and Nancy along the Atlantic coast to the mouth of the Seine at Le Havre, with Paris just barely visible at the right edge of the plate, in which the highway system was to merge seamlessly with the preexisting countryside. Reducing the territory at issue to the scale of a wide plain, its surface marked by meandering rivers and patchwork farmlands, Janko's prospectus heralds a systematization of traffic in which the

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[241] Louis Baudry de Saunier, "Causerie sur le Salon de l'Automobile de 1933," *op. cit.*, n.p.: "Il n'y a qu'une seule solution: adapter le plus vite possible la route à l'automobile moderne, faire des voies spéciales à ces véhicules spéciaux, ouvrir à nos voitures des routes droites, larges, entourés de barrières, où elles soient toutes seules, sans carrioles attelées, sans piétons, sans animaux, sans bicyclettes ni même de motocyclettes (règlements américain et italien), sans croisements de chemin, sans passages à niveau, où elles ne circulent que dans un seul sens, ayant droit à tous les maxima de cette qualité qui fait le fond même de l'automobile: la vitesse."

[242] *Ibid.* "Ainsi n'aurait-on aucun terrain à acheter et aucune expopriation à faire!" Baudry de Saunier contiued to point out the obvious deficits of Janko's project—"notamment le prix extrêmement élevé de ces routes suspendues, la largeur beaucoup trop petite des voies, l'impossibilité de faire passer l'autoroute sous les tunnels ou sur les ponts actuels: etc."

automobile's ambit would be limited to the corridors set by the railway companies in the nineteenth century—a landscape ultra-modern in this respect, but otherwise unchanged in aggregate. The countryside remains rural, and even remote, per Janko's depiction; the network of traffic barely interrupts the patterns of life at ground level, except in casting a somewhat ominous—but essentially harmless—shadow over the already-modernized *voies ferrées*.

Janko's *autoroutes* were plainly the stuff of fantasy. Yet the image of traffic figured in the pages of *L'Illustration*, tallied with the journalist's description of the purified, car-only roadways of the future, suggested a reality close in morphology to the highway networks that were actually to be built in the remainder of the century. From Léger's vantage, the idea of a system of *autoroutes* would have confirmed to the n^{th} degree his suspicion of 1928—namely, that the landscape was over, *fini*, a thing of the past, lost and forgotten by the motorist ensconced in his "perfect object." By the same token, however, this closure was not so different in the end than that of the railway lines: in both cases, the base infrastructure essentially similar, and similarly circumscribed—at least, such was Janko's promise. In any case, there was no praising the motorist's unprecedented "independence" in the year 1933, as Baudry de Saunier had urged in his '28 *causerie*; for the highway and the railway were bound to be equally limited in their purchase upon the national territory, competitors in the race to shore up the market in long-distance transport.[243] A driver could take off from her garage whenever she wished, and could drive as fast as she wished along the *autoroute* (according to Baudry de Saunier), but *only* on the *autoroute*. Otherwise she would be obliged to navigate the rules and restrictions of the surface streets, with their municipal traffic police, their speed limits, and their carts, carriages, dogs, sheep, pedestrians, cyclists, etc. Eventually, the road system would come to reduplicate the density and convenience of the railway networks, but would remain as hampered as ever, if not more so, beyond the pale of the highway.

It is by no means certain that Léger would have picked up a copy of *L'Illustration* during the run of the 1933 *Salon de l'Auto*; but in the event that he had, he might have noticed that Janko's proposal would have placed an elevated highway just beyond the bounds of his hometown, Argentan, while sparing Lisores entirely. Per the illustrator's scheme, Normandy—*his* Normandy—was to bear an unusually high proprotion of the national automotive infrastructure, owing to the longstanding fact of its preponderance of railway lines. Even so, there can have been no mistaking the overall shape of Janko's plan, or the logic of things to come. The landscape (that is, the countryside) was to remain marginal to the urban population, its patchwork of greenery dimly glimpsed and fondly remembered, but no more than that. It was not the least obvious quirk of Janko's

[243] Indeed, the promoters of road versus rail transport in Depression-era France were locked into a life-or-death struggle, as the drop in manufacturing led, precipitously, to a crisis in the shipping industry. See Jones, *Politics of Transport in Twentieth-Century France*, 37-57.

plan, after all, that it permitted no access to the *autoroutes* from beneath the grand viaduct, except at a few urban switching points. Perhaps the illustration had not realized that the countryside, too, would wish to be serviced by the highways of the future—indeed, that it brimmed with motorists and buzzed with locomotion, no less so than Haussmann's boulevards. Or perhaps, in a more pessimistic vein, Janko had already understood that modernity and democracy were completely different ideas, and would never be synthesized as such.

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Here is the place to acknowledge the aspect of Léger's project he preferred least to let on in his correspondence with Herman—its social aspect, that is. The reasons for Léger's cleaving, both to Normandy and to its object-world, were ultimately personal: it was *his* Normandy, after all—and yet he was nonetheless foreign to it, having long since left for Paris (there was to be no question of returning in a durable or organic way). This is not to imply, however, that Léger's preoccupation with objects was his alone. We know, for instance, that he shared his mania with his friends Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret, and Charlotte Perriand, with whom he made frequent trips to the beaches of the Channel Coast, scavenging for beach flotsam, which Le Corbusier would come to describe as "objets à réaction poétique." In her autobiography, Perriand recalls outings with Léger and the Jeannerets at Dieppe, where the group gathered stones, shells, and driftwood to use for various projects—in her case, photography [**Fig. 111**].[244] As for Le Corbusier, he would amass a small hoarding of these objects, mining it at intervals for motifs in his painting and architecture. Léger and Le Corbusier saw each other frequently during the late '20s and '30s, and the similarities between their drawings of found objects are often so striking that they could not conceivably have been made in isolation from one another. Compare, for example, Le Corbusier's sketch of a woodchip and piece of bark, dated 1930, to Léger's *Logs* of the previous year [**Figs. 112 and 113**]; or, as another comparison, their respective sketches of tree roots circa 1932 [**Figs. 114 and 115**]. It would appear that the two artists arrived at this drawing practice together, more or less at the same moment, and perhaps even collaboratively, as a shared hobby.[245]

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[244] Charlotte Perriand, *A Life of Creation: An Autobiography* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2003), 97.

[245] That the two artists borrowed liberally from one another between 1930 and 1934 does not mean their borrowing need be taken as a sign of influence in one direction or the other. For example, flints appear in Le Corbusier's canvases two years before Léger adopts this motif; however, tree trunks and roots can be found in Leger's work as early as 1928, two years in advance of Le Corbusier. It seems most probable that Le Corbusier took up the practice of collecting and drawing objects after spending time at La Bougonnière in the late '20s, adapting this habit to suit his own needs. For an account of

Yet Le Corbusier's comments on these found objects differed markedly from those of his colleague, suggesting an alien cast of mind. In a short essay of 1935, titled "Lyrisme des objets naturels," the architect positioned his collection of objects as mere *aides à penser*, to be employed in his studio practice when the project required a hint of capital-N Nature. Beginning in 1925, with the Pavilion de l'Esprit Nouveau, Le Corbusier recounts,

> [t]urning one's back upon the 'landscape,' the 'site,' the 'motif' we considered 'the thing [*le fait*]'; moreover, we discovered in natural objects the effects of the laws that govern them. These objects took on the role of potentials, like loudspeakers, like presences. Through them, we were able to bring into our own home, into anyone's home, the admirable grand cadences of the universal statute. These small and modest objects became the reason for thinking [*des raisons de penser*].
>
> It was thus for this reason that I began to collect stones in the fields and along the road, or pieces of wood at the foot of a cliff, or pinecones in the forest, and especially, along the seashore, the emotive residues jettisoned by the sea: shells as harmonious as Greek sculpture, stems of seaweed, stones rolled by the waves and submitted to an implacable law. One day, I discovered a trove of butchered bones, the humble bones of a ham-hock or shoulder blade, sectioned by the butcher's saw, washed and cleaned by the sea. Seen along the cut side, their profiles had an admirable rigor and economy; inside the bones, one could discern the hard fibers that the mathematicians have discovered to be 'contours of the greatest resistance' and which Koechlin employed in designing the Eiffel Tower… I have found myself in possession of an eloquent collection, which manifests the great events of nature, the true laws, the variety, a limitless fantasy, possessing extaordinary plastic powers, revealing the specific qualities of matter. […] In the end I called these modest treasures (they cost me nothing, naturally) 'My C.P.' (my *collection particulière*).[246]

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this period of the architect's friendship with Léger, see Fox Weber, *Le Corbusier: A Life*, 322.

[246] Le Corbusier, "Lyrisme des objets naturels," *La Bête Noire*, January 10, 1935: 4: "Tournant le dos au 'paysage,' au 'site,' au 'motif,' on considérait 'le fait'; plus que cela,, on découvrait en des objets de la nature, l'effet des lois qui la gèrent. Ces objets devenaient comme des potentiels, comme des hauts-parleurs, comme des présences. Par eux, on pouvait faire entrer chez soi, les grandes cadences admirables du statut universel. Ces menus et modestes objets devenaient des raisons de penser.

C'est alors là que je me suis mis à ramasser des cailloux, dans les champs et sur la route, ou au pied des falaises, des morceaux de bois, des pignes, dans la forêt, et tout particulièrement, au bord de l'ocean, les résidus émouvants que chaque marée rejette: coquillages harmonieux comme la plastique grecque, troncs d'algues, épaves roulées par les flots et ayant subi l'effet d'une loi implacable. Un jour, je découvris des os de boucherie, d'humbles os de jarret ou d'omoplate, sectionnés à la scie par le boucher, lavés et blanchis par la mer. Sur leur coupe, les profils étaient d'une rigueur et d'une économie admirables; à l'intérieur, on voyait ces fibres dures que les mathématiciens ont

For Le Corbusier, these "objets de la nature" were touchstones, revealing the tectonic principles of the universe, an all-pervading physics of support and resistance. The point of the architect's assembling his *collection particulière* was less to discover new or unusual speciments, but simply to find confirmed in nature what the hard sciences had already deduced. In the manner of a dutiful archivist, Le Corbusier's sketchbooks often present his *objets trouvés* in typographic format [**Fig. 116**], as if illustrating a beachcomber's field guide, with different specimens shown on a single page for the sake of comparison. In all ways, this practice was fundamentally at odds with Léger's way of working: Léger never privileged the objects as touchstones or keepsakes—in fact, there is no evidence that he ever kept or collected the stones, roots, and other sundries that were the subjects of his drawings—and had no sense of a "statut universel" or "loi implacable" underlying the forms of his findings. Léger's objects were rather organisms without a species, things of no category or function; moreover, they were not *natural* in Le Corbusier's sense of the term, and could not be mobilized in shoring up the authority of the sovereign individual, to whom seeing and knowing were one and the same.

The closer affinity between Léger's object drawings and the workings of the avant-garde had to do with Surrealism. Granted, Léger was not himself an adherent of any particular Surrealist group or cause, preferring independence to the cabalism of the avant-garde. The affinity was nevertheless perceptible: For example, a viewer steeped in Surrealist literature would have been right to wonder if Léger's drawing of *Vieux gants* in 1930 [**Fig. 117**] had been inspired by the photograph of Lise Deharme's bronzed glove reproduced (without attribution) in André Breton's 1926 novel *Nadja* [**Fig. 118**]. Likewise, surely a handful of invitees to Léger's show at Galerie Vignon would have caught the rhyme between the inventory-style advertisement (*Racines*, *silex*, *noix,* etc.) and the press announcement issued a year earlier, in June 1933, on the occasion of the *Exposition Surréaliste* at Galerie Pierre Colle, in which an altogether stranger, yet syntactically similar, litany of wares were advertised (reproduced here in the original French):

> Objets désagréables, chaises, dessins, sexes, peintures, manuscrits, objets a flairer, objets automatiques et inavoubales, bois, plâtres, phobies, souvenirs intra-utérins, éléments de rêves prophétiques, dématérialisations de désirs, lunettes, ongles, amitiés à fonctionnement symbolique, cadres, détérioration de cheminées, livres, objets usuels, conflits taciturnes, cartes géographiques, mains, buste de femme rétrospectif,

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lavés et blanchis par la mer. Sur leur coupe, les profils étaient d'une rigueur et d'une économie admirables; à l'intérieur, on voyait ces fibres dures que les mathématiciens ont découvert être des 'courbes de plus grande résistance' et que Koechlin employa pour calculer la Tour Eiffel… Je me suis trouvé possesseur d'une collection éloquente, manifestant les grands événements naturels, les lois vraies, la variété, une fantaisie illimitée, possédant des puissances de plasticité extraordinaires, révélant les qualités spécifiques des matières. […] J'ai fini par appeler ces trésors modestes (gratuits d'ailleurs) 'Ma C.P.' (ma collection particulière)."

saucisses, cadavres exquis, palais, marteaux, libertins, couples de papillons, perversions d'oreilles, merles, oeufs sur le plat, cuillers atmosphériques, pharmacies, portraits manqués, pains, photos, langues.[247]

For Surrealism, of course, objects were to be made strange—thrown off course from their habitual ends and ordinary meanings—by any means necessary. This effect was often achieved, or at least attempted, photographically: Léger's growing interest in objects in the late '20s owed at least a small debt to the Surrealists' experiments in photographic estrangement, whether in the guise of the marvelous or that of the *informe*. He had seen, and admired, the films of Jean Painlevé, whose larger-than-life-size documentaries on marine life, such as the bristly sea urchins of his 1928 film *Oursins*, were exemplary of the animating power of the close-up. Still nearer to Léger's work was the series of photographs Painlevé made in collaboration with Éli Lotar, published in *Documents* in 1929, which depicted the exoskeletons of living crustaceans—a lobster's claw, for example [**Fig. 119**], which, when seen close-up and flipped upside-down, made for an uncanny caricautre of the nasal Charles De Gaulle—in ways prefigurative of the *Silex* sequence of 1932.

Much more than an iconography or set of pictorial operations, however, what Léger shared with Surrealism was a critical orientation toward the forces of modernization: a critique, moreover, which saw the scene of everyday life as its crucial arena, and especially the boundary-zones and edgelands of *quotidiennéité*. It was with good reason, after all, that Léger never moved permanently to La Bougonnière; for his art required—it could not do without—the friction, and even the violence, of modernization in the raw. The negative had to be tarried with, Léger felt: the alien(ating) power of the object was part of this violence, and was certain to be lost in a landscape wholly and completely defended against the modernizers.

Where Léger parted ways with the Surrealists therefore had to do with the particular methods by which everyday life was attacked and laid bare, and thus rendered available to critique. For the Surrealists, the object was interesting mainly in relation to its animating subject, whether as fetish or anti-fetish: Breton's glove or Boiffard's big toe. For Léger, to the contrary, objects exerted a power 'in themselves,' beyond any sort of subjective cathexis: a power that was strictly inhuman, unnatural—the power to escape human appropriation, and to thrust the observer into a morass of self-doubt. Framed in Léger's terms, Surrealism's project was always bound to seem overly committed to the subject; after all, even the most dogged Surrealist attempts at "base materialism" and the *informe* retained the subject as their essential crux and vanishing-point: it was the impossibility of sovereignty—the impossibility of the *Je*—that Bataille raised to an absolute in his writings of the late '30s and early '40s, not the disappearance of the object-world as such (as *world*: "Fini paysage"). By the same token, however, Surrealism might have suggested to Léger how the job of estrangement might best be carried out—

[247] "Il faut visiter l'Exposition Surréaliste" [Jun. 1933], reprinted in *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives, tome 1, 1922-1939* (Paris, 1980), 245.

namely, by trying, and failing, at Surrealism; or rather, it was via a sort of defunctionalized and repurposed Surrealism, from which the theory of the subject had been extracted and left empty, that an artist might break through the screen-image of the object-world into the weird wildness of the things-themsleves.

My instinct is to trust Léger's claim that his objects had been "exhausted" by late September '33—exhausted, meaning depleted of the power he believed lay vested in the object-world writ large, and especially along modernity's cutting edge. The drawings that came flowing from his pen in the two weeks prior are as close as we have to a counter-Surrealism: a groping toward the unconscious of *matter*, not so as to know the world better or more precisely, but rather, and in a spirit of true desperation ("dégoûté à fond de ce pays…"), to sabotage its normal operation. There was in the '33 drawings a darkness not found in anything Léger had done previous: in fact, the drawings were literally darker, worked in an unbroken sequence of gestures in a test of the artist's endurance—a test to see how much ink could be put down on the page before the marks calcified into an opacity. The darkness was metaphorical as well: Léger's drawings—his *Silex*, no less than his *Pantalon* [**Fig. 120**]—hover on the cusp of illegibility; we are rescued by his titles (often written in pencil, perhaps with the thought of later erasing the proper name) but only barely. The category of 'object' is very nearly undone in these works. It is hard to see, in fact, that they depict *objects* at all, at least, not in any philosophically defensible sense.

I mentioned earlier that Léger's letters to Herman in September '33 contained, in nugatory form, the outline of a lecture delivered the following winter, in February 1934. As it turned out, this lecture, "De l'Acropole à la Tour Eiffel," was to come down hard on the side of objects, but in a way that marked an unambiguous endpoint to the research of his drawings. Speaking before an audience at the Sorbonne, Léger declared "the need for objectivity" to be "the preoccupation of clear-sighted men" of every age, declaring himself for technology and spectacle (technology *as* spectacle) against the false verities and cheap illusionism of "la vie décoratif."[248] Armed with a technologically objective image of the material world, he suggested, an artist might yet find it possible to combat the *false,* mediatized image of everyday life, submitting the dreamworld of modernity to the "light" of technologized surveillance:

> To live in the light, to throw back the curtains, to destroy the mystery of veils and gloves—it is a revolution.
>
> The individual who does not know he is beign *observed* 'expresses' himself in a different manner than the one who knows.
>
> There is a world of difference between the hidden gesture or expression and the undisguised gesture [*le geste découvert*]. The moment someone manages to invent a device that would be able to *shoot* cinematographically *without being seen*, the

[248] Fernand Léger, "Le Beau et le Vrai," *Beaux Arts* no. 58, 9 Feb. 1934, 2.

> moment it is put into service, such that, from a window, in the doorway, through the keyhole, one would be able to capture people in their intimacy, registering their gestures, unconscious and uncontrolled, projected upon a screen without retouching—you will be terrified. A new and completely unheard-of realism will appear before you and will overturn your conceptions of the Beautiful and the True; your image taken without your knowledge, projected before your eyes, *you will no longer recognize it*.[249]

The stakes of art were shifting for Léger in the aftermath of his '33 recess. It was already self-evident as of the first weeks of 1934 that the year would be remembered as a period of crisis: On 8 January, the huckster financier Serge Alexandre Stavisky was found dead of suicide in a Swiss chalet, while embroiled in criminal proceedings on numerous counts of fraud and embezzlement. Less than a month later, on 4 February, the president of the Republic sacked the right-wing Prefect of the Paris Police, sparking off street demonstrations by a consortium of ultra-Right factions, from Charles Maurras' monarchist Action Française to the hard-nationalist veterans' organization Le Croix-de-feu, which came within a hair's breadth of consummating a coup d'état. Sixteen Right-wing militants were killed on the first night of protests, on 6 February, as the police worked to contain a mass gathering at Place de la Concorde. When socialist and communist militants rallied to the streets in a counter-protest a few days later, nine further demonstrators—this time partisans of the Left—were shot dead during clashes with the police. Not since the Dreyfus Affair had the streets of Paris been so roiled by political unrest; there was talk in the press of a fascist plot against the Republic, a fear aggravated both by sheer duration of the economic crisis and by the visible (in Stavisky's case, fully spectacular) font of corruption believed to lie at its root.

Léger's politics were to concretize in earnest under these conditions, pushing him toward the breaking wave of the Front Populaire. *Objectivity* remained the painter's watchword: objectivity was needed, he argued in his Sorbonne lecture, in order to combat the spectacle of falsehood at work in Hitlerian Europe. But it was no longer a question of the artist wielding the brazier of Truth. The way of September '33 was too difficult in the

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[249] *Ibid*.: "Vivre dans la lumière, supprimer les rideaux, détruire le mystère de la voilette et des gants, c'est une révolution.

L'individu qui ne se sait pas *observé* 'exprime' d'une manière différente de celui qui se sait regardé.

Il y a un monde entre le geste ou l'expression cachées et le geste dévouvert. Qu'un jour on invente l'appareil qui permettra de *tourner* cinématographiquement *sans être vu*, qu'on s'en serve; qu'à travers une fenêtre, dans l'entrebaillement d'une porte, par le trou d'une serrure, on puisse prendre les gens dans l'intimité, enregistrer leurs gestes, inconscients et non contrôlés—projeté à l'écran sans retouche, vous serez effrayé. Un nouveau réalisme complètement inconnu vous apparaîtra et bouleversera vos conceptions du Beau et du Vrai; votre figure prise à votre insu, projetée devant vous, *vous ne la reconnaîtrez pas.*"

end, too painstakingly slow, and too uncertain in its results, to serve the needs of the present. Technology would have to be mobilized in defense of the Beautiful and the True; armed with photography and cinema, artists could yet demonstrate to the masses what the world really was, as seen through an "unconscious and uncontrolled" lens. The results would be terrifying, Léger thought—he agreed with Walter Benjamin on this point—but they could hardly be avoided.

Modernism was to be left in difficult straits, then, forced to go along *with* modernity—with the machinery of modernization—against the forces of ultra-conservatism and revanchist ethno-nationalism. Léger could see the way forward, but could not follow; his art was too much an act of sympathy, not with the modernity of the motorist (the one who "loses his views" in gaining the totality of the territory), but with the locals and *their* modernity. There was a part of Léger that thrilled to the hothouse of Parisian spectacle; but another part—a larger part, in the end—that refused to cede the countryside to the modernizers, or to let "his" Normandy be overcoded by the Parisian's idea of its backwardness and peasant primitivity. In spite of his own prognosis, his art of after the *Objets* exhibition would develop in an effort at imagining what modernism might be, or look like, were it to take the provinces as a centerpoint rather than (as always) a periphery. A modernism that continued to resist the lure of atavism *and* abstraction, and to stand opposed both to Nature and to Artifice alike. A modernism, too, in which the critique of everyday life was not abandoned out of political necessity, but burnished—kept alive—in the countryside, where the violence of modernization did not easily let itself be forgotten.

Let me close, then, by gesturing toward Léger's most ambitious canvas of the 1930s, the mural-scale *Composition aux deux perroquets* of 1935-39 [**Fig. 121**]. The canvas is massive, four meters tall by nearly five meters wide; it depicts four figures—a young man, perhaps an acrobat or *faux matelot*, surrounded by three nudes—who occupy the immediate foreground of a placeless landscape, the man standing and the women performing various circus-type feats. An unstable ladder, or perhaps the edge of a fence, sits off the far right, with something like drapery, sharp-edged and inflexible, thrown over its top beam. Dismal air drifts all around, darker in patches, while strange clouds hang high overhead. The ground plane has mostly been atomized, save for a patch of earth anchored by a few flints and a rudimentary perennial.

The young man in the blue jeans is unmistakably Léger's protagonist: pensive, quietly sullen, he figures a homeless generation, consigned to occupy a forgotten world far from wherever history might plausibly be made. He is modern, no doubt; his nonchalance and anomie—his boredom, too—all smack of modernity. The modernity of the countryside was incontestible in the year 1939, when Léger's painting came out of the studio at last. The sons and granddaughters of Pissarro's peasants knew the language of the commodity-sign just as well as the Parisian weekender passing en route to the seashore; their world was no worldlier in the end, and certainly no more 'natural,' than that of Belleville or Ménilmontant—indeed, in many ways, it was *less* worldly, and even less rural. After all, it was in the *faubourgs* and the *banlieues* that rural France had

reconstituted itself following each migratory wave; the cities were paradoxically flush with peasants, and the provinces, mobbed by Parisians. It had been that way for a long time—since the Second Empire, if not earlier. In any case, by the late '30s, an authentic relationship to nature was no more possible in the country than in the city; geography had ceased to furnish a barrier in that sense. But the landscape was not lost entirely, only ignored. The scene of its modernization was not the one that mattered.

I read *Composition aux deux perroquets* as an elegy, then, not to the landscape, but to the Left—meaning, to a kind of Left-wing politics (a kind of communism) that ought to have existed, but which never did. At some point in the picture's long gestation, Léger appears to have given up on the desiderata of classicizing heaviness and *Guernica*-level profundity, adding to his scene a pair of parakeets, from which the painting draws its title. They help to offset the darkening mood of the picture, these birds, restoring a sense of levity, and of duration—a sense that we are waiting for something to happen, in other words, but against a backdrop of boredom. Again, the boy in the striped shirt is somber; probably he guesses that the soldier's uniform awaits him in a year or two. The cylindrical pole at his feet is an obvious stand-in for a rifle's muzzle. The bird in the hand will have to be let go of, and his companions (his capacity for sensuality), said goodbye to. Of course it is the coming war that lends the painting its tragic note; but more tragic still—because we are still in 1939, and not yet in 1941—is the unhappy truth at the heart of the scene, and the reason for its frozen listlessness.

The boy is waiting for something—waiting for a way out of the country, perhaps, or for an audience worthy of his acrobatic talents. The painter, too, is waiting: for his art to be of some use. If not for the fact of war—the fact of the countryside furnishing the warmakers with both battlefields and cannon fodder—the waiting game might well go on ad infinitum. It was a phyrric blessing that the French countryside received from World War I, after all: a power of sacredness—a charm against total and immediate commercialization—granted in recompense for the vastness of provincial devastation. The tragedy was less the destruction per se, however, than the fact of the war's destructiveness afflicting a place already marked as forgettable, unhistorical, unmodern, and worst of all, *natural*. Destruction in nature is inevitable. Trees do fall in the forest.

Composition aux deux perroquets strikes me, again, as the image of a political subject—a subject of modernity—on the cusp of formation, and which never arrived in earnest. That subject was the rural proletariat: the wage-workers who first took to the country roads by bicycle, and whose experience of the new scale and intensity of modernity was no less profound and unsettling for its happening far afield of Paris. These were the perennial subjects of Léger's art, his heroes and heroines: the men and women on the edge of the society of the spectacle. It was the peasant's encounter with, and resistance to, the violence of modernization that mattered to Léger, and which he labored place at the center of things. The fate of this project was sealed, however, in absence of the sort of politics of the rural modernization (a Left politics, I mean) in which alternative representations of the peasantry—representations on the order of *Composition aux deux perroquets*—might productively circulate.

The stakes of Léger's *Objets* exhibition were of a similar order. The drawings at its core strained to exploit a narrow, and fast-closing window of public attention, taking advantage of the countryside's figuring within, and mattering to, the discourse of modernity. It was unusual, after all, that the discourse of modernity in 1928 had so much to do with traffic crisis in *rural* France, not Paris. The journalists passing through Calvados on the way to Deauville seem to have been genuinely shocked by what they saw, and dismayed at the thought that the contryside might be permanently ruined by exposure to Paris, just as the suburban landscape had been in the late nineteenth century. By April 1934, however, this spell had been broken: "les autoroutes s'imposent," per Baudry de Saunier's declaration. Politically, Paris had reemerged at the historical epicenter; the question of traffic on the way to Deauville no longer impressed itself as an urgent crisis. Already, Léger's tune had changed. With his advertisement for the Galerie Vignon show, he re-coded the drawings as portable and commodifiable—simply "Objets par Fernand Léger": wares carted off to Paris, their origins no longer visible as such. The critics seem to have taken him at his word: none of the reviewers saw Normandy as the exhibition's essential context. The painter did what he thought best to put himself back in place.

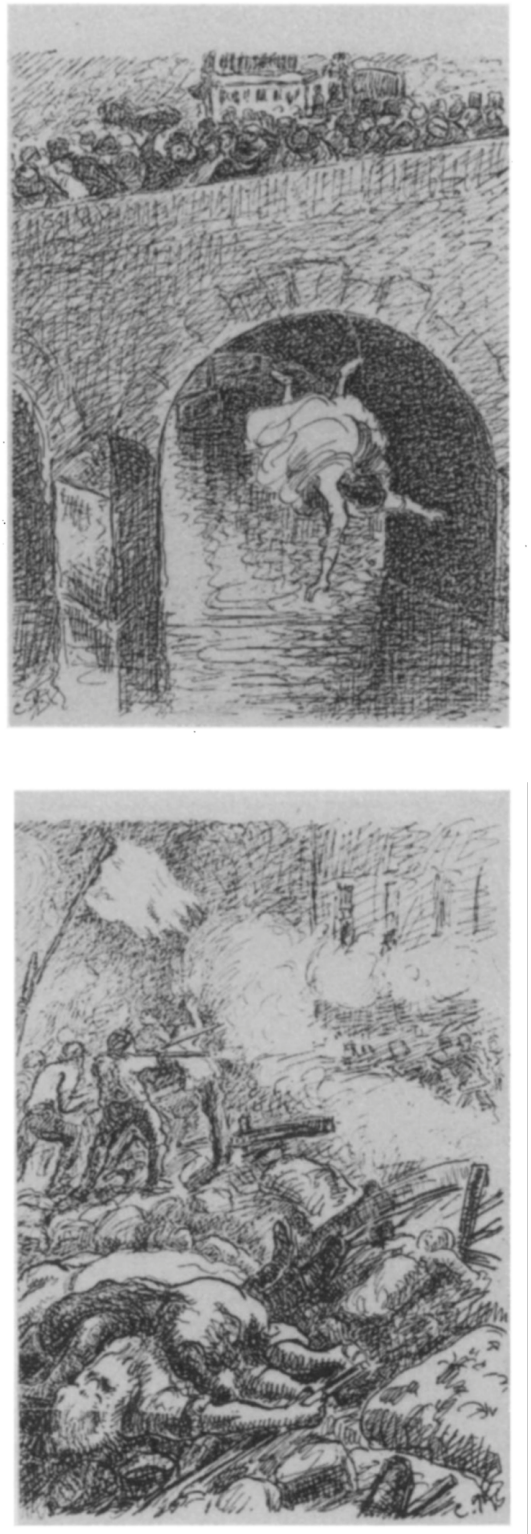


Figure 1. Camille Pissarro, *Turpitudes sociales, 1889*

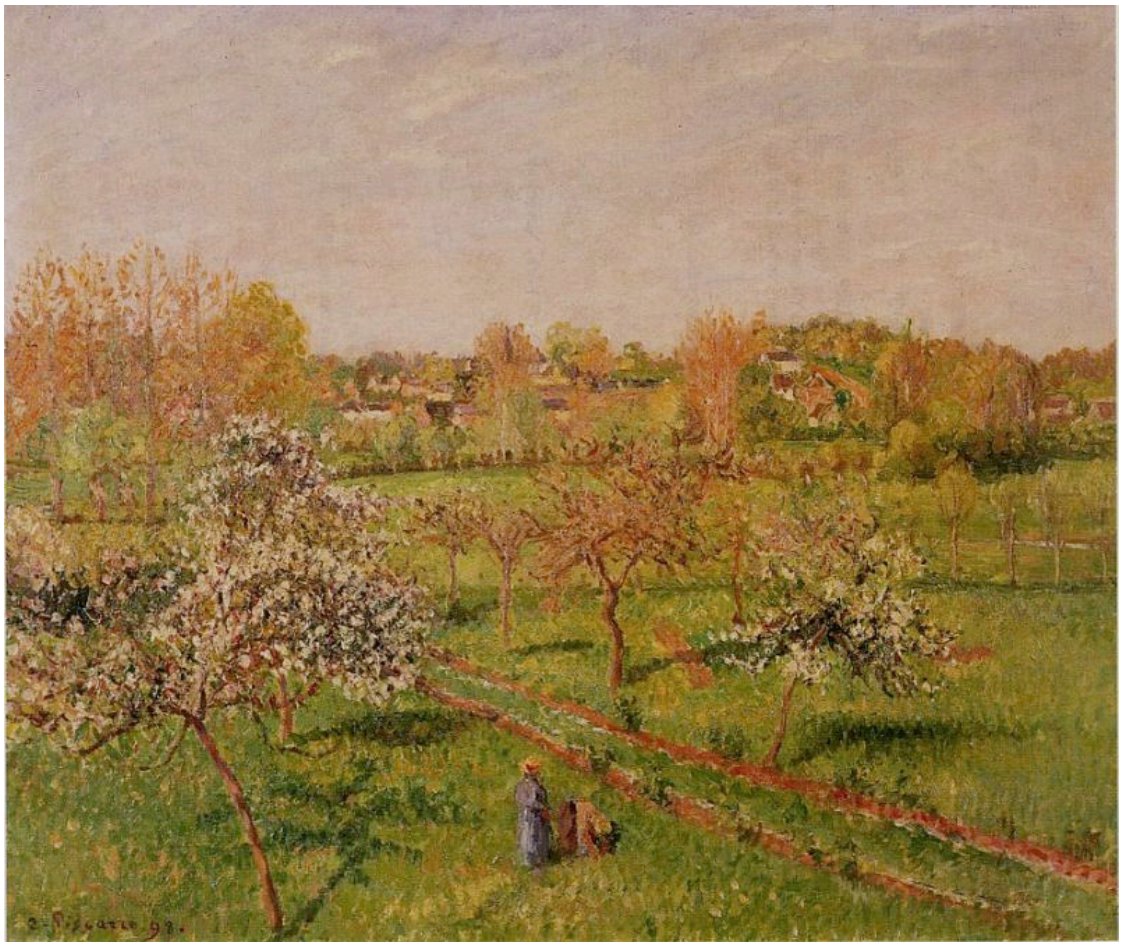


Figure 2. Camille Pissarro, *Matin, pommiers en fleur à Eragny*, 1898

Figure 3. Camille Pissarro, *Boulevard Montmartre, matin d'hiver*, 1897

Figure 4. Camille Pissarro, *Effet de neige à Eragny*, 1894

Figure 5. Camille Pissarro, *Boulevard Montmartre, matin, temps gris*, 1897

Figure 6. Edgar Degas, *Portraits à la Bourse*, 1878-79

Figure 7. Camille Pissarro, *Boulevard Montmartre, Mardi-Gras*, 1897

Figure 8. Camille Pissarro, *Mardi-Gras, soleil couchant, Boulevard Montmartre*, 1897

Figure 9. Claude Monet, *La Rue Montorgueil à Paris, fête du 30 juin 1878*, 1878

Figure 10. Henri Roger, Photograph of police contingent at the 1896 Marche du Boeuf Gras. Louis Lépine is visible to the far right, walking with a cane.

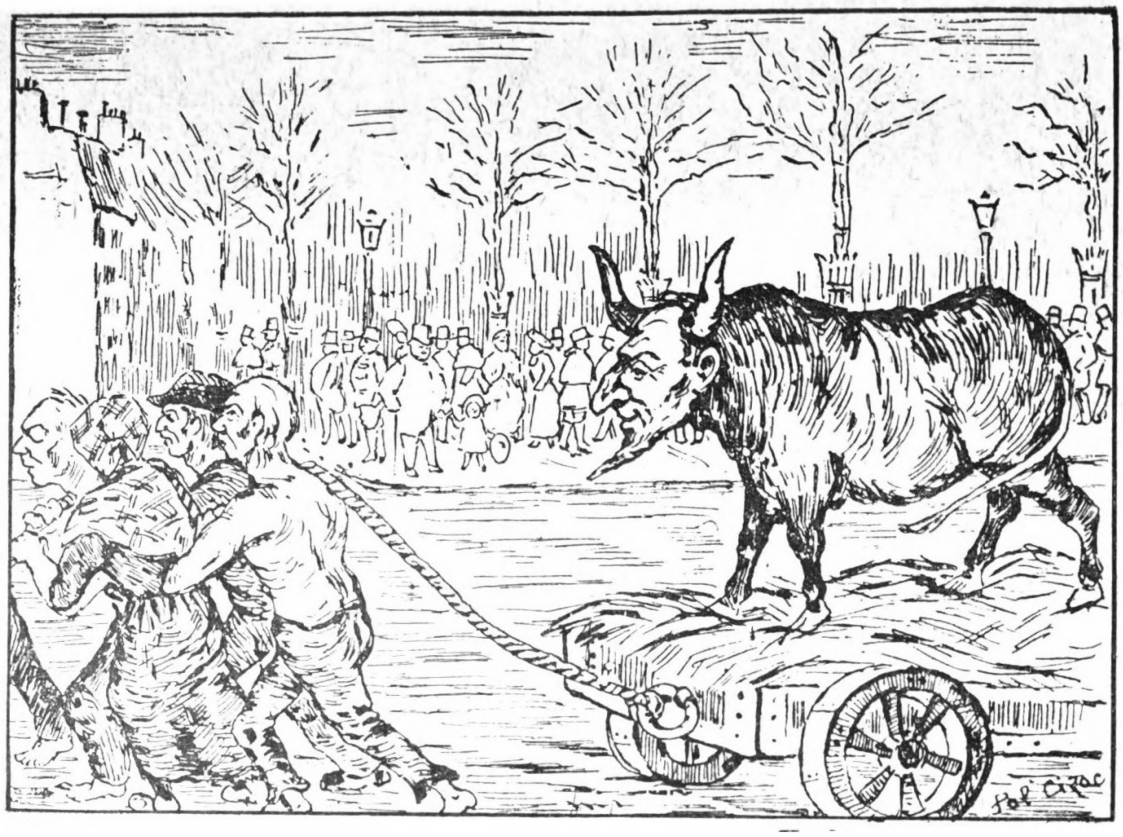


Figure 11. Pol Cizac, *Le populo trimballe le Boeuf gras… Il bouffe la Vache enragée*, 1897

Figure 12. Camille Pissarro, *La Mi-Carême sur les boulevards*, 1897

Figure 13. Camille Pissarro, *Le Boulevard Montmartre, après-midi, soleil*, 1897

Figure 14. Jean Béraud, *Scène sur le boulevard*, ca. 1885

Figure 15. Jean-François Raffaëlli, *Les Grands boulevards*, 1898

Figure 16. Camille Pissarro, *Boulevard Montmartre, matinée de printemps*, 1897

Figure 17. Camille Pissarro, *Le Champ de chou à Pontoise*, 1873

Figure 18. Camille Pissarro, Detail of *Boulevard Montmartre, après-midi, soleil*, 1897

Figure 19. Jean Béraud, *Kiosque de Paris*, ca. 1880-1884

Figure 20. Camille Pissarro, *L'Avenue de l'Opéra*, *soleil du matin*, 1898

Figure 21. Photograph of l'Avenue de l'Opéra as seen from the Place du Théâtre Français, ca. 1890

Figure 22. Camille Pissarro, Detail of *L'Avenue de l'Opéra*, *soleil du matin*, 1898

Figure 23. Camille Pissarro, *L'Avenue de l'Opéra*, *effet de neige*, 1898

Figure 24. Camille Pissarro, *La Rue Saint-Honoré, après-midi, effet de pluie*, 1898

Figure 25. Camille Pissarro, *La Place du Théâtre-Français et l'avenue de l'Opéra, hiver, effet de soleil*, 1898

Figure 26. Camille Pissarro, *Autoportrait*, 1898

Figure 27. Photograph of Camille Pissarro at Eragny, ca. 1895

Figure 28. Camille Pissarro, *La Place du Théâtre Français*, *les omnibus*, 1898

Figure 28. Camille Pissarro, Detail of *La Place du Théâtre Français*, *les omnibus*, 1898

Figure 30. Camille Pissarro, *La Place du Hâvre*, *l'omnibus*, 1893

Figure 31. Gustave Caillebotte, *Un Refuge*, *Boulevard Haussmann*, 1880

Figure 32. Camille Pissarro, *Le Boulevard des Italiens, matin, lumière de soleil*, 1897

Figure 33. Camille Pissarro, *La Place du Théâtre Français, les omnibus, printemps, soleil*, 1898

Figure 34. Camille Pissarro, *Les Jardin des Tuileries, après-midi d'hiver* , 1899

Figure 35 . Marcel Arnac, "Le Piéton fautif," *Le Journal*, 16 Decmeber 1924

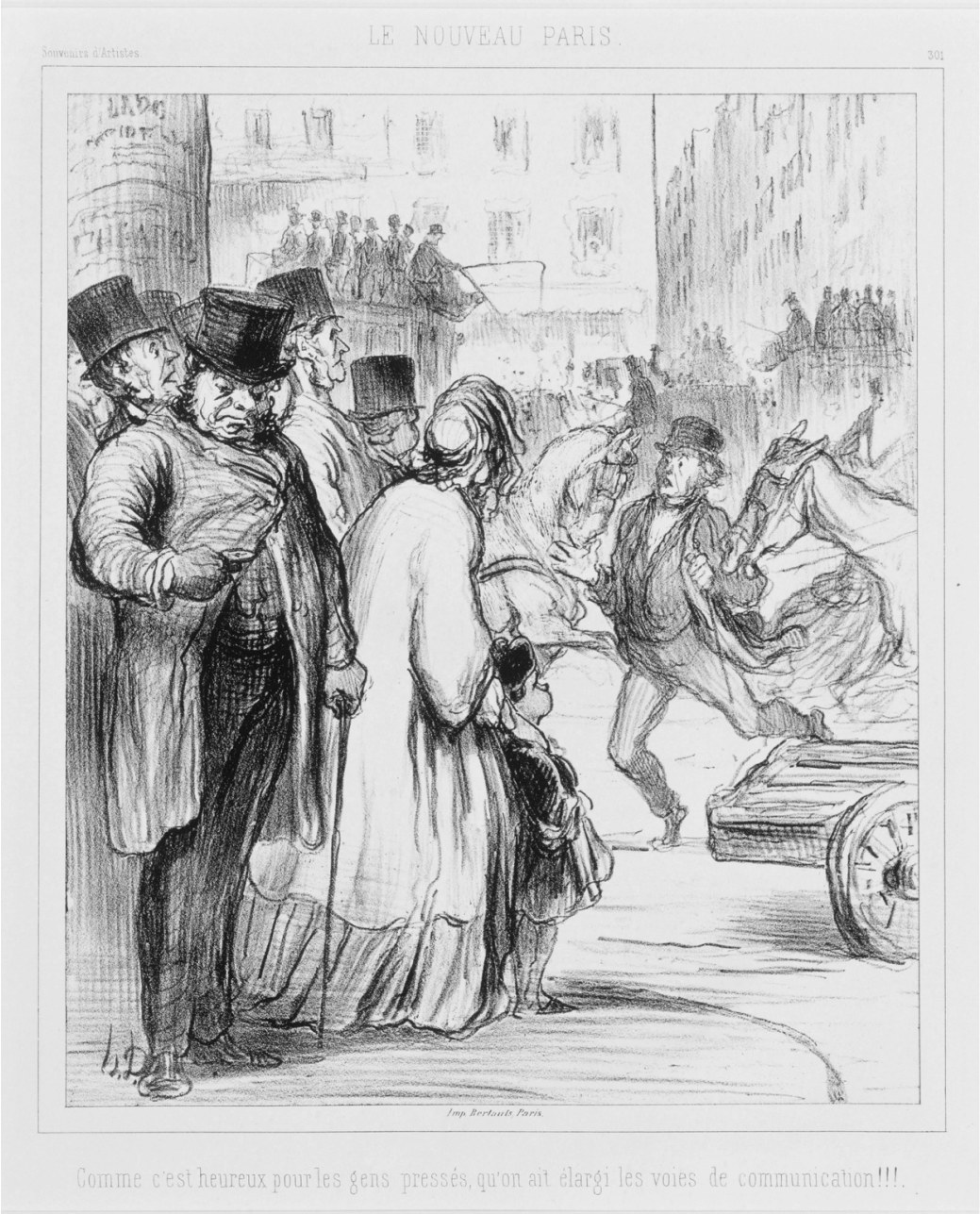
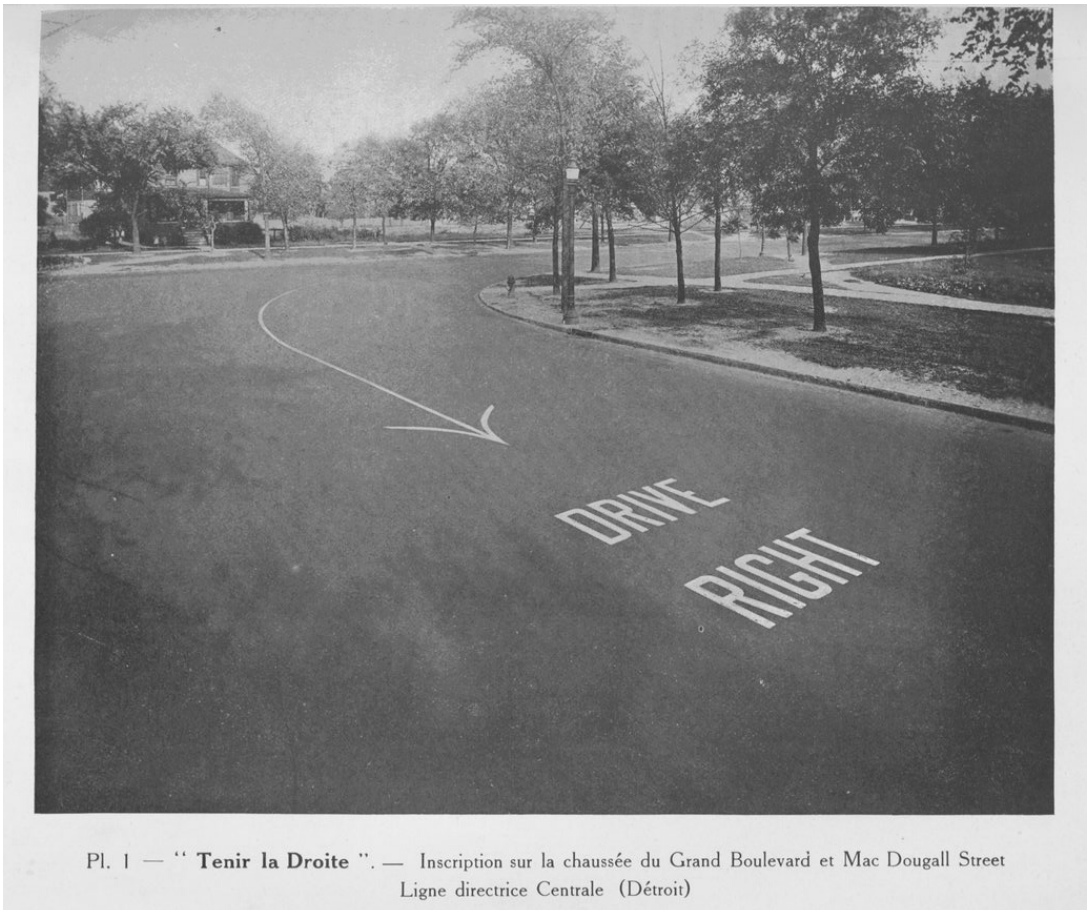
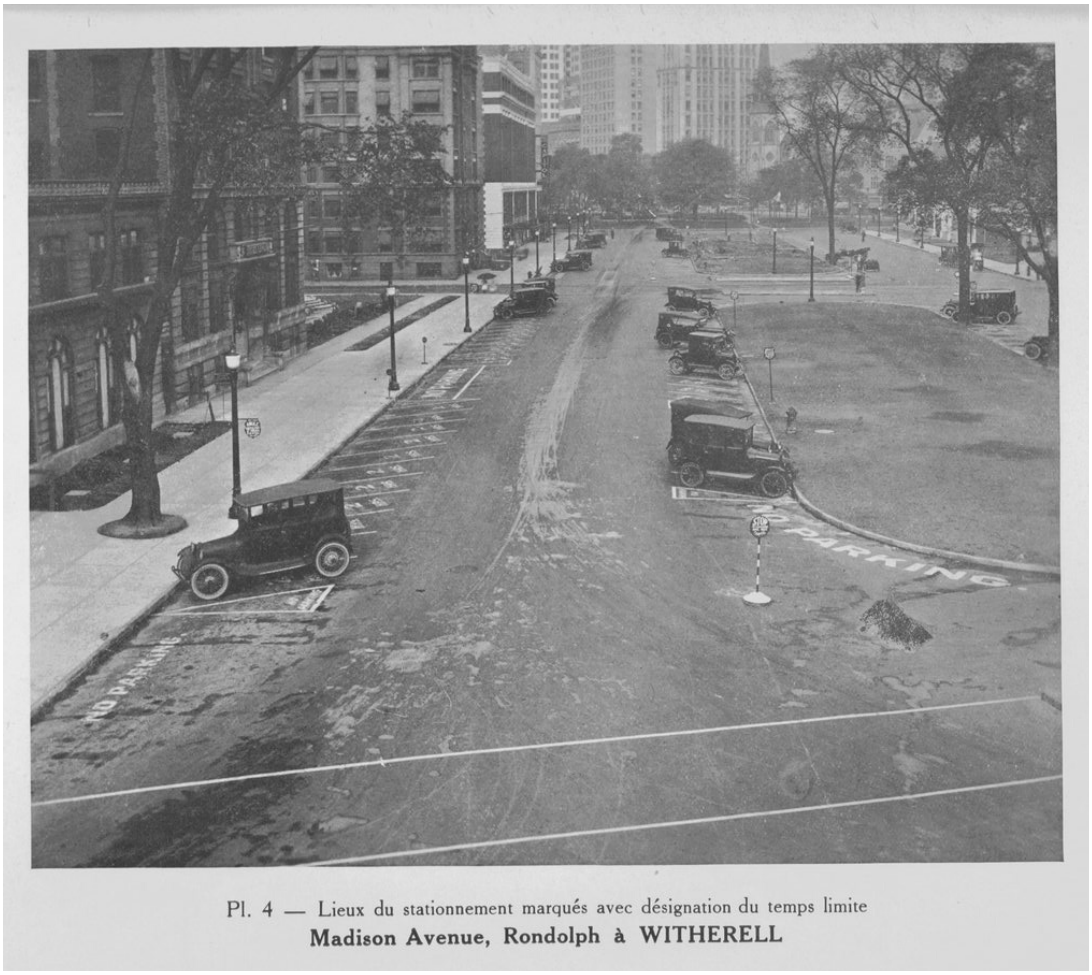


Figure 36. Honoré Daumier, "Le Nouveau Paris," *Le Boulevard*, 6 April 1862



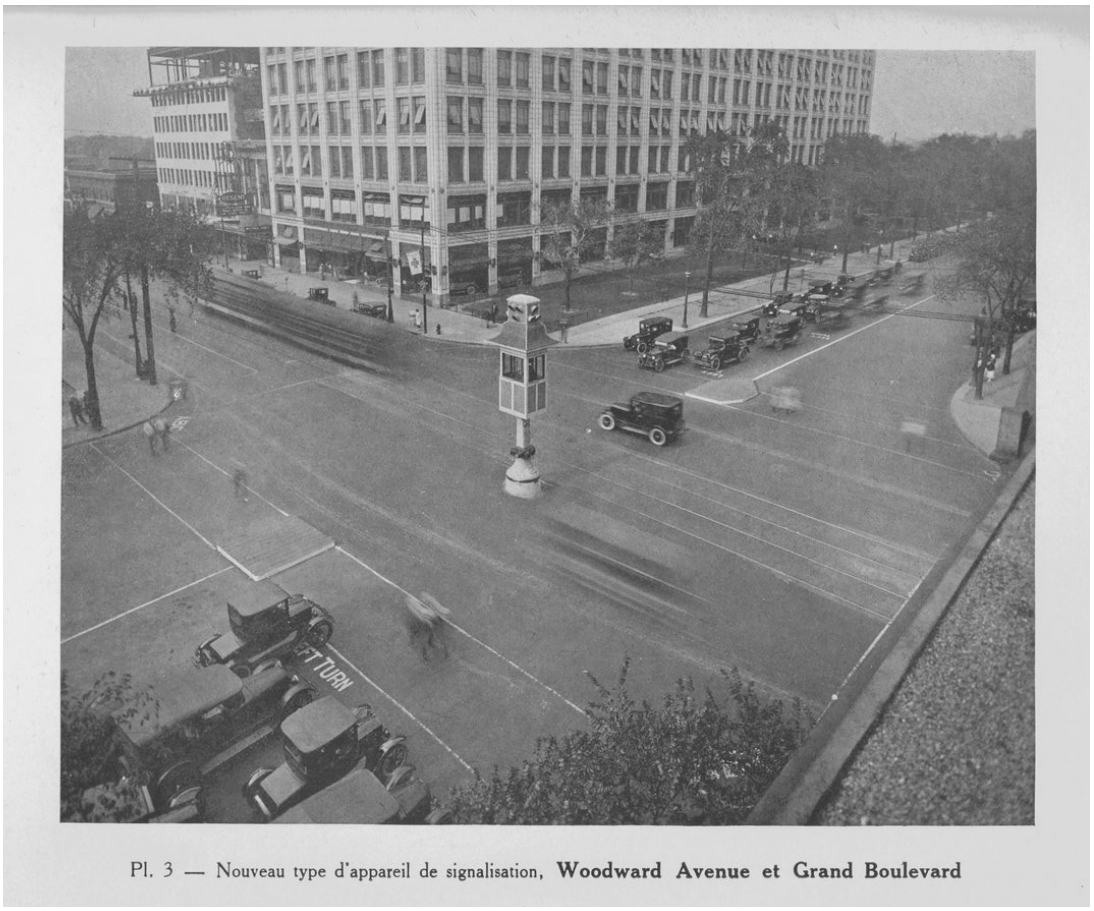
Pl. I — " **Tenir la Droite** ". — Inscription sur la chaussée du Grand Boulevard et Mac Dougall Street
Ligne directrice Centrale (Détroit)

Figure 37. "Drive Right," Photograph of Grand Boulevard at MacDougal Street, Detroit. Published in Émile Massard, "Rapport au nom de la 2e commission sur le compte rendu du Congrès de la route a Séville...," *Conseil Municipal de Paris: Rapports et documents*, no. 103 (1923).



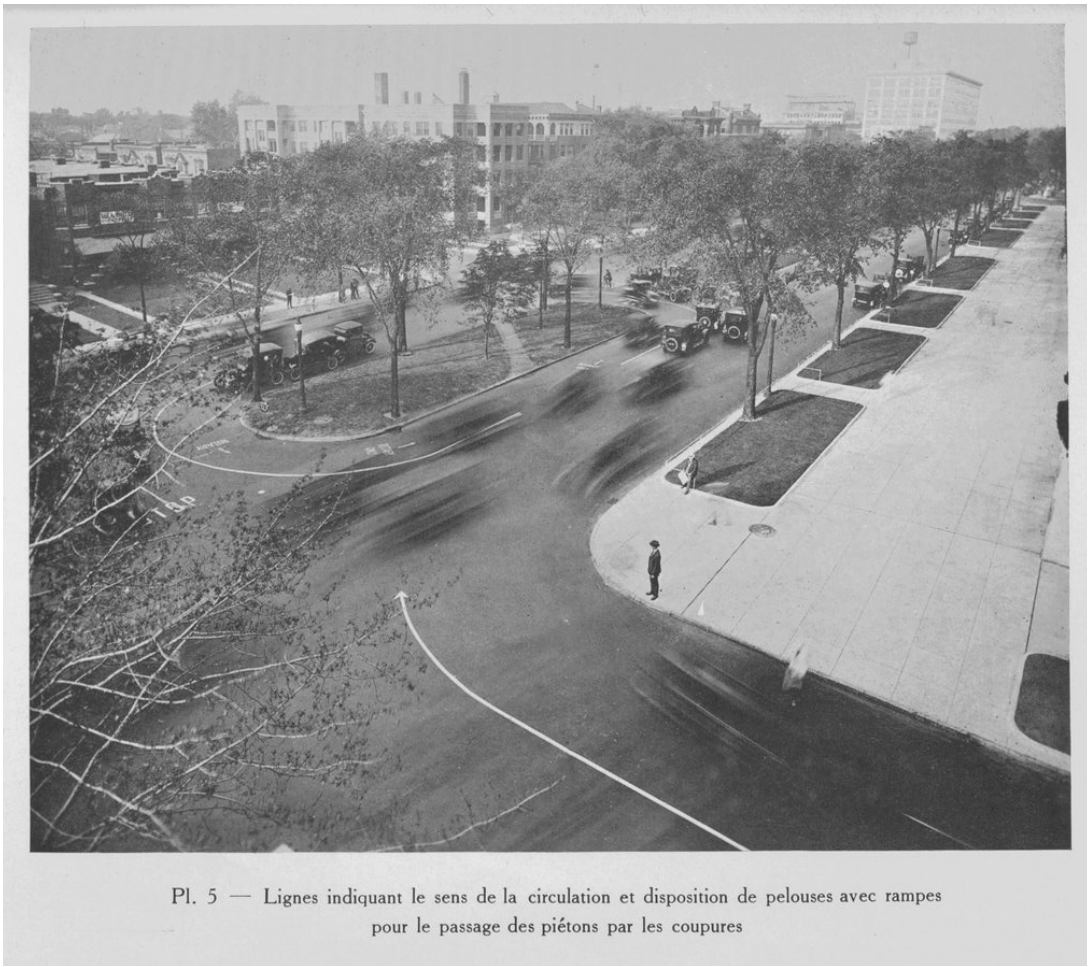
Pl. 4 — Lieux du stationnement marqués avec désignation du temps limite
Madison Avenue, Rondolph à WITHERELL

Figure 38. Photograph of temporary parking spots, Madison Avenue, New York. Published in Émile Massard, "Rapport au nom de la 2e commission sur le compte rendu du Congrès de la route a Séville..." *Conseil Municipal de Paris: Rapports et documents*, no. 103 (1923).



Pl. 3 — Nouveau type d'appareil de signalisation, **Woodward Avenue et Grand Boulevard**

Figure 39. "New type of signal apparatus," Detroit. Published in Émile Massard, "Rapport au nom de la 2e commission sur le compte rendu du Congrès de la route a Séville...," *Conseil Municipal de Paris: Rapports et documents*, no. 103 (1923).



Pl. 5 — Lignes indiquant le sens de la circulation et disposition de pelouses avec rampes pour le passage des piétons par les coupures

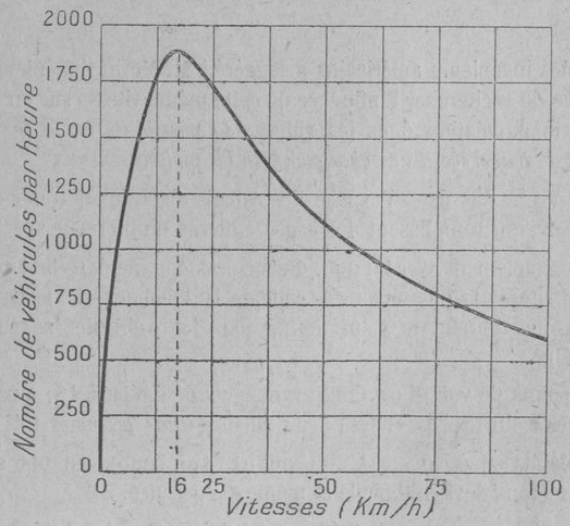
Figure 40. Photograph depicting pedestrian sidewalks and roadway traffic indicators in the United States, location unknown. Published in Émile Massard, "Rapport au nom de la 2e commission sur le compte rendu du Congrès de la route a Séville...," *Conseil Municipal de Paris: Rapports et documents*, no. 103 (1923).

Le tableau ci-dessous indique les temps et les distances nécessaires à l'arrêt en palier et sur route sèche :

Vitesse — kilomètres-heure	Durée de l'arrêt — secondes	Distance d'arrêt — mètres
8	0,91	1,00
16	1,83	4,10
24	2,75	9,20
32	3,67	16,40
40	4,58	25,50
48	5,30	36,90
64	7,33	69,60
80	9,17	82,00
96	11,00	147,60

En ajoutant à chacun de ces nombres la longueur du véhicule (environ 4 m. 50), on obtient la distance à réserver par véhicule, et on peut en déduire le nombre de véhicules que la rue peut débiter à l'heure, sur une seule file.

La figure 1, qui traduit le résultat de ce calcul, montre que l'augmentation du



débit avec la vitesse n'est vraie que pour les allures lentes, et que la capacité de la

8

Figure 41. Graph recommending an average speed limit of sixteen kilometers per hour in urban area, with data collected by American engineer and planner Herbert S. Swan. Published in Émile Massard, "Rapport au nom de la 2e commission sur le compte rendu du Congrès de la route a Séville...," *Conseil Municipal de Paris: Rapports et documents*, no. 103 (1923)

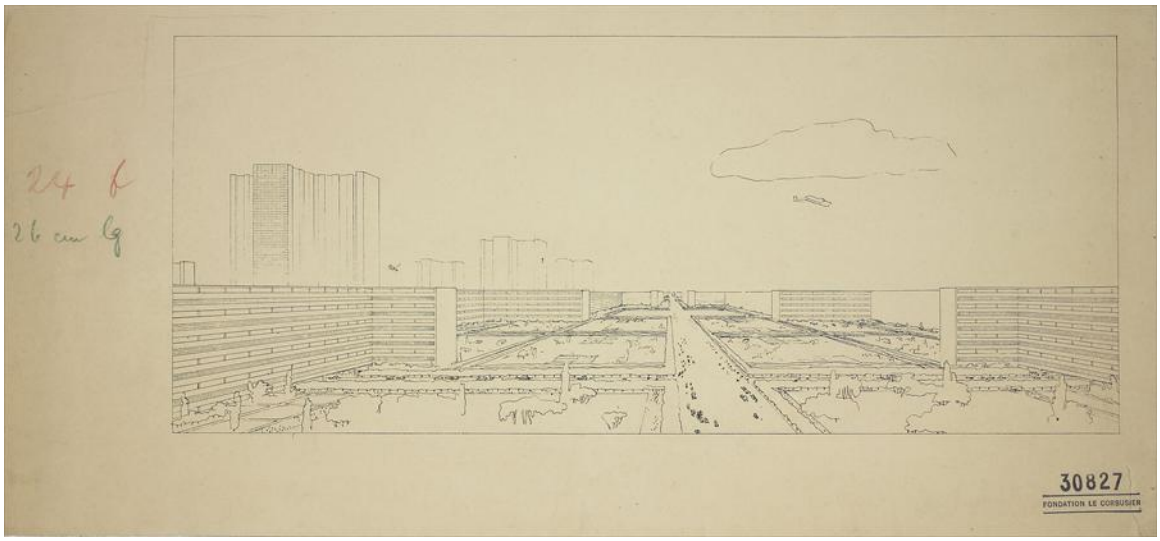
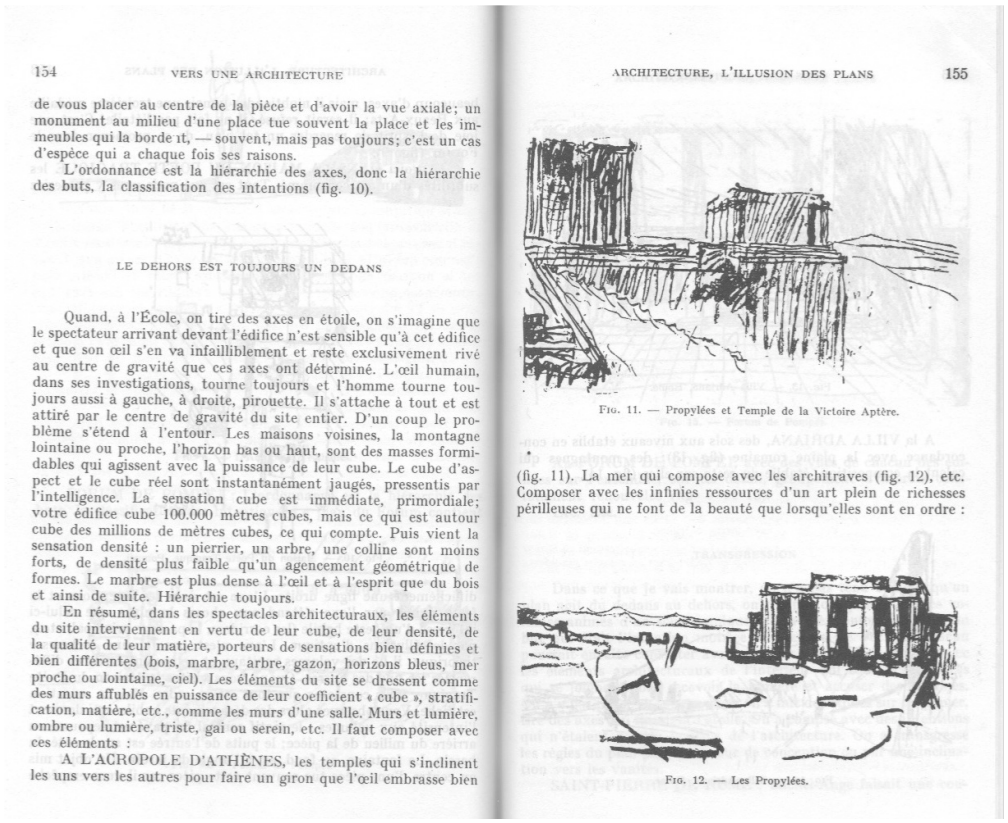


Figure 42. Le Corbusier, Perspective view of *Ville contemporaine de trois millions d'habitants*, 1922



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de vous placer au centre de la pièce et d'avoir la vue axiale; un monument au milieu d'une place tue souvent la place et les immeubles qui la borde it, — souvent, mais pas toujours; c'est un cas d'espèce qui a chaque fois ses raisons.

L'ordonnance est la hiérarchie des axes, donc la hiérarchie des buts, la classification des intentions (fig. 10).

LE DEHORS EST TOUJOURS UN DEDANS

Quand, à l'École, on tire des axes en étoile, on s'imagine que le spectateur arrivant devant l'édifice n'est sensible qu'à cet édifice et que son œil s'en va infailliblement et reste exclusivement rivé au centre de gravité que ces axes ont déterminé. L'œil humain, dans ses investigations, tourne toujours et l'homme tourne toujours aussi à gauche, à droite, pirouette. Il s'attache à tout et est attiré par le centre de gravité du site entier. D'un coup le problème s'étend à l'entour. Les maisons voisines, la montagne lointaine ou proche, l'horizon bas ou haut, sont des masses formidables qui agissent avec la puissance de leur cube. Le cube d'aspect et le cube réel sont instantanément jaugés, pressentis par l'intelligence. La sensation cube est immédiate, primordiale; votre édifice cube 100.000 mètres cubes, mais ce qui est autour cube des millions de mètres cubes, ce qui compte. Puis vient la sensation densité : un pierrier, un arbre, une colline sont moins forts, de densité plus faible qu'un agencement géométrique de formes. Le marbre est plus dense à l'œil et à l'esprit que du bois et ainsi de suite. Hiérarchie toujours.

En résumé, dans les spectacles architecturaux, les éléments du site interviennent en vertu de leur cube, de leur densité, de la qualité de leur matière, porteurs de sensations bien définies et bien différentes (bois, marbre, arbre, gazon, horizons bleus, mer proche ou lointaine, ciel). Les éléments du site se dressent comme des murs affublés en puissance de leur coefficient « cube », stratification, matière, etc., comme les murs d'une salle. Murs et lumière, ombre ou lumière, triste, gai ou serein, etc. Il faut composer avec ces éléments :

A L'ACROPOLE D'ATHÈNES, les temples qui s'inclinent les uns vers les autres pour faire un giron que l'œil embrasse bien

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Fig. 11. — Propylées et Temple de la Victoire Aptère.

(fig. 11). La mer qui compose avec les architraves (fig. 12), etc. Composer avec les infinies ressources d'un art plein de richesses périlleuses qui ne font de la beauté que lorsqu'elles sont en ordre :

Fig. 12. — Les Propylées.

Figure 43. Le Corbusier, Perspective views of the Propylaea, Athens, in *Vers une architecture*, 155.

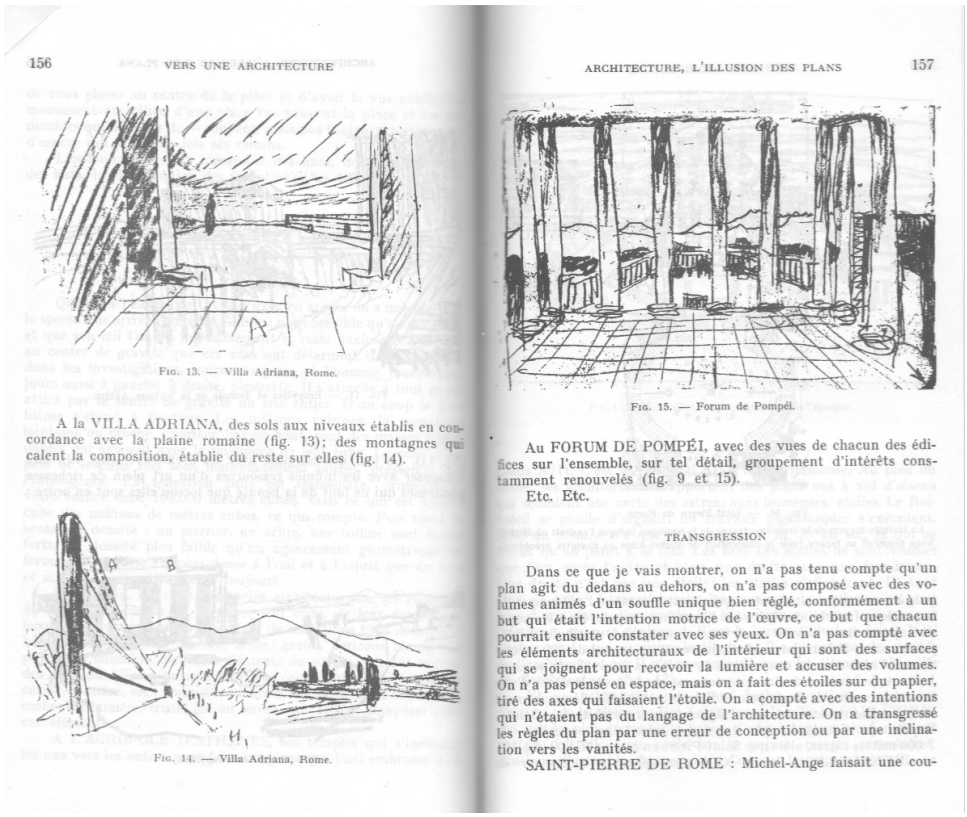

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Fig. 13. — Villa Adriana, Rome.

A la VILLA ADRIANA, des sols aux niveaux établis en concordance avec la plaine romaine (fig. 13); des montagnes qui calent la composition, établie du reste sur elles (fig. 14).

Fig. 14. — Villa Adriana, Rome.

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Fig. 15. — Forum de Pompéi.

Au FORUM DE POMPÉI, avec des vues de chacun des édifices sur l'ensemble, sur tel détail, groupement d'intérêts constamment renouvelés (fig. 9 et 15).

Etc. Etc.

TRANSGRESSION

Dans ce que je vais montrer, on n'a pas tenu compte qu'un plan agit du dedans au dehors, on n'a pas composé avec des volumes animés d'un souffle unique bien réglé, conformément à un but qui était l'intention motrice de l'œuvre, ce but que chacun pourrait ensuite constater avec ses yeux. On n'a pas compté avec les éléments architecturaux de l'intérieur qui sont des surfaces qui se joignent pour recevoir la lumière et accuser des volumes. On n'a pas pensé en espace, mais on a fait des étoiles sur du papier, tiré des axes qui faisaient l'étoile. On a compté avec des intentions qui n'étaient pas du langage de l'architecture. On a transgressé les règles du plan par une erreur de conception ou par une inclination vers les vanités.

SAINT-PIERRE DE ROME : Michel-Ange faisait une cou-

Figure 44. Le Corbusier, Perspective views Hadrian's Villa, Rome, in *Vers une architecture*, 156

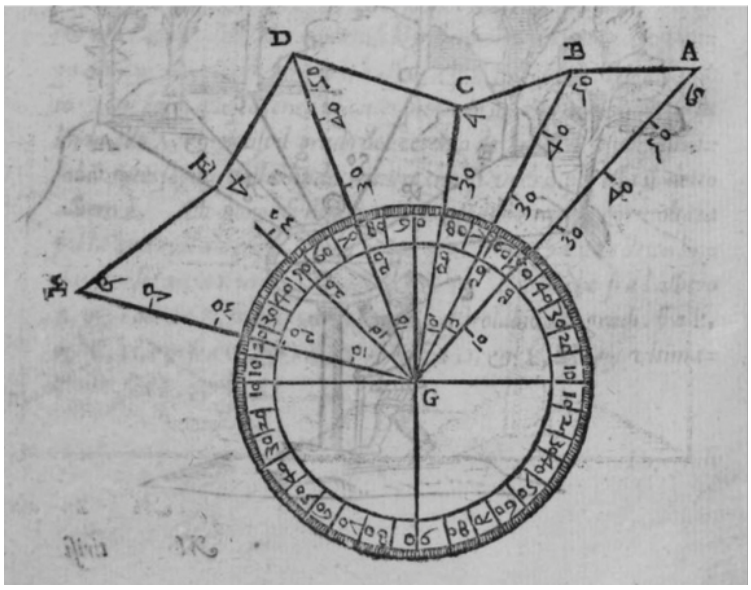

Figure 45. Cosimo Bartoli, Illustration of a Horizon, *Del modo di misurare de distancie*, 1564

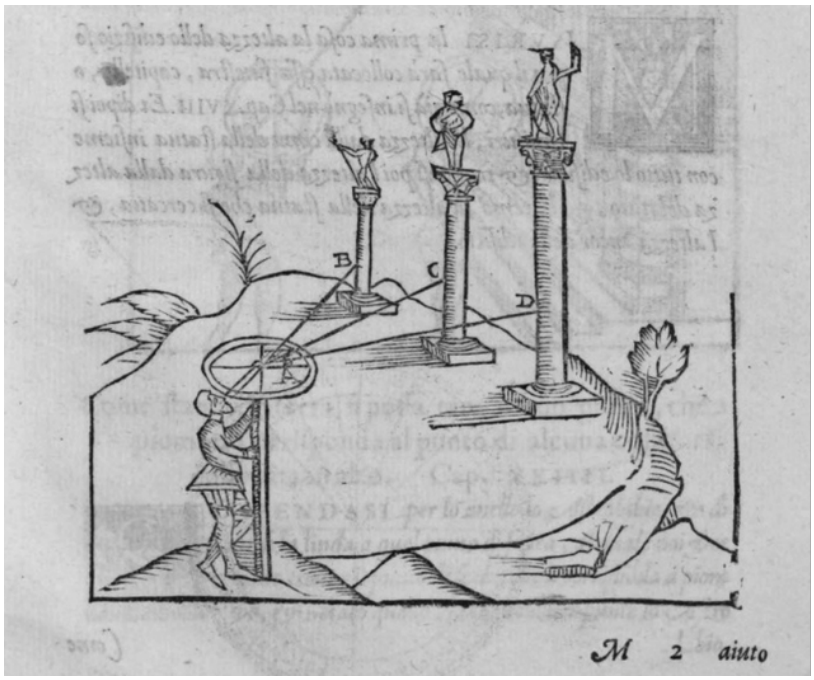

Figure 46. Cosimo Bartoli, Illustration of a Horizon as used by a surveyor, *Del modo di misurare de distancie*, 1564

Figure 47. Le Corbusier, View from the rooftop of L'Unité d'habitation, Marseille (1952)

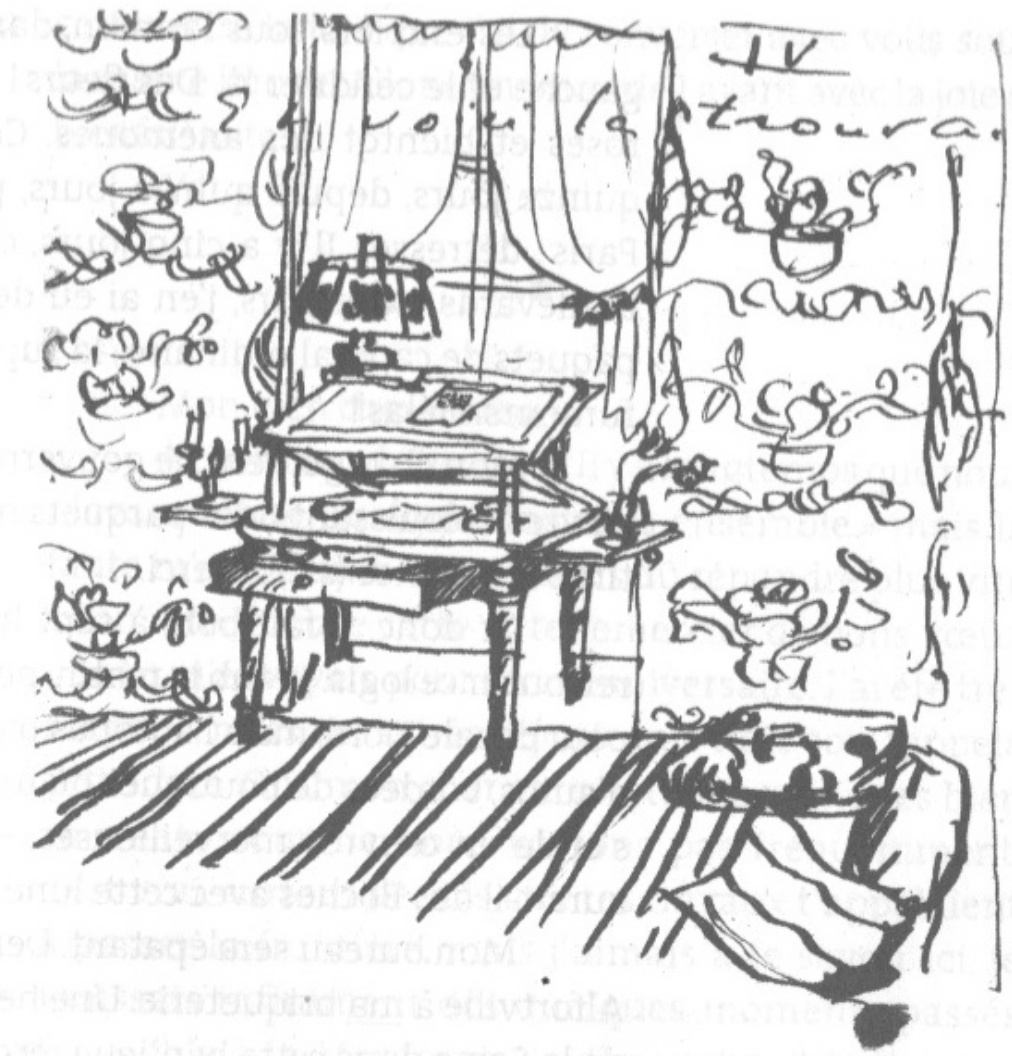

Figure 48. Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier), Sketch of a writing desk included in letter to his parents, 5 Dec 1917

Figure 49. Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier), *Couple enlacé*, 1917

Figure 50. Le Corbusier in his bedroom, 20 rue Jacob, Paris, 1917

Figure 51. Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier), *Couple de femmes en positions érotiques*, 1917

Figure 52. Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier), *Vue sur les toits de Paris*, 1917

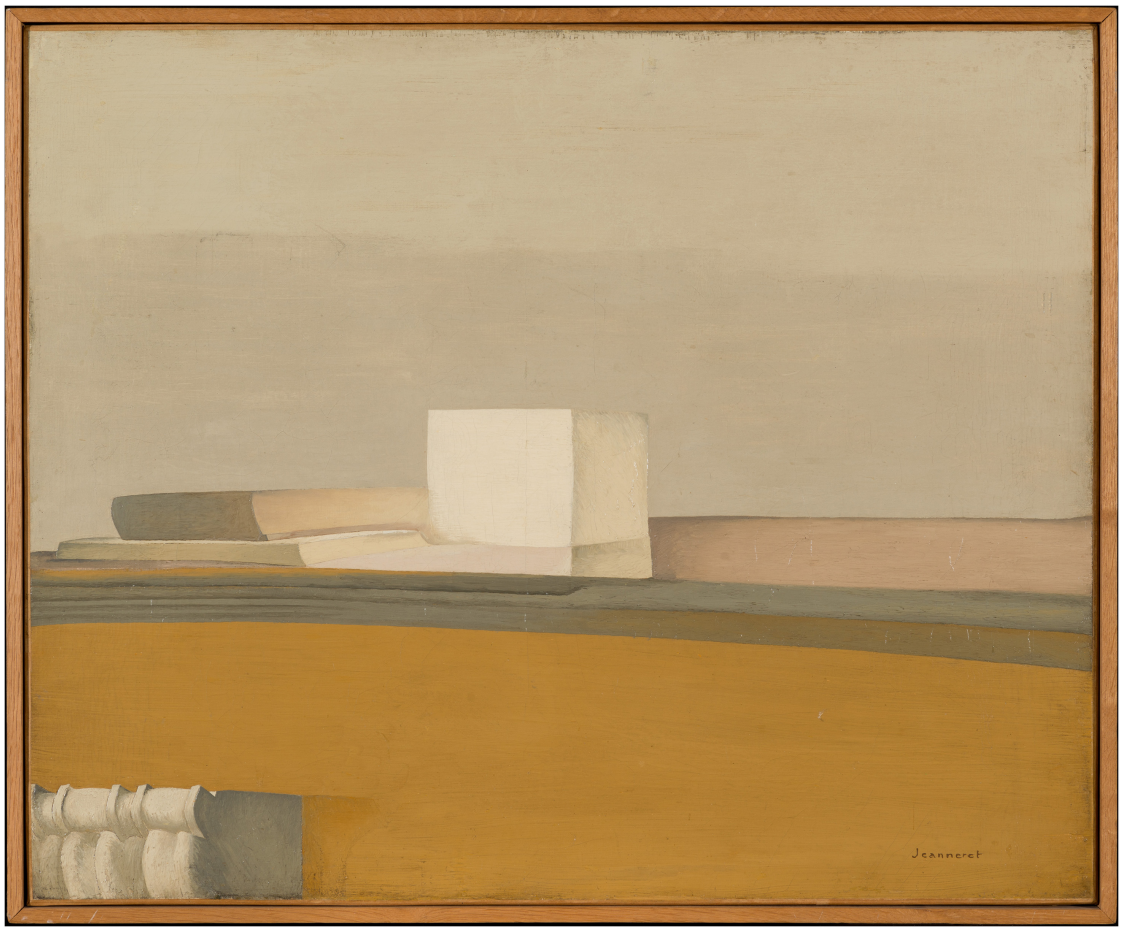

Figure 53. Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier), *La cheminée*, 1918

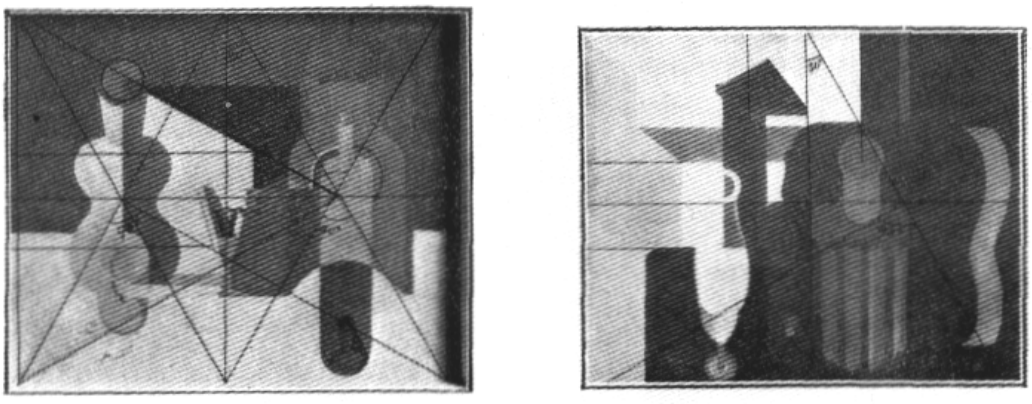

Figure 54. Diagram of "traces régulateurs" employed in Purist still lifes, published in *L'Esprit Nouveau* no. 17 (June 1922)

Figure 55. Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier), *Nature morte à la pile d'assiettes et au livre*, 1920

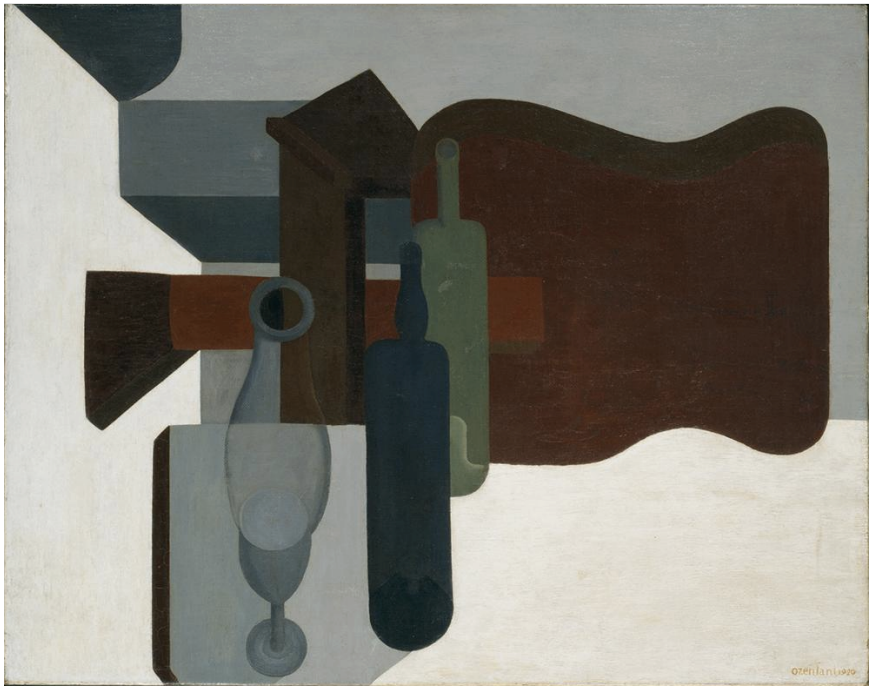

Figure 56. Amédée Ozenfant, *Nature morte à la guitare et aux bouteilles*, 1920

Figure 57. Le Corbusier, Maquette of Maison Citrohan (Second Project), Salon d'Automne, Paris, 1922

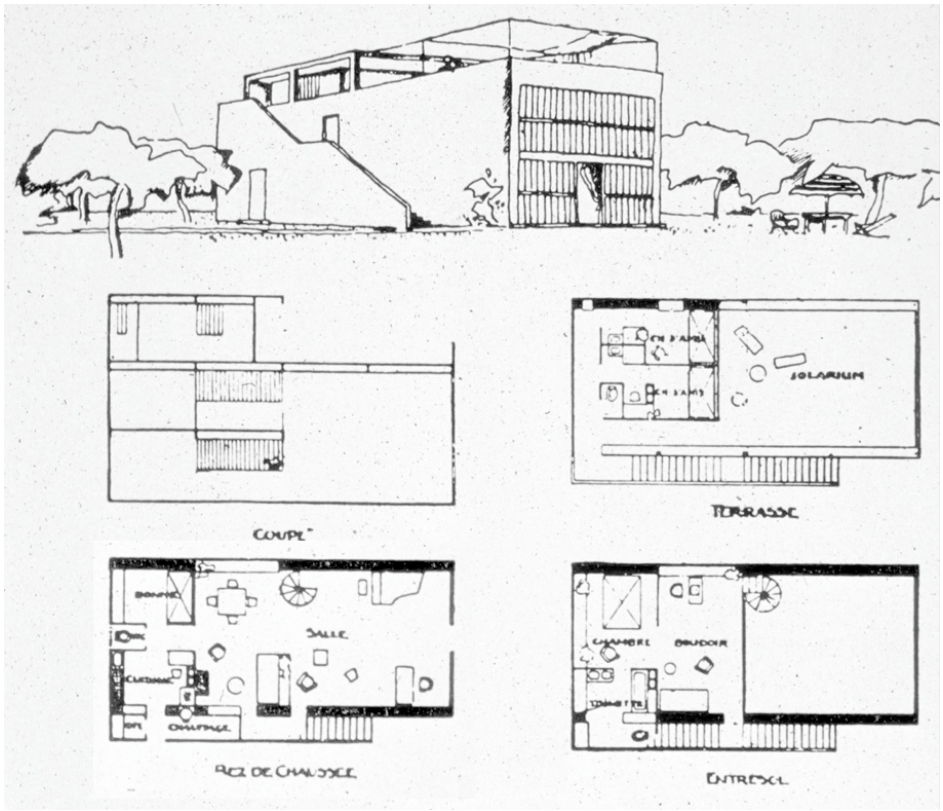

Figure 58. Le Corbusier, Maison Citrohan (First Project), Published in "Maisons en série," *L'Esprit Nouveau*, no. 13 (Dec 1921)

Figure 59. Le Corbusier, Perspective view of Maison Citrohan (Second Project), ca. 1922

Figure 60. View of Villa Besnus from Route de Versailles, ca. 1924

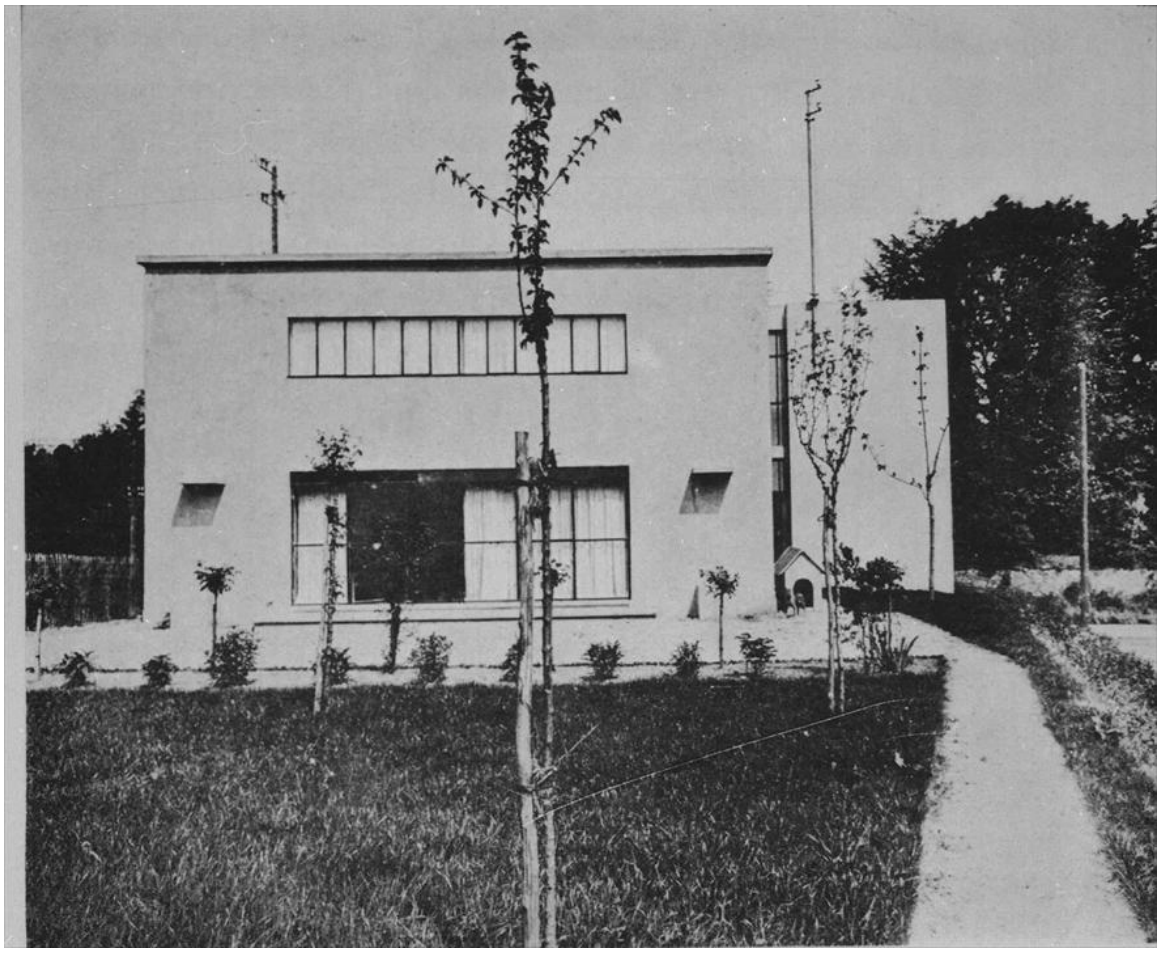

Figure 61. View of Villa Besnus from garden front, ca. 1924

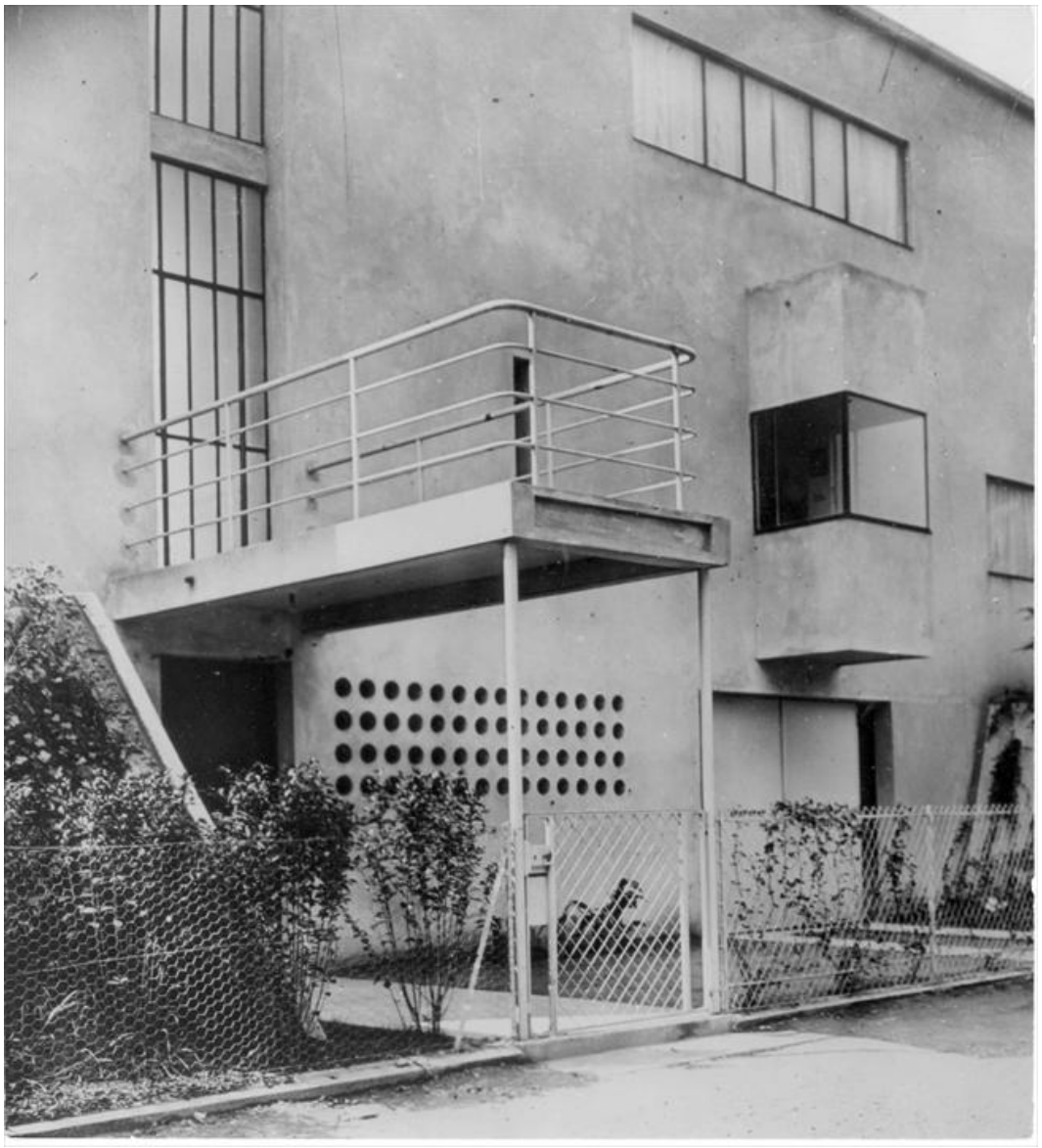

Figure 62. “Marquise” on Route de Versailles façade, ca. 1924

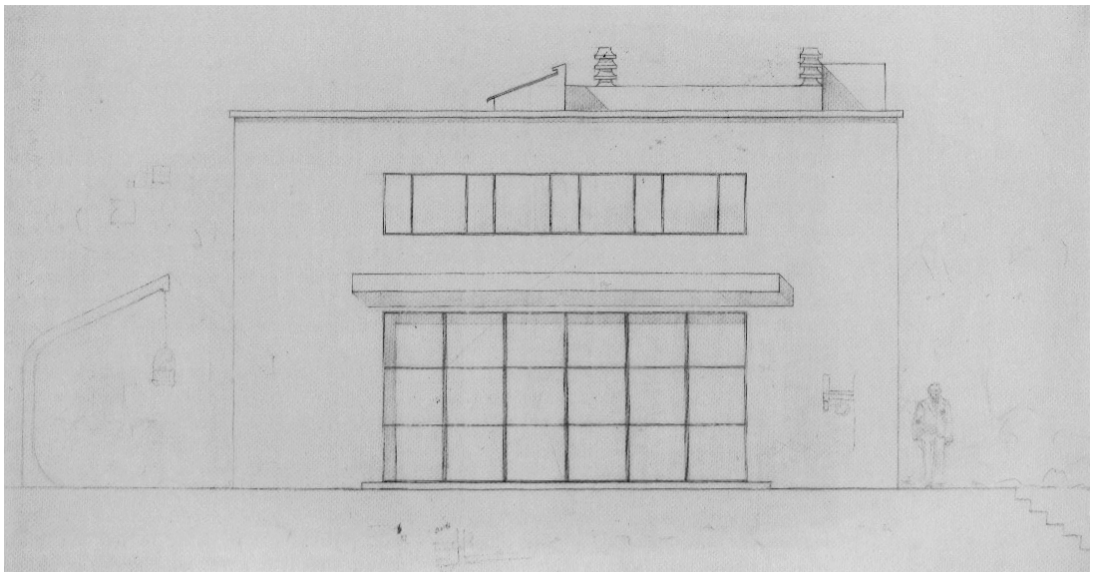

Figure 63. Le Corbusier, Elevation of garden façade, Villa Besnus (First project), Vaucresson, March-April 1923

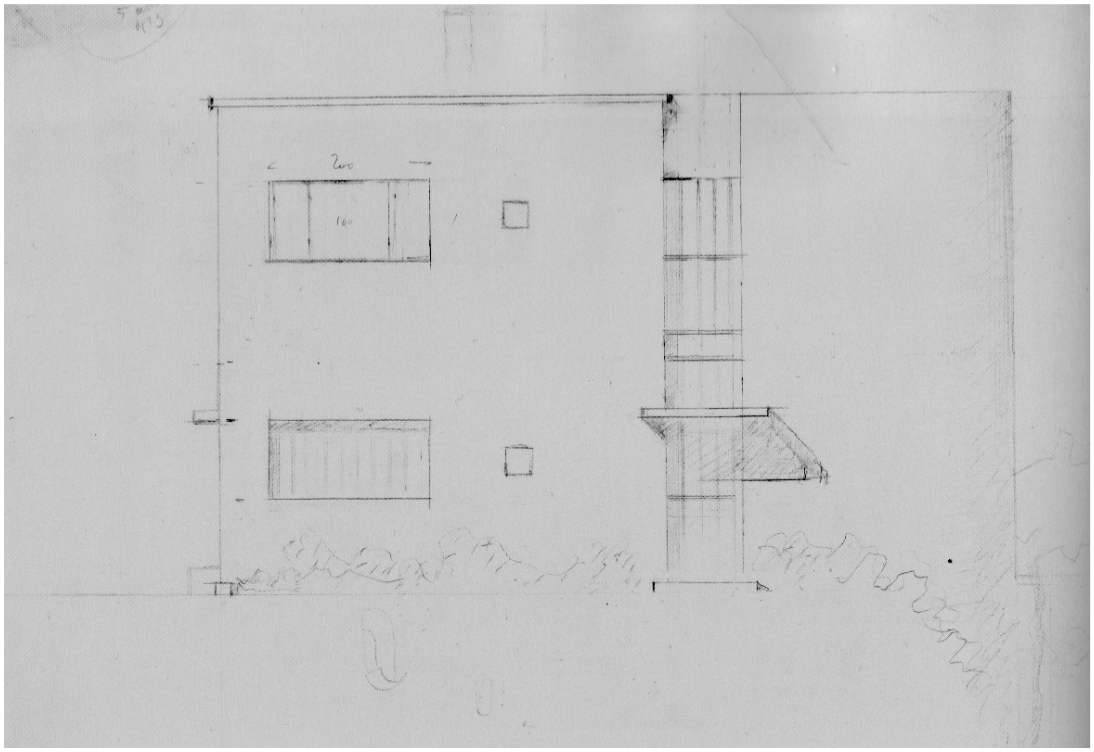

Figure 64. Le Corbusier, Elevation of Rue Allouard façade, Villa Besnus (First project), Vaucresson, March-April 1923

Figure 65. Le Corbusier, Exterior view of Villa au bord de la mer, ca. 1920-22

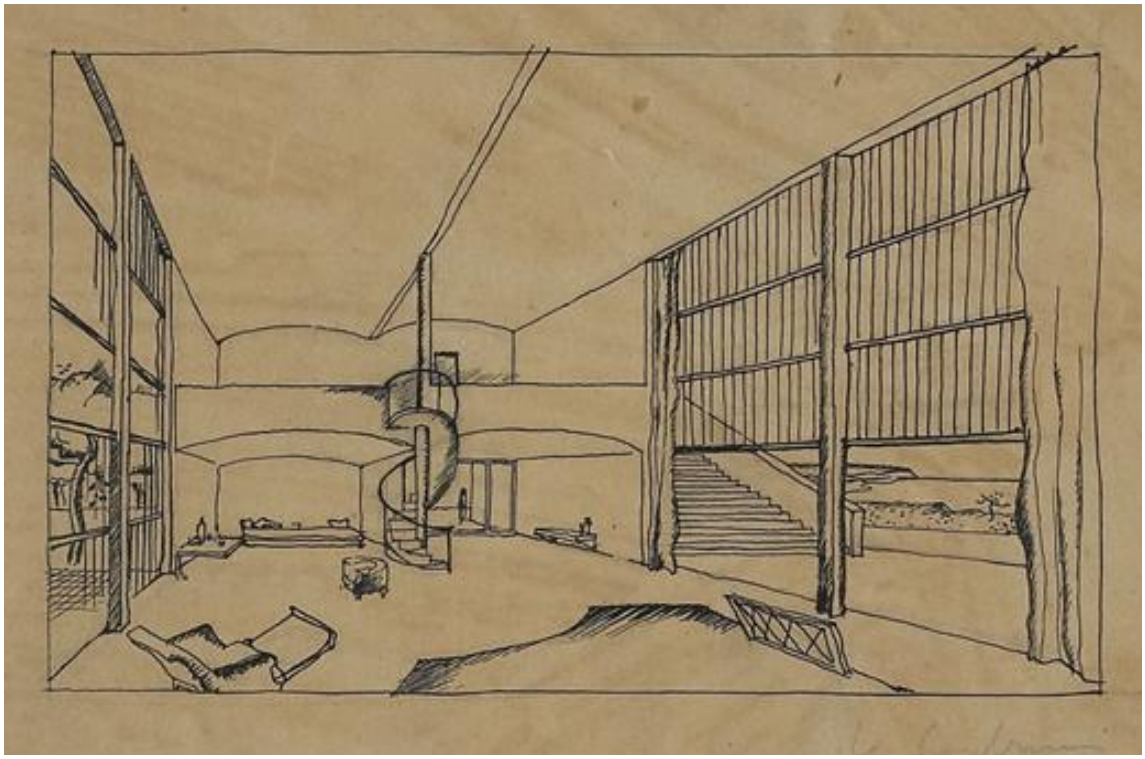

Figure 66. Le Corbusier, Interior view of Villa au bord de la mer, ca. 1920-22

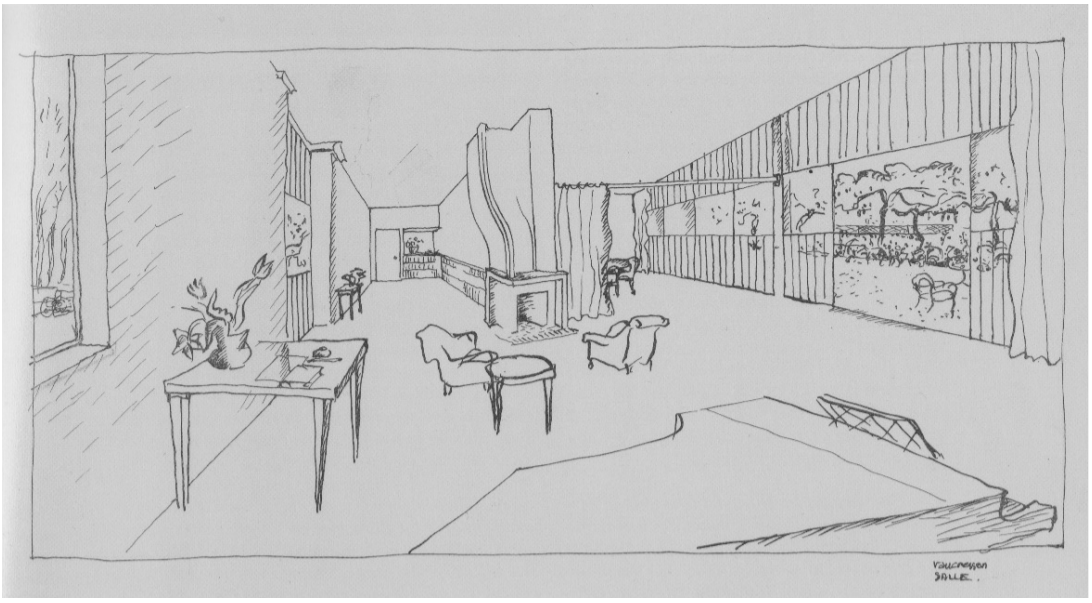

Figure 67. Le Corbusier, Interior view of Villa Besnus (first project) salon, 4-5 April 1923

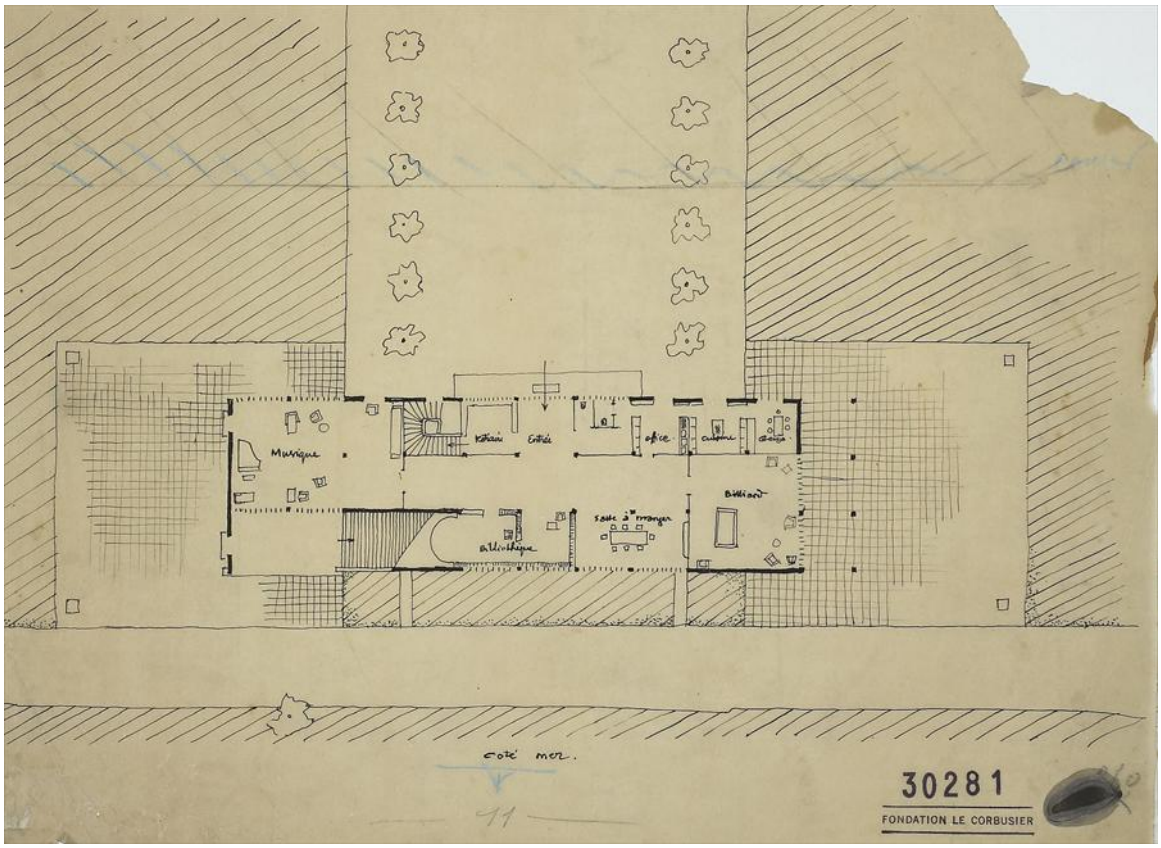

Figure 68. Plan of Villa au bord de la mer, ca. 1920-22

Figure 69. View of Maison-Atelier Ozenfant from Square de Montsouris (facing northwest), ca. 1924

Figure 70. View of Maison-Atelier Ozenfant from Avenue Reille, facing southwest, ca. 1924

Figure 71. Interior view of studio facing north, Maison-Atelier Ozenfant, ca. 1924.

Figure 72. Interior view of studio from mezzanine, Maison-Atelier Ozenfant, ca. 1924

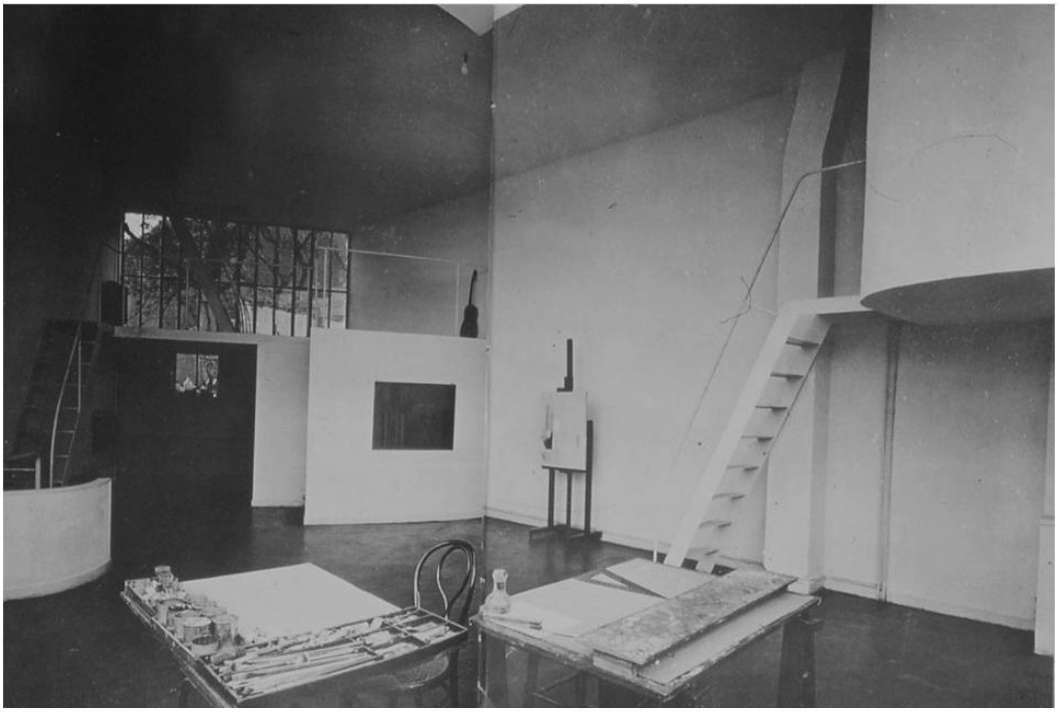

Figure 73. Interior view of studio facing south, Maison-Atelier Ozenfant, ca. 1924.

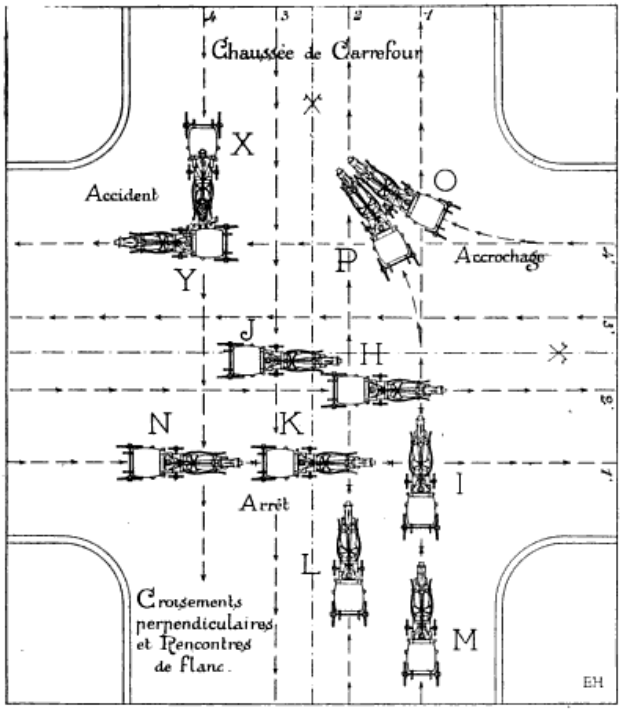

Fig. 4

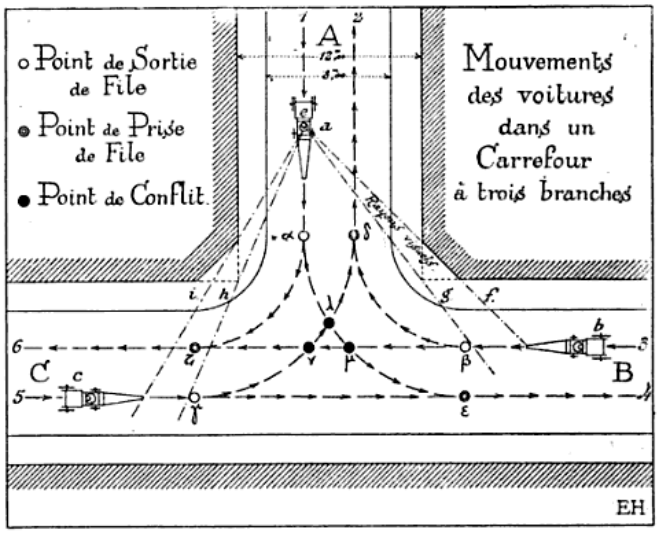

Fig. 6

Figure 74. Plates from Eugène Hénard, *Études sur les transformations de Paris*, 1906

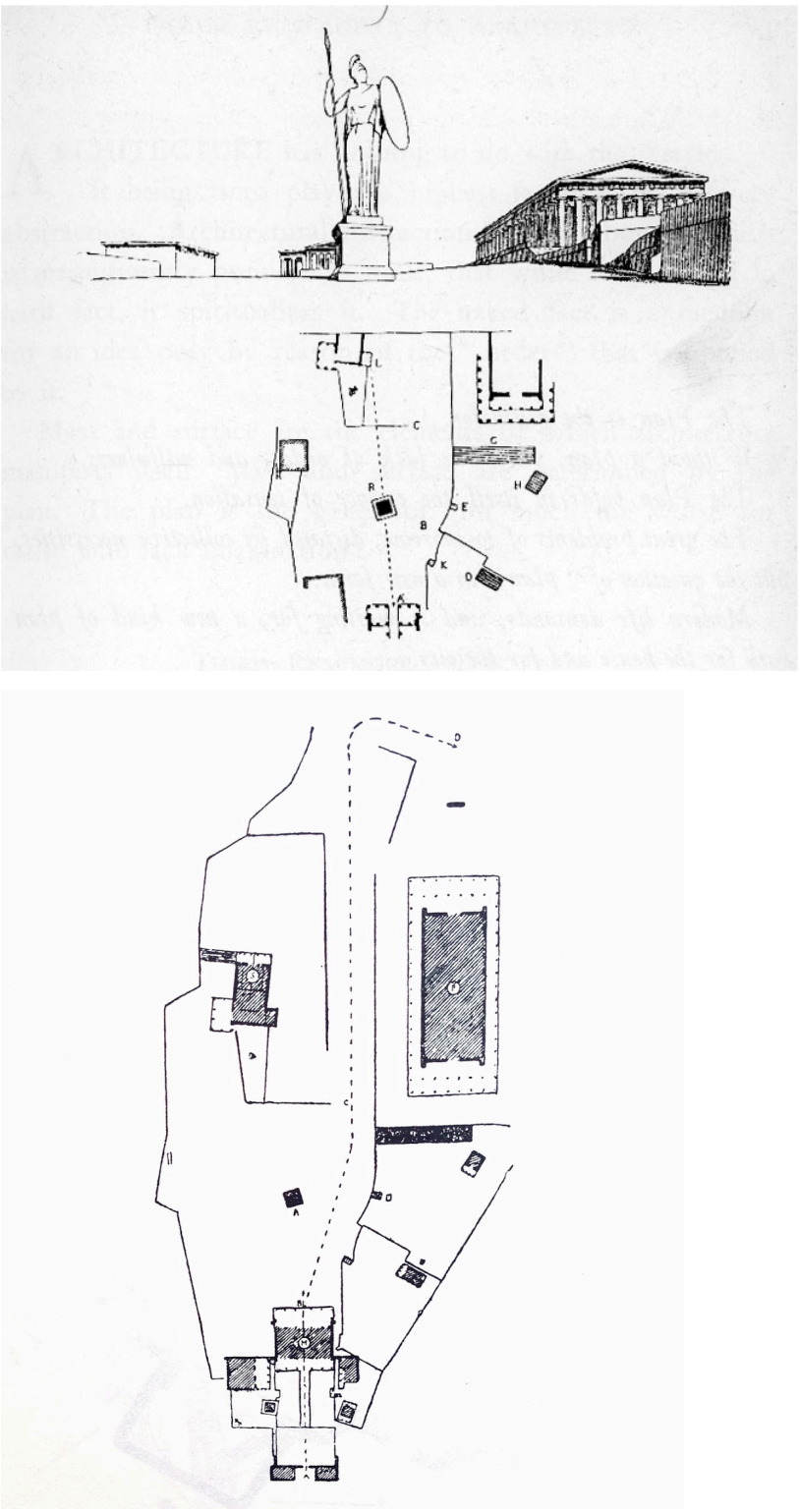

Figure 75. Perspective and plan of the Acropolis, in Le Corbusier, *Vers une architecture* (1923/28)

Figure 76. Amédée Ozenfant, *Nature morte aux bouteilles*, 1922

Figure 77. Amédée Ozenfant, *Rouges*, *Rome*, 1920-25

Figure 78. Poster advertisement for "Objets par Fernand Léger," exhibition at Galerie Vignon, Paris, April 16-28, 1934

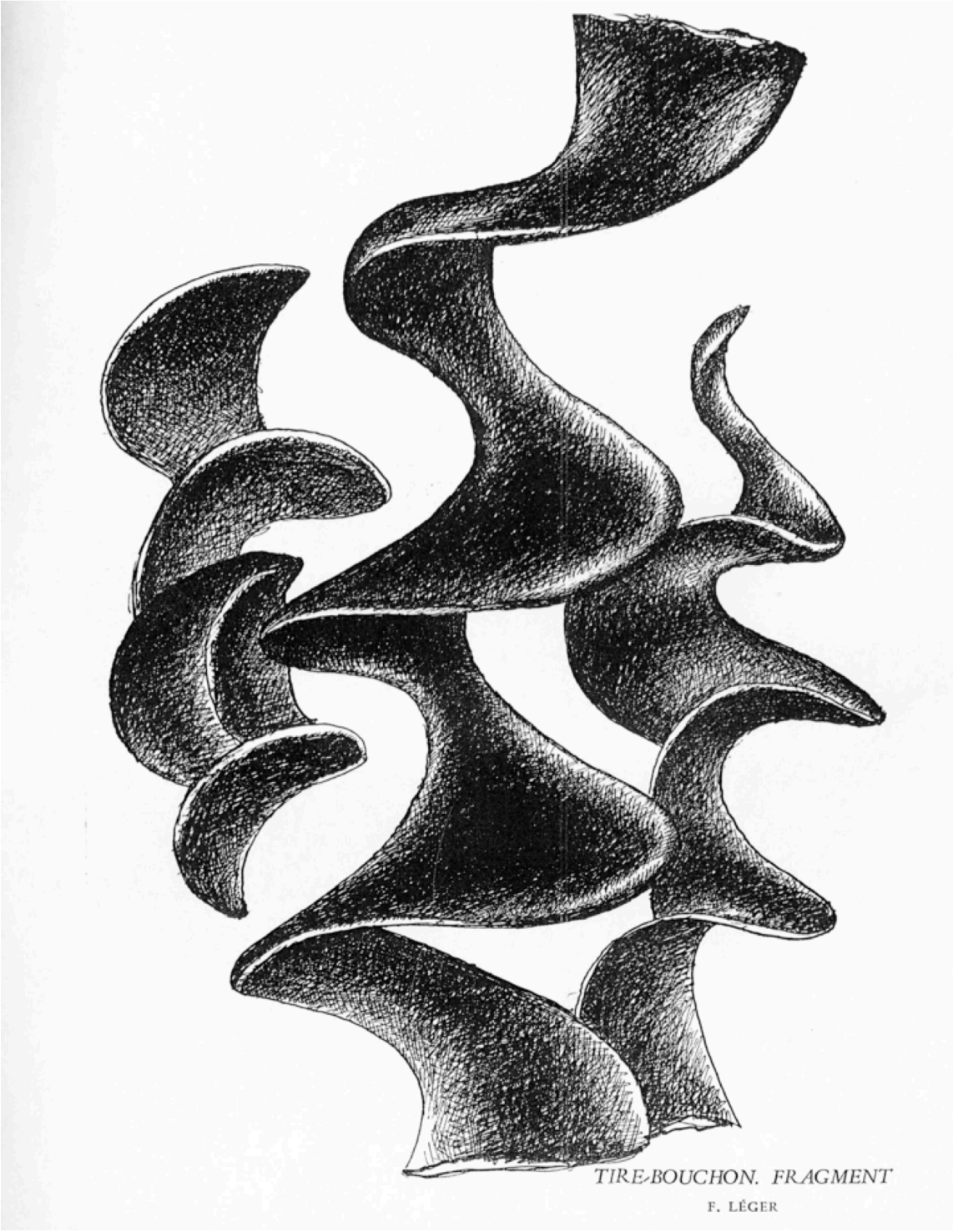

Figure 79. Fernand Léger, *Tire-bouchon fragment*, 1933

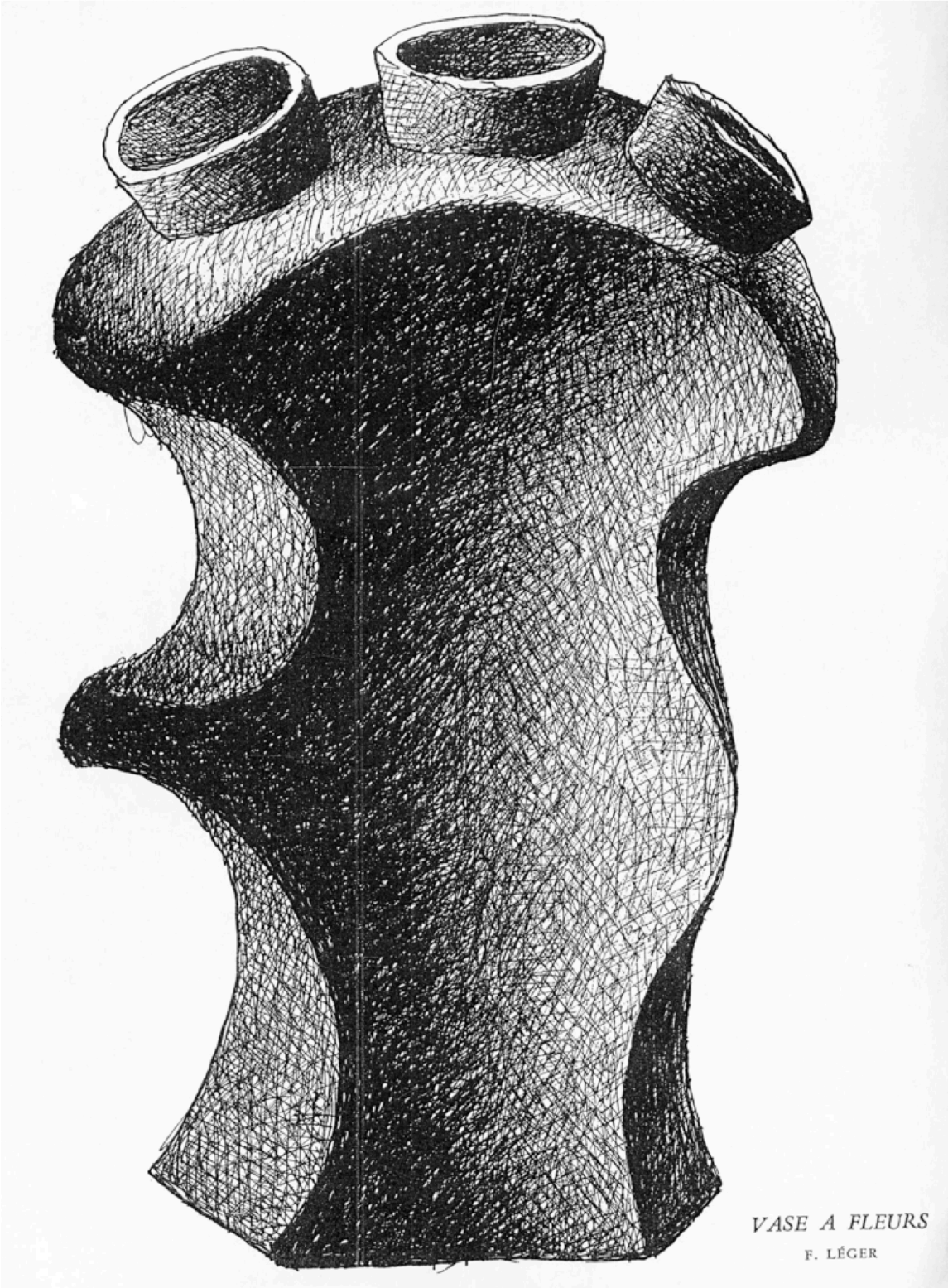

Figure 80. Fernand Léger, *Vase à fleurs*, 1933

Figure 81. Thérès Bonney, Photograph of the entrance to Galerie Myrbor [later Galerie Vignon], ca. late 1920s, with tapestry by Léger at right.

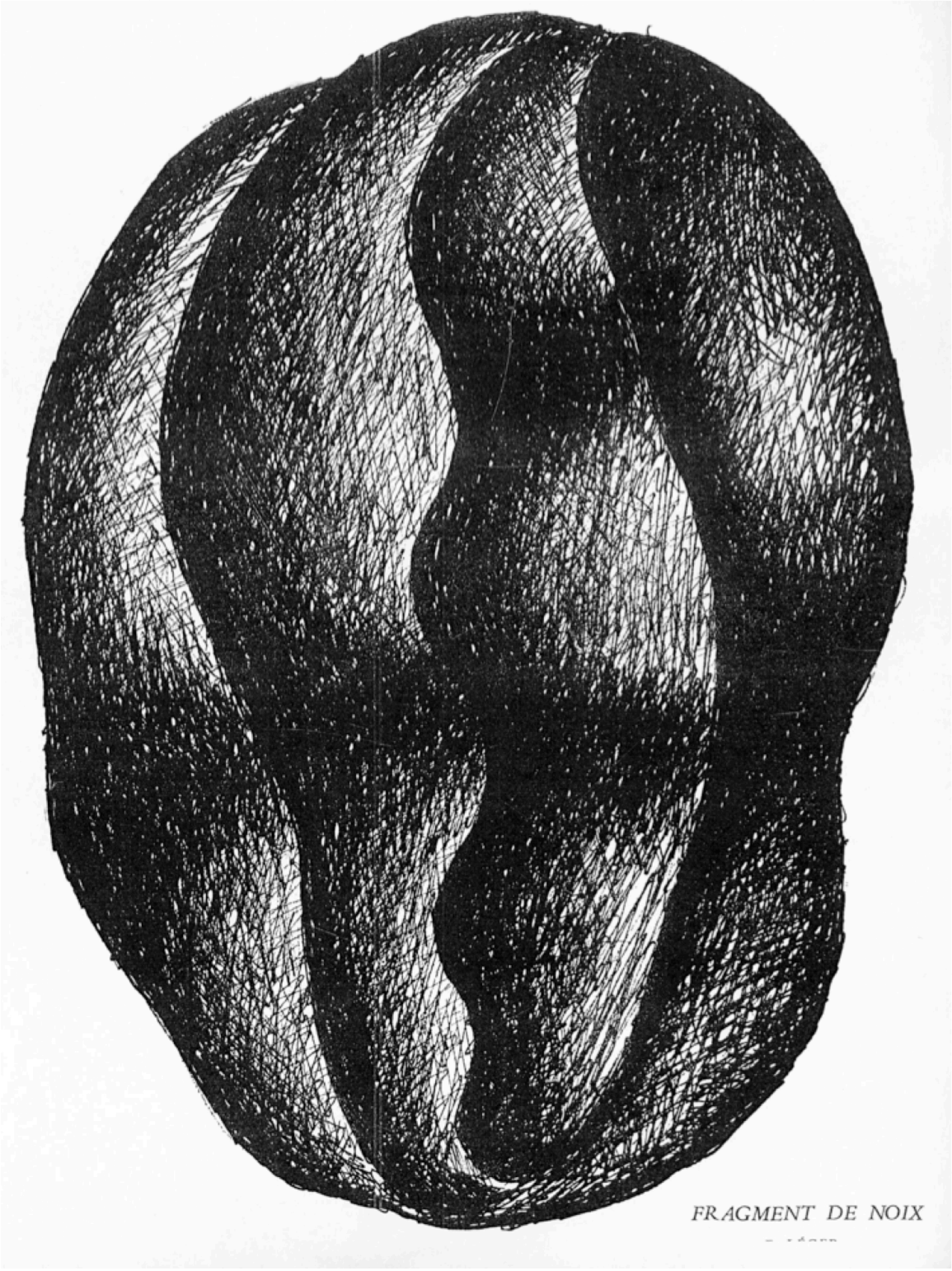

Figure 82. Fernand Léger, *Fragment de noix*, 1933

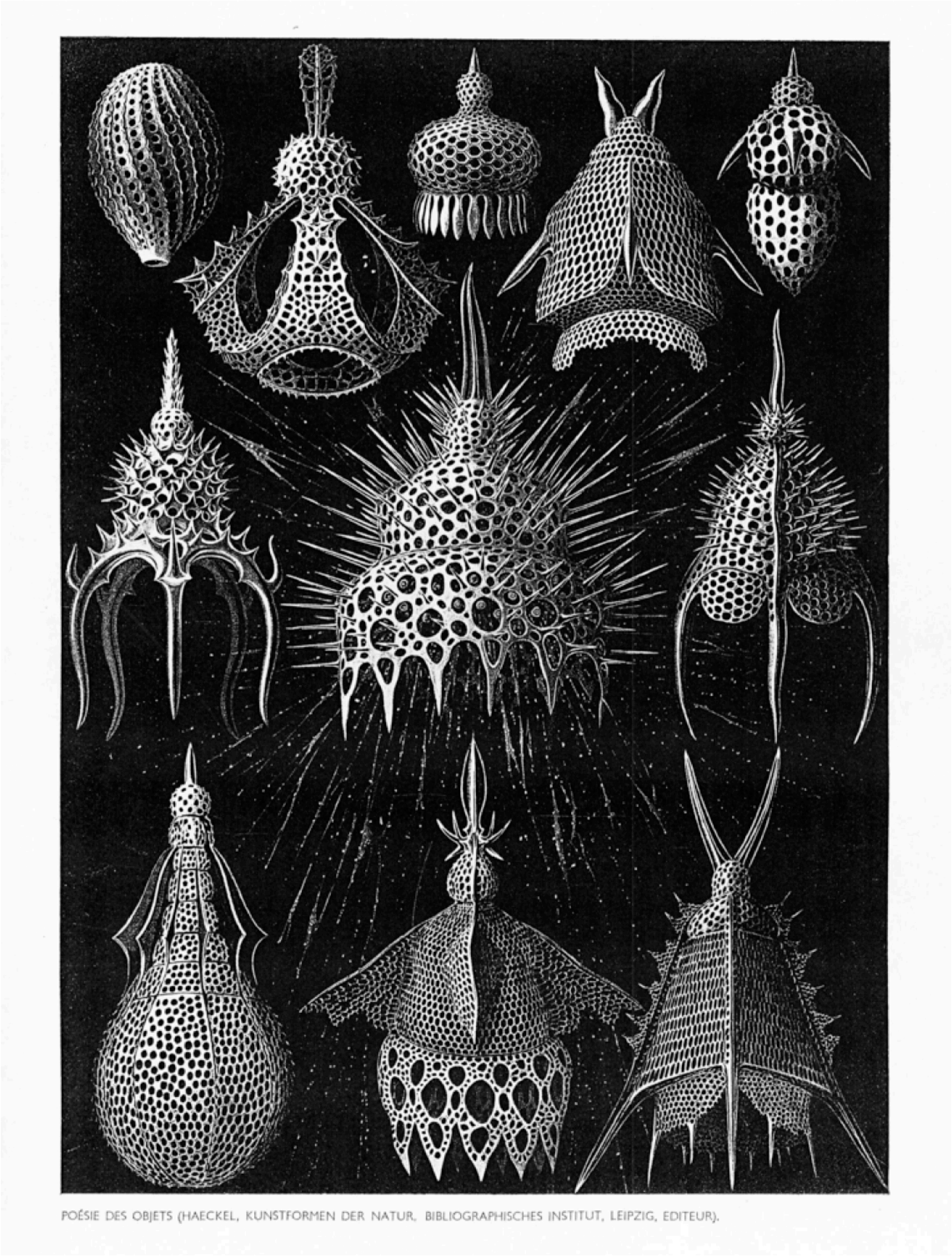

Figure 83. Plate from Ernst Haeckel, *Forms of Art in Nature* [Kunstformen der Natur], 1894

Figure 84. Fernand Léger, *Feuilles et coquillage*, 1927

Figure 85. Fernand Léger, *La Feuille de houx*, 1928

Figure 86. Fernand Léger, *Feuille de houx sur fond rouge*, 1928

Figure 87. Fernand Léger, *Troncs d'arbre*, 1928

Figure 88. Photograph of Léger's studio, Lisores, France, ca. 1935

Figure 89. Map of railway lines in France, 1910-1930

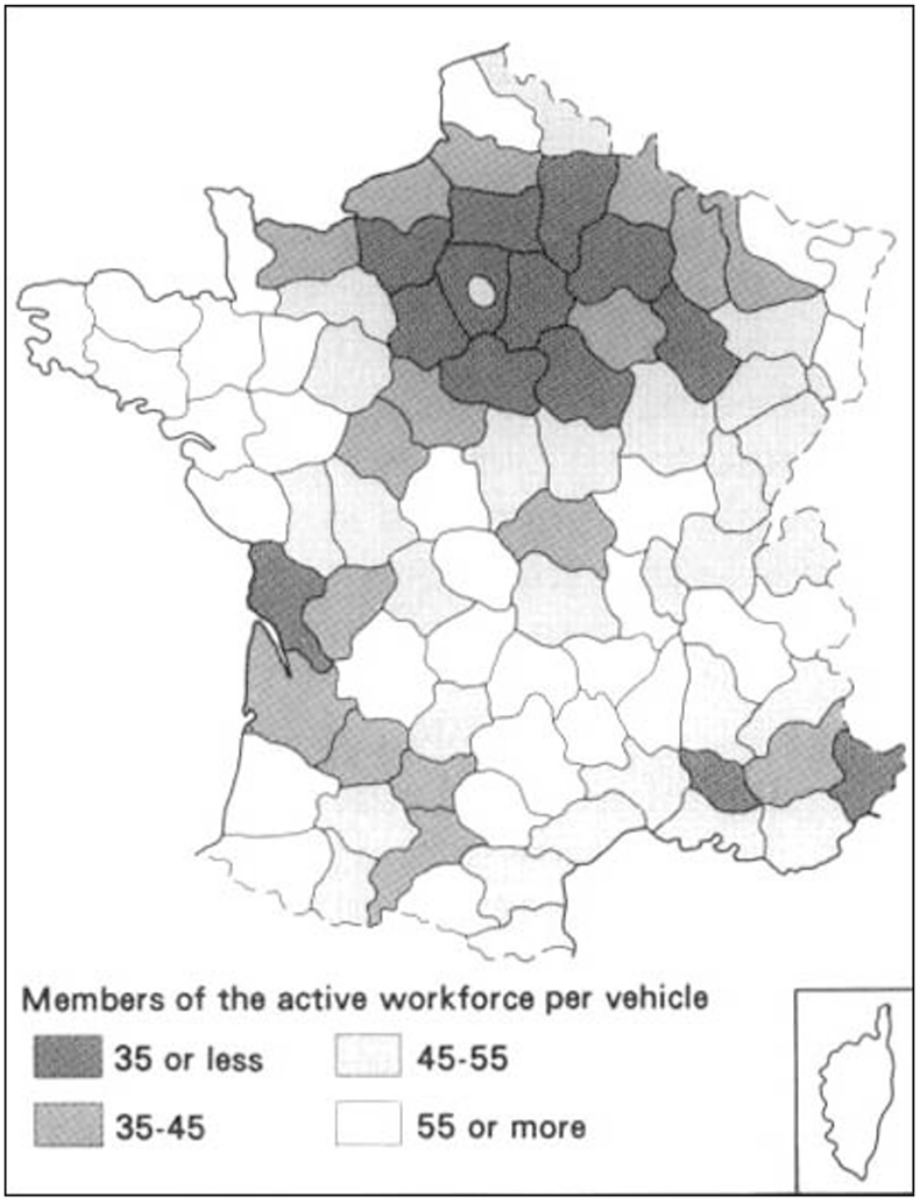

Figure 90. Regional distribution of Commercial Motor Vehicles, 1931

La route, piste de la caravane automobile, jalonnée de « points d'essence ». — P. 352.
Ce poste de ravitaillement, sur la route de Paris à Deauville, imite plaisamment la forme d'un bidon d'essence géant couché sur le côté.

Figure 91. Photograph showing a filling station on the Paris-Deauville road. Published in *L'Illustration: L'Automobile et le tourisme*, October 3, 1925.

La route autodrome de Paris à Deauville. *Aquarelle de A.E. Marty.*

Figure 92. A.E. Marty, illustration showing traffic on the Paris-Deauville road. Published in Robert De Beauplan, "En regardent passer les autos." *L'Illustration: L'Automobile et le tourisme*, October 1, 1927

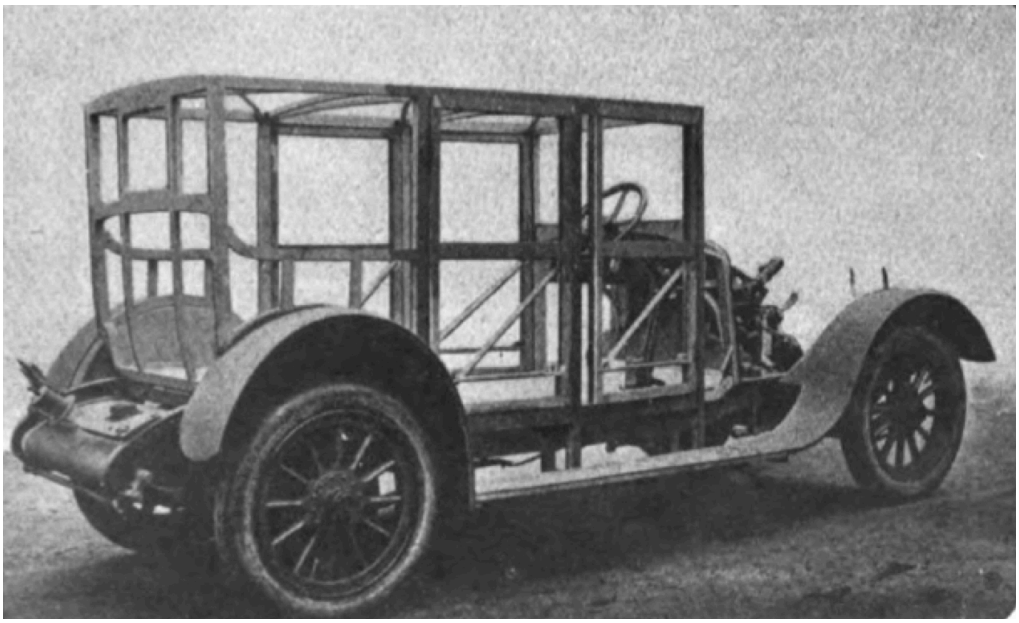

Figure 93. Rear view of Weymann *carrosserie*, showing the steel support cage prior to the addition of steel or wood paneling. Photograph published in *La Vie Automobile*, May 10, 1922.

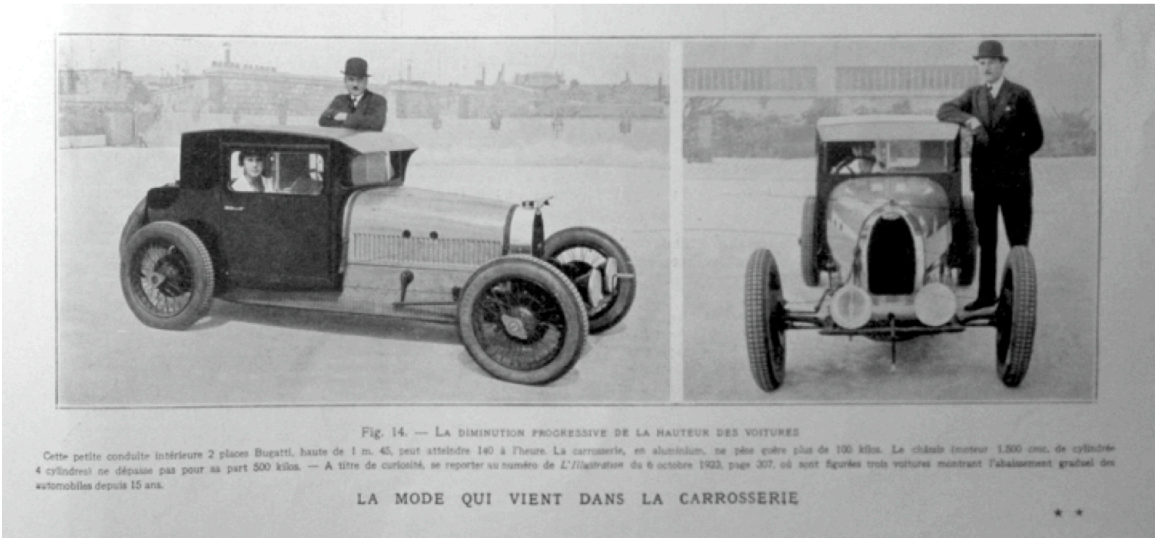

Fig. 14. — La diminution progressive de la hauteur des voitures

Cette petite conduite intérieure 2 places Bugatti, haute de 1 m. 45, peut atteindre 140 à l'heure. La carrosserie, en aluminium, ne pèse guère plus de 100 kilos. Le châssis (moteur 1.500 cmc. de cylindrée 4 cylindres) ne dépasse pas pour sa part 500 kilos. — A titre de curiosité, se reporter au numéro de *L'Illustration* du 6 octobre 1923, page 307, où sont figurées trois voitures montrant l'abaissement graduel des automobiles depuis 15 ans.

LA MODE QUI VIENT DANS LA CARROSSERIE

* *

Figure 94. "La mode qui vient dans la carrosserie," published in *L'Illustration*, October 1, 1927. The photograph illustrates the extreme lowering of the automotive body, resulting in the *conduite surbaissée*—here, a Bugatti two-seater.

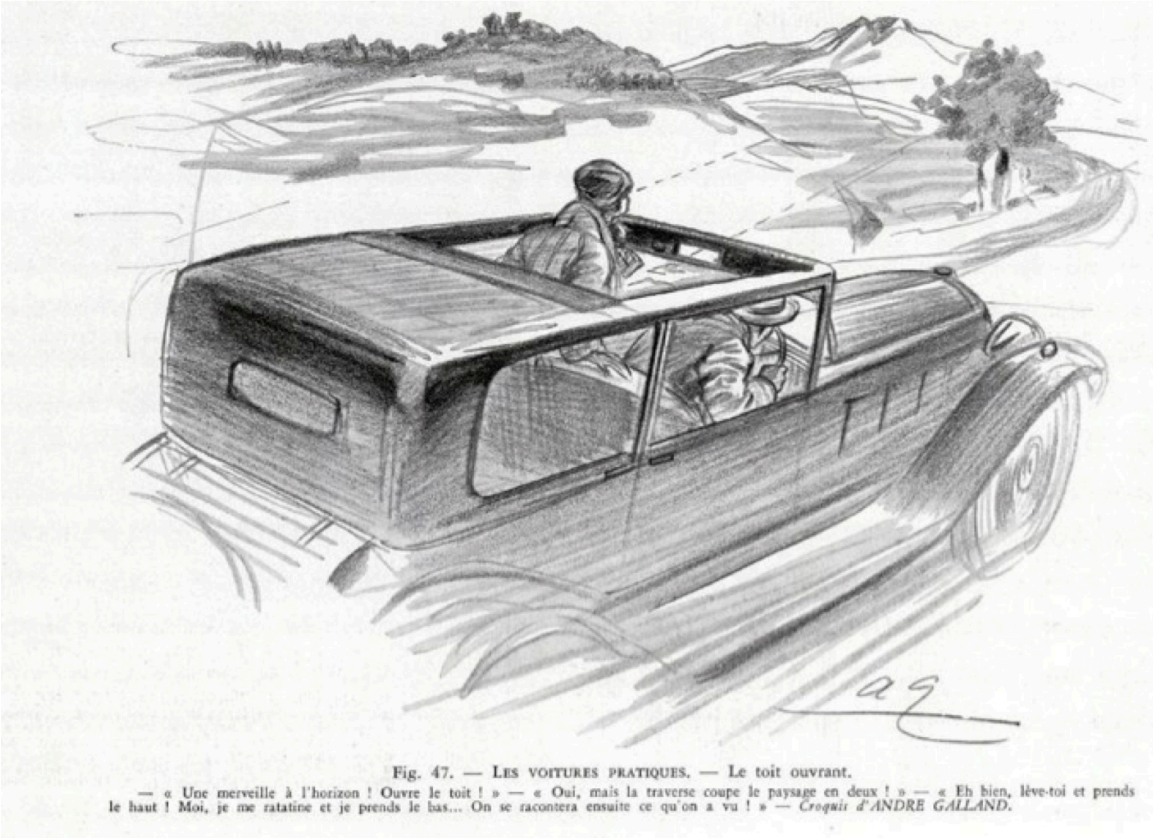

Fig. 47. — LES VOITURES PRATIQUES. — Le toit ouvrant.
— « Une merveille à l'horizon ! Ouvre le toit ! » — « Oui, mais la traverse coupe le paysage en deux ! » — « Eh bien, lève-toi et prends le haut ! Moi, je me ratatine et je prends le bas... On se racontera ensuite ce qu'on a vu ! » — *Croquis d'ANDRE GALLAND.*

Figure 95. Cartoon demonstrating the faults and defects of recent *carrosseries*. Published in Louis Baudry de Saunier, "Causerie sur le Salon de 1933," *L'Illustration,* no. 4727, October 7, 1933.

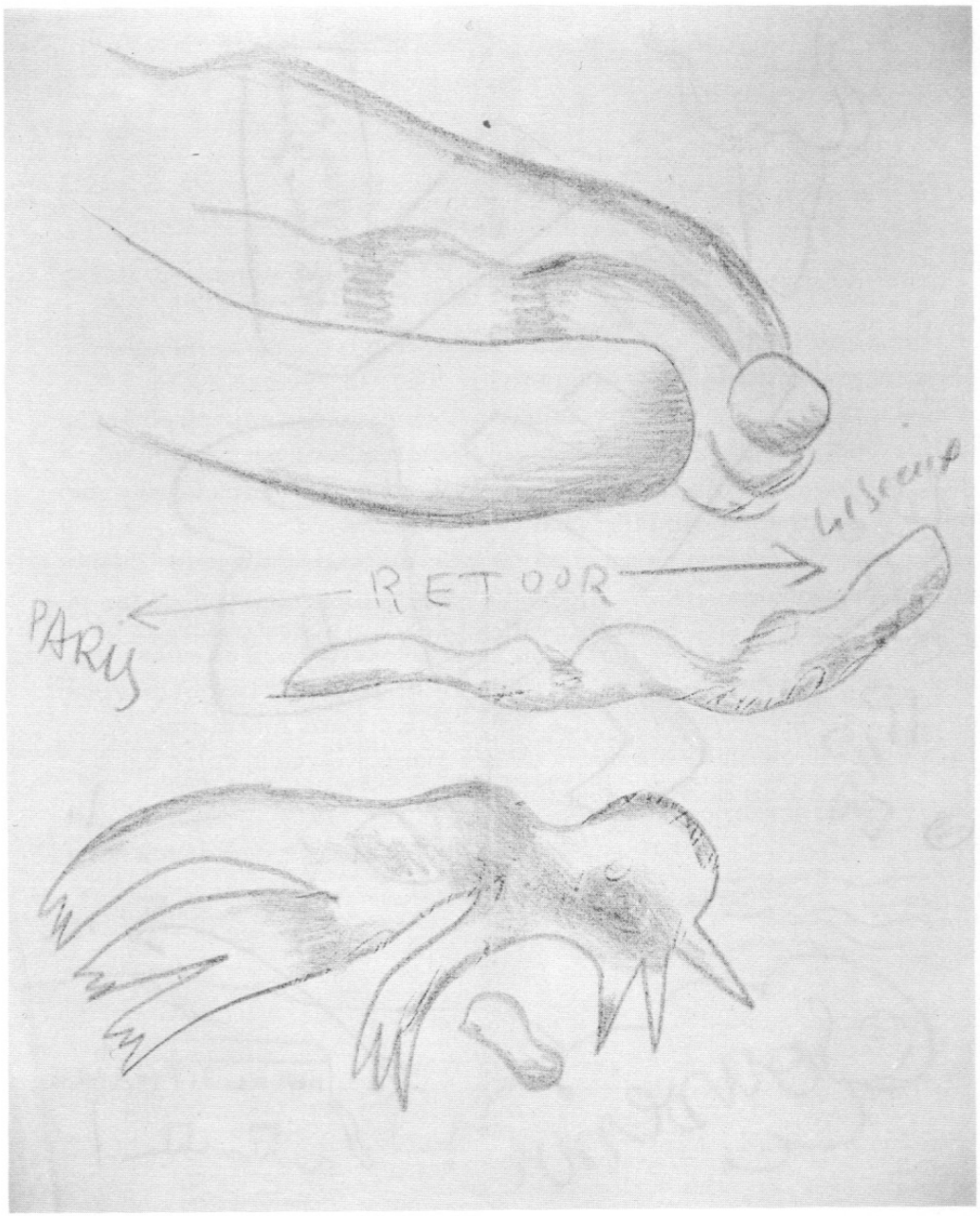

Figure 96. Fernand Léger, Verso of double-sided drawing sent to Simone Herman, nd. [Aug 1931]

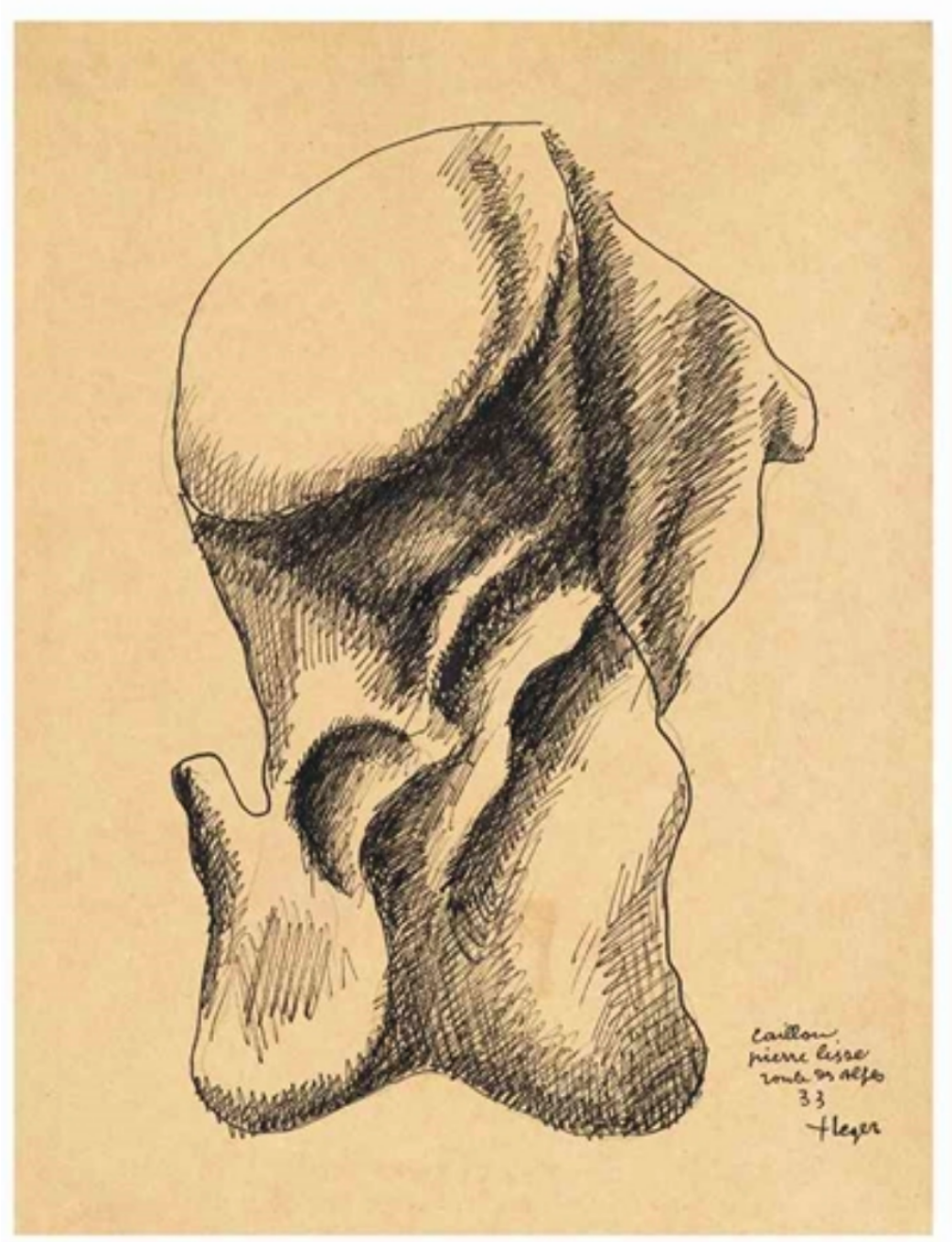

Figure 97. Fernand Léger, *Caillou, pierre lisse*, 1933 [inscribed 'Route des alpes']

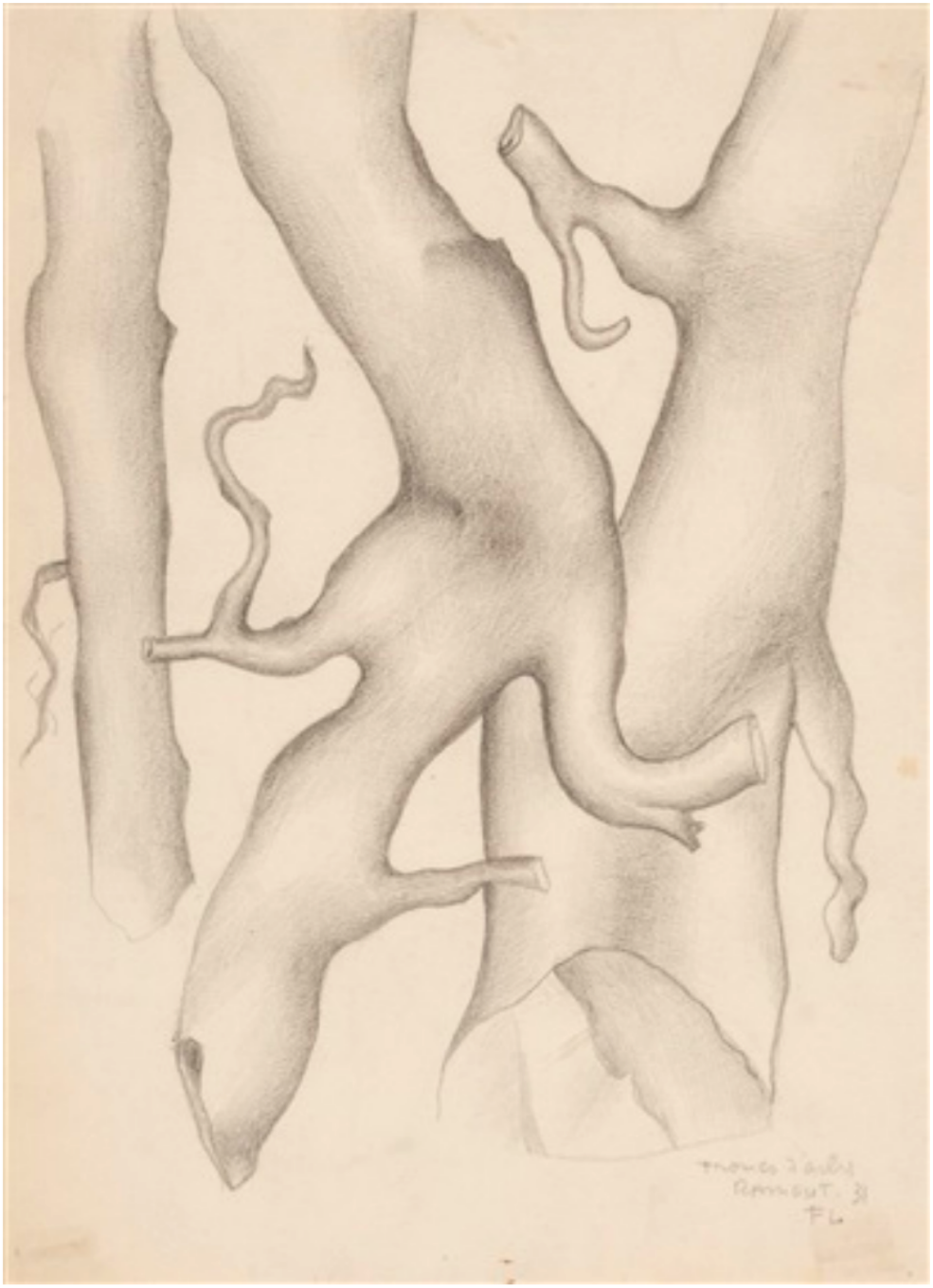

Figure 98. Fernand Léger, *Troncs d'arbre*, 1931 [inscribed 'Ramgut 31']

Figure 99. Fernand Léger, *Troncs d'arbre*, 1931

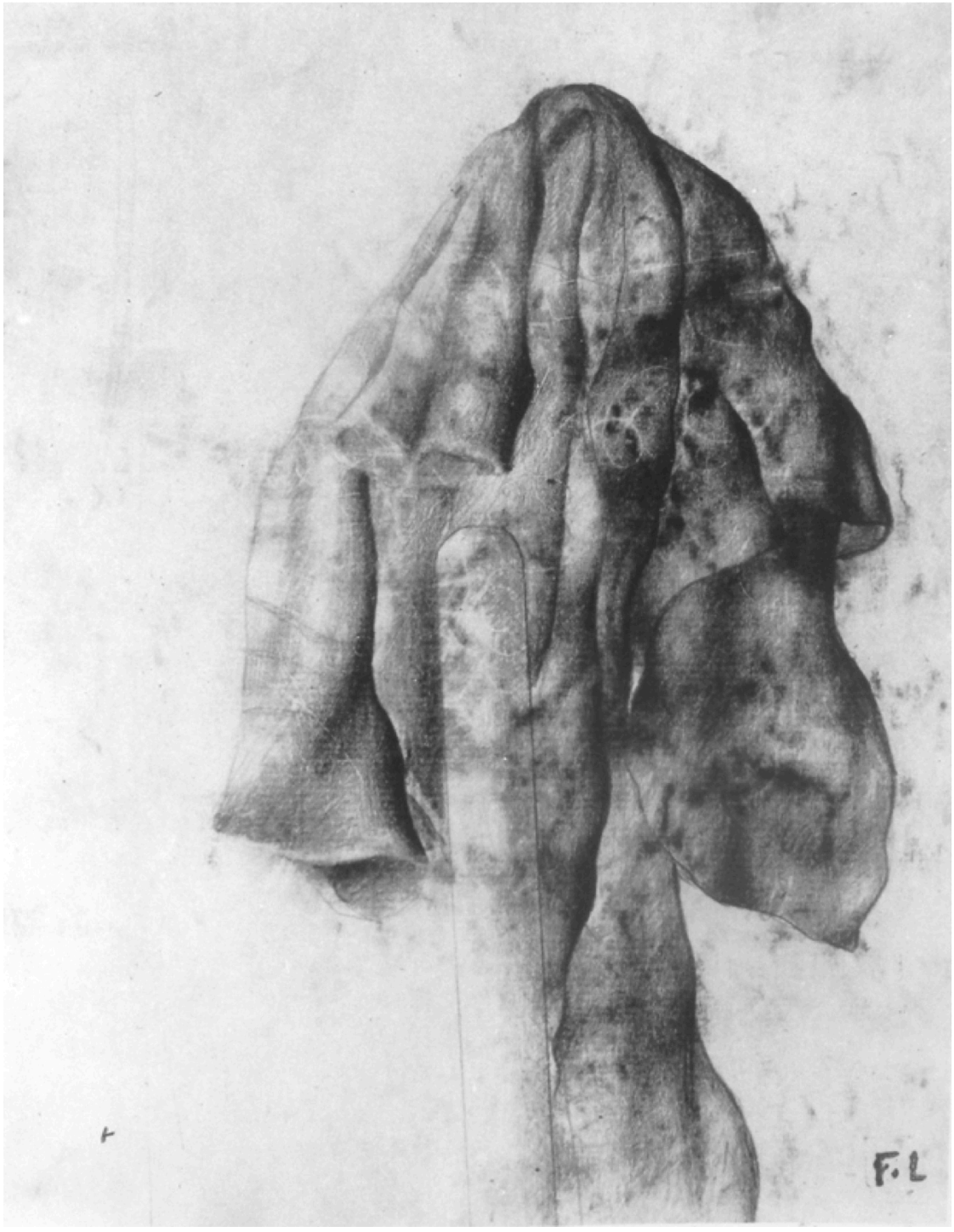

Figure 100. Fernand Léger, *Draperie*, 1930

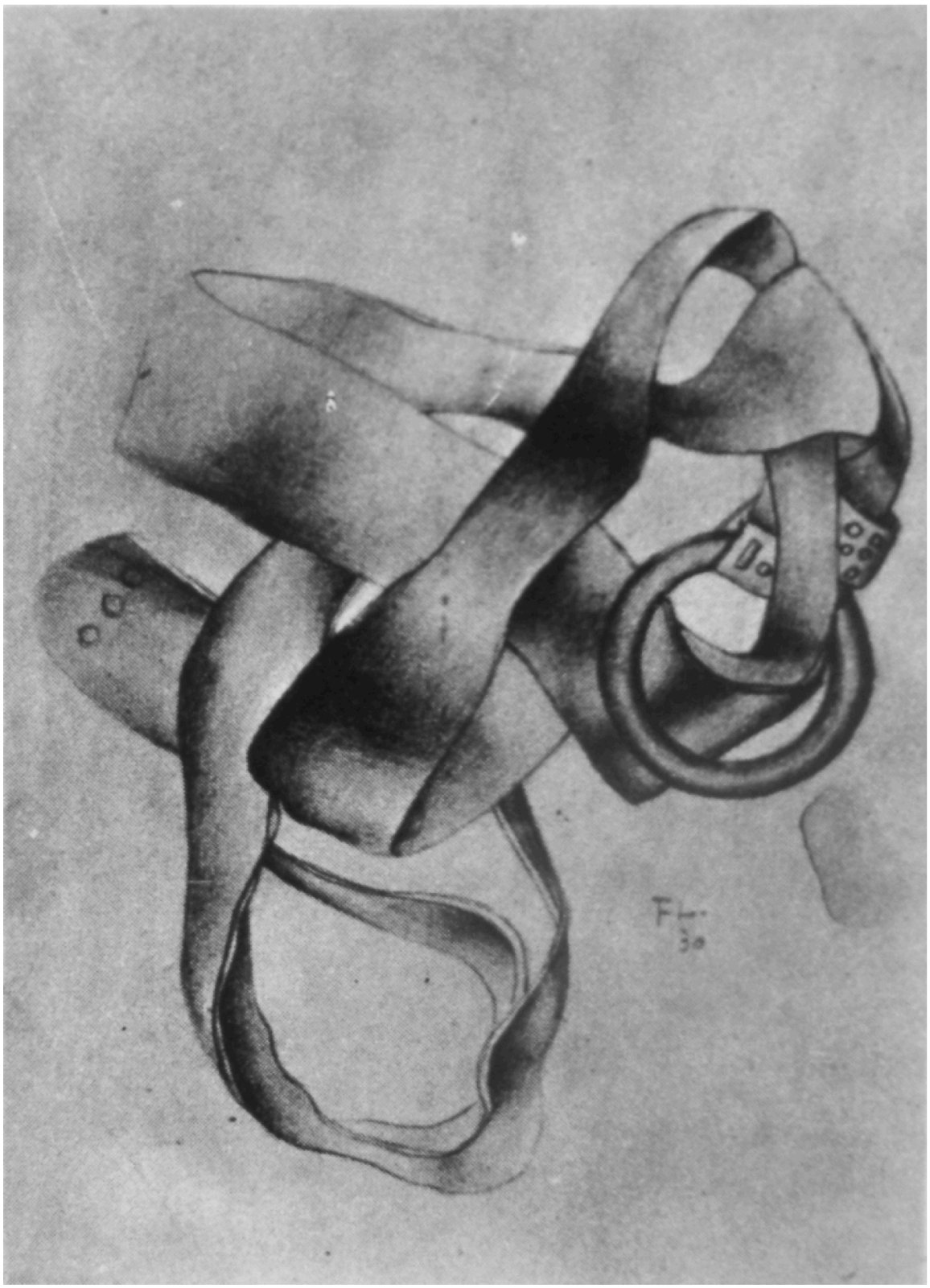

Figure 101. Fernand Léger, *Ceinture*, 1930

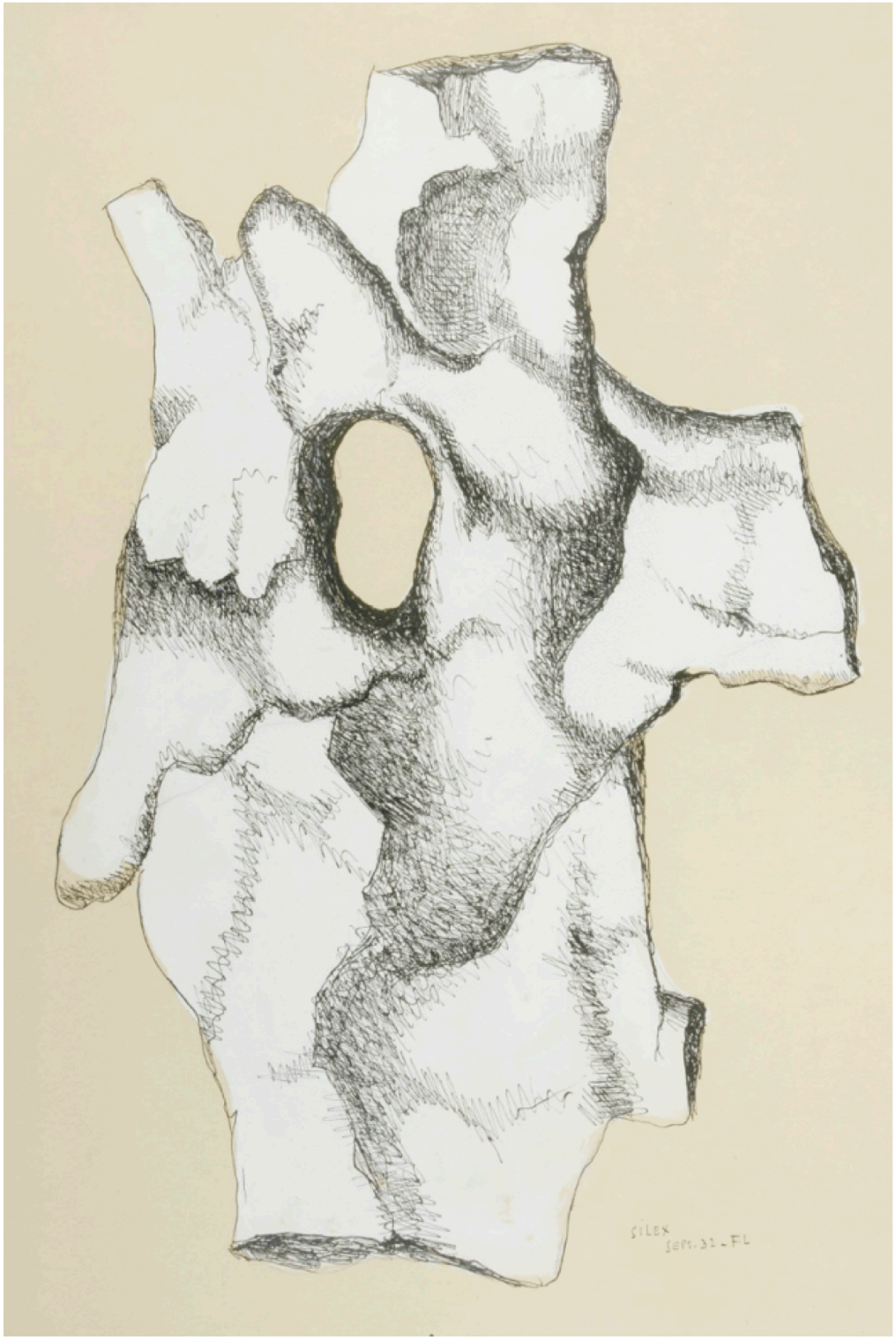

Figure 102. Fernand Léger, *Silex blanc sur fond jaune*, 1932

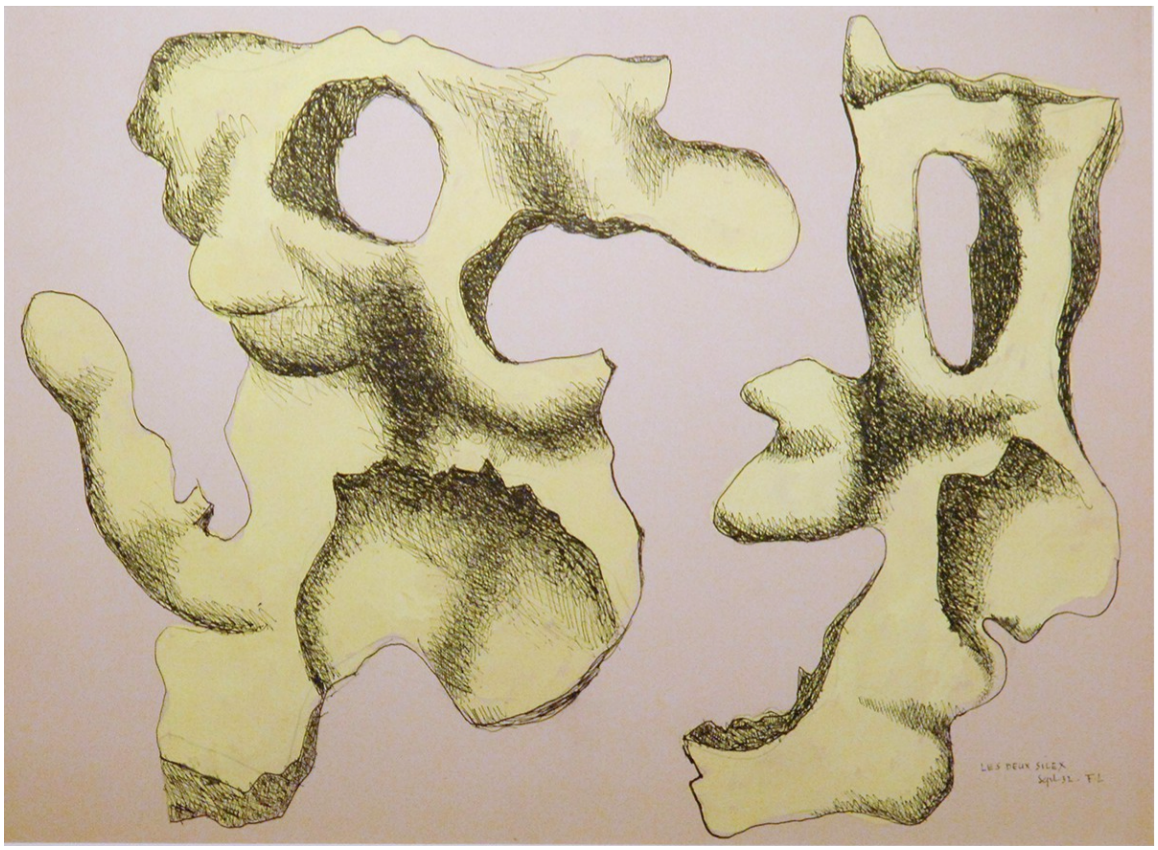

Figure 103. Fernand Léger, *Les Deux silex*, 1932

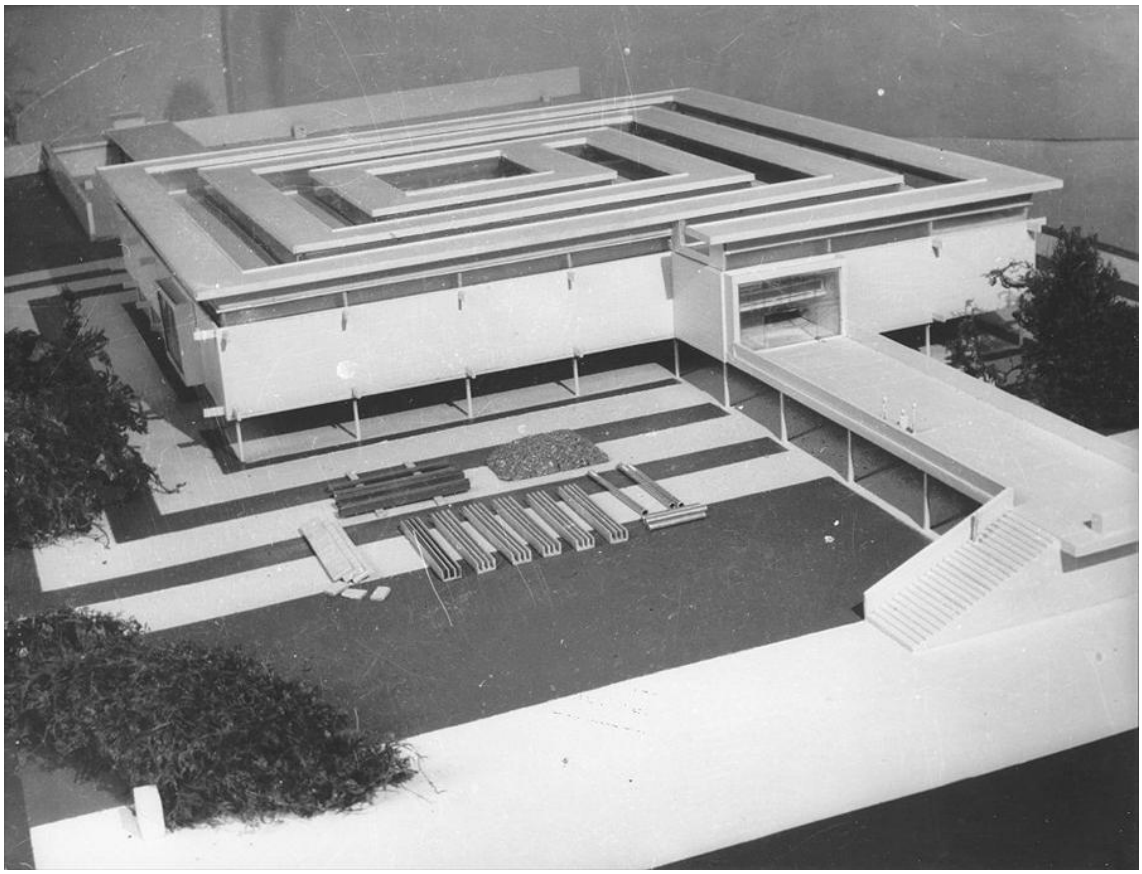

Figure 104. Photograph of a model of Le Corbusier's Musée à croissance illimité, 1939

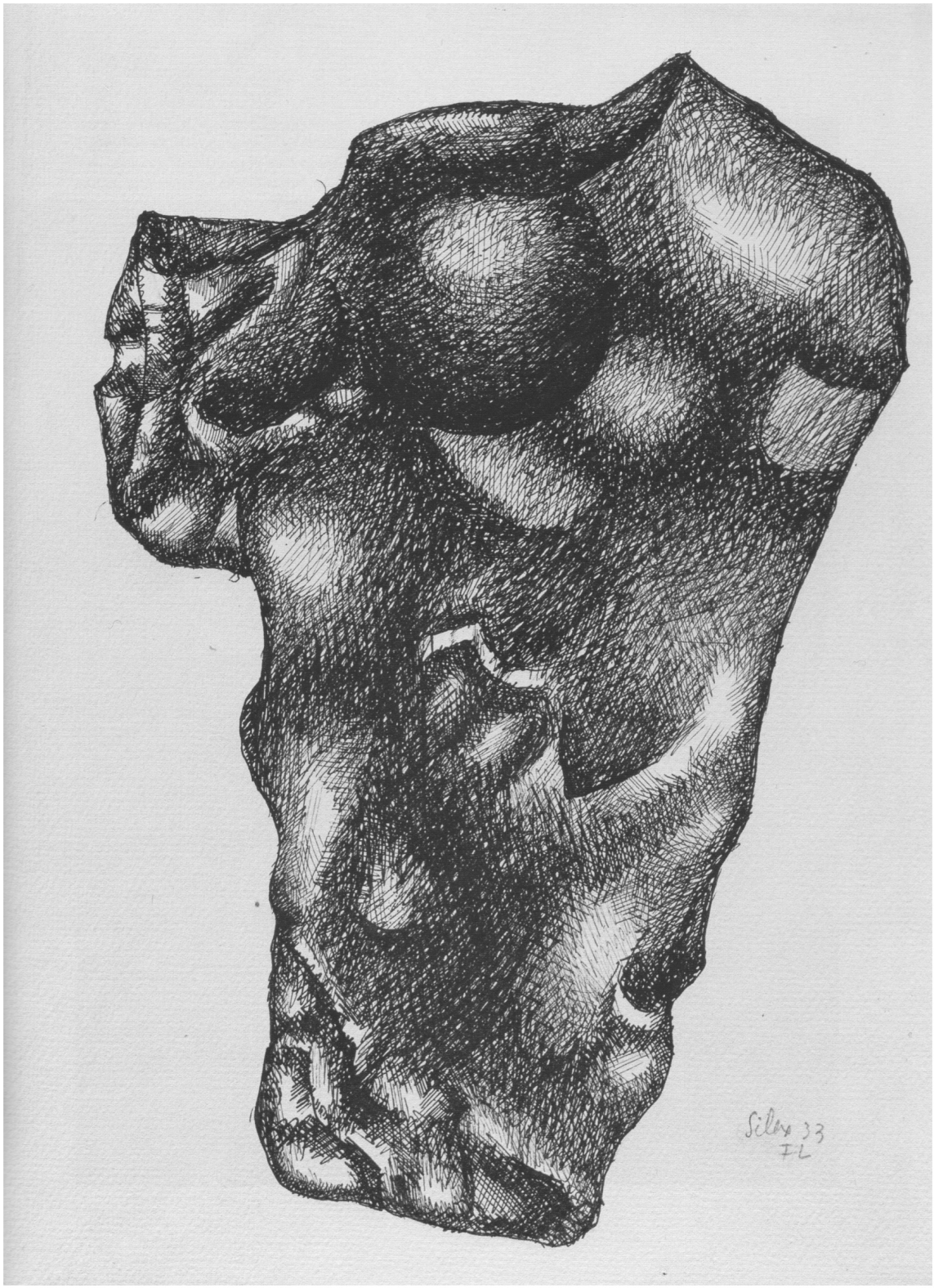

Figure 105. Fernand Léger, *Silex*, 1933

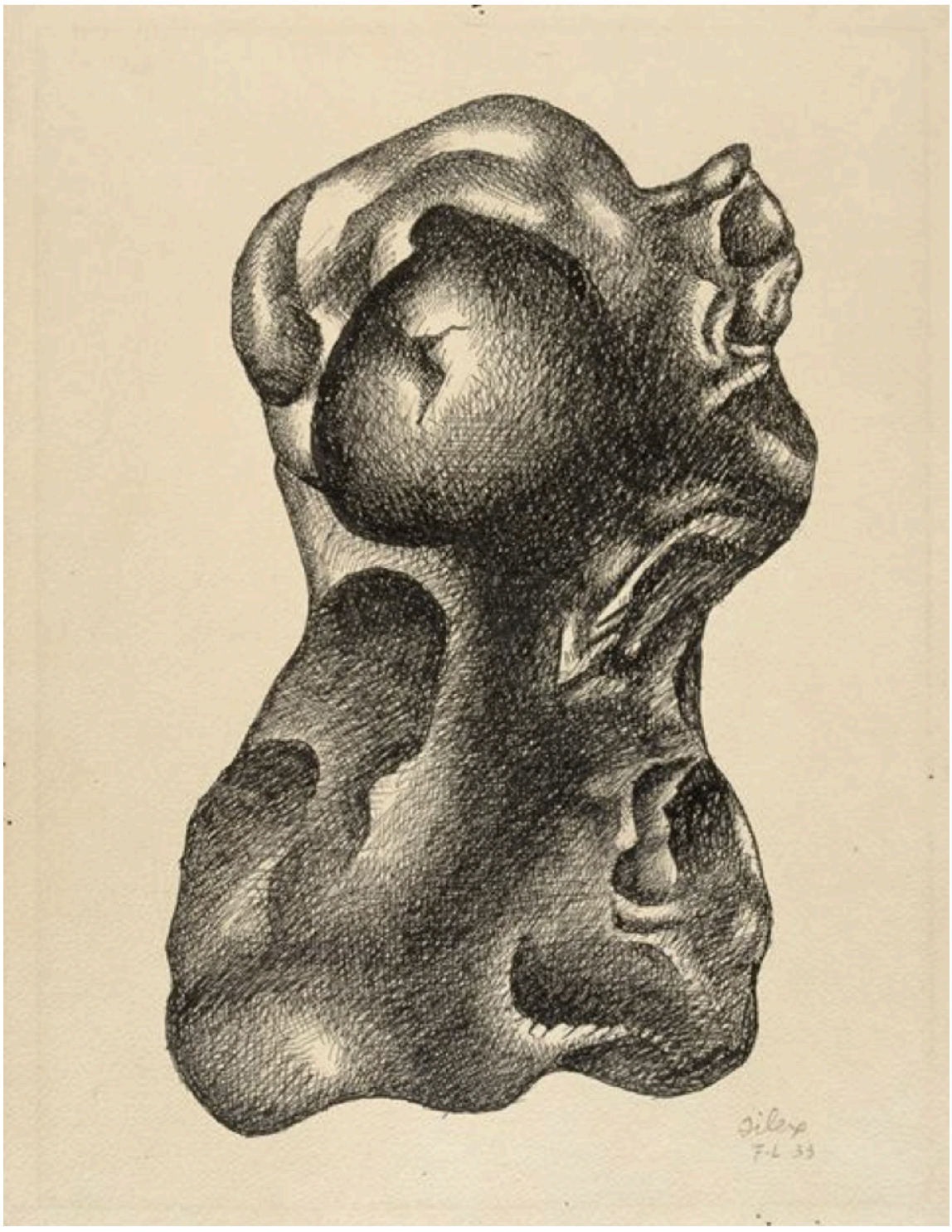

Figure 106. Fernand Léger, *Silex*, 1933

Figure 107. Fernand Léger, *Les gants*, 1933

Figure 108. Fernand Léger, *Quartier de mouton*, 1933

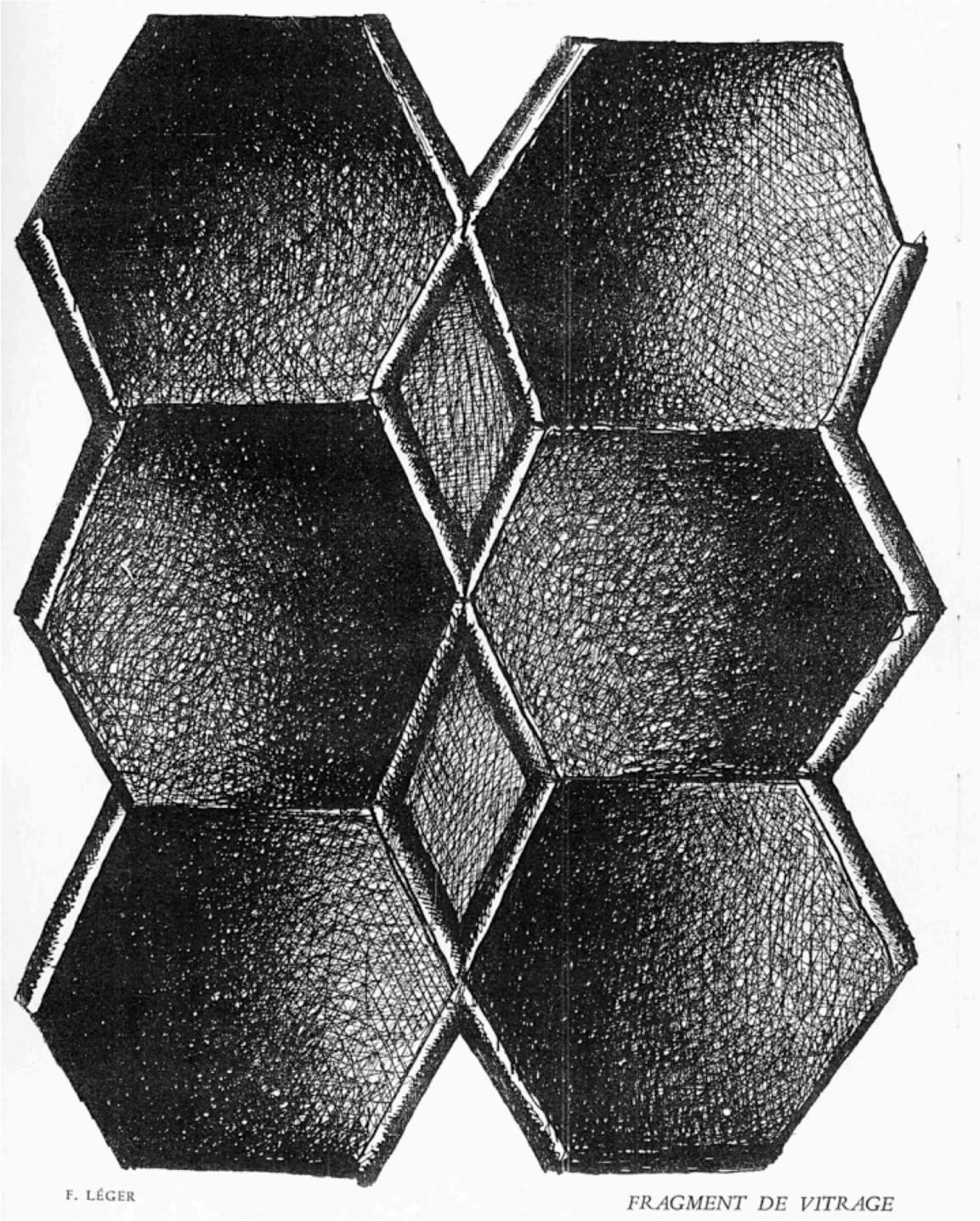

Figure 109. Fernand Léger, *Fragment de vitrage*, 1933

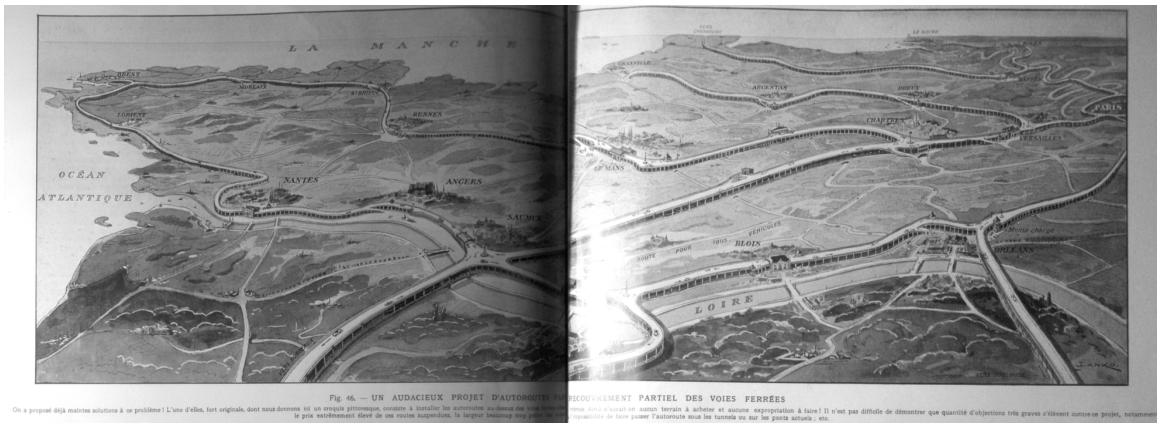

Figure 110. W. Janko, "Un audacieux projet d'autoroute par récouvrement partiel des voies ferrée," *L'Illustration: L'Automobile et le tourisme*, 7 Oct. 1933, n.p.

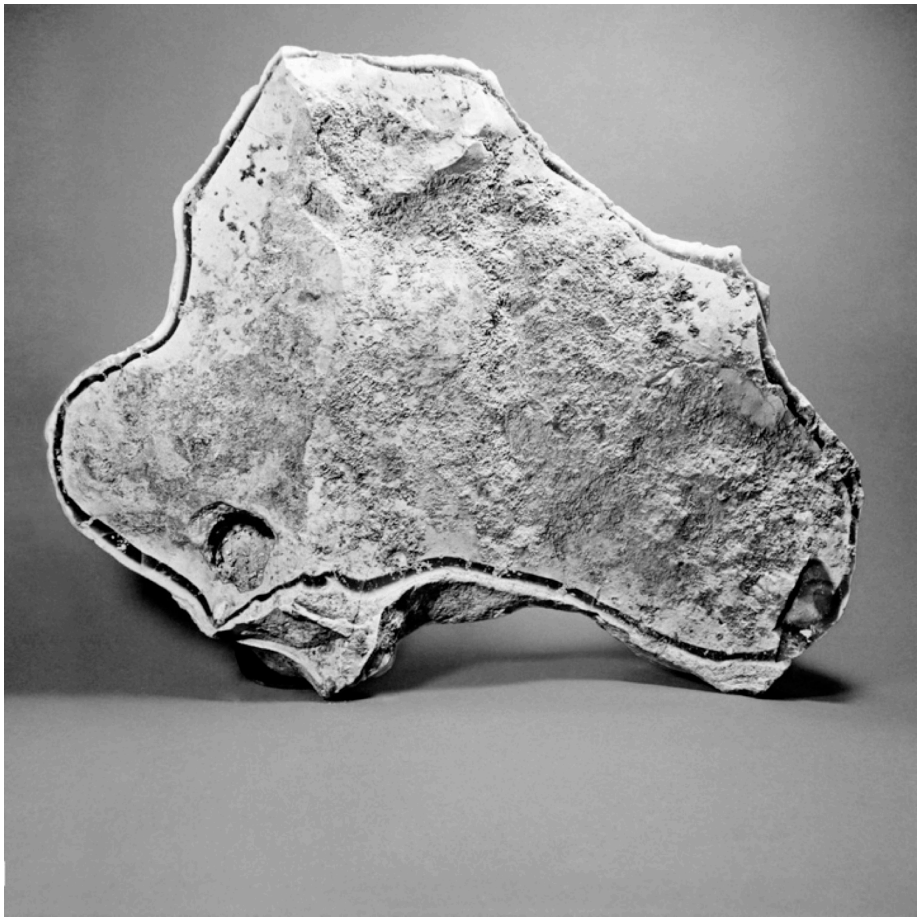

Figure 111. Charlotte Perriand, *Rognon de silex cerné, trouvé en Maurienne*, 1933

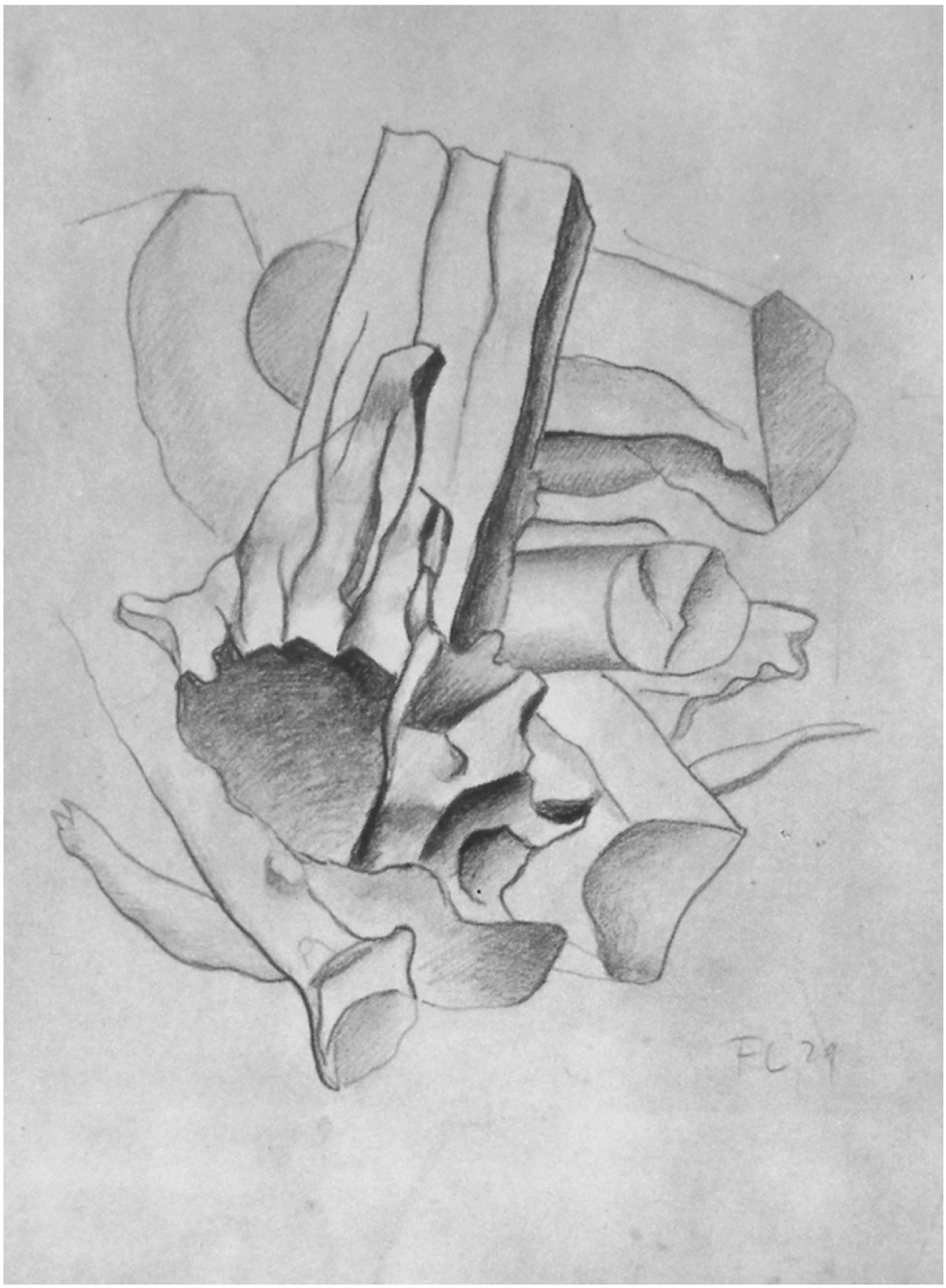

Figure 112. Fernand Léger, *Bûches*, 1929

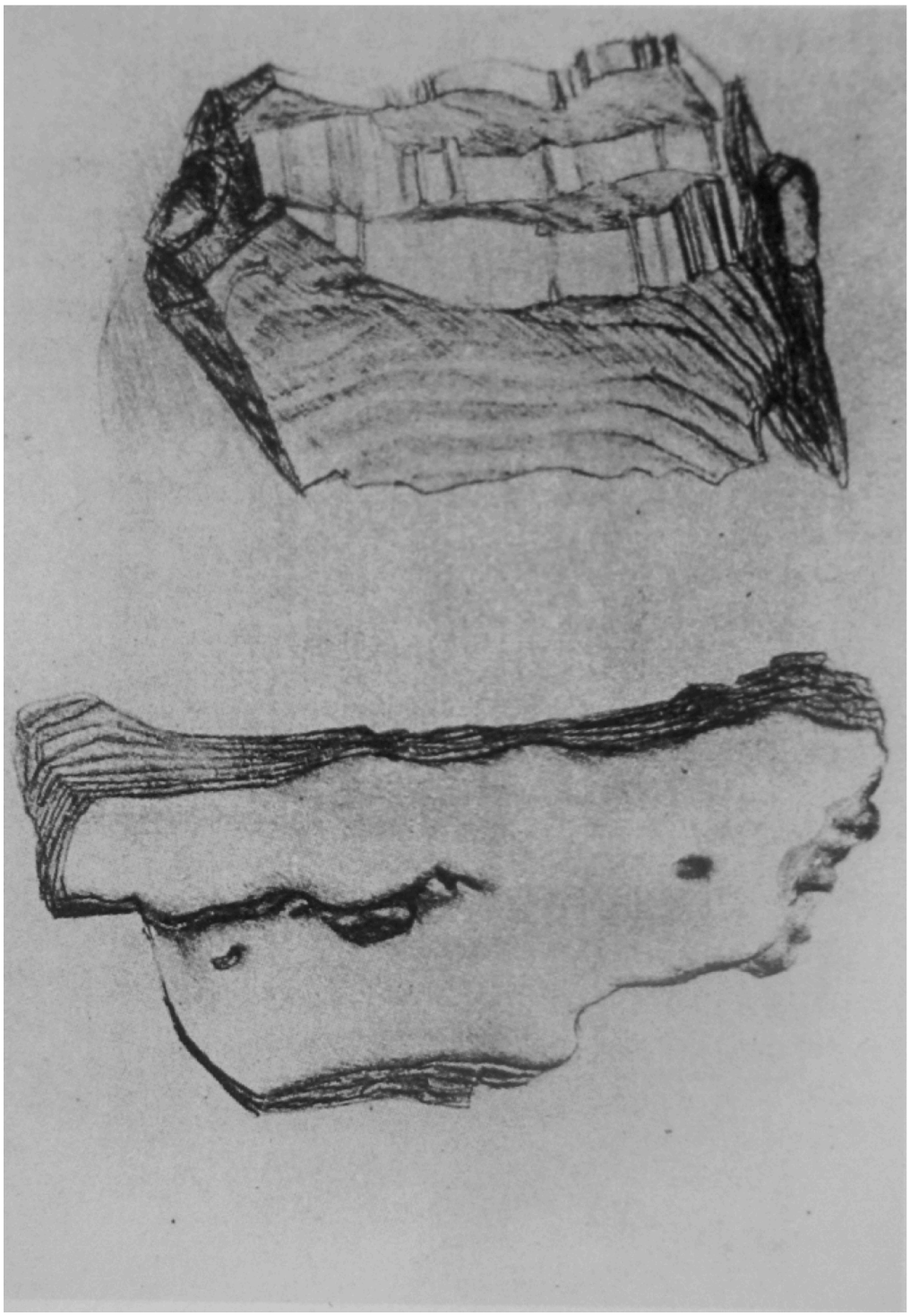

Figure 113. Le Corbusier, *Coupe de bois et écorce*, 1930

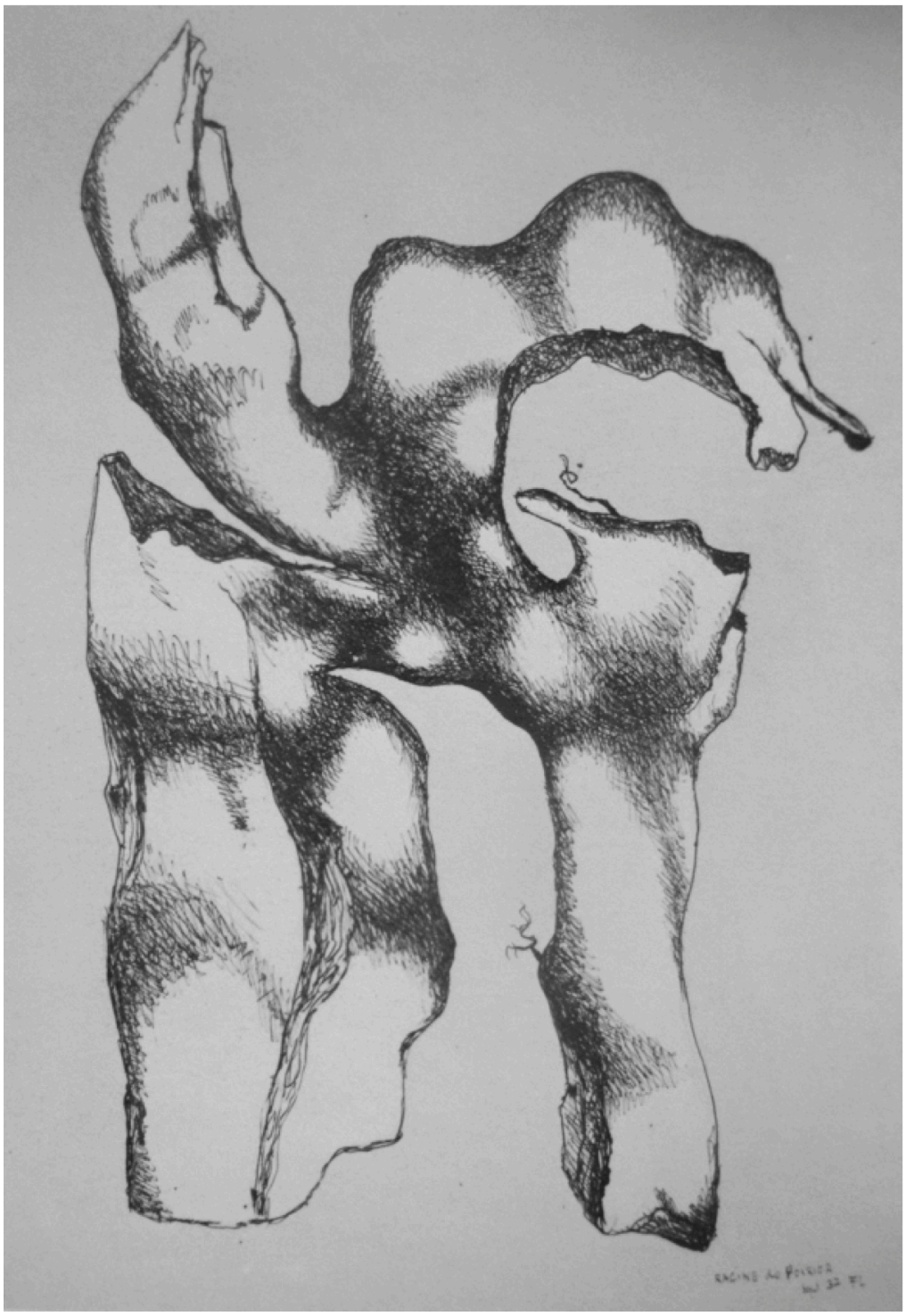

Figure 114. Fernand Léger, *Racine de poirier*, 1932

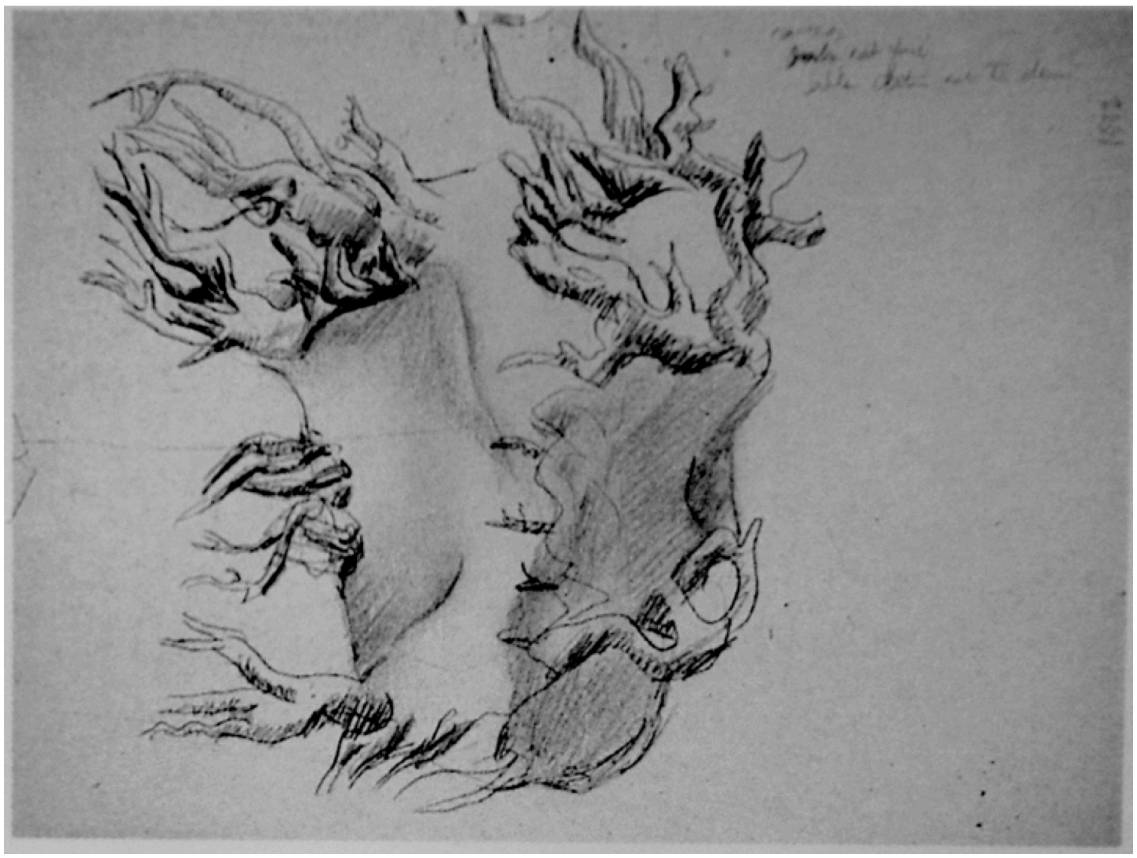

Figure 115. Le Corbusier, *Racines*, 1932

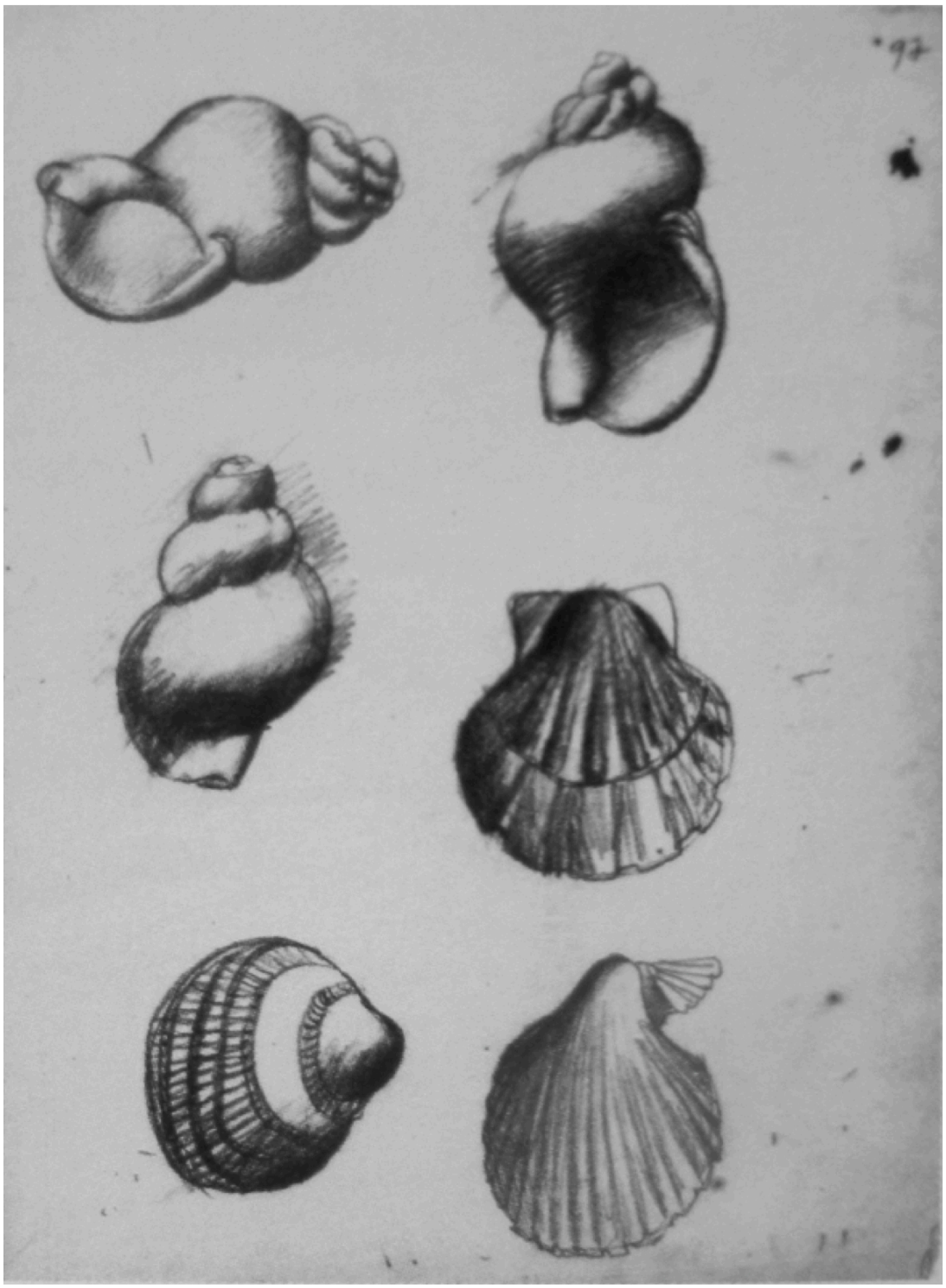

Figure 116. Le Corbusier, Study of shells, n.d.

Figure 117. Fernand Léger, *Vieux gants*, ca. 1930

PLATE 16. Also a woman's glove . . .
(SEE PAGE 56)

Figure 118. Photograph of Lise Deharme's bronzed glove printed in Andre Breton, *Nadja*, 1926

Figure 119. Jean Painlevé and Éli Lotar, *"De Gaulle" ou Pince de homard, Port-Blanc, Bretagne*, 1929

Figure 120. Fernand Léger, *Le pantalon*, 1933

Figure 121. Fernand Léger, *Composition aux deux perroquets*, 1935-39

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