

**Laying their own Track:
Provincial Cities and Urban Development in France,
1851-1918**

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the role of the railway station in the development and transformation of the provincial city in France in the second half of the nineteenth century, in terms of its effect on the relationship of provincial citizens to the French nation, and in terms of changes to the city itself. The railway station was a place in which ordinary Frenchmen encountered and actively participated in the imagined community of the nation. National officials used the station as a platform for mass politics; later, during World War I, it became a site of mass enthusiasm, and then of mass mourning. Meanwhile, urban improvement projects reoriented provincial cities on a new axis, stretching from station to the city center. The station came to represent the provincial city's unique modernity (distinct from that of Paris). Provincial travelers recognized the structures and orientations of other regions' cities as similar to their own.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
List of Illustrations	v
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: The Provincial Railway Station as a Stage for Mass Politics.....	9
Chapter 2: Urban Improvement and the Alteration of Urban Landscapes	41
Chapter 3: The Creation of a Common Urban Identity in Provincial France	76
Conclusions: The Transformation of the Provincial City.....	95
Appendix.....	102
Bibliography.....	114

List of Illustrations

Figure 1. H. Clout, “The Changing Rail Network of France.”	102
Figure 2. A. Le Blondel, “Lille: Rue de la Gare pendant la démolition en 1870.”.....	103
Figure 3. F. Roussel, "Projet d'amélioration de la gare du nord à Lille et d'annexion de la section de Fives, avec modification importance de l'ancienne ville."	104
Figure 4. J. Leterme, "Projet d'ouverture d'une rue entre la place du théâtre et la gare de voyageurs."	105
Figure 5. L. Michaux, "Projet de percement de la Rue de la Gare aboutissant à la Grand Place."	106
Figure 6. City of Lille, “Ville de Lille: Percement de la rue de la gare. Vue perspective du projet présenté par la ville.”	107
Figure 7. L. Gilquin, “Ville de Lille: Percement de la rue de la gare. Projet avec galerie saillante éclairée du dessus.”.....	107
Figure 8. A. Le Blondel, “Lille: La Rue de la Gare en 1878. ”	108
Figure 9. E.C., “Lille- La Gare.”.....	109
Figure 10. L.B., “Lille, La Gare.”	110
Figure 11. Lefebvre, “Lille, La Gare.”	110
Figure 12. P. Carlier, “Lille: Rue de la Gare, aujourd’hui rue Faidherbe boulevard.” ...	111
Figure 13. E. Boldoduc, “Lille: Démolition of the Rue de la Gare.”	112
Figure 14. E. Boldoduc, “Calendrier lillois: rue de la gare.”	113

Introduction

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, France experienced dramatic growth in the areas of transportation and communication thanks to the rapid spread of the railway system. The map in Figure 1 (see Appendix) reveals the state of French railway system in 1870 and 1890.¹ In 1870, there was already an excess of routes available to travelers in the French rail system. This new railway system included nearly every major French city of the period as well as a number of minor provincial towns.² Later maps, including the one from the 1890s shown here reveal the continued expansion of routes at the end of the century to accommodate an ever-increasing numbers of rail travelers.

Some accounts of the French railway have suggested that prior to 1871, the French railway system resembled a hub and spoke system, in which all routes led out across France from the sole hub of Paris. This line of thought is particularly popular among some historians of the Franco-Prussian war, who argue that France's defeat in the conflict was due to the inferiority of France's hub-and-spoke rail system against the webbed railway system of the Prussians in deploying troops to the front.³ Historians of

¹ H. D. Clout, *Themes in the Historical Geography of France* (New York: Academic Press, 1977), 71.

² References to the "provinces" and "provincial cities" in this text refer not to the historical French administrative unit, but to the Oxford Dictionary definition of "provincial": "of or concerning the regions outside the capital city of a country."

³ Allan Mitchell, *The great train race: railways and the Franco-German rivalry, 1815-1914* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000); Michael Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Invasion of France*

the railway system, in contrast, have taken a more measured view of the French railway system; for instance, David Harter has suggested that France's loss was due less to railway management or the layout of the system, and more due to military incompetence and the fact that "no clear railway policy had been developed beforehand. Thus the railways and military had no previous experience in how to work together."⁴ As the 1870 map shows, the idea that the idea that France lacked the ability to quickly send troops to the front because all routes led to Paris is patently false. Lyon and Dijon, as well as to some extent Nancy and Lille, were ideal hubs for the mobilization effort, located as they were on France's eastern coast with connections to southern, western, and northern provincial cities. For soldiers traveling from eastern France, Bordeaux and Rouen might have served as ideal points of deployment, as they not only acted as hubs for much of the surrounding countryside, they also connected directly to Dijon, Lyon, and Lille. That the French army decided to mobilize through Paris was therefore a choice and not a technical necessity.

As early as 1870, provincial cities like Rouen and Lyon had become regional hubs in their own right. Railway travelers in the later nineteenth century thus had a variety of routes to choose from, with no need to route through Paris. From Lyon alone, one could travel west to Geneva and Switzerland, south to the nearby Grenoble or St. Étienne, or further to Avignon and the Mediterranean coast, north to Dijon and New Orleans and from there west into Alsace-Lorraine or east to Nantes and the Atlantic coast without ever traveling to Paris. It is true that cities in northern France like Lille and Rouen possessed

1870–1871 (New York: Routledge, 2001); Geoffrey Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Conquest of France in 1870-1871* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁴ Jim Harter, *World railways of the nineteenth century: a pictorial history in Victorian engravings*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 140.

fewer routes before the war than after, and that the railway system was somewhat less developed in western and southern France than in the north and north east, but provincial cities throughout the nation were already acting as regional transfer points as early as the 1870s. By the 1880s and beyond, these provincial cities had become major hubs in the French railway system in their own right.

Historians have recognized that the development of the French rail system thoroughly transformed the French countryside, although its influence was concentrated mostly in urban areas. “Between 1866 and 1936,” the historian Eugen Weber wrote, “rural communities without a railway station in a zone 15 km on either side of the Paris-Lyon-Méditerranée line lost almost one-quarter of their population, while those with a station (excluding Paris) gained 1,645,373 inhabitants.”⁵ At the same time, Weber found, “the roads and rail lines...brought the isolated patches of the countryside out of their autarky-cultural as well as economic- into the market economy and the modern world.”⁶ For Weber, national circulation was central to the extension of an idea of French ‘nation’ throughout France. As Weber concluded, “The conjunction of secondary lines and of the roads built to serve them resulted in a crash program of national integration of unparalleled scope and effectiveness.”⁷

Theorists of nationalism and the nation state – Ernest Gellner and John Breuilly among them – have long argued that nationalism involves “the establishment of an anonymous, impersonal society, with mutually substitutable atomized individuals, held together above all by a shared culture of this kind,” and which broke down local

⁵ Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 206.

⁶ Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 206.

⁷ Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 206.

connections in favor of a new and universal high culture.⁸ While Weber agreed with the many theories of nation that see it as something created by the state and imposed on the people, he was more interested in determining how mobilization actually happened in practice.⁹ In *Peasants into Frenchmen*, “the transition from traditional local politics to modern national politics took place when individuals and groups shifted from indifference to participation because they perceived they were involved in the nation.”¹⁰

The idea that national communities “imagine” themselves is, of course, one most usually associated with another theorist of nationalism, Benedict Anderson. In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson concluded that the creation of the nation depended on the creation of a deep comradeship between individuals, one that extended beyond personal relationships to groups of people that have never met or even heard of each other, what he referred to as an “imagined community.” He placed print capitalism at the center of this process. For Anderson, print capitalism was significant because it “made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and relate to others, in profoundly new ways.”¹¹

Applying Anderson’s theory of the imagined nation is difficult, however, when one considers that literacy was still far from universal in late nineteenth century France.¹² In the absence of literate readers, the question becomes, then, how imagined communities emerged in the absence of widespread readership. The answer lies in new forms of mass politics, interacting with but not wholly defined by print media. As this thesis will argue,

⁸ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 57, 63.

⁹ Eugen Weber, *Peasants Into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 241. See also E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

¹⁰ Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 242.

¹¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 37.

¹² The Jules Ferry laws establishing universal free education were not established until 1881.

the railway station was integral to the spread of this new kind of politics. In order to exist, the imagined community of the French nation required Frenchmen to recognize their connections to each other, and the railway provided not only a physical connection between the national government and the French people, but also among the French people themselves.

Provincial cities, as hubs of the new railway system, bore the brunt of this transformation of the French countryside. Within those cities, the railway station came to dominate the urban landscape. This thesis therefore focuses on the role of the railway station in the development and transformation of the provincial city in the latter half of the nineteenth century, both internally, and in terms of the relationship of provincial urban French men and women to the rest of the France nation.

Chapter 1 will examine how the railway station acted as an important stage on which ordinary Frenchmen encountered, and learned to understand and accept, the changing political relationship of province and nation. From Louis Bonaparte's election through the Third Republic, when national officials visited provincial cities, they used the rail station as a platform for mass politics, as a way to reach and engage with the French people. In effect, the railway station provided a way for people to actively participate in the imagined community of the nation.

Chapter 2 looks at the transformation of one provincial city in particular (the northern city of Lille) as a result of various urban pressures, most centrally the appearance and expansion of the French railway system. Numerous provincial cities across France reoriented around the railway station in the latter half of the nineteenth century, most often building grand boulevards that connected the city's center to the

railway station, but also in projects to aggrandize the train station and its immediate surroundings. This reorientation was not only physical; however, it was also mental: Lille's railway station became a city monument in its own right, and the grand boulevard of the *Rue de la Gare* became a place rather than just a conduit for citizens and visitors to the city. Moreover, it was a place that represented the provincial city's *modernity*. The local photographers looked to create a vision of unproblematic modernity, even when the actual city is a mixture of old, new, and even newer elements. The railway station (and the related Rue de la Gare) became central in mental perceptions of the city as well as the city's physical layout. The perspectives/experiences of tourists reveal this transformation particularly well.

Chapter 3 takes this investigation of the extent of provincial urban transformation further by examining how provincial travelers perceived change in other French cities during this period. A new perception of difference had opened up within provincial France, a desire to distinguish between civilized/educated people and the peasants, and between an old, timeless France and a new France defined by its modernity. Meanwhile, the former cultural capitals of France's regions – full of distinctive local culture – were seen as increasingly alike, even interchangeable. This new urban identity was non-Parisian.

Studies on individual French cities have not been keen to write the comparative history of a common provincial urbanization, stressing commonalities as well as differences. The historians Keith Mann and Bill Sewell, for example, both published monographs of single provincial cities in the period under consideration, Lyon and

Marseille respectively.¹³ In their works, both historians engaged with the provincial city as sites of particular forms of industrial production, emphasizing the unique quality of the city they chose to examine. More general accounts of French history, meanwhile, have increasingly centered on consumption rather than production as the creator of social difference in nineteenth century. Mary Louise Roberts and Ellen Furlough provide ideal examples of consumption in France, although they have again focused on the spectacles and exhibits of Paris instead of those in the provincial cities.¹⁴ A more general approach to consumption in provincial cities, specifically the consumption of politics and the circulation of people and things within those cities, is therefore warranted.

Relatively little has been written on the effects of the railway on the provincial city, or on the provincial city at all for that matter.¹⁵ One notable exception is John Merriman, whose *French Cities in the Nineteenth Century* examined the relationship of the provincial French city to popular politics, industrialization, and conceptions of urban space. Merriman recognized the importance of the provincial city in understanding the

¹³ William H. Sewell, *Structure and Mobility: The Men and Women of Marseille, 1820-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Keith Mann, *Forging Political Identity: Silk and Metal Workers in Lyon, France, 1900-1939* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010).

¹⁴ Mary Louise Roberts, "Gender, Consumption, and Commodity Culture," *The American Historical Review* 103, no. 3 (1998): 817; Ellen Furlough, *Consumer Cooperation in France: The Politics of Consumption, 1834-1930*. (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

¹⁵ The effect of the railway station in the development of the city has, however, been somewhat explored within the wider European context; see Ralf Roth and Marie-Noëlle Polino, *The city and the railway in Europe* (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2003); Luca Bertolini and Tejo Spit, *Cities on Rails the Redevelopment of Railway Station Areas* (London: Routledge, 1998). Studies of the city in nineteenth century France have tended to concentrate overwhelmingly on Paris: see Colin Jones, *Paris: Biography of a City* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2005), David P. Jordan, *Transforming Paris: The Life and Labors of Baron Haussmann* (New York: Free Press, 1995), Francois Loyer, *Paris: Nineteenth Century: Architecture and Urbanism*, trans. Charles Lynn Clark (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988), Pierre Pinon, *Paris: biographie d'une capitale* (Paris: Hazan, 1999); Other works on non-governmental city planning include Nicholas Papayanis, *Planning Paris before Haussmann* (Baltimore MD: John Hopkins UP, 2004); Karen Bowie, ed., *La Modernité avant Haussmann: formes de l'espace urbain à Paris, 1801-1853* (Paris: Éditions Recherches, 2001); Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-siècle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); and Ralph Kingston, "Capitalism in the Streets: Paris Shopkeepers, *Passages Couvertes*, and the Production of the Early Nineteenth Century City." *Radical History Review* 114 (2012): 39-65.

“large process of social change” in the French political nation, but argued that theories on the French nation must also “evoke the nineteenth-century city, showing how it was organized and how it worked, bringing to life the individual and collective experiences of the people who lived there,” an act which could only be undertaken by examining cities outside the capital. Although Merriman recognized the importance of individual conceptions of the city in his analysis, however, his focus was primarily on the influence of cultural politics in the development of the city; the railway was all but absent from his work. The same can be said of William Cohen, whose *Urban Government and the Rise of the French City* recognized the critical problems faced by the provincial city in the second half of the nineteenth century. Although Cohen recognized the railway system as one of many factors in the growth and transformation of the provincial city, like Merriman he gave the railway only an ancillary role. This is perhaps because the topics of “the railway” and “the city” have often been taken as distinct topics; after all, the railway is not *in* the city. The place of the railway station in the transformation and development of the provincial city has been severely under-recognized, at least in the French case.¹⁶

¹⁶ Much more can be said about the centrality of the railway in the development and alteration of British provincial cities. Jack Simmons’ *The Railway in Town in Country 1830-1914* (London: David and Charles, 1986) provides an excellent synopsis of the physical changes undertaken in the city because of the railway, including the destruction of slums and lower-class housing to provide the train with an approach to stations located in the city center. Historians have written extensively about the effect of the railway on British provincial cities, including John Kellett, *The Impact of Railways on the Victorian City* (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1969); Jim Harter, *World Railways of the Nineteenth Century: A Pictorial History in Victorian Engravings* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005); and Michael Freeman, *Railways and Victorian Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University, 1999). These accounts primarily examine the economic and social costs of the railway upon the city itself rather than its citizens.

Chapter 1: The Provincial Railway Station as a Stage for Mass Politics

On the afternoon of 26th August 1867, Théophile Denis stood on the platform of the Lille train station. An experienced writer for the *Monitor universel*, the official newspaper of the French government, Denis could not believe his luck. Usually tasked with reporting on education and local affairs, his current assignment was much grander. His job was to join the imperial retinue as it traveled by train throughout northeast France, recording the emperor Louis-Napoleon's reception by the local officials and citizens of the region for publication. Having travelled from Paris and through Douai, the imperial train arrived in Lille on the afternoon of the 26th, and was greeted on the platform by the local authorities of the city. Denis first reported on a short ceremony on the platform, attended only by the mayor, the city council, their families, and the imperial retinue. After the mayor gave a short speech and provided the emperor with the keys to the city, several young women presented the emperor and empress with bouquets of flowers. Once this intimate ceremony was over, Denis and the rest of the Imperial party departed from the train station to travel by car to the *Préfecture*. From station and Préfecture, past banquet hall and cathedral, factories and charity hospitals, there was always the crowd, always the "incessant cries of Long Live the Emperor! Long Live the

Empress!”¹⁷ Denis seemed surprised by the massive turnout of the citizens of the provinces to see the emperor, remarking that although the route from the station to the prefect’s residence was over two kilometers long, “there was little space to put all of the people that came to represent the six hundred communes of this rich department.”¹⁸

“Urban citizens and villagers, workers in large factories, companies of firefighters, of sharpshooters, archers and crossbowmen, miners in work clothes, etc., form a compact hedge...The people explode with joy and enthusiasm pushed to extreme limits.”¹⁹ Although Louis-Napoleon was a national leader, Denis’s description of the crowd as a hedge rather than an urban wall or barrier reveals that for him the moment was fundamentally one of the provinces. This chapter will argue that the train station was central to the experience of mass politics in the provinces in the late nineteenth century, because it was a place where the provincial citizen encountered the national. Louis’s visit to Lille was one manifestation of an evolving relationship of local and national in the latter half of the nineteenth century. It, and similar events, offered important moments of connection between the “intimate, immediate and real” world of provincial citizens and the “distant, abstract” world of the “nation.”²⁰

¹⁷ Théophile Denis, *Voyage de leurs majestés impériales dans le nord de la France* (Douai: L. Crépin, 1867), 10: « et rendant à tout le monde le sommeil impossible par leurs cris incessants de: Vive l'Empereur! Vive l'Impératrice! »

¹⁸ Théophile Denis, *Voyage de leurs majestés impériales dans le nord de la France*, 8: « Cependant l'espace manque pour placer toutes les députations qui sont venues représenter les six cents communes de ce riche département. »

¹⁹ Théophile Denis, *Voyage de leurs majestés impériales dans le nord de la France*, 8-9: « Les municipalités urbaines et villageoises, les ouvriers des grandes usines, les compagnies des sapeurs-pompier, de francs-tireurs, d'archers et d'arbalétriers, les mineurs en tenue de travail, etc., forment une haie compacte...La population fait éclater une joie et un enthousiasme poussés aux dernières limites. »

²⁰ Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 4. Recognition of the importance of the local in the development of nationalism (and modernity for that matter) is relatively rare in the French case. Stéphane Gerson, in *The Pride of Place* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 2, is a major exception to this rule, suggesting “the local and modernity (national) were interlaced rather than inimical” in the early nineteenth century. See also Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, Michael G. Müller, and Stuart

Officially, the emperor was in northeast France to celebrate the bicentennial anniversary of the region's annexation. The event was more than a celebration; however, it was a chance for Louis-Napoleon to increase the visibility of his majesty in the provinces. Louis-Napoleon was the first French president, as well as the first head of state elected after the institution of universal suffrage in France in 1848. Despite not having the support of the National Assembly, he received over 70% of the popular vote.²¹ Even after he became emperor via a coup in 1851, he continued to recognize the value of the support of provincial citizens; he recognized the necessity of popular support in avoiding the possibility of coup or revolution. He therefore traveled extensively throughout the French provinces between his election in 1848 and his abdication in 1871, regularly participating in local ceremonies and parades in order to establish and cement popular support for his rule. Matthew Truesdell suggests that Louis-Napoleon was the first politician to recognize the importance of mass public support in maintaining national political power. Louis-Napoleon's power depended on his ability to develop and refine the use of "public spectacle as a powerful instrument for dealing with a political system based on universal male suffrage and a society that put ever more trust in the value of popular opinion."²² Holding the support of the people became even more critical for the

Woolf, *Regional and National Identities in Europe in the XIXth and XXth Centuries* (The Hague: Kluwer, 1998), as well as Caroline Ford, *Creating the Nation in Provincial France: Religion and Political Identity in Brittany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). Apart from these important works, analyses of the connection between the local and the national in the French case remain sparse; German works like Confino's *The Nation as Local Metaphor* and Celia Applegate, *A nation of provincials: The German idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) act as useful intermediaries.

²¹ Matthew Truesdell, *Spectacular Politics: Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte and the Fête impériale, 1849-1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3. As Truesdell asserted, "the bulk of Louis-Napoleon's support came from rural areas. Throughout the Second Empire, it should be noted, France remained a predominantly rural country. With almost 70 percent of the population in 1866 still living in rural areas, it is clear that those areas would have greater political weight than urban areas in a system of universal suffrage" (159).

²² Matthew Truesdell, *Spectacular Politics*, 3.

presidents of the Third Republic, as their continued political power depended on their reelection.

Historians have written much about Napoleon's popular appeal. Robert Tombs has argued that Louis-Napoleon was the first to initiate the personalized politics which encouraged public support in his cultivation of the image of the "peasants' emperor." Within this imagery, the French peasantry championed Louis-Napoleon not only because he brought agricultural prosperity to the provinces in the 1850s and 1860s, but also because he protected them from the nobility, the Church, and urban upheaval.²³ While agreeing with Tombs that popular politics came into full force under Louis-Napoleon, Sudhir Hazareesingh has suggested that public anger among the peasantry after Napoleon Bonaparte's abdication was a clear signifier of the existence of popular politics in France as early as 1815. The French people supported Louis-Napoleon not because of his relation to the elder Napoleon and the so-called cult of Napoleon, but because Louis-Napoleon was able to organize a political dimension for the cult. This politicization established him as the living heir of the ideologies of Napoleon and of the French Revolution; "like Napoleon before him, he symbolized the Revolutionary principles of equality, and the proletarian defiance of the old aristocracy."²⁴ Whatever advantage Louis-Napoleon possessed in his unique ability to key into popular support for the first Napoleon, however, his hold on power still depended on whether he could successfully *use* this cult to mobilize the provincial citizens of France.

As Denis's account tells us, and as this paper will argue, Louis-Napoleon's visit to Lille was an early example not just of popular politics but also of mass politics in the

²³ Robert Tombs, *France 1814-1914* (London: Longman, 1996), 287.

²⁴ Sudhir Hazareesingh, *The Legend of Napoleon* (London: Granta Books, 2005), 217.

provincial town. No single universal definition of “mass politics” currently exists. Ideology has often driven historians’ understanding of the political meaning of mass politics (particularly in terms of its relationship to the rise of fascism in the twentieth century). For George Mosse, mass politics occurred when “the chaotic crowd of the ‘people’ became a mass movement which shared a belief in popular unity through a national mystique. The new politics provided an objectification of the general will; it transformed political action into a drama supposedly shared by the people themselves.”²⁵ Historians of France, like Patrick Hutton and James Lehning, have similarly located the antecedents of twentieth-century mass politics in the rise of right-wing populist *Boulangisme* in the late nineteenth century. For Hutton, mass politics was a new form of political organization that involved “integrating the ‘people’ into the political process” via rallies and populist celebrations.²⁶ Lehning likewise found that “the ‘spectacular politics’ that Boulangism practiced thus connected characteristics of republican political culture with the mass culture that was beginning to mark entertainment and consumption.”²⁷

Placing the advent of mass politics within the right-wing movement of Boulangism in 1888 by necessity minimizes the importance of similar left-wing popular events undertaken by Republicans in the 1870s and 1880s. Traditionally, historians have suggested that while right-wing politics, like Boulangism, became populist in the 1880s, left-wing politics in the early twentieth century did not in the same way. They remained

²⁵ George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (New York, H. Fertig, 1975), 1-2.

²⁶ Patrick H. Hutton, "Popular Boulangism and the Advent of Mass Politics in France, 1886-90," *Journal of Contemporary History* 11 (1976): 85-106.

²⁷ James Lehning, *To Be a Citizen: The Political Culture of the Early French Third Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 157.

grounded in local groups that were locally oriented (in the workplace, the neighborhood café, and so forth). Nevertheless, Hutton's study of the Blanquists in the 1870s and 1880s defined mass politics as "the efforts of political leaders to integrate vast numbers of people into political parties by providing them with a fuller sense of participation in the political process."²⁸ For Hutton, the "ceremonies of anniversary remembrance" – in particular, Blanquist funeral ceremonies – constituted mass politics. Philip Nord similarly concluded that the public funeral ceremonies organized by the Republicans "invited the nation to participate in a range of activities that encouraged beliefs and habits supportive of a democratic public life."²⁹ Funeral ceremonies were not the only mass political events undertaken by the left in this period, as Lehning recognized in *To Be A Citizen*. Lehning examined the political career of Louise Michel, a prominent member of the French labor movement and frequent speaker on political issues, and concluded that "her appearances at public meetings, and her calls to working men and women to strive for their own liberation through strikes and other public activities, she advocated a greatly enlarged public space in French political culture."³⁰ Thus mass politics existed as both a left-wing and a right-wing phenomenon in late nineteenth century France.

Left-wing or right-wing, however, all of these examples of "mass politics" in the second half of the nineteenth century refer to mass politics *in practice* – as rallies, marches, strikes and work stoppages, mass boycotts, public lectures and political events. Public spectacles of this sort, as Matthew Truesdell has noted, were "a powerful

²⁸ Patrick H. Hutton, *The Cult of the Revolutionary Tradition: The Blanquists in French Politics, 1864-1893* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 12.

²⁹ Philip G. Nord, *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995), 191.

³⁰ James R. Lehning, *To Be a Citizen: The Political Culture of the Early French Third Republic*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 96-97.

instrument for dealing with a political system based on universal male suffrage and a society that put ever more trust in the value of popular opinion.”³¹ However, although the literature on Boulangism in particular has stressed the importance of the “powerful instrument” on the organization of rallies and their political import in the period, it is important to remember that, to be successful mass politics required the active involvement of the masses in political events. Why did the “masses” attend, and what did they see at these events? What did such events mean for those who participated in them?

Seeing Louis-Napoleon’s entry into Lille as an episode of mass politics therefore requires two important reconsiderations of how historians usually think about mass politics in France. Critiquing radical manifestations of mass politics in the period, the often-referenced 19th century psychologist Gustave Le Bon launched a scathing critique of the politics of crowds: “among the special characteristics of crowds there are several- such as impulsiveness, irritability, incapacity to reason, the absence of judgment, and of the critical spirit, the exaggeration of the sentiments, and others besides- which are almost always observed in beings belonging to inferior forms of evolution- women, savages, and children, for instance.”³² Following Le Bon, modern historians have also treated nineteenth century crowds with extreme skepticism, for instance in their accounts of the rise of Boulangism and Socialist movements after the implementation of universal

³¹ Matthew Truesdell, *Spectacular Politics: Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte and the Fête Impériale 1849-1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3.

³² Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (New York: Viking Press, 1960), 31, 33, 35-36. It should be noted that although Le Bon believed that “the crowd is always intellectually inferior to the isolated individual, but that, from the point of view of feelings and of the acts these feelings provoke, the crowd may, according to circumstances, be better or worse than the individual. All depends on the nature of the suggestion to which the crowd is exposed.”

male suffrage in France in 1848.³³ Le Bon saw the crowd as dangerous, as a threat to rationality and individual thought. The crowds that gathered to welcome Louis-Napoleon tell a different story, however. Denis repeatedly described the crowds he encountered in emotional terms. At one point, he exclaimed that the empress “was greeted by the cheers of a huge crowd. Most workers in this area had abandoned their household to be found on the passage of the Sovereign. How many women have we seen the face bathed in tears and heart oppressed to one that greeted them with this infinite grace that subjugates all hearts!”³⁴ Denis’ account, written for the official government newspaper, the *Moniteur universel*, reveals that crowds were not always seen as troublesome or dangerous by national officials.

To locate the rise of mass politics in the French provinces in the 1850s is also a relatively controversial statement. Some historians have dated the advent of mass politics in the provinces much later. Peter Jones, for example, argued that the solidification of mass politics first occurred during the Third Republic, thanks to the efforts of republican politicians in the 1880s. Eugen Weber was similarly of the opinion that the involvement of provincial Frenchmen in national politics did not occur until at least the 1870s, and well into the 1880s in many places. This timing has been called into question by other historians of politics in the French provinces, including Alain Corbin, Roger Price, and Maurice Agulhon, all of whom date the politicization of the provincial towns much earlier, to the Second Republic and even before. However, the forms of political

³³ Jaap Van Ginneken, *Crowds, Psychology, and Politics, 1871-1899* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); also Robert Nye, *The Origins of Crowd Psychology: Gustave Le Bon and the crisis of mass democracy in the Third Republic* (London: Sage, 1975).

³⁴Théophile Denis, *Voyage de leurs majestés impériales dans le nord de la France*, 12-13: « Elle a été saluée par les acclamations d'une foule immense. La plupart des ouvrières de ce quartier avaient abandonné leur ménage, pour se trouver sur le passage de la Souveraine. Combien de ces femmes avons-nous vues le visage inondé de larmes et le cœur oppressé devant Celle qui les saluait avec celte grâce infinie qui subjugue tous les cœurs ! »

mobilization described by those historians differ significantly, as Eugen Weber has noted, from the mass movements of the later century. What matters is not the overall *presence* of national politics in the French provinces but the *scale* of human involvement in those politics.³⁵

For Weber, in order to understand the spread of mass politics into the provinces, we must first acknowledge the significant role played by individual political figures: he argued that “personalized politics are the introductory stage of modern politics,” because the French peasantry needed a “recognizably symbolic figure” in order to interact effectively with politics at the national level.³⁶ In addition, Weber asserted, “the transition from traditional local politics to modern national politics took place when individuals and groups shifted from indifference to participation because they perceived they were involved in the nation.”³⁷ For Jones also, the Third Republic’s success in gaining the attention of the masses was due to the encroachment of state in people’s everyday lives, or, as he put it, the regime’s ability “to wield the carrot as well as the stick.” The Third Republic provided the country dwellers with economic incentives in the form of official employment and building roads and railways, in addition to introducing compulsory education across France to encourage participation in national politics.³⁸

Yet arguably, these measures were not enough to bring mass politics to the provincial city. Such an outcome required the transformation of the regional city itself,

³⁵ Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 240.

³⁶ Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 256. John Breuilly also briefly discusses personalized politics, concluding, “it was now possible for elements within the political community to go beyond their previous forms of opposition and claim to enforce the needs and interests of ‘society’ upon an unrepresentative state”: John Breuilly, “Nationalism and the State,” in Philip Spencer and Howard Wollman, eds. *Nations and Nationalism: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 66.

³⁷ Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 242.

³⁸ P.M. Jones, *Politics and Rural Society: The Southern Massif Central c. 1750-1880* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 296.

and the provincial train station was one space in which this transformation can be observed. On the occasion of the visit of the French emperor Louis-Napoleon, the city of Lille was transformed. Decorative trees and banners were put up by the local government. Thousands of urban and rural citizens flocked to the train station and the surrounding area for a chance to see the emperor. Standing in the large square in front of the station and along the major streets that were marked as his route by official decorations, citizens looked towards the modest train station building waved flags, and strained to hear the sound of the train arriving over the noise of the crowd.³⁹ Excitement rose and radiated out from the train station and through the city, reaching a crescendo when Louis-Napoleon, his retinue, and the municipal officials exited the train station and began to move along the designated route, passing the excited masses on their way to the *Préfecture*. Despite the lack of personal contact between emperor and citizen, enthusiasm for the emperor remained high as he passed through the gathered crowd. The area around the Lille railway station became a place for the citizens of Lille to catch a glimpse of this “recognizably symbolic figure.” Mass politics had arrived in provincial France, and the railway station was the platform on which it was performed.

The Railway Station as a Public Space

On 3 April, 1890, Charles Floquet, the President of the National Chamber of Deputies and the former President of the French Republic, traveled by train to Arcachon, a town in Southwest France, for a vacation with his wife. This was not an official visit. Floquet, although a national political figure, was no longer the head of state. The morning

³⁹ Auguste Descamps, “Fil électrique,” label, 1860, Bibliothèque municipale de Lille, France, 43662-702, http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/etiquettes_de_fil_02/43662_0702 (accessed October 23, 2012).

of his arrival, local citizens gathered in the flat, dusty courtyard of the station and along the path leading to the city. They had learned of the visit from local newspapers, conversations with neighbors and friends, and the putting up of elaborate decorations raised by city officials along the route Floquet would travel while in Arcachon. An hour before the train arrived, the noise and activity of the crowd around the station was already immense, and the gathered citizens only became more restless as time went on. The local newspapers had announced only that Floquet and his wife would arrive on the train from Bordeaux, the capital of the department, on Thursday morning. The train entered Arcachon 19 minutes late, the noise and steam from the train's engine announcing its arrival to the gathered citizens.

The proliferation of provincial train stations had brought with it a new relationship between the French sovereign and provincial citizens. Prior to the election of Louis-Napoleon, heads of state only rarely traveled throughout the provinces, and such travel typically consisted of traveling by horse-drawn carriage to meet important foreign dignitaries or moving between royal estates. When the French head of state did go to a provincial city, his stay was at best loosely scheduled, often very brief, and typically only involved staying overnight at the town's inn after briefly greeting whatever local dignitaries at the town hall.⁴⁰ Royal progresses had become increasingly uncommon in the late seventeenth and in the eighteenth century. When, in 1786, Louis XVI travelled to

⁴⁰ Mack P. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Such royal progresses, as they were known, were typically undertaken by French sovereigns to shore up political and religious support. For example, in 1564, Charles IX and his mother, Catherine de Medici, undertook a two-year "grand voyage de France" after the passing of the edict of Amboise, a law that guaranteed religious freedom to French Huguenots. Their progress included visiting all *parlements* that had opposed the Edict of Amboise, forcing registration of the law in those places, as well as to win over "provincial nobles...who could serve as a bulwark against the Guise and Bourbon factions that dominated the first civil war" (59). Between Louis XIV and Louis XVI, such progresses were stopped altogether, and were only briefly resumed before the French Revolution.

Cherbourg to inspect the naval harbor works there, it was a highly unusual event.⁴¹ While visiting the nearby town of Caen, Louis interacted directly with his subjects, even allowing a woman to kiss him “like a father.”⁴² The sovereign’s interaction with his subjects emphasized paternalism and the sacred body of the king. Both Louis-Napoleon’s visits to the provinces in the 1860s and Floquet’s visit to Arcachon in 1890 were significantly different, not only because of the renewed frequency with which heads of state were travelling to meet ordinary Frenchmen and women, but because the meaning of seeing the sovereign, and of being a part of the event, had changed. The events of the late nineteenth century were simultaneously more inclusive, involving more of the townspeople, and less personal. Louis Napoleon or Floquet saw no need to deliver alms to the poor, nor to include anyone but local political leaders in their procession.

Despite the obviousness of the train’s approach, the crowd was not sure that Floquet had actually arrived with the train until almost an hour later. Kept out of the train station itself, the citizens of Arcachon had to wait until Floquet exited the station to see that he was indeed in their city. Even then, Floquet did not stay in the station’s courtyard to interact with the gathered crowd, but immediately moved to the waiting cars to travel to a banquet held in his honor. Low-level city workers like customs officials and firemen lined the route from the station entrance to the waiting cars, as well as along the route to the banquet, creating a barrier between the dignitaries and the common citizens of the city. The area around the train station lacked any raised areas or multi-story buildings, making it even more difficult for the gathered citizens to see Floquet and his party.

⁴¹ Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1989), 57-58.

⁴² Jeffrey Merrick, “The Body Politics of French Absolutism,” in Sara Melzer and Kathryn Norberg, eds., *From the Royal to the Republican Body: Incorporating the Political in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 17-18.

Although officials still excluded local citizens from participating in the welcoming ceremony inside the train station, the people still knew where and when the politician would enter the city. The large squares and courtyards that fronted provincial railway stations were easily transformed into commodious public spaces in which national political figures and citizen could meet in numbers unimaginable in earlier periods. Local newspapers reveal the identification of the train station as the primary point of contact for the public and national officials. In Arcachon, the first column of the first page of the 29 March 1890 edition of *La vigie Arcachon* publicized the fact that “Mr. and Mrs. Floquet will arrive Thursday on the morning express.” The announcement also encouraged “the people of Arcachon and especially those who are near the station, to wear the national colors in the morning on Thursday” to celebrate the arrival of their illustrious visitor.⁴³ The arrival of the head of state at the local train station was therefore an event deliberately open to the masses. Station courtyards and squares could hold hundreds of people, and the boulevards leading from the station thousands more, turning the arrival of the head of state into a popular political festival. In Lille, the energy of the gathered people had overwhelmed Denis. “We cannot paint the indescribable enthusiasm,” he wrote, “of a people happy to greet loved monarchs with such touching protestations of loyalty and respectful affection, as also those aspects that present a crowd dominated by strong feelings: our words would lessen its impact.”⁴⁴ Denis also described

⁴³ *La vigie Arcachon*, March 29, 1890, 1: « M. et Mme Floquet arriveront jeudi par l’express du matin, » « nous espérons que pour fêter notre illustre visiteur, les habitants d’Arcachon et en particulier ceux qui avoisinent la gare, arboreront les couleurs nationales dans la matinée de jeudi. »

⁴⁴ Denis, *Voyage de leurs majestés impériales dans le nord de la France*, 7: « Nous ne peindrons pas ce qui est indescriptible, comme cet enthousiasme d’une population heureuse de saluer des Souverains aimés, comme ces touchantes protestations de fidélité et de respectueuse affection, comme aussi ces aspects particuliers que présente une foule dominée par de fortes sensations: nos expressions amoindrieraient ces côtés de la fête. »

the railway station as a public gathering space for the “entire rural population of the province” to witness and celebrate the arrival of the Emperor and Empress.⁴⁵

As such visits became regular occurrences by the end of the nineteenth century, the station became a de facto point of encounter, a stage on which politicians could stand and present themselves to the provincial public. This new relationship is also present in President Félix Faure’s visit to the city of Nantes in 1897. Upon his arrival in Nantes, Faure was greeted by “a huge crowd (that) pressed on the passage of the President and continued to cry, “Long live Félix Faure! Long Live the Republic!”⁴⁶ The appearance of the local railway station thus allowed *many* more people to participate in a relationship with the French head of state than was the norm before such a space existed. And, even though there was little direct engagement between local citizens and the national politicians who visited the provinces, citizens at the station would still gather to see those figures, to soak in the pomp and circumstance of the event, or just to experience the excitement of the crowd.

Even before the arrival of the dignitary, however, the railway station was the center of attention, and of active local participation. The day before Floquet’s arrival in Arcachon, a group of workers led by Monsieur Deneux, the Works Director of the City Council, transformed the city and the station for the occasion. Hired by the municipal government, this team of workers spent the day “appropriating and installing poles, banners, flags, and triumphal arches” at the station and all along the route Floquet would

⁴⁵ Denis, *Voyage de leurs majestés impériales dans le nord de la France*, 15: « Toute la population rural de l’arrondissement s’était jetée dans le chef-lieu... »

⁴⁶ E. Auclaire, *Voyage de M. président de la république en Vendée: avril 1897* (Moulins: E. Auclaire, 1897), 8: « Pendant le long trajet de la gare a la préfecture, une foule immense, que se presse sur le passage du Président, ne cesse de pousser le cri de: « Vive Felix Faure ! Vive la République ! »

travel while in Arcachon.⁴⁷ The railway station itself received extra attention, complete with a “triumphal arch of greenery, with the crest of the arms of Arcachon, flags,” and other decorative features.⁴⁸ In addition to the activities that took place at the station on the day of the arrival of national officials, the ceremonial flags and decorative trees erected for the occasion communicated to the masses the ceremonial significance of such events for the city.

In many cities, the visit of national public figures such as Floquet or Louis-Napoleon constituted a holiday for local citizens. Floquet’s visit to Arcachon took place on the morning of Thursday, a time when people should have been at work, and yet they were not. One might argue that a morning off was not such an issue because Arcachon’s key industries, fishing and tourism, were flexible enough to allow people to take the day off to attend the ceremony.⁴⁹ By the 1890s, however, both of these trades were increasingly industrial in nature, with large fishing crews and modern developed hotels replacing individual fishermen and innkeepers. Even if the work life of the Arcachonnais was flexible enough to allow them to miss work for Floquet’s arrival, workers still had to balance fiscal concerns against taking holidays, making the large attendance at Floquet’s arrival even more significant. The mayor of Arcachon signed the advertisement in *La vigie Arcachon* that announced Floquet’s visit and encouraged citizens to attend,

⁴⁷ *Arcachon-saison: Journal des étrangers*, April 5, 1890, 2: « commençait les travaux d'appropriation et installait les mâts, oriflammes, drapeaux et arcs de triomphe, depuis le gare et sur tout le parcours que devaient suivre les voitures conduisant M. Floquet et sa suite. »

⁴⁸ *Arcachon-saison, Journal des étrangers*, April 5, 1890, 2: « l'entree de la gare avait ete arrangee avec un soin et un gout particulier. Un arc de triomphe de verdure, avec écussons aux armes d'Arcachon, drapeaux, filets, patins de parc, avirons. »

⁴⁹ For an in-depth study of Arcachon’s development over the course of the nineteenth century, see Alice Garner, *A Shifting Shore: Locals, Outsiders, and the Transformation of a French Fishing Town, 1823-2000* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005).

suggesting that municipal officials acknowledged the event as a local holiday.⁵⁰ Louis-Napoleon encountered a similar situation during his visit to Lille. In addition to the villagers, urban citizens, and miners that formed the hedge leading from the station, the emperor and empress often found “themselves in the middle of the industrial population, mostly hardworking, and able to gather the true expression and without mixed feelings.”⁵¹ Although Louis-Napoleon traveled to the city on a Monday when citizens should have been at work, local officials viewed his appearance in the city as so monumental that they turned it into a local holiday to allow and encourage participation.

The noise of the crowd itself also reinforced the political significance of the event for individuals within it. On the morning of Floquet’s arrival, the Gendarmerie, a local military force created for policing civilian populations, arrived at the packed square in front of the station to a chorus of bugles and drums and in full uniform and battle formation shortly before the train was scheduled to arrive. They were joined in this procession by members of the *Société de gymnastique*, a local athletics club, and the *Bataillon scolaire*, a military unit from the local school.⁵² Standing amongst the crowd during the Floquet’s or Louis-Napoleon’s arrival would have been quite intense, with bugles, drums, and voices covering the entire space in front of the station. When the train arrived, a local band played the national anthem. Thus Floquet’s visit was to some extent an entertaining show for the people of Arcachon. The lack of direct auditory input from

⁵⁰ *La Vigie d’Arcachon: Journal des intérêts du littoral*, April 3, 1890, 1.

⁵¹ Denis, *Voyage de leurs majestés impériales dans le nord de la France*, 10: « Aujourd’hui, nous le répétons, Leurs Majestés appartenaient complètement aux Lillois. Elles allaient se trouver au milieu de cette population industrielle, essentiellement travailleuse, et pouvoir recueillir l’expression vraie et sans mélange de ses sentiments. »

⁵² *Arcachon-saison: Journal des étrangers*, April 5, 1890, 2. *Sociétés de gymnastique* and *bataillons scolaires* proliferated across France in the 1880s and 1890s ; as local participatory organizations, they served an important political and social role in French society.

the visiting politicians in the way of speeches or personal conversation with the crowd reinforced the spontaneity of the formation of mass politics in the provinces.

The day was defined not only by what people could see, then, but also the range of things they could hear: the noise of the crowd, the band, the shouldering of arms, and of course, the train chugging into the station. The idea of sound acting as a reinforcement to political ideas is not a new concept. Mark Smith has suggested that in the nineteenth century, “sound increasingly mediated and helped inform ideas about class, identity, and nationalism.”⁵³ Such aural stimuli in this case include the playing of the national anthem in Lille, Arcachon, and elsewhere. For Smith, “Hearing, listening, sounds, noises, aurality generally, were not simply peripheral to modernity, existing on the outskirts, but, rather, deeply implicated in its daily elaboration.”⁵⁴

One of the sounds calling out the Arcachonnais to greet Floquet had already a well-established timbre. Alain Corbin’s *Village Bells* has demonstrated that the attachment to the regular sound of church bells in the provinces remained strong in the century leading up to the Third Republic. Across France, the bell acted as a “symbol of the identity and cohesion for the community,” one which guided the rhythms of village life and directed collective modes of behavior. Local officials often used bells to wake the city, regiment local time, announce the opening of the market, or announce the arrival of the tax collector, among other reasons.⁵⁵ In Arcachon, when the local officials received telegraphed word that the train had left La Teste, a nearby village on the route between Bordeaux and Arcachon, they also used bells. They rang the station bell to inform the crowd of Floquet’s imminent arrival.

⁵³ Mark Smith, *Sensing the Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 48.

⁵⁴ Smith, *Sensing the Past*, 57.

⁵⁵ Alain Corbin, *Village Bells* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), xi, 287-288.

The use of the bell to send a message to the crowd was significant. When the gathered citizens heard the station bell ringing, the crowd cheered and settled slightly, suggesting that they possessed a shared understanding that the ringing of the bell meant that the train was about to arrive at the station. In other cities, church bells took on the function of announcing politicians' train-station arrival. On the morning that President Faure was due to arrive in La Roche-sur-Yon in 1897, for instance, "rural people, awakened by the chorus of church bells throughout the city, gathered around the train station as well as the route that Faure would later take on his way to the city banquet" from the train station.⁵⁶ In both cases, local officials used bells to encourage attendance at the political event. Modern national meanings merged with traditional symbolism. Local officials attempted to plug new political ideas into the traditional emotions and identities projected by the bells onto provincial society.⁵⁷

In Arcachon, a local band played the French national anthem, the Marseillaise, as the train pulled into the station. The Marseillaise also greeted President Faure upon his arrival in Nantes, although in this case the band was from the local 93rd regiment rather than civilian musicians. The fact that local rather than national musicians were responsible for the playing of the anthem at the arrival of a national figure reveals the

⁵⁶ E. Auclair, *Voyage de M. le président de la république en Vendée*, 7: « Le cérémonial de l'arrivée du Président est immuable dans toutes les villes. Il se déroule avec la même solennité... les rues, les places, les carrefours, pavés en abondance présentent la plus vive animation. »

⁵⁷ Nearly all rail stations possessed some form of timekeeping, either in the form of a bell or clock tower; such devices also served to unite villages and cities across France by placing them on standardized time; now people in Arcachon knew they were on the same time as people in Bordeaux, Lille, and other cities across France. Wolfgang Schivelbusch engaged with the nationalizing effect of time directly in *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980). He found that the regular traffic of the railway required the standardization of time across France, a change that in turn deprived villages and citizens of their local time. On the debate on the standardization of time in the nineteenth century, see also E.P. Thompson's canonical "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present* 38 (1967): 56-97; Nigel Thrift and Paul Glennie, "Reworking E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism," *Time and Society* 5, no. 3 (1996): 275-299.

extent to which local pride was mobilized in service to national politics. In addition, the Marseillaise was not just a song that people listened to; they recognized it and sang along to it. By singing along to the Marseillaise, provincial citizens were actively participating in the events at the station. The Marseillaise thus served as an instrument for the active participation of the masses in the visit of national politicians in the provincial city, essentially the local was made national, and the national was made local.

Forms of National-Local Interaction

If the space of the station allowed many more people to interact with national political leaders such as Floquet than was possible before the existence of the provincial railway station, this transformation also altered the nature of these interactions. Louis-Napoleon and Floquet interacted with crowds rather than individuals. When another French president, Sadi Carnot, travelled from Paris to Arras in June 1889, Bertol-Graivil, the author of an account of Carnot's travel in Northern France, found that "The main street is decked out; many people in the windows; beautiful reception, no discordant cries. The President, escorted by cavalry, greeted all sides, eventually we reached the Préfecture."⁵⁸ As in Arcachon and Lille, communication between the president and the people was short and highly superficial, and it is more accurate to describe Carnot and Floquet as moving through the crowd rather than engaging with it. Thus although the train station allowed more people to encounter their head of state in the latter half of the nineteenth century, it is important to note that these interactions occurred between national officials and crowds, not national officials and individuals.

⁵⁸ Bertol-Graivil and Paul Boyer, *Les Voyages présidentiels illustres. Voyage de M. Carnot, président de la République, dans les Pas-de-Calais* (Paris: P. Boyer, 1890), 13: « La grande rue est pavoisée ; beaucoup de monde aux fenêtres ; bel accueil, pas de cris discordants. »

Not all provincial citizens were willing to accept the limits of such an impersonal relationship with national officials. In Longueau, another northern provincial town Louis-Napoleon visited in August 1867, a brief stop turned into chaos when local citizens eager to see the emperor overran the railway station. “Despite the orders,” an account of Louis-Napoleon’s travels by Florian Pharaon began, “the station was invaded by the population of Longueau and the neighboring towns... the crowd, eager to see near the Emperor and Empress, surrounded the car and beat against the imperial doors in tumultuous waves.”⁵⁹ Thus although many provincial citizens accepted their supporting role as members of the crowd, not everyone was satisfied with the special relationship accorded to the local elites who greeted the emperor within the station.

In spite of such occurrences, negative reactions to the presence of the masses on the part of either local or national elites were rare. Pharaon’s description of the events in Longueau was no different; “in its limited scope,” he asserted, “this scene was of a very special character and was the prelude to the ovations reserved for the illustrious Travelers.”⁶⁰

The lack of direct access to the politicians was mitigated by the window into what was happening in the train station provided by the local newspapers. Before Floquet’s arrival in Arcachon, the local newspaper *Arcachon-saison* devoted the entire front page of its 5 April edition to a biography of the former President, followed by second page that gave an in-depth itinerary of his arrival and events he planned to attend while in the city.

⁵⁹ Florian Pharaon, *Voyage impérial dans le nord de la France: 26-27-28-29-30 août 1867* (Lille: L. Danel, 1868), 11: « Malgré les ordres donnés, la gare avait été envahie par la population de Longueau et par celle des communes environnantes... la foule, désireuse de voir de près l’Empereur et l’Impératrice, entourait le wagon impérial et venait battre les portières de ses flot tumultueux. »

⁶⁰ Pharaon, *Voyage impérial dans le nord de la France*, 11: « Dans son cadre restreint, cette scène avait un caractère tout spécial et était le prélude des ovations réservées aux Illustres Voyageurs. »

Given that this was a weekly paper and each edition was only four pages long, this was a major dedication of space to the event. In the following issue, citizens read accounts of the events that had happened out of sight or behind closed doors, namely those ceremonies that took place away from the crowds in the station and banquet halls. “Amid the most profound silence and before all heads uncovered,” a section of the edition entitled “LA RÉCEPTION” began, “the presentation of Municipal assistants and advisors took place and two charming girls...dressed in white with a wide ribbon tricolor necklace advanced, holding beautiful natural bouquets of flowers.”⁶¹ The article further narrated the scene of the crowd throughout the morning of Floquet’s arrival, allowing the readers who had been part of the crowd to see it from an entirely new perspective, from the outside rather than the inside. By giving readers a new perspective on such events, newspapers such as the *Arcachon-saison* encouraged citizens to put themselves back into the moment of the event.

Books also played a major role in reinforcing the importance of the visit of national figures in provincial cities across France. Primarily published by government-controlled presses, official travel narratives first appeared during Louis-Napoleon’s reign and continued to flourish under the Third Republic. They followed the emperor or president through a single region in France, for instance the northeast or Vendée. Denis’s account of Louis-Napoleon’s visit to Lille is therefore only one of the many books written to emphasize the significance of national officials visiting the provinces. In *Voyage de leurs majestés impériales dans le nord de la France*, Denis did not simply

⁶¹ *Arcachon-saison: Journal des étrangers*, April 5, 1890, 2: « Au milieu du plus profond silence et devant toutes les têtes découvertes... La présentation des adjoints et conseillers municipaux a eu lieu, puis deux charmantes fillettes...habillée en blanc avec un large ruban tricolore en sautoir, s'avancent, tenant à la main de magnifiques bouquets en fleurs naturelle. »

report on the events as they happened; he embellished elements to make them appear more majestic. For example, Denis described a moment in Lille when the empress refused to raise the hood of her carriage despite torrential rainfall. “The entire crowd that was gathered on the steps of the church noticed the action of the Sovereign and redoubled their enthusiastic cheers. This large and beautiful popular scene continues until the Préfecture, and it is with difficulty that one heard murmuring against the inclemency of the weather.”⁶² This would have been a beautiful scene, but how did Denis know that the people who cheered were doing so in reaction to the empress’s action? Furthermore, how could the people in the crowd have seen the empress signal her aides to let the carriage hood up, if they were standing in a crowd several dozen feet away from the royal entourage? Denis’s description therefore moved beyond reporting into propaganda, idealizing the emperor and empress, seeking to persuade readers that Louis-Napoleon was worthy of the adoration of the French citizens and that his presence in the provinces was worth celebrating. In this way, printed media served to reinforce the importance of the visits of heads of state to provincial cities, encouraging even more citizens to attend such events and thus participate in mass politics.

Consuming both newspapers and books, readers felt connected to others in the French nation, to events in other towns and cities, and at other train stations..⁶³ As Benedict Anderson has argued, print capitalism “laid the bases for national

⁶² Denis, *Voyage de leurs majestés impériales dans le nord de la France*, 9: « Au moment où Leurs Majestés remontent en voiture, la pluie tombe à torrents, le tonnerre gronde. Les gens de service avaient relevé la capote de la voiture, mais l'Impératrice s'empresse de la faire baisser et reçoit stoïquement l'averse qui, du reste, ne fait fuir personne. Au contraire, toute la foule qui s'est amassée sur le parvis de l'église a remarqué le mouvement de la Souveraine et redouble ses enthousiastes acclamations. Cette grande et belle scène populaire continue jusqu'à la préfecture, et c'est à peine si l'on entend murmurer contre l'inclémence du temps. »

⁶³ This simultaneity partially involved the standardization of time discussed earlier, but the spread of print capitalism played an equally important role in the nascent French nation.

consciousness” by creating a common language (and thus a common past) for the nation as a whole, a crucial element in the solidification of an imagined community.⁶⁴ Print also reinforced a sense of simultaneity within the local event. In the *Arcachon-saison*, citizens were invited to experience Floquet’s visit from two different perspectives at once. Descriptions of the welcoming ceremonies allowed citizens to participate indirectly in the events within the train station; at the same time, the newspaper’s account of the crowd’s activities outside the station on the morning of Floquet’s arrival provided an entirely different kind of viewpoint on the day’s events. In both cases, print was central in cultivating and reinforcing a sense of nation within the Arcachon visit.

Ultimately, although printed media such as books and newspapers played an important role in altering the relationship between the head of state and citizens throughout Europe in the nineteenth century, what was happening in provincial cities like Lille and Arcachon was not just about print alone. The sense of “deep, horizontal comradeship” identified by Anderson as at the core of the idea of nation, the reason why individuals perceive themselves as having deep personal relationships with people that have never met or even heard of each other, found strength not just in reading about the event, but in actively participating in the real event.⁶⁵ On the day of their visit, provincial citizens in Arcachon and Lille felt the same sort of personal connection to Louis-Napoleon or Floquet, despite never actually coming into direct contact with the Emperor or former president. This connection was not only mental (encouraged by print media),

⁶⁴Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 44-45.

⁶⁵ Although traditional scholarship identified the concept of nation as geographic and originating in antiquity, historians now treat the “nation” as an imagined idea born in the nineteenth century. As Ernest Gellner put it, “nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist;” Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 168.

but also physical, as people were actually a part of the crowd; the station acted as a physical place in which provincial citizens could participate in the national community.⁶⁶ Although print media solidified their memories of the event in its aftermath, the foundation of the “imagined nation” was first laid at the train station.

The Crucial Role of Local Officials

When national officials visited the provinces, local officials served a critical intermediary role as “representatives” of the local to the national and of the national to the local. City officials often used this role to assert their authority at the local level; they restricted access to national officials to all but themselves and a chosen few. While the Arcachon crowd only saw Floquet when he actually left the train station, municipal officials were able to meet Floquet on the station platform as he disembarked and could thus interact with him on a much more personal level. This hierarchy of access to Floquet continued throughout his stay in Arcachon. In addition to the difference in physical location between the officials in the station and the citizens outside of it, less prominent city workers literally blocked access to Floquet as he traveled from the station to private banquets held in his honor and attended only by those deemed worthy of his presence. In addition, the Gendarmerie was present in the crowd along with the Commissioner of Police and his officers to ensure that order was kept while Floquet was present in the city.⁶⁷ City authorities effectively separated Arcachon’s ordinary citizens from local and regional leaders and restricted personal access to the guest of honor. This situation

⁶⁶ See also Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-siècle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

⁶⁷ *Arcachon-saison: Journal des étrangers*, April 5, 1890, 2: « La gendarmerie, sous les ordres du Maréchal-des-logis était également a son poste et, de concert avec M. le commissaire de police et ses agents, assurait le service d'ordre. »

demonstrates the radically different experiences of those inside and those outside the station.

Local officials sought to use mass political moments to stage their own authority for local audiences. In Arcachon, the Mayor welcomed Floquet to the city “on behalf of the people of Arcachon,” and told him that he should “never cease to count on a natural friendship that will be lavished by all residents.”⁶⁸ Floquet responded with his own speech, acknowledging the reception and expressing his hope that “I may see you and talk with you during my stay in your beautiful city.”⁶⁹ Although these meetings lacked the participation of the masses they were still immersed in the language of mass participation, no doubt, so it could be reported in the newspapers. The establishment of the station as a political location brought with it a new relationship between local and national politicians. Prior to Louis-Napoleon’s election, the relationship between local and national leaders was tenuous at best. Although local officials were a crucial part of the national system, interactions between the state and local officials were minimal and typically left to ministers or secretaries. Around the 1860s, this situation changed and local officials could begin to interact directly with their head of state. This was partially a consequence of the travel of national leaders in the provinces. The provincial railway station established a location in which these politicians could intimately interact with national leaders; they then exited the station as his companions, and were seen to be so by the gathered crowd. Local and national officials began to act as if they were simply different steps on the same political ladder. The railway station thus altered the French

⁶⁸ *Arcachon-saison: Journal des étrangers*, April 5, 1890, 2: « Au nom de la population arcachonnaise, j’ai l’honneur de vous souhaiter la bienvenue et ne cessez de compter sur l’amitié toute naturelle qui vous sera prodiguée par tous les habitants. »

⁶⁹ *Arcachon-saison: Journal des étrangers*, April 5, 1890, 2: « J’espère que je pourrais vous voir et causer avec vous Durant mon séjour dans votre belle ville. »

political system, as local officials became allies rather than subordinates of central government.

National politicians' railway tours also increasingly cemented differences between towns which had train stations and those which did not; those with significant station buildings and those with only a single sleepy platform. The men who waited on the platform for Floquet were not exclusively Arcachonnais officials; the mayors of La Teste, Gujan-Mestras, and Teich and several municipal officials from La Teste were also at the station.⁷⁰ This makes it unlikely that Floquet's train stopped in any of those towns on its journey from Bordeaux. If it had, those politicians would have simply greeted Floquet in their own towns rather than traveling to another city where they held relatively less importance. Although politicians who were traveling through the provinces in an official capacity likely had greater motivation to stop in every town along their route, this does not alter the fact that many provincial towns were not on the route between two major cities, as Arras was between Paris and Lille. Politicians had little cause to visit the small towns at the end of train lines, and even less reason to visit those towns that did not possess a railway station at all. In this way, the train station's centrality as a political site was mostly limited to larger provincial cities.

Nevertheless, even small towns found ways to mark the passage of the politician through their midst. Although Louis-Napoleon did not stop in Douai on his way to Lille in 1867, the local railway station was "decorated with flags and banners and decorated

⁷⁰ *Arcachon-saison: Journal des étrangers*, April 5, 1890, 2: « M. le Président de la chambre des Députés et Madame Floquet...sont reçus à leur descente du wagon par M. le Commandant Ravaux Maire d'Arcachon accompagné de ses deux adjoints, de M. Léon Lesca conseiller général du canton de La Teste, de M. Larroque conseiller d'arrondissement et maire de Gujan-Mestras, des Conseillers municipaux d'Arcachon, de M. Mouliets maire de La Teste, de M. Garnung maire du Teich, de M. Besson juge de Paix du canton de La Teste et de son suppléant... »

with shrubs and various trophies.”⁷¹ Bertol-Grailvil similarly found that “all of the stations that are passed are bannered and the crowd waves handkerchiefs and hats” at the Imperial train.⁷² Such experiences suggest that interactions between national politicians and local citizens in some cases relied almost entirely on the public imagination to create relationships between national officials and the people of the provinces.⁷³ The railway station acted as a space for the provincial public to connect with national politicians, even when the politicians did not bother to stop. Gathered crowds still gained some sense of political significance from the momentary passing of the imperial/presidential trains. Even more than in Arcachon and other big provincial towns, the experience of mass politics in these villages and small towns was impersonal and one-sided.

Mass Politics in Wartime

The events in Arcachon, Lille, and other French cities reveal how mass politics had decisively entered the provincial city in the second half of the nineteenth century. The provincial train station was central to this experience, because the area around the station was a major ceremonial space in which people could participate as members of the masses. The ceremonial significance of the railway station for local citizens continued during World War I, even after national officials ceased visiting regional cities. The war saw mass conscription: soldiers mobilized throughout France. Every city, village, and

⁷¹ Theophile Denis, *Voyage de Leurs Majestés Impériales dans le Nord de la France, en août 1867*, 8: « Vers quatre heures, il traverse la gare de Douai qui est pavoisée de drapeaux et d'oriflammes et décorée d'arbustes et de trophées variés.

⁷² Bertol-Graivil and Paul Boyer, *Les Voyages présidentiels illustrés. Voyage de M. Carnot, président de la République, dans le Pas-de-Calais*, 12: « Toutes les stations que l'on brule sont pavoisées et la foule agite des mouchoirs et des chapeaux. »

⁷³ Such stations were typically decorated at the behest of local governments.

home witnessed its men depart for the front. Units were often geographically based; men served with their neighbors and friends.

The frequent embarkation point for soldiers leaving from the front was often the railway station of their home city or village. As Weber noted, the War of 1870 was the first major conflict in which the local railway station was used in this capacity, but by 1914, the railway had expanded to the extent that the local station's use as an embarkation point was almost universal throughout the villages, towns, and cities of provincial France.

The provincial railway station therefore became site of another form of "mass politics." Serving an embarkation point, it was the place where soldiers and their families said goodbye, sometimes permanently. In a postcard drawn to capture the first day of the French mobilization, August 2, 1914, the artist V.H. depicted hundreds of men, women, and children gathered before the Roubaix train station.⁷⁴ Across the closely packed square, families formed tight circles. Young men stood surrounded by their mothers, fathers and siblings, or else looked into the eyes of the wives and lovers; women said goodbye to their husbands, brothers and fathers. Children were also present and held by their parents; fathers hugged their children goodbye, and mothers cradled them in conciliation or held them up to wave at the departing soldiers. The men closer to the station waved across the square to loved ones from which they had already parted; several men hold large French flags, reminding the gathered people of their national cause. In the background, the façade of the Roubaix railway station loomed over the proceedings. Just as in peacetime, the area around the station was a place of mass politics,

⁷⁴ Verschaave Houminim, "La Gare pendant la 1ère Guerre Mondiale (1914-1918)," postcard, 1914, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France CP_A01_L1_S2_001/002, http://www.bn-r.fr/fr/notice.php?id=CP_A01_L1_S2_001/002 (accessed 2/4/2013).

a place of shared emotion and shared patriotism. Whereas in earlier events people gathered to witness the visits of national officials, however, now they gathered to say goodbye to the people they loved, sometimes for the last time. The railway station established a different sort of connection between the provincial citizen and the rest of France, one in which the nation was something to be fought for, not simply witnessed in the presence of national officials. This scene of mobilization and goodbyes was universal across France. The station was the place they came to say goodbye, and it was a goodbye en masse- one became a part of that mass/crowd.

As the war progressed, the station was not only a disembarkation point. Just as the railway had connected individual villages and towns to the nation in peacetime, in wartime the railway station became the place at which information from the front and from Paris entered the local arena. It was where they waited for soldiers to return, on leave or wounded. It was also the place from which those killed in the war failed to return. As the site of all of these events (or non-events), the local railway station acted as a physical and imagined gateway to the national war for local citizens throughout the period between 1914 and 1919.

The earliest returnees to the provinces were often those injured in the war. A series of photographs from Lyon on 27 August 1915 reveal the emotional scene that took place at the train station when men returned from war. Men and women were depicted crowding the station, all looking to the train that had just arrived.⁷⁵ Nurses and military officers stood apart from the crowd, ready to assist the gravely injured. As the men disembarked, some on stretchers and others with crutches, nurses and family members

⁷⁵ Agence Rol, "27-9-15, arrivée des grands blessés à la gare de Lyon [dans le Rhône]," photograph, 1915, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France, Rol, 45503, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6908847h.r=guerre+AND+lyon.langEN> (accessed March 5, 2013).

greeted them and escorted them to the waiting ambulances. In another photo, a woman and child were pictured standing behind an amputee soldier who was presumably her husband, watching another military officer escort him into the waiting car.⁷⁶ In another, men and women were photographed smiling at the camera, relieved that they have survived the war and been reunited with loved ones.⁷⁷ In a fourth, the photographer shot a nurse and several men standing around a comrade lying on a stretcher, a scene of indescribable sadness as they look down at the injured man.⁷⁸ The railway station was the site of all of these emotions, emotions that bonded the people together into a new kind of mass. This feeling was not limited to nurses, soldiers, and family members who witnessed this life and death firsthand; crowds gathered outside the station to witness the return of these soldiers even if their own loved ones were not present.⁷⁹

The tone and meaning of mass political events in the provinces thus changed again in the aftermath of the war. The brutality and suffering endured by the French people during the First World War required a rethinking of the meaning of the French nation. At the heart of this new national identity was a dedication to remembering and commemorating the trauma of the war; nearly every citizen had lost a relative or close friend in the conflict. Losses were mourned privately and within the local community,

⁷⁶ Agence Rol, “27-9-15, arrivée des grands blessés à la gare de Lyon [dans le Rhône],” photograph, 1915, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France, Rol 45522, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6908866v.r=guerre+AND+lyon.langEN> (accessed March 5, 2013).

⁷⁷ Agence Rol, “27-9-15, arrivée des grands blessés à la gare de Lyon [dans le Rhône],” photograph, 1915, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France, Rol 45509, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b69088537.r=guerre+AND+lyon.langEN> (accessed March 5, 2013).

⁷⁸ Agence Rol, “27-9-15, arrivée des grands blessés à la gare de Lyon [dans le Rhône],” photograph, 1915, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France, Rol 45511, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b69088552.r=guerre+AND+lyon.langEN> (accessed March 05, 2013).

⁷⁹ Agence Rol, “27-9-15, arrivée des grands blessés à la gare de Lyon [dans le Rhône],” photograph, 1915, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France, Rol 45520, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b69088641.r=guerre+AND+lyon.langEN> (accessed March 05, 2013). Many more men were killed in action, and failed to ever return from the front. In these cases, the rail station remained significant, the last place families had seen a lost son, father, or husband alive.

and war memorials often formed the heart of commemoration proceedings. As Mona Siegel and others have argued, war memorials provided local communities with an emblem of the war, one that allowed survivors to unite in the commemoration of the dead.”⁸⁰ Although such memorials were typically constructed and maintained by the local community, they also represented the collective memory of the nation; people across France were linked by their shared experience of the trauma of war in what Jay Winter has referred to as a ‘fictive kinship.’⁸¹

In many provincial towns, memorials were established near the city’s railway station. Arcachon’s memorial was erected in a large square only a block from the station and adjacent to the railway tracks; it was connected to the station by the Boulevard d’Haussez, today the Boulevard du général Leclerc. Although today a row of houses stands between the memorial and the railway tracks, in the postwar era the monument was visible to people as they arrived in the town. Another memorial to the war, the Place du 11 Novembre 1918, stands in front of the Gare de l’est in Paris, the station used by soldiers travelling to the Front during the war. The location of such monuments reveal that even after the trauma of World War I and the rethinking of the French nation, the railway station still had a place in the carrying-out of mass politics in the provinces, albeit one that emphasized remembering those lost in the war rather than the personalized politics of an earlier era.

⁸⁰ Mona Siegel, *The Moral Disarmament of France: Education, Pacifism, and Patriotism, 1914-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 55.

⁸¹ Jay Winter, “Forms of Kinship and Remembrance in the Aftermath of the Great War,” in Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, eds. *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Winter also discusses World War I memorials in *Remembering war: the Great War between memory and history in the twentieth century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Daniel Sherman’s *The construction of memory in interwar France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) also examines collective memory after the war in great detail.

The return of the injured soldiers in 1915 was just as much a mass event as the arrival of Louis-Napoleon in Lille or Floquet in Arcachon. The railway station served as a platform and a gateway for national politics, both in the form of visiting politicians, and in the sense that it served as an embarkation and returning point for soldiers during the war. The area around the station became a place for the citizens of Lille to engage in mass politics, a public space in which people experienced their connection to the nation. The modes of interaction between the local and the national included not only print sources, but also festivities of the rail station. Not all provincial citizens possessed an equal relationship to the French state, as local officials often played a more important role in the arrival of the national official. The public spectacles carried out in Arcachon and Lille brought people together in the political moment, allowing them to participate actively in the politics of the nation. In later years, the station became a gateway to the war front. It was where citizens received news, where they met loved ones coming home (or heard that they would never return). The railway station had become a significant point of reference for provincial citizens in their efforts to think about their place, and the place of their city, in a wider France. The train station had also become established as a key landmark of the city's landscape, a key part of the urban environment. It would find itself a central focus in programs of urban renewal and modernization in the late nineteenth century.

Chapter 2: Urban Improvement and the Alteration of Urban Landscapes

In the spring of 1869, the photographer Alphonse Blondel stood at a window on the second floor of the municipal theatre of Lille, looking out over the city's Place du Théâtre. Primarily known for his daguerreotype portraits of Lille's elite as well as more informal shots of the city's residents, his job that day, paid for by the city of Lille, concerned the city itself and not just its inhabitants. Instead of people, Blondel's concern was the debris that filled the city center. His photographs showed that windows were gaping holes; a once-thriving fabric shop was now an open shell, a pit held yet more debris from the demolition (Appendix, figure 2).⁸² The remnants of a doorway, and bits of wreckage stuck to the sides of surviving buildings, were the only evidence that buildings had only a year earlier stood on the spot. Only the cupola of the fish market remained. The debris Blondel photographed was not caused by war or natural disaster; rather, this scene of complete destruction was a result of a planned demolition. The old city was making way for the Rue de la Gare, a new boulevard connecting the city center to the railway station on the outskirts of town.

⁸²Alphonse le Blondel, "Lille: Rue de la Gare pendant la démolition en 1870," photograph, 1870, Bibliotheque municipale de Lille, France, alb E1, 8, <http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/recherche?q=Bibliotheque+municipale+de+Lille%2C+alb+E1%2C+8>. (accessed January 14, 2013).

The destruction of the old city and building of the Rue de la Gare in the 1870s had a dramatic impact on Lille's urban landscape. Like other late nineteenth-century municipalities, the Lille city council believed it had good reasons to undertake this sort of extensive, and expensive, urban development. As was the case elsewhere, Lille's population had grown dramatically since the start of the nineteenth century, from 54,000 in 1801 to 178,000 in 1881, and to 201,000 by 1891.⁸³ In the face of economic and demographic growth, provincial municipalities like Lille sought to establish greater control over their urban environments, as overpopulation and the ever-growing proportion of citizens in poverty were perceived to threaten existing class structures and urban infrastructures.⁸⁴ Like other cities also, Lille's demographic growth overwhelmed the city's existing sanitation infrastructure.⁸⁵ Frequent outbreaks of cholera in this period convinced city governments to invest in measures of public hygiene, including building parks and other green spaces, developing better methods for dealing with water and waste, and moving animal industries such as fish markets to the outskirts.⁸⁶ Finally, new

⁸³ John Merriman, *French Cities in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1981), 14.

⁸⁴ Louis Chevalier, *Labouring classes and dangerous classes in Paris during the first half of the nineteenth century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973) treated this growing poverty of urban citizens as a real threat, but more recent critiques suggest that Chevalier took for granted what realist writers said about overpopulation as they echoed contemporary anxiety, instead of relying on real data. See Barrie M. Ratcliffe, review of *Labouring classes and dangerous classes in Paris during the first half of the nineteenth century*, by Louis Chevalier, *French Historical Studies* 17, no. 2 (1991): 542-575; Robert J. Bezucha, review of *Labouring classes and dangerous classes in Paris during the first half of the nineteenth century*, by Louis Chevalier, *Journal of Social History* 8, no. 1 (1974): 119-124. Victoria Thompson, "Telling 'Spatial Stories': Urban Space and Bourgeois Identity in Early Nineteenth-Century Paris," *The Journal of Modern History* 75, no. 3 (2003): 523-556; Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution: Writing the Nineteenth-Century City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); and Christopher Prendergast, *Writing the City: Paris and the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), similarly argue that the threat Chevalier perceived was in reality a bourgeois construction of what was happening in the city.

⁸⁵ Abel Joire, *Département du Nord, Ville de Lille. Commission des logements insalubres. Rapport général sur les travaux de la Commission pendant l'année 1865* (Lille: impr. de L. Danel, 1866).

⁸⁶ Midard and Masquelez, *Département du Nord. Ville de Lille. Direction des travaux municipaux. Service du nettoyage de la voie publique. Enlèvement des boues et immondices* (Lille: impr. de Lefebvre-Ducrocq, 1869). For developments elsewhere, see Donald Reid, *Paris Sewers and Sewermen: Realities and Representations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991); Andrew Aisenberg, *Contagion:*

traffic also encouraged urban development, particularly in Lille, where the addition of a permanent railway station in 1847 and the ever-increasing number of railway connections brought ever more people into the city.⁸⁷

The French railway system had grown dramatically in the latter half of the nineteenth century, from 3,554 km of track and one billion passenger-km in 1850 to 40,438 km of track and 16.9 billion passenger-km in 1910.⁸⁸ Lille was the first French city to act as an international railway connection, as it became part of the Belgian railway network in November 1842. Although Rouen beat Lille as the first French city connected to Paris by railway, Lille became the second in June 1846. At least initially, Lille's primary importance in terms of the railway was its connection to Belgium; much like the Rouen-Paris track, the Lille-Paris route was meant to connect Paris with Great Britain and Belgium. Over time, however, Lille also became a regional hub for northeast France, adding connections to Calais and Dunkerque on the Northern coast by 1850. The addition of a permanent railway station and the alteration of the neighborhood around the station were partially a consequence of this expansion, which by 1880 brought over 2 million visitors into the city each year.⁸⁹ Lille's municipal council and the Compagnie du Nord de Chemin de Fer also established a great deal of railway infrastructure around the city to

Disease, government, and the "Social Question" in Nineteenth-Century France (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); William Cohen and Ryan Johnson, *Filth: Dirt, Disgust, and Modern Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

⁸⁷ Also see Thomas Hall, *Planning Europe's Capital Cities: Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Urban Development* (London: E & FN Spon, 1997); and William B. Cohen, *Urban Government and the Rise of the French City: five municipalities in the nineteenth century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), as well as David H. Pinkney *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), which emphasized Napoleon III and his goal to make Paris into a new Rome. A more sociological approach to city planning is found in Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976); and Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989).

⁸⁸ Kimon Doukas, *The French Railroads and the State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945). Passenger-km refers to the travel of one passenger the distance of one kilometer.

⁸⁹ Lille, Chambre de Commerce, *Archives de la Chambre de Commerce de Lille*, Volumes 15-17 (Lille: L.Danel, 1880), 16.

handle this rapid expansion of the railway. Such measures included piercing the city's original fortifications in 1847 to allow for the construction of a permanent railway station within the city itself, the widening of this breach to accommodate five tracks instead of two in 1880, and the continuous efforts to rebuild and upgrade existing bridges and tracks in the surrounding area.

While the demographic and commercial pressures on the nineteenth century city have been well documented, the question posed in this chapter is not *why* urban development occurred, but *how*. The destruction captured in Blondel's 1870 photograph was not about overpopulation or hygiene; it documented the physical construction of a real boulevard out of the rubble of the old city. It revealed the process through which the urban landscape reoriented itself around the railway station. Indeed, Blondel angled his view of the demolition in such a way that the new railway station loomed over the remnants of the disappearing city center. Architects who planned the Rue de la Gare replanned the city around a new axis, stretching from the city center to the railway station. Interest in the station and the Rue de la Gare, particularly among the city's photographers and artists, also reinforced the new centrality of Lille's railway station in the urban landscape; the spaces of the street and the station became places with their own importance rather than conduits through which people traveled.⁹⁰ Over time, the station became a point of reference for tourists and citizens alike, changing the way they encountered and experienced the city.

⁹⁰ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). De Certeau differentiated between space and place, suggesting that space is something that people move through and occupy, while places are permanent and symbolic areas that possess distinct borders.

Remaking the City

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the center of Lille shifted eastwards. In 1882, the municipal councilor F. Roussel proposed the creation of a large number of squares and boulevards to the east of the train station, expanding all the way to Fives, a nearby commune incorporated into Lille in 1858. This was the first major expansion of the city outside of Lille's walls. Those same walls had already been broken only a few decades earlier, however, to make way for the addition of a permanent railway station. Later town development plans, like that submitted to the municipal council by the councilor F. Roussel in 1882 (Appendix, figure 3), sought to expand Lille's railway station dramatically and alter a number of streets throughout the old city, in order to create a series of grand boulevards.⁹¹ The placement of the railway station at the center of this plan reveals the extent to which the municipal council, or at the very least, councilor Roussel, placed the railway station at the center of their mental perceptions of Lille. This image rotated the traditional image of the city 90 degrees to the left, placing the normally eastern commune of Fives at the top of the map, so that the new construction around the railway station was at the center, and renovation of the old city on the periphery. In the plan, the city's eastern wall became nothing more than "fortifications," a single word overlying the proposed boulevards that denoted where the city's ancient walls once stood. This layout shows more clearly than any other piece of evidence that the municipal officials of Lille no longer considered the Exchange, Theatre, or Grande Place itself to be

⁹¹ F. Roussel, "Projet d'amélioration de la gare du nord à Lille et d'annexion de la section de Fives, avec modification importance de l'ancienne ville (Paris: Impr. Broise et Courtier, 1882)," map, BM Lille, carton 5, 4, http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/carton_05/ca05_04?p=5 (accessed January 28, 2013).

the center of Lille; although construction was planned throughout the city, the crown jewel of their efforts would be the district around the railway station.

It seems that the municipal council of the late nineteenth century had little need for medieval monuments in their quest to modernize the city; this is nowhere more apparent than in the plan to replace the city's walls and periphery with grand boulevards and squares. Roussel's plan sought to triple the size of the station property, including a secondary façade at the southern edge of an expanded railway station. The new boulevards and squares were laid out in a hub and spoke system, eschewing the smaller squares and streets of the old city in favor of those twice as wide and three times as long as the Rue de la Gare. None of the proposed squares would be larger than the Grande Place, but their location at the intersection of several grand boulevards would have undoubtedly given them a major place in the city. Although not ultimately developed, this plan shows the extent to which the Lillois' perceptions of their city changed in the late nineteenth century. Roussel's plan was the logical conclusion to an earlier city plan, one that constructed a broad boulevard from the train station to the center of Lille- the Rue de la Gare.

Lille's municipal council had decided in 1864 to build a new street that led from the train station to the city center, to be named the Rue de la Gare.⁹² Three main proposals were considered in turn in 1864. The first plan, labeled the "Rue des Arts" plan

⁹² The cost of construction is detailed in Alfred Mongy, *Département du Nord. Ville de Lille. Direction des travaux municipaux ... Service des études. Agrandissement de Lille. Projet d'ouverture des grandes artères qui a servi de base à l'emprunt de 8.000.000. État indicatif des travaux exécutés ou à exécuter dans la période de 1867 à 1874. Dressé par l'inspecteur principal, chef du service des études.* (Lille: impr. de Lefebvre-Ducrocq, 1864); Alfred Mongy, *Département du Nord. Ville de Lille. Direction des travaux municipaux... Service des études. Agrandissement de Lille. Projet d'ouverture de la Rue de la Gare. Règlement des indemnités. Tableau des affaires à soumettre au jury dans la session qui s'ouvrira à Lille le 4 décembre 1869. Décret du 15 mai 1869. Enquête parcellaire, 25 juin 1869. Jugement d'expropriation, 23 juillet 1869. Dressé par l'inspecteur principal, chef du service des études* (Lille: impr. de Lefebvre-Ducrocq, 1869).

was much shorter and narrower than the later proposals. Instead of connecting straight to the Grande Place or the Place du Theatre, this initial plan would have run to the north and connected to the city center via the Rue des Arts, an existing perpendicular street, requiring almost no destruction of existing buildings or streets. The second plan (Appendix, figure 5), considered by the municipal council was created by the local architect J. Leterme. Leterme envisioned a grand, broad boulevard that crossed the old city directly from the city's railway station to the place du theatre, located somewhat south of the Rue des Arts plan.⁹³ The final plan considered by the municipal council was created by Michaux, also a Lillois architect. Michaux's plan was the furthest south of all the proposals considered by the municipal council. Like Leterme, Michaux envisioned a grand boulevard leading from the Rue de la Gare to the city center, although the outlet of his boulevard was at the Grande Place rather than the Place du Theatre. Michaux's plan mapped the neighborhood around the station with an overlay showing the three possible locations for the Rue de la Gare labeled in the order they were considered by the municipal council. All three began at the Place de la Gare, but their outlets, width, and length differed dramatically.⁹⁴

Since each proposal was created only after the previous one had been put before and considered by the city council, the later architects were able to criticize and improve upon the earlier plans. Leterme was extremely critical of the Rue des arts plan in his analysis, arguing that, in spite of the huge cost of building such street, it “creates (except

⁹³ J. Leterme, “Projet d'ouverture d'une rue entre la place du théâtre et la gare de voyageurs,” map, 1864, BM Lille, France, carton 4, 18, http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/carton_04/ca04_18?format=pdf (accessed January 18, 2013).

⁹⁴ L. Michaux, “Projet de percement de la Rue de la Gare aboutissant à la Grand Place plan,” map, 1864, BM Lille, France, carton 4, 19, http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/carton_04/ca04_19?p=2 (accessed January 18, 2013).

for a stretch of insignificant road) absolutely nothing, and continues forcing travelers to take a much longer, indirect route, with varying widths at each step and lined with old misaligned houses.” Leterme also criticized the plan’s treatment of the area around the station, dismissively noting, “the place or rather the street in front of the station is also shabby and will soon be insufficient.” Michaux also dismissed the original Rue des arts proposal in his own plan, instead emphasizing the much grander proposals later considered by the council.

Leterme sought to improve upon the Rue des arts plan by creating a wide, broad boulevard that led directly from the railway station to the place du Theatre. Such a direct route, he reasoned, would “remake the city in a new, magnificent, way.”⁹⁵ He recognized that his proposal for the Rue de la Gare required the elimination of several significant neighborhood features, including the city’s fish market and a number of city streets and squares, but argued that such destruction would add value and beauty to the area. For Leterme, the goal of the Rue de la Gare was not simply to provide a conduit between the railway station and the city center; it was to create a new, more magnificent, city. The grandeur of Leterme’s plan is also evident in his suggestion that the “new route would lead in front of the station to a square whose scope would allow the Company (if thought fit) to buy from the city the land necessary to have in front of the building a courtyard enclosed by a gate.”⁹⁶ In addition to adding to the dignity and splendor of the proposed Rue de la Gare, such reasoning also showed Leterme’s consideration of the needs of the railway station in coming years. Indeed, the railway station was never far from Leterme’s mind throughout his proposal, as seen in his argument that the boulevard would “offer

⁹⁵ J. Leterme, “Projet d'ouverture d'une rue entre la place du théâtre et la gare de voyageurs,” 1864.

⁹⁶ J. Leterme, “Projet d'ouverture d'une rue entre la place du théâtre et la gare de voyageurs,” 1864.

travelers a shorter, more direct route”⁹⁷ from the train station. The contrast between the Rue des arts plan and Leterme’s plan reveals the extent of the evolution in the goals for the Rue de la Gare. Whereas the Rue des Arts plan required relatively little destruction and followed the general structure and style of the old city, Leterme’s plan embraced the demolition of an entire neighborhood to allow for the construction of something entirely new.

The full extent of Leterme’s plan was demonstrated most effectively by Michaux, even though he looked to argue against it. In his map for the Rue de la Gare, Michaux depicted the two prior proposals as well as his own. He clearly showed that Leterme’s Rue de la Gare was located farther to the south than the Rue des arts option, and came out directly on the steps of the municipal theatre, just north of the Grande Place. It also revealed that Leterme’s boulevard would allow pedestrians to see the grand facades of both the station and the opera house from any point on the street, a detail left out by Leterme in his own proposal. For Michaux, Leterme’s plan was also the most disruptive to the existing city: demolition would be required on no fewer than three cross-streets and one major city artery.

Michaux’s own plan for the Rue de la Gare was a compromise between the Rue des arts plan and Leterme’s proposal, one that balanced old and new elements. Michaux’s boulevard still opened on the Place de la Gare, allowing pedestrians a view the front façade of the station from any point on the path. Instead of opening on the Place du Theatre, however, Michaux’s Rue de la Gare connected directly to the Grande Place, the largest square in the city and the location of the city’s Exchange, Opera House, official meat market, and numerous other buildings of economic and social importance.

⁹⁷ J. Leterme, “Projet d’ouverture d’une rue entre la place du théâtre et la gare de voyageurs,” 1864.

Michaux's plan was the longest and widest of the three proposals, but, because it incorporated already existing streets, it limited the destruction of the old city for the placement of the Rue de la Gare. Only one cross-street would have to be demolished.

While mapping out his plan for the Rue de la Gare, Michaux argued in a caption below the map that his plan was the best option because of its location relative to the station and the city center. He also argued that his plan was better than Leterme's because it lined up the boulevard almost exactly with the front façade of the station, allowing pedestrians a perfect view of the station's façade. Leterme's plan, in contrast, placed the boulevard at an angle relative to the facades of the station and Theatre, leaving pedestrians with an unsatisfactory view of both buildings.⁹⁸ Both Michaux and Leterme were clearly concerned with the angle and appearance of the Grande Place, national theatre, and railway station for people on the Rue de Gare. They both wanted to create a wide, linear path between two major city monuments, a monumental avenue. The Rue de la Gare would allow visitors to Lille to travel from the railway station to the city center without entering into the old alleys and tight courtyards of the old city. For train travelers, Lille would henceforth be a city of boulevards and open squares.

However, although Leterme and Michaux both saw the Rue de la Gare as a chance to recreate Lille, Michaux took a much less destructive approach to the city's existing appearance. Whereas Leterme sought to destroy the old city entirely, Michaux sought a compromise between old and new elements. Michaux lamented that the city's fish market, known for its wide rotunda and double fish stalls, would be destroyed entirely under Leterme's plan. Michaux would, in contrast, double the size of the market and expanded it to reach the Rue de la Paris, another major artery through the center. This

⁹⁸ L. Michaux, "Projet de percement de la rue de la gare aboutissant à la Grand Place plan," 1864.

would put the expanded fish market directly across the path of the Rue de la Gare.

Whereas Leterme pushed aside the markets and occupations of the old city, Michaux believed that important elements of Lille's past had a role in the city's future.

Lille's architects had differing visions of a new Lille. Although the city council considered a number of plans for the Rue de la Gare, ultimately they chose only one. It was Leterme's. The Rue des Arts plan had required little destruction, following the general layout and style of the existing streets. Michaux's plan required somewhat more destruction, but still tried to balance the old and the new by saving the fish market and attempting to limit the amount of the existing city that would have to be demolished for the new boulevard. Leterme's plan was the most destructive, cutting without prejudice through the existing city. The municipal council disregarded the cost of the construction in favor of the grandest possible vista for people traveling from the train station to the city center – and from the city center to the station. The council rejected the idea of a balance of old and the new, dooming the fish market to destruction. It considered this destruction as a positive move for the city, as seen in their decision to hire Blondel to document and celebrate it in his photographs.

The new boulevard was twenty-two meters wide and 240 meters long, interrupted only by the Rue des Ponts des Comines at its center. At one end, the new boulevard opened into the Place de la Gare, at an angle that perfectly patched the angle of the railway station. The other end of the street opened onto a small square and the steps of the municipal theatre. This positioning allowed everyone who traveled the boulevard before 1904 to see the facades of both the theatre and the railway station from any point along the street.

All of the buildings along the Rue de la Gare were constructed at the same time as the boulevard itself, producing an entire street of new, ornamental buildings of the same style; floors, balconies, and rooftops lined up the entire length of the street, creating a grand uniformity that impressed visitors and citizens alike. Although the city council had adopted Leterme's proposal for the layout of the Rue de la Gare by 1865, they did not decide the actual appearance of the boulevard until at least 1868, when the municipal council published two competing plans that provided contrasting proposals for the appearance of the boulevard once completed (Appendix, figures 6 and 7).⁹⁹ Named the Gilquin and City plans, both showed a long, straight, and broad boulevard, with tall and flat building facades on either side. The buildings on either side of the street were uniform; a single façade ran the length of the boulevard on either side, allowing the eye to glide unimpeded to the head of the street. It is clear from these similarities that this new set of architects thought of the Rue de la Gare as a grand boulevard of the Parisian style. The continuous facades that dominated their plans reflect the earlier Parisian designs of Percier and Fontaine, whose renovation of the Rue de Rivoli in Paris created a continuous façade that ran from the Louvre to the Place de la Concorde alongside the Jardin des Tuileries.¹⁰⁰ Both proposals also included extensive covered and lighted sidewalks for pedestrians on either side of the street, a sign that human traffic (and comfort) was a major concern for both designers. Both the Gilquin plan and the City plan

⁹⁹ City of Lille, "Ville de Lille: Percement de la rue de la gare. Vue perspective du projet présenté par la ville," perspective plan, 1868, BM Lille, France, carton 32, 11, http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/carton_32/ca32_11?p=1 (accessed January 18, 2013); Louis Gilquin, "Ville de Lille: Percement de la rue de la gare. Projet avec galerie saillante éclairée du dessus," perspective plan, 1868, BM Lille, France, carton 32, 12, http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/carton_32/ca32_12?p=1 (accessed January 18, 2013).

¹⁰⁰ Andrew Ayers, *The Architecture of Paris: An Architectural Guide* (Stuttgart: Edition Axel Menges, 2004), 43; see also Allan Braham, *The Architecture of the French Enlightenment* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980), 258.

also pictured the Rue de la Gare from the same angle, placing the façade of the railway station at the head of the street. The boulevard was thus not “the street of the station” only in name; it was defined by its relationship to the monumental train station façade.

Blondel, who so carefully depicted the chaos and griminess of the demolition of the old city center in 1870, returned to the neighborhood in the late 1870s. His goal was to supplement his earlier work with photographs of the completed Rue de la Gare. One of those photos, taken in 1878 (Appendix, figure 8), reveals that the boulevard lived up to the grand visions of the city planners and municipal council.¹⁰¹ Although lacking the covered sidewalks of the Gilquin and City plans, lampposts and regularly spaced shop awnings provide shade to street walk cafes. The grand façade of the railway station appeared to connect directly to the buildings at the end of the boulevard, a natural head to the Rue de la Gare. Although already eight years old by the time Blondel took his picture, the boulevard still appeared new. The sidewalks, building facades, and the street itself were devoid of dirt or upheaval. Signs of life existed everywhere, in the shops, windows, and the few carriages that line the street, but humanity itself was absent. This Rue de la Gare of 1878 matched exactly the grand boulevards dreamed up by Gilquin, Leterme, Michaux, and the city council.

Blondel’s characterization of the Rue de la Gare in this way was not accidental.¹⁰²

The order and cleanliness of the photograph would have been impossible if Blondel had

¹⁰¹ Alphonse Le Blondel, “Lille: La Rue de la Gare en 1878,” photograph, 1878, BM Lille, Alb E3, 4, http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/album_E3/albe03_04?p=1 (accessed January 18, 2013).

¹⁰² Classic works on this subject include Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), as well as Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981). For more recent reassessments of the field, see Barbara E. Savedoff, “Transforming Images: Photographs of Representation,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 50, No. 2 (1992): 93-106; Margaret Olin, “Touching Photographs: Roland Barthes’s ‘Mistaken’

not taken the photograph in the early morning, when the chaos and disorder of human life were largely minimized. Wind, rain, and other weather conditions were also absent, enabling Blondel to take a photograph that emphasized the cleanliness and linearity of the boulevard. Finally, the angle of the photograph was not arbitrary; Blondel purposefully took the photograph from a perspective that lined up the railway station and the boulevard exactly, with the station's clock tower at the very center of the image. Just as the 1870 photograph emphasized the chaos and turmoil of the demolition of the fish market and the buildings on the place du theatre, the 1878 photograph emphasized exactly the opposite- the grandeur and perfection of the finished boulevard.

The Railway Station: A Symbol of the New Lille

The renovation of the neighborhood around the station was not the only consequence of the expansion of the railway system and the greater influx of people into the city. The railway station itself also underwent an extended period of expansion and transformation in the first half century after Lille's connection into the nation's railway network. Lille first connected into the Northern railway network in 1842, when trains began to serve the outskirts of the city. Recognizing the future economic benefits that the station held for the city, in 1847 the municipal council decided to pierce the city's fortifications for the first time in order to build a station inside the city's walls.¹⁰³ This was no small feat for Lille's officials; they risked the city's future security against outside

Identification," *Representations* 80 (2002): 99-118; and Michael Fried, "Barthes's *Punctum*," *Critical Inquiry* 31 (2005): 539-574.

¹⁰³ Marie-Josèphe Lussien-Maisonneuve, "Du débarcadère à la gare: l'exemple de Lille. Mises au point et réflexions. Villeneuve," *Revue du Nord* 62 (1980): 459.

invaders in breaching the city's defenses for the railway.¹⁰⁴ This first station, opened in 1848, was built on the site of a former barracks, and consisted of a small, simple hall made out of brick. The area in front of the station was not the Place de la Gare, but a small street similar to those destroyed in the construction of the Rue de la Gare.¹⁰⁵ This first station barely resembled the later monumental construction of the 1860s, 70s, and 80s. The municipal council did not yet conceive of the railway as a significant city landmark.¹⁰⁶

By the 1860s, however, the city had become more willing to invest, socially and economically, in the railway. Around the same time that the construction of the Rue de la Gare began, the municipal council also considered an expansion and renovation of the railway station. This willingness to invest in the railway station was partially a consequence of the expansion of the Northern railway network that brought even more visitors into the city. The Compagnie du Nord, the company that managed the railway network in northern France at that time, proposed taking materials from the old Gare du Nord in Paris, and essentially reconstructing the station in Lille. The Gare du Nord was itself renovated and expanded in 1860, which freed up the materials of the old station for use elsewhere. The old Gare du Nord was a small single-story building, with multiple

¹⁰⁴ Lille's officials undertook the piercing of the city's fortifications only a year after the completion of the Thiers Wall in Paris in 1846, revealing that city walls were by no means redundant in the minds of urban officials in the nineteenth century. Interestingly, the Thiers Wall included points of entry for the railway. Colin Jones, *Paris: The Biography of a City* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004). In Lille, the replacement of the city's barracks with a railway station in addition to the breaching of the city's fortifications reveal the primary of the railway station over defensive concerns in Lille in the mid-century.

¹⁰⁵ Marie-Josèphe Lussien-Maisonneuve, "Du débarcadère à la gare: l'exemple de Lille. Mises au point et réflexions. Villeneuve," *Revue du Nord* 62 (1980): 459.

¹⁰⁶ European societies welcomed railways neither quickly nor uniformly in the nineteenth century. The reluctance of Lille's municipal council to embrace the railway station is one manifestation of the broader anxieties about the railway in European society as a whole. See Wolfgang Schivelbusch *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980); George F. Drinka, *The Birth of Neurosis: Myth, Malady and the Victorians* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984); Ralph Harrington, "The neuroses of the railway," *History Today*, 44 (1994): 15-21.

arched doorways on the front façade; it was replaced with a façade that was over four times the width of the original station and featured a triumphal windowed arch of the Roman style complete with multiple neoclassical statues and columns across the front of the building. The municipal council initially rejected this proposal, indignant at the “state of inferiority in which the city is placed by the company” and the fact that the company wanted the city to use the castoffs from the capital rather than building a new monumental station akin to the new Gare du Nord. It was only in December 1864 that the council reconsidered the project, eventually endorsing it with the understanding that the building would be sufficiently altered to make it grand enough for Lille. The original architect for the Gare du Nord, Léonce Reynaud, agreed to adjust the plan for the station by adding a second story and large clock atop the original building. Finished in 1867, the new railway station was a dramatic change from the earlier small brick building; given a neo-classical style, the new façade was filled with large semicircular arches, pillars with Corinthian, Tuscan, and Ionic features, and large windows.¹⁰⁷ This new station fulfilled the municipal council’s goal of a station that reflected the perceived grandeur and importance of the city, a significant change from the small, simple station of the 1840s.

The expansion of the railway network in northeast France continued after the 1867 renovation of the station. As early as 1880, the municipal council and the Compagnie du Nord reacted to this growth by considering other improvements to the station. An early plan considered by the council in 1880 proposed adding two separate train arrival halls to the 1867 station. The new arrival halls would be perpendicular to each other with a large courtyard between them that also fed into the main station building; one hall would serve trains arriving from the north and, the other, trains from

¹⁰⁷ Lussien-Maisonneuve, “Du débarcadère à la gare,” 462.

the south.¹⁰⁸ Another project, from 1884, suggested adding one large train arrival hall, connecting directly to a newly constructed hotel. The municipal council ultimately accepted this proposal for the expansion of the station, and chose Sidney Dunnett, an architect and the head of the department of Buildings of the Compagnie du Nord, to design and oversee the construction of the arrival hall and the adjacent hotel. In 1889, the city hired the Fives-Lille company, a local company whose experience included the construction of exhibits of various World Exhibitions held in Paris, to construct the hall, which was to be built using glass and steel.¹⁰⁹ The station plan then, finalized in 1887, included the integration of the reception area, hotel, and arrival hall into one large open station. The *hôtel des voyageurs* (Travelers' Hotel), a three-story building added to the left side of the reception hall, expanded the station south to the Rue de Tournai, simultaneously creating a second entrance to the station from the south. The train arrival hall added an additional five tracks to the existing two, as well as a large glass and metal building behind the reception area to cover the train platforms. Spurred by the increasing flow of visitors to the city, Lille's municipal council continued their efforts to expand and embellish the station even after the 1867 renovation, hinting that they found the former façade of the Gare du Nord to be insufficient even after the addition of a clock and second story. Although Dunnett's renovation of the station succeeded in further expanding the city's main entry point, the resulting station was a jumble of multiple architectural styles and ideals. The large neo-classical arches and columns of the reception's façade dwarfed the neighboring hotel, whose ornamental architecture more

¹⁰⁸ Lille, Chambre de Commerce, *Archives de la Chambre de Commerce de Lille*, Volumes 15-17 (Lille: Vanackere, 1880), 13.

¹⁰⁹ Marie-Josèphe Lussien-Maisonnette, "Du débarcadère à la gare," 468.

closely matched those of the neighboring buildings on the Rue de la Gare.¹¹⁰ Standing in the Rue de la Gare, the glass and iron roof of the train arrival hall towered over the neoclassical stone reception building and hotel of travelers.

This jumble of architectural styles was a result of the piecemeal way in which the city developed, even when the city was ‘planned’ from above, as was the case with Lille’s station and the Rue de la Gare. The consistent expansion of the French railway system in the latter half of the nineteenth century had driven a transformation in the ideas and goals of Lille’s municipal council. From hesitatingly adding a station within the city’s walls in 1847, to the construction of the glass and metal arrival hall and a hotel within the station itself in 1892, Lille’s municipal council altered their perceptions on the role of the train in provincial life. They did not do so overnight.

That the development of modern cities is piecemeal and incremental is rarely fully explored in histories of urban planning in France, and in particular in the histories of Haussmannization in Second Empire Paris that draw on the theories of Certeau and Foucault to note the increasing “rationality of urban order.”¹¹¹ In Lille, the piecemeal

¹¹⁰ Lussien-Maisonnette, “Du débarcadère à la gare,” 462.

¹¹¹ Fran Tonkiss, *Space, the City and Social Theory: Social Relations and Urban Forms* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), 127; see also David P. Jordan, *Transforming Paris: the life and labors of Baron Haussmann* (New York: Free Press, 1995); David H. Pinkney, *Napoleon III and the rebuilding of Paris* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1958); Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow, *The Foucault reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984). This problem also exists among urban historians who refer to the creation of the modern city primarily in ideological rather than physical terms. For example, Patrick Joyce and Chris Otter argue that the modern city was a product of liberalism, that the modern city endorsed freedom. Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London: Verso, 2003); Chris Otter, *The Victorian eye: a political history of light and vision in Britain, 1800-1910*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). Several historians have, nevertheless, argued for the fragility of urban identities in the later nineteenth century, most notably Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: people, streets, and images in nineteenth-century London* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: politics and culture* (New York: Knopf, 1979). Efforts to grapple with this social context, and to put people back into the urban construction of modernity, include Tristram Hunt, *Building Jerusalem: the rise and fall of the Victorian city* (New York: Metropolitan Books/ Henry Holt and Co, 2005); and Lief Jerram, *Germany’s other Modernity: Munich and the Building of Metropolis, 1895-1930* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

architecture of the station and the multiplicity of plans for the Rue de la Gare reveal the jumbled reality of the modern city and its planning process. In spite of plans for continuous facades a la Percier and Fontaine, the result is much more unsystematic; Lille was never a finished modern city in the minds of its urban planners.

The reality of incremental development and the combination of diverse architectural visions contrasted heavily, however, with photographers' visions of the train station, which imagined uniformity where none existed. One such postcard, credited to the photographer E.C. and taken in the early twentieth century, reveals what the photographer wanted to see when he stood at the head of the Rue de la Gare, looking across the Place de la Gare at the station façade (Appendix, figure 9).¹¹² Lined up perfectly with the new boulevard, he framed his shot so that the reception hall's arches and columns appeared in their full glory, dwarfing the surrounding buildings. This particular 'view' of the station required careful construction in order to hide the jumbled reality of the station; the photographer had to search for the perfect spot from which to present the station as uncomplicatedly 'modern.' The Travelers' hotel was cut out entirely, and the arrival hall depicted as an afterthought over the right shoulder of the station, as the photographer chose to center his image on the station façade itself.

Another postcard from the same time, credited to L.B. (Appendix, figure 10) showed the station from a similar position at the head of the Rue de la Gare, although it chose to include the hotel of travelers in the photograph.¹¹³ A third postcard, uncredited, reverted back to E.C.'s decision to include only the façade of the reception hall in the

¹¹² E.C., "Lille- La Gare," postcard, 1900, BM Lille, France, 11, 25, http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/lefebvre_11/lef0011pag15car025?p=1 (accessed January 18, 2013).

¹¹³ L.B., "Lille, La Gare," postcard, 1900, BM Lille, France, 44332, 2-1, 1, http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/44332/44332_2-1_1?p=1 (accessed January 18, 2013).

image, although the train arrival hall could be seen much more clearly in the background of the image (Appendix, figure 11).¹¹⁴ This postcard was somewhat different from the other two, however, because the photographer chose to show the station in winter in winter, when snow covered the square and station, and from the third-story of a nearby building rather than at street-level at the head of the Rue de la Gare. In spite of these differences, all three of the postcards created idealized images which airbrushed out the jumbled reality of the railway station. Theorists of space like Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre have argued that the order of urban planners should be resisted by urban citizens. The city “inhabitant” (or de Certeau’s walker), must develop his or her own spatial imagination (their own routes through the city) to resist the impositions of cartographers, urban planners and property developers.¹¹⁵ As the photographs of the Rue de la Gare show, however, the inhabitants of Lille were not resisters. Instead, they were keen to make up for the failure of central planning by finding the angle at which the railway station architecture looked uniform and planned.

All of the photographers characterized the area around the station in the same way. People and carriages crowded the Place de la Gare. Indeed, the photographers seem to have taken their pictures around the same time during the work day: the station clock reveals that all of the images were taken between three and four p.m., although at different times in the year. The winter postcard does show somewhat fewer people in the square than the summer postcards, but that deviation was more due to weather than the

¹¹⁴ Lefebvre, “Lille, La Gare,” postcard, 1900, BM Lille, 11, 26, http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/lefebvre_11/lef0011pag15car026?p=1 (accessed January 18, 2013).

¹¹⁵ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2011); De Certeau differentiated between the city from above, as seen by the urban planner, and the city from the street; regardless of the goals of the urban planner, pedestrians create their own paths and meanings of the city. See also Fran Tonkiss, *Space, the City and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005).

timing of the photograph. The shared timing reveals that these photographers purposely chose to show the station at the height of its daily use, rather than in the early morning when the area would have been mostly empty.¹¹⁶

This perception of the railway station reflected a particular view of what the railway station meant for the people who took those pictures: for them, the modernity of the city was not only in the uniformity of its architecture (which they themselves manufactured), but also in the crowd; the photographers wanted a crowd in front of the station. This perception of the crowd as an essential component of the modern city was not unique among Lille's photographers. Charles Baudelaire's 1863 essay *The Painter of Modern Life* told the story of an artist, Monsieur G., who sought to "know, understand and appreciate everything that happens on the globe;" "a man of the world" whose goal was to experience the life of the crowd. For Baudelaire, the "painter of modern life" was someone who created pictures (painted or written) of the experience of the crowd.¹¹⁷ Negative views of the crowd, for instance that of Victor Fournel in 1858, which argued that the crowd was a result of people overwhelmed by the spectacle of the city, were no less insistent on the importance of the crowd in defining modernity. Such *badauds*, as he called those overwhelmed by the city, lost their identity and humanity, and thus became part of the masses.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ For more on the use of postcards as self-conscious attempts to frame the city (rather than as unproblematic representations, see Thomas Kramer and Andreas Adam, *New York in postcards, 1880-1980: The Andreas Adam collection* (Zurich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2010); and Malcolm Miles, *Art, Space and the city* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

¹¹⁷ Baudelaire's *The Painter of Modern Life* is in turn based on Edgar Allen Poe's *The Man of the Crowd* (1840), in which an unnamed narrator sits in a coffee shop, fascinated by the crowd outside. Charles Baudelaire and Jonathan Mayne, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (London: Phaidon Press, 1995).

¹¹⁸ Victor Fournel, *Ce qu'on voit dans les rues du Paris* (Paris: A. Delahays, 1858), 263. Also Walter Benjamin and Michael William Jennings, *The writer of modern life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006); Charles Baudelaire and Jonathan Mayne, *The Painter*

Art historian Shelley Rice has examined this relationship between photography and modernity most directly in *Parisian Views*, in which she connected the dawdling people watcher of Baudelaire's essay as a prototype of the contemporary street photographer. Rice examined a photograph taken by Gustave Le Gray in 1852, which depicted the Place de la Concorde in Paris in the midst of public celebrations for the coronation of the Emperor Louis-Napoleon. Taken from a rooftop some distance away from the Place de la Concorde, Le Gray's photograph mirrored those later taken in Lille. Individual citizens were blended into the mass, and the urban monuments of the city became part of the frame for that mass. In her view, the disorganized mass of the crowd acted as both a broad model of public life and an icon of modernity.¹¹⁹ Similarly, for the men who created the postcards of Lille's station in the early twentieth century, the modernity of the station was not only in its main façade, but in its existence as a backdrop for modern urban life.

The images described above are only a small sample of the postcards and photographs taken of Lille's station in the first decades of the twentieth century. The image of the station was captured in every season and from nearly every angle in the Place de la Gare and along the new boulevard, a sign of the sustained interest in the station among its citizens and visitors. The crowd in front of the station served as a symbol of modernity in one particular view of the meaning of the modern city. The prevalence of postcards reinforced the importance of the railway station; its image

of Modern Life and Other Essays (London: Phaidon Press, 1995); T.J. Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois: Artists and Politics in France, 1848-1851* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973). More recently, Clark took a similarly negative view of the crowd in an analysis of Ernest Meissonier's 1848 *The Barricade*, a watercolor that depicts dead workers lying in a Parisian street in the aftermath of the fighting of 1848. For Clark, *The Barricade* reveals the true anonymity of the people, a *created* sameness that was the result of violence- it was not a natural occurrence. The first step to the transformation of the people into the mass, according to Clark, was to look at or depict the people as a mass.

¹¹⁹ Shelley Rice, *Parisian Views* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997), 216.

became something to collect and give to others, a token that represented the city. The station was not only a gateway into the city; it was a place with its own symbolic significance. The station became a city monument in fin de siècle France, akin to a great cathedral or the Grand Place. The railway station effectively became a symbol of Lille, just as the Eiffel Tower became a symbol of Paris.

Constructing the history of the Rue de la Gare

Similarly, the Rue de la Gare was not just a conduit between two places (the city center and the railway station), it was a place with its own significance to the people of Lille. Vanessa Schwartz has studied Parisian boulevards extensively in this capacity; she referred to the boulevard as a “theatre of modern life...a festive space in which everyday life was rendered spectacular.”¹²⁰ Michel de Certeau has also recognized the difference between a space, something that people moved through, and a place, a more permanent and stable “locatedness.”¹²¹ For Certeau, the space/place relationship is like the relationship between a map and an itinerary. The itinerary describes an “everyday narration of movement;” the map is a representation of this that erases the itineraries that produced it. The Rue de la Gare existed as a space in the sense that people moved through it and occupied it, but it was also a place, a permanent and symbolic area with distinct borders. In a similar way, Pierre Nora has described “places of memory” as delineated spaces with symbolic significance to the people around it.¹²² Although Nora

¹²⁰ Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-siècle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 20.

¹²¹ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2011), 117.

¹²² Pierre Nora, ed., *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, vol. 1, translated by Lawrence D. Krizman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), xi.

primarily engaged with symbolic significance of historical monuments, he also recognized that new places, such as the Rue de la Gare, could possess such significance from the moment of their construction.

Whereas other “places of memory,” such as the Louvre or the Pantheon, were born out of events that took place in the past, the Rue de la Gare was a different kind of place, one that represented the beauty of modern life. Baudelaire, in his essay *The Painter of Modern Life*, defined modernity as “the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable.”¹²³ Such a conception of modernity suggests that half of art *is* by necessity immutable, that beauty must consist of both an eternal element and a variable element. As Karl Marx once wrote, “men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.”¹²⁴ The creative destruction of Lille’s old city, to make way for the new boulevard, did not involve the total removal of the past for the present. Rather, it involved the alteration of old social configurations to make room for modern ones. Lille’s Rue de la Gare was not exclusively modern; it represented the beauty of modern life because it combined the past and the present of the city.

Giving strength to this perception, a revised urban architectural history was carefully crafted by the municipal council, city architects, and planners. Blondel’s 1870 photograph of the demolition recalled the old city as rubble about to be cleared away by workers, not as the active city it once was. He substituted the reality of the old

¹²³ Charles Baudelaire, and Jonathan Mayne, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (London: Phaidon Press, 1995), 13.

¹²⁴ Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York: International Publishers, 2008), 15.

neighborhood with a shadow; he replaced memories of the old city with images of the city in ruins. In the case of the Rue de la Gare, history replaced memory when the city took the material of the old city and integrated it into the new symbolism of the boulevard.¹²⁵ The history of the new city superseded the memory of the old. Blondel's 1878 photograph showed a boulevard that seemed permanent and out of time, as if it had always been there. In creating this image, Blondel subverted the memory of the old city and the reality of living in the city's center, replacing it with a new 'official' history.

While Blondel presented an image of empty, idealized boulevard taken in the early morning, a place ready and waiting for human occupation, later photographers populated the new city, normalizing it and (as in the case of the pictures of the train station itself) presenting Lille as a vibrant modern metropolis. While Paul Carlier, another Lillois photographer, also displayed the street as a frame for urban life, he chose to capture the street later in the day, when pedestrians and several carriages and carts filled the boulevard (Appendix, figure 12).¹²⁶ The shift from unpopulated to populated, from plan to portrait of the everyday, cemented a sense of the boulevard as a 'historic' part of Lille's landscape. The Rue de la Gare was not new; nor was it, in the pictures of Carlier, in any way exceptional within the city landscape; it was now a permanent and long-lasting aspect of life in Lille. In Carlier's photograph, the station at the end of the street was even faded and not quite in focus, as if to stress that the boulevard itself was the subject, and the inclusion of the station only serving to locate it in the urban landscape.

¹²⁵ Pierre Nora, ed., *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, vol. 1, translated by Lawrence D. Kritzman. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). This process was undertaken by the city council and planners, not by the inhabitants of the city; it was an imposition from above, not an easy or organic process. For Nora, the imposition of new meanings of memories constitutes the "terrorism" of history (although the "terrorists" in his mind are archivists and historians).

¹²⁶ Paul Carlier, "Lille: Rue de la Gare, aujourd'hui rue Faidherbe boulevard," photograph, end of the nineteenth century, BM Lille, France, alb B12, 12, http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/album_B12/albB12_12?p=1, (accessed January 14, 2013).

Meanwhile, the two photographers adopted a very similar perspective on the street. Carlier took his photograph with the railway station at the far end of the street, although from a position somewhat closer to the center of the street rather than from the Place du Theatre itself as Blondel had done.¹²⁷ In both, shop signs and awnings were evident, and the railway station appeared to connect to the buildings at the end of the street. Early twentieth-century postcards adopted the same or similar perspectives on the Rue de la Gare, capturing it from the place du Theatre and including the buildings (a pharmacie and grande café) at the near end of the street. This view of the Rue de la Gare, with the photographer standing at the center of one end of the street and facing the railway station, was thus common among photographers of the time.

Both the creative destruction and construction of the Rue de la Gare – and its framing for consumers of print images – is perhaps even better illustrated by the work of Lillois artist and engraver Edouard Boldoduc. One of his images (Appendix, figure 13) is of the initial destruction of buildings on the place du Theatre, drawn in the midst of the demolition in 1868 (the presence of the cupola of the city’s fish market in the background make it clear that the drawing is of an early stage in the demolition). In this, Boldoduc created an image of the rubble of the Rue de la Gare that was very similar to Blondel’s.¹²⁸ The visual emptiness that dominates Boldoduc’s drawing made it immediately apparent that a building is missing along a row of older buildings, and the ruined frame of part of the first floor among the piles of debris nearly as high as the men working to clear it away added poignancy to the image.

¹²⁷ Paul Carlier, “Lille: Rue de la Gare, aujourd’hui rue Faïdherbe boulevard.”

¹²⁸ Edouard Boldoduc, “Lille: Démolition of the Rue de la Gare,” lithograph, 1868, BM Lille, 44213, planche 30, http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/44213/44213__30_?p=1 (accessed January 18, 2013).

Boldoduc's rendition of the scene was more idealized than Blondel's. He drew the buildings on either side of the demolished structure as if there had never been a building between them, with doors and windows that opened onto the area where the neighboring building once stood. The facades of the neighboring buildings appeared flawless, complete with curtains and an ornamental shop window, even though photographs of the 1868 demolition reveal that these buildings sustained a good deal of damage. The windows of both were missing, and piles of debris lie in what was once the bottom floor shop of the left-hand building. The focus of the image is certainly the remains of a demolished building, but the flawlessness of the surrounding scene muted this focus. Rather than the garish chaos that confronted the eye in photographs of the 1868 demolition, Boldoduc's drawing minimized the interruption of the demolition to the city.

Like Blondel, Boldoduc also created a picture of the finished Rue de la Gare, this time in a series of annual calendars he created between at least 1868 and 1882. Each year of Boldoduc's calendar featured a different accompanying image. Several featured legendary Lillois figures, such as Jeanne Maillotte, a woman who defended Lille from rebel peasants in 1582, or Lyderic and Phinaert, the supposed founders of Lille in 640.¹²⁹ Other years featured the Préfecture du Nord or the Grande Place, both of which were important Lillois sites. Like the other calendars Boldoduc created, the 1874 calendar featured an important Lillois urban space: the Rue de la Gare, with the city's station at its head (Appendix, figure 14).¹³⁰ Boldoduc's calendar depicted the Rue de la Gare in much

¹²⁹ Edouard Boldoduc, "Calendrier lillois," calendars, 1871-1882, BM Lille, France, carton 52, <http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/recherche?q=boldoduc+calendrier> (accessed January 28, 2013).

¹³⁰ Edouard Boldoduc, "Calendrier lillois: rue de la gare," Calendar, 1874, BM Lille, carton 32, 10, <http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/recherche?qid=&q=calendrier%20lillois&p=1> (accessed January 28, 2013).

the same way as the postcards and photographs, from the perspective of a pedestrian at the place du Theatre looking down the crowded boulevard. Unlike Blondel's photograph of an empty street, Boldoduc's 1874 interpretation of the Rue de la Gare already showed a street brimming with human activity. Nevertheless, Boldoduc's image of the completed boulevard, like Carlier's, suggested no less the permanence of the Rue de la Gare. More than that, however, Boldoduc's inclusion of the boulevard in his annual calendar demonstrated that the Rue de la Gare was not only a permanent place, it was a place with cultural and symbolic importance to the citizens of Lille – people like Boldoduc himself.

Although Blondel, Carlier, and Boldoduc portrayed the Rue de la Gare at different times and with different emphases, they all perceived the boulevard to be an important spatial canvas onto which they could depict modern urban life. Whether empty or crowded, dirty or clean, the Rue de la Gare above all represented Lille's modernity; its image lay at the heart of the reinvention of the modern city center. Such representations established the boulevard as a permanent and unchanging backdrop for the continuous motion of the crowd, a depiction that cemented the Rue de la Gare into the fabric and history of the city.

Tourism- the case of Rouen

Lille was not the only provincial city that transformed in the nineteenth century after the introduction of the railway. In Rouen, a city whose population had reached 100,000 by 1861, urban improvement projects primarily took place in the area around the Gare de Rouen-Rive-Droite; grand boulevards replaced the medieval buildings and alleyways of the city as they did in Lille. Much as in Lille, the Gare de Rouen-Rive-

Droite was built on the outer rim of the metropolitan area in 1847. Although Rouen's Gare de Rouen-Saint Sever was built four years earlier, in 1843, the increasingly large numbers of visitors to the city made the construction of the larger Rive-Droite necessary almost immediately. Rouen also built its own version of Lille's Rue de la Gare, la Rue de l'Impératrice, in the early 1860s. Later renamed the Rue Jeanne d'arc, the construction of the Rue de l'Impératrice required the demolition of large parts of the old city to connect the railway station to the city center, in this case the exchange and other buildings along the waterfront of the Seine river. The project also required the demolition of several churches, including the Saint-Martin-sur-Renelle and Saint-André-aux-Fèvres, although the bell tower of the latter church still stands today. This era of urban development also led to the creation of Verdrel Square, a large park on the Rue de l'Impératrice located several blocks south of the railway station. The park is named for Charles Verdrel, the mayor of Rouen from 1858 to 1868; Verdrel commenced so many improvement projects during his tenure that he was later given the nickname "Baron Haussmann rouennais," a reference to Haussmann's renovation of Paris.¹³¹

The effect of the reorientation of the city around the railway station and the significance of boulevards like the Rue de la Gare and the Rue de l'Impératrice in transforming the city was apparent in how visitors engaged with and interpreted the city. In both Lille and Rouen, nearly all of the people who entered the city arrived by train, making the train station both the city gate as well as the first space they encountered in each city. Upon leaving the station, the people who visited Lille between 1870 and 1904 stepped into the Place de la Gare, with the Rue de la Gare stretched out ahead and the Grand Theatre visible in the distance. In contrast to the twisted alleyways of old Lille and

¹³¹ Daniel Caillet, "Rafraîchissant Second Empire," *Côté Rouen*, February 1 - 7, 2012.

other provincial cities, the grand boulevard provided a first impression of the city that awed visitors. In providing a direct link between the front of the station and the Grand Theatre as well as the Grand Place, the Rue de la Gare funneled tourists into the city center, compelling particular experiences of the city among its tourists and other visitors. From the railway station to the Place de la Gare, to the Rue de la Gare, and beyond into the city center, visitors experienced only the new Lille; the old city remained hidden to outsiders. Much the same can be said of Rouen; the construction of the Rue de l'Impératrice guided visitors directly from the railway station to the city center, revealing only the grandest elements of the city to short-term visitors.

The travelers who visited Rouen after the bulk of the urban improvement projects took place often witnessed the transformation of the city's identity firsthand. Visits to the city no longer involved following the post to an "old little inn, with its rubicund jovial hail-fellow-well-met landlord," the English traveler William Miller wrote; instead, "whole streets of hotels, in the best situations, and possessed of all the comforts with which modern civilization can furnish them, are built and occupied, and in busy times are sometimes full to overflowing."¹³² Other tourists also remarked upon the new feeling of the city after the urban improvements. The American Margaret Jane Mussey Sweat wrote of the view from her hotel window; "Beneath our windows is a row of trees," Sweat began, "presenting to our downward gaze so smooth a bank of greenery, that we are tempted to jump down upon it as the most inviting turf. This bank conceals from us the

¹³² William Miller, *Wintering in the Riviera: with notes of travel in Italy and France and practical hints to travellers* (London: Longmans, 1879), 44.

passers-by beneath, but beyond this sidewalk we have the Quai de la Bourse, on which our hotel fronts, busy with its wayfarers and gay with various costumes.”¹³³

The city owed its very existence as a tourist destination to the expansion of the French railway system. Prior to the 1840s, people traveling from London rarely stopped in northern France en route to Paris, and stops typically consisted of a night at the inn rather than any tourist activities. After the expansion of the railway, however, travel in northern France transformed. Le Havre became the primary port of entry for people traveling from France, and all visitors traveling by rail from Le Havre to Paris by necessity stopped in Rouen, located 90 kilometers southeast of Le Havre and 130 kilometers northwest of Paris. With the connection of the railway, Rouen transformed from a medieval provincial city into a regional hub of trade and travel, one that acted not only as a temporary platform for those passing from one place to another, but as a tourist destination in its own right. “The introduction and development of the railway system,” the English traveler William Miller wrote, “have affected such an extraordinary increase in the amount of traveling as to have, in respect of such public accommodation, produced, or rather necessitated, a revolutionary change.”¹³⁴

The presence of the railway station in Rouen made the city important in the minds of all rail travelers. Even those tourists who passed through Rouen without stopping remarked on it, as Phebe Early Gibbons did when he remarked, “We pass though Rouen, but only stop ten minutes; so I do not go to see where Joan of Arc was burned. The young woman with the parrot tells me that the heart of Richard Coeur de Lion is here, and that I

¹³³ Margaret Jane Mussey Sweat, *Highways of Travel or A Summer in Europe* (Boston: Walker, Wise, and Company, 1859), 26-27.

¹³⁴ William Miller, *Wintering in the Riviera: with notes of travel in Italy and France and practical hints to travellers*, 43.

can be shown to the church by paying a small sum...¹³⁵ Gibbon's comment on an otherwise nondescript encounter suggests that the very presence of a rail station in an otherwise minor city encouraged tourists to think of Rouen as important French city. The English traveler and guidebook writer William Miller also reinforced the importance of Rouen for other visitors when he talked of traveling to Paris from Calais or Boulogne. "One may stop at Amiens and see the town and fine old cathedral," he wrote, "But the routes from Havre, and from Dieppe to Paris through Normandy, are far more interesting by the way, and pass picturesque Rouen, which is well worthy of a visit, the stoppage of at least a night to explore it amply repaying the visitor."¹³⁶ The existence of a railway station in Rouen created a tourist destination almost overnight; it put the city on the map for people visiting France.

Visitors to Rouen were not alone in their recognition of the transformation of the city's identity. Many of Rouen's citizens also began to see (and capitalize on) their city as a tourist destination. Rouen's citizens, via the proliferation of locally produced guidebooks, souvenir shops, and tourist-centric urban spaces, turned the city into a commodity. They not only recognized that Rouen's identity was in the midst of transition, they directly contributed to the shape of this new identity. One such guidebook, *Rouen, son histoire, ses monuments et ses environs* went through nine editions and multiple authors and publishers from the 1840s through into the nineteenth century. Several of its authors, including G. Dubosc and Théodore Licquet also produced their own guidebooks to the city in addition to contributing to *Rouen, son histoire, ses*

¹³⁵ Phebe Earle Gibbons, *French and Belgians* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1879), 14-15.

¹³⁶ William Miller, *Wintering in the Riviera: with notes of travel in Italy and France and practical hints to travellers*, 21.

monuments et ses environs.¹³⁷ In the preface, Théodore Licquet wrote, “at present...to increase the enjoyment of tourists, we believe it is necessary, to the eager traveler, with a native guide, concise, especially to visit properly and promptly all that the ancient capital of Normandy including the curious and useful.”¹³⁸ Profit was certainly a motivation for the publication of such works, but locally produced guidebooks also provided Rouennais citizens with the opportunity to influence how visitors encountered and interpreted their city.

The construction of Rouen’s train station thus played an integral role in transforming the city into a major tourist destination remarked upon by visitors and locals alike. Rouen and Lille did not develop in exactly the same way: provincial cities modernized to meet local needs, and according to local political and economic conditions. The correlation between urban development and the influx of tourists was relatively minor in Lille, a provincial city in northern France away from the spas and resorts on the coasts and other tourist destinations. In cities such as Rouen and Nice, however, tourism played a much greater role in urban development; urban planners rebuilt and reoriented these cities according to the needs of visitors.

¹³⁷ Théodore Licquet and Édouard Frère, *Guide de l'étranger dans Rouen. Extrait de l'itinéraire de Th. Licquet* (Rouen: A. Le Brument, 1851); Théodore Licquet and Édouard Frère, *Rouen: son histoire, ses monuments et ses environs: guide nécessaire aux voyageurs pour bien connaître cette capitale de la Normandie et les localités voisines les plus intéressantes* (Rouen: A. Lebrument, 1861); George Dubosc, *A Travers Rouen ancien et moderne: histoire et description de la ville de Rouen* (Rouen: Librairie Henri Defontaine, 1920).

¹³⁸ Théodore Licquet, *Rouen, son histoire, ses monuments, ses environs: guide nécessaire pour bien connaître cette capitale de la Normandie et les localités voisines les plus intéressantes*, 6e édition, revue et annotée par Edouard Frère (Rouen: A. Le Brument, 1855), 11: « A présent...accroître les jouissances du touriste, nous pensons qu'il faut, à l'impatient voyageur, l'aide d'un Cicérone indigène, concis surtout, pour visiter convenablement et promptement tout ce que l'ancienne capitale de la Normandie renferme de curieux et d'utile. »

James Haug has already examined the role of tourism in depth in the case of Nice, a provincial city located on the coast of the Mediterranean near the border with Italy.¹³⁹ Although a popular tourist destination for the very wealthy in the eighteenth century, the addition of a railway station with connections to Lyon and Paris caused a rapid 117% increase in Nice's population, from 48,000 in 1861 to 143,000 by 1911.¹⁴⁰ Haug argued that Nice's role as a major tourist destination meant that tourism played a major role in the urban development in the metropolis, as urban planners developed the city in accordance with the demands of the tourist. "Nice's municipal leaders understood," he wrote, "that the city's future lay in its ability to attract visitors, and they recognized the need for municipal investments in streets, promenades, and municipal facilities."¹⁴¹

Railways transformed French provincial cities in the late nineteenth century, as local centers of trade became full-blown tourist destinations, complete with the development of urban structures to handle the influx of short-term visitors. The railway was central to this transformation, as it put the city on the map and led to the reorientation of the city around the railway station. The fabric of the city responded to the train station not at once, but slowly over time; planners and municipal officials considered multiple possibilities in renovating both the station and the surrounding area. The men who interpreted the city through visual images (for example Blondel, Blondel, and Carlier, in Lille) presented it differently, as quick and decisive, not piecemeal and incremental. They obscured not only the old city, but also the cracks in the "modern" façade when they

¹³⁹ Prior to 1860, Nice belonged to Piedmont-Sardinia, a kingdom in what is now northwest Italy. Louis-Napoleon negotiated with Cavour, the prime minister of Piedmont-Sardinia for France to receive Nice in 1860; soon after the Paris-Lyon-Méditerranée rail line was extended to Nice: James Haug, *Leisure and Urbanism in Nineteenth-Century Nice* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1982), 20-1.

¹⁴⁰ Haug, *Leisure and Urbanism in Nineteenth-Century Nice*, xvi.

¹⁴¹ Haug, *Leisure and Urbanism in Nineteenth-Century Nice*, 21.

angled photographs to avoid showing the jumble of the city. French provincial cities each had their own story of development - the railway offered different economic advantages to different towns. Nevertheless, across late-nineteenth-century France, provincial cities were responding to the appearance of the railway, constructing new urban landscapes in which the train station played a vital spatial, symbolic role.

Chapter 3: The Creation of a Common Urban Identity in Provincial France

In 1875, the writer Hippolyte Verly visited Périgueux, a French city in southwestern France and the capital of the Dordogne department. This was the first time that Verly, a native of Lille, had traveled outside of northern France. Writing under the pseudonym Étienne Durand, Verly described the beauty of the ancient city in detail; “a painter would draw no doubt, a wonderful advantage of the streets,” he began, “where the sun, arriving through the narrow estuary, provides vivid contrasts of warm light and dark shadow; weird old facades, with arched entrances, with wire windows.”¹⁴² In spite of this beauty, however, Verly admitted that “the tourist has other requirements,” most important among them the ability to easily navigate the city.¹⁴³ “For these reasons, as I am a tourist,” he concluded “we are indebted to his (the local city planner Magne’s) participation in the drilling of a large artery leading from the station to the top of the hill, that is to say the Grande Place.”¹⁴⁴ Much as in Lille, Verly’s hometown, Périgueux was in the midst of a rapid transformation, with the construction of a permanent railway station

¹⁴² Hippolyte Verly, *De Flandre en Navarre: notes d'un bourgeois de Lille* (Lille: impr. De Leleux, 1875), 19-20: « Un peintre tirerait, sans doute, un merveilleux parti de ces ruelles où le soleil, arrivant de biais par l'étroit estuaire, produit d'éclatants contrastes de lumière chaude et d'ombre épaisse; de vieilles façades bizarres, aux poternes cintrées, aux fenêtres à grillage. »

¹⁴³ Verly, *De Flandre en Navarre: notes d'un bourgeois de Lille*, 21: « que le pinceau s'empresserait de poétiser. Mais le touriste a d'autres exigences: il voit les choses non pas embellies... »

¹⁴⁴ Verly, *De Flandre en Navarre: notes d'un bourgeois de Lille*, 20: « l'on doit à son intervention le percement d'une large artère (la seule où les maisons n'aient pas l'air de se parler à l'oreille) qui mène de la gare au haut de la côte, c'est à dire à la «grande place. »

and a corresponding rise in visitors to the city. When Verly traveled to Périgueux, he recognized and appreciated this transformation; he understood that other provincial cities had carried out programs of urban development similar to that of Lille's Rue de la Gare in recent decades. Verly's account contrasts directly with Denis's interpretation of Louis-Napoleon's visit to Lille in 1867. Published only eight years after Denis's *Voyage de leurs majestés impériales dans le nord de la France*, Verly's account of Périgueux and other provincial cities contrasts directly with Denis's description of the Louis-Napoleon's visit as a distinctly provincial event; taken together, they reveal the transformation of the French provincial urban identity. The widespread nature of such urban improvement projects also meant that provincial cities were easier to navigate for tourists like Verly in the late nineteenth century.

This nation-wide modernization of the provincial city did more than make the city more accessible to tourists, however. It also created a split between the modern city and the "Old France" of the countryside. Verly had a very different perception of the countryside during his travels. "The land between Paris and Périgueux, he reminisced, "is like an ocean of greenery, sometimes forests, sometimes bushes or ferns, waves of green which extend out of sight... Hamlets here and there that the railway has taken their ancient secrecy, the trees show their huts and the picturesque old Gothic church tower, cracked and empty."¹⁴⁵ Originally from Lille, Verly's account consistently romanticized the countryside of southwest France. This romanticization was not simply born of a desire to appear poetic, however. Verly imagined the villages and people he encountered

¹⁴⁵ Verly, *De Flandre en Navarre: notes d'un bourgeois de Lille*, 17: « C'est comme un océan végétât, tantôt futaies, tantôt tailis ou fougères, qui étend à perte de vue ses vagues de verdure... Çà et là des hameaux que le chemin de fer est venu tirer de leur incognito séculaire, montrent au milieu des arbres leurs mesures pittoresques et leur vieille église gothique; une tour fendue et vide. »

to be part of an Old France, one already extinct in Lille and Paris. The “ruined tower, which cut the horizon with its chipped gray battlements,” he remembered, “remind while passing through here of the bowels of Old France, the countries of nobility where manors flourished.”¹⁴⁶

Throughout his work, Verly consistently contrasted between the Old France of the southern countryside and the new, urbanized France of the provincial city. For Verly, his journey to southern France was a journey into the past, into a France that no longer existed in the urbanized city. Eugen Weber recognized the same sort of urban / rural divide in *Peasants into Frenchmen*; he emphasized that urban dwellers believed the peasantry were little better than the animals they farmed. Referencing the journalist Eugène Bonnemère, who in 1856 “predicted the hardening of social lines, culminating into two distinct races, city dwellers and countryfolk, living in mutual ignorance, and in two distinct Frances, different and hostile, that of the country and that of the towns,” Weber found that “urbanization - or more precisely, the spread of urban values across the countryside” affected the expectations of previously rural individuals, and caused new frustrations when those expectations were not met.¹⁴⁷ He linked the growth in an urban / rural divide within the provinces to the rise of the railway, mapping onto it the spread of “Frenchness.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Verly, *De Flandre en Navarre: notes d'un bourgeois de Lille*, 17: « un donjon ruiné qui découpe sur le gris horizon ses crénaux ébréchés, rappellent au passant qu'il traverse ici les entrailles de la vieille France, les pays de noblesse où florissaient les gentilhommières. »

¹⁴⁷ Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 10.

¹⁴⁸ Weber's chronology of provincial “Frenchness” has been contested by other historians. For James Lehning, Frenchness was not something that entered the countryside from the city; it consisted of a relationship between two separate cultures, the “French” culture and the “Peasant culture,” in which each contributed to the idea of a French nation. City dwellers used the country as something to define themselves against, Lehning argued, but the people in the countryside also influenced the categories in

In this chapter, I will push Weber's argument further by examining how provincial travelers discussed this division between city and country in the provinces as they passed through other parts of provincial France. The major marker by which these travelers distinguished a "city" from a rural town was by reference to the urban improvement projects of the nineteenth century. Like Verly, these travelers not only arrived in the city via the train station, they also often used the station as a point of navigation as they traveled through the city. Thanks to similar urban improvement projects that occurred across France, provincial travelers easily navigated the cities they visited.

The Old Countryside and the New City

For provincial travelers, rural and urban provincial France were fundamentally different: where the city was modern, the countryside still belonged to Old France. Verly identified this transformation in Périgueux when he commented on the effect of Magne's boulevard in the middle of an otherwise medieval city; he recognized the transformative effects of such urban improvement projects in provincial France.

Verly's commentary on the countryside he travelled through in southern France was much more romanticized. Upon arriving at the chateau d'Argentonnesse, his lodging near the small town of Saint-Cyprien, Verly described it by comparing it to the settings of novels by Walter Scott and Anne Radcliffe, two well-known writers from the early nineteenth century. "Time has chipped his scythe on the granite walls," he began, walls with a few cracks and indentations made to ancient stairs of the towers by the boot of

which they were placed by city dwellers. *James Lehning, Peasant and French: Cultural Contact in Rural France during the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 5.

armed men, the feudal house is as habitable today as it four hundred years ago.”¹⁴⁹ For Verly, these villages, buildings, and natural features were not simply remnants of the Old France, they were signs that the society and culture of past centuries were still alive in the south. Upon entering the chateau, Verly came upon a portrait of the former inhabitant of the estate, “an ominously famous ancestor, the Baron of Adrets.”¹⁵⁰ Several moments and a few corridors later, “a vague light cast by a slit window showed who standing two steps ahead of me: The Baron of Adrets in person! Yes, this cursed deceased of three centuries...I stopped, speechless with horror. The spectre advanced, extended his arm, and said politely ‘welcome sir.’”¹⁵¹ Although the “spectre” Verly encountered was the current inhabitant of the chateaux, and not the Baron of Adrets of the fifteenth century, Verly made sure to note the resemblance between the two men. For Verly, the chateaux d’Argentonnesse was not a hotel for modern travelers, but a symbol of Old France; he was greeted there not by a contemporary, but by a man who had been dead for over three centuries. Upon entering the countryside, Verly imagined that he was in the past, and he identified the villages, people, and natural features he encountered as places and symbols of a society and culture that no longer existed in Périgueux or Lille.

Verly was not the only provincial traveler to distinguish between the provincial city and the countryside throughout his travels. Étienne Lucas, a teenage self-styled adventurer from Sotteville-lès-Rouen, a suburb of Rouen, traveled with an older

¹⁴⁹ Verly, *De Flandre en Navarre: notes d’un bourgeois de Lille*, 31: « Le Temps a ébréché sa faux sur ces murs de granit: à part quelques lézardes et les échancrures séculaires faites aux escaliers des tours par la botte des hommes d’armes, la féodale demeure est aussi habitée aujourd’hui qu’il y a quatre cents ans. »

¹⁵⁰ Verly, *De Flandre en Navarre: notes d’un bourgeois de Lille*, 32: « un ancêtre lugubrement fameux, le baron des Adrets. »

¹⁵¹ Verly, *De Flandre en Navarre: notes d’un bourgeois de Lille*, 32: « une vague lueur projetée par une meurtrière me montra debout, à deux pas devant moi,...qui? Le baron des Adrets en personne ! Oui, ce maudit, trépassé depuis trois siècles, était là, sous mes yeux, bien portant, en chair et en os !! Je m’arrêtai pétrifié, muet d’horreur. Le spectre s’avança, étendit le bras, et me dit poliment: Soyez le bienvenu, Monsieur. »

companion to Savoie and Switzerland in 1877. Whereas Verly complimented the modern features of Périgueux in his travels, Lucas preferred country to city. For Lucas, the countryside was a also place out of time, but a place out of time full of picturesque villages and natural beauty, unaffected by the industry and crowds of the modern city. After hiking to the peak of Mont Blanc, Lucas wrote, “I was exhausted, but soon I came to myself when I saw the size of the scene that unfolded spontaneously in front of my eyes. The sight of huge masses...the silence that reigns in this vast desert, all combine to give the astonished traveler a feeling of admiration that is difficult to describe. I forgot momentarily the hardships of the road, at the sight of this grand spectacle which is unique in the world.”¹⁵² After experiencing such timeless beauty in the countryside, Lucas expressed his disappointment with Dijon, the next city he encountered. “Now, we are in Dijon, a city which seems to us supremely sad.”¹⁵³ Even in the city, Lucas sought out the old – medieval monuments, in particular -- often to be disappointed that they had disappeared. Lucas questioned whether Dijon was worth visiting for any provincial traveler, expressing interest in only a handful of sites in Dijon: a Cathedral from the thirteenth century the Church Notre-Dame, and the Palace of the Dukes of Burgundy, all

¹⁵² Lucas, *Un premier voyage: Savoie et Suisse* (Sotteville-les-Rouen: Impr. Lecourt et Miollais, 1877), 49: « J'étais épuisé, mais bien vite je revins à moi quand je vis la grandeur de la scène qui se déploya spontanément devant mes yeux. La vue des masses énormes...le silence absolu qui règne dans ce vaste désert, tout concourt à faire sur le voyageur étonné une impression d'admiration difficile à décrire. J'oubliais momentanément les fatigues de la route, à la vue de ce spectacle grandiose qui est unique au monde. » Lucas treated the mountain villages he encountered in Savoy as part of natural beauty he found in the area. “At our feet the river flows we hear the roar,” he began, “before us, centuries old trees, green pastures and chalets, and everywhere clear water streams. Nature is at once grandiose and laughing by this beautiful summer day. Above, a small village with a bridge over a small stream that cascades and rejoins the Arly.” Lucas, *Un premier voyage: Savoie et Suisse*, 32: « A nos pieds, coule le torrent dont nous entendons le fracas; devant nous, des sapins séculaires de verts pâturages des châlets et partout, des filets d'eau limpide. La nature est tout à la fois grandiose et riante par ce beau jour d'été. Plus haut, un petit village avec un pont sur un petit torrent qui tombe en cascades et rejoint l'Arly, puis une église et un presbytère tout neufs. »

¹⁵³ Lucas, *Un premier voyage: Savoie et Suisse*, 12: « Maintenant, nous voici à Dijon, qui nous paraît une ville souverainement triste. »

medieval sites unrelated to the modern identity of the city. With his head still filled with the timeless beauty of the Savoy, he was unwilling to engage even with the city's medieval center: "we were obviously in a bad disposition to appreciate the Ancient capital of the Dukes of Burgundy."¹⁵⁴

In Dijon, Lucas neglected completely the city's magnificent Château d'eau, designed by the architect and railway engineer Henri Darcy to carry water from Messigny, twelve kilometers away, to the city, and the large open square that surrounded it, built directly adjacent to the train station (named after Darcy in 1858). Lucas had no desire to stay long in the city: indeed, he regretted that he had not continued directly to Paris. Similarly, when arriving in Lyon earlier during his journey, Lucas remarked, "we did not intend to stay long, so we went to the hotel nearest to the station, that of l'Univers."¹⁵⁵ As in Dijon, he and his companion saw little reason to remain there for longer than a day.

Lucas also assumed his audience would be uninterested in reading about Lyon. "It would be superfluous to give a long description of Lyon," he wrote, "everyone knows that it is crossed by two major rivers, the Rhône and the Saône."¹⁵⁶ After a brief walk to the Rhone, a visit to the Hotel-de-Ville and the Prefecture, and the Saône, he quickly moved on to Fourvière and the countryside around Lyon. By excluding in-depth descriptions of his time in Lyon from his account, Lucas assumed that, like himself, his readers were uninterested in nineteenth-century urban life.

¹⁵⁴ Lucas, *Un premier voyage: Savoie et Suisse*, 12: « Nous étions évidemment dans une mauvaise disposition pour apprécier l'ancienne capitale des ducs de Bourgogne. »

¹⁵⁵ Étienne Lucas, *Une premier voyage: Savoie et Suisse*, 12. « N'ayant pas l'intention d'y séjourner longtemps, nous descendîmes à l'hôtel le plus voisin de la gare, celui de l'Univers. Nous allâmes ensuite à travers la ville, qui est la seconde de France par son importance et sa situation. »

¹⁵⁶ Lucas, *Un premier voyage: Savoie et Suisse*, 12. « Il serait superflu de décrire longuement Lyon, qui est une ville bien connue ; chacun sait qu'elle est traversée par deux grandes fleuves: le Rhône et la Saône. »

Lucas ascribed more importance to the city of Annecy, located only 40 kilometers from Geneva and the capital of the department of Haute-Savoie. “The streets are narrow and winding,” he wrote, “the houses are on arcades, under which circulate pedestrians. Under these arcades are the shops with their modest display. The old town is dominated by a building that flanks a large square tower, in a quite severe medieval style. This tower is the Ancient City Jail.”¹⁵⁷ Although brief, Lucas’ description of the medieval streets of Annecy was the first time he engaged with a provincial city with any real interest. This is partially because Annecy is the capital of the Savoie region, the area Lucas was most interested in visiting during his trip, but also because he could see that the old “medieval” city of Annecy still existed in some form; it had not been destroyed to make way for new buildings and boulevards as had happened in so many other provincial cities. Lucas then continued his description of Annecy, “The new town is close to the lake. Therein lies the Hotel-de-Ville, the Public Garden, and the Prefecture of recent construction, which has a beautiful view of the lake and the surrounding hills. From Annecy we want to win Chamounix.”¹⁵⁸ In drawing a distinction between the old and new parts of Annecy, Lucas restricted the modernity of the provincial city to a small area, suggesting to the reader that the Old France he (and, he believed, his readers) were looking for still existed in Annecy in some form.

Although Verly and Lucas came to very different conclusions as to the value of provincial cities as tourist destinations, they agreed that a division existed between the

¹⁵⁷ Lucas, *Un premier voyage: Savoie et Suisse*, 22: « Les rues sont étroites et tortueuses, les maisons sont à arcades, sous lesquelles circulent les piétons. Sous ces arcades sont les boutiques avec leur modeste étalage. La vieille ville est dominée par un édifice flanqué d’une grande tour carrée, style Moyen-Age assez sévère. Cette tour est l’ancienne prison de la ville. »

¹⁵⁸ Lucas, *Un premier voyage: Savoie et Suisse*, 22: « La ville neuve se rapproche du lac. Là se trouve l’Hotel-de-ville, le jardin public et la Préfecture de construction récente, qui a une très belle vue sur le lac et les collines voisines. D’Annecy nous désirons gagner Chamounix. »

provincial city and the countryside, between the new and the old in provincial France.

What made the provincial city so unworthy of time or mention for Lucas was also what made it enjoyable for Verly.

The division between town and country was felt most deeply by a third provincial traveler, also from Lille, Henry Beaufort. Beaufort, a member of the Société de géographie de Lille, traveled to Dijon, Lyon, Grenoble, and a number of smaller towns and villages in southwestern France in 1899. While visiting Lyon, Beaufort moved quickly between buildings, boulevards, and monuments, seeing the entire city in a single day. After lunch on 10 August, Beaufort managed to visit Lille's city hall, the grand theatre, the exchange, the Church of St. Bonaventure, the Prefecture, the city's library, the Palais St-Pierre, with its museums of art, sculpture, antiquities, and natural history, and the Parc de la tête d'or, as well as a number of other squares, statues, and monuments he passed on his route.¹⁵⁹ Of the church of St. Bonaventure, he wrote "The second facade of the Exchange overlooks the place des Cordeliers, where also stands the St. Bonaventure Church, of the fifteenth century: one mainly notices the modern stained glass, the most admirable colors."¹⁶⁰ Beaufort treated each site with a terse perfunctory description of its history and significance, before moving on to the next. He was interested in mapping the modern city, seeing the all sights (more so than Lucas), but no one building or monument arrested his attention. His treatment of the countryside was entirely different.

In contrast to the brief wooden descriptions of Lyon, Beaufort's account of the rest of his journey through the countryside was emotional and imaginative. While

¹⁵⁹ Henri Beaufort, *Voyage en Dauphiné et en Savoie, du mercredi 9 au samedi 26 août 1899* (Lille: Impr. de L. Danel 1899), 11-14.

¹⁶⁰ Beaufort, *Voyage en Dauphiné et en Savoie*, 12: « La seconde façade de la Bourse donne sur la place des Cordeliers, où s'élève aussi l'église St-Bonaventure, du XVe siècle: On en remarque principalement les vitraux modernes, la plupart d'une couleur admirable. »

traveling through the Isère department in in southeast France, Beaufort was overcome by the beauty of his surroundings. “At the end of the [railway] tunnel was a dazzling vision,” he wrote, “at over 500 meters the Isère valley appears suddenly, green, flowery, full of walnut and mulberry; beyond the rise, also green, the high hills of the Côte Saint-André through the trees, by fields nearby, hamlets, villages, towns, small towns with red roofs seem sown. This is a sublime, one of those whose eyes cannot detach.”¹⁶¹ At Talloires, he remarked on “a large village, in a pretty setting and enjoying a mild climate thanks to the mountains that shelter winds from the north and east, especially Tournette. There is an ancient Abbey of the 9th and 11th centuries, now in ruins.”¹⁶² For Beaufort, the city was a place of modern boulevards and buildings, whereas the countryside was the site of ancient monuments and the timelessness of nature. Like Verly and Lucas, then, Beaufort presented the countryside and the city as entirely different: they had to be experienced in very different ways.

Like Lucas, Beaufort was more interested in the countryside than the city. On several occasions, Beaufort suggested that the key feature of the cities he visited was their location relative to nearby natural landmarks. After providing basic information on the history and population of Grenoble, for example, Beaufort then went on to say, “but what makes Grenoble a principle city of France for tourists, is its original site it occupies, at the junction of the beautiful values of the Isère and the Drac and the surrounding

¹⁶¹ Beaufort, *Voyage en Dauphiné et en Savoie*, 26: « A l'issue d'un des tunnels on a une éblouissante vision. A plus de 500 mètres de profondeur apparaît tout à coup la vallée de l'Isère, verte, fleurie, remplie de noyers et de mûriers; au delà se dressent, vertes aussi, les hautes collines de la Côte St-André. Dans les arbres, par les champs, par les près, des hameaux, des villages, des bourgs, des petites villes aux toits rouges semblent semés. C'est une vue sublime, une de celles dont le regard ne peut se détacher. »

¹⁶² Beaufort, *Voyage en Dauphiné et en Savoie*, 71: « Un gros village, dans un joli site et jouissant d'un climat très doux, grâce aux montagnes qui l'abritent des vents du Nord et de L'Est, en particulier La Tournette. Il y a une ancienne *Abbaye*, des IX et XI siècles, maintenant morcelée. »

mountains rising up to 3,000 meters.”¹⁶³ He decided to delay his description of the city until after he toured the surrounding countryside, again suggesting that his interest lay not with the city as a city, but as a gateway to the surrounding region.

Throughout their travels, Beaufort, Verly, and Lucas all recognized the dichotomy of the modern provincial city vis-à-vis the timelessness of the countryside. Beaufort’s dedication to the modern neighborhoods and buildings of various provincial cities served the same purpose as Verly’s mention of the usefulness of the Périgueux grand artery for visitors to the city; both recognized that the city had recently transformed. All three of them also saw the countryside as effectively unchanged; they agreed that an Old France still existed in the countryside. Even though the travelers ascribed different values to the provincial city vis-à-vis the countryside, they all recognized this fundamental division between the modernity of the city and the timelessness of the countryside.

‘Walking in the City’

In the city, as he had done in Lyon, Beaufort followed a “standard” route as he traveled through the city, allowing himself to follow the lines of boulevards and other open spaces. Dijon similarly possessed large boulevards and squares through which tourists navigated the city: “the Rue de la Gare,” he wrote, “leads to the Place Darcy, named for the Engineer who created both the reservoirs and the public fountains of the city. Erected there in 1886 was a statue of Rude (1784-1855) the sculptor. Behind this square, [is] the lovely promenade of the Chateau d’Eau, with beautiful new houses at its sides. Further on is the Porte Guillaume of 1784, at the entrance of the city proper. The

¹⁶³ Beaufort, *Voyage en Dauphiné et en Savoie*, 27. « Mais ce qui fait de Grenoble une des principales villes de France pour les touristes, c'est le site original qu'elle occupe, à la jonction des belles vallées de l'Isère et du Drac et au milieu de montagnes s'élevant jusqu'à 3000 mètres... »

rue de la Liberté leads directly from there to the Place d'Armes.”¹⁶⁴ In Dijon, Beaufort told his readers “The route from Paris, to the left of the Rue de la Gare coming from the direction of the interior of the city, leads to the Botanical Gardens and the Promenade of the Arquebuse near the station.”¹⁶⁵ Like Lille, Dijon and Aix-Les-Bains had recently developed an infrastructure that was easier for tourists to navigate than had been the case in earlier decades; the construction of boulevards such as the Rue de la Gare allowed tourists to see more of the city in less time than was previously possible.

Beaufort’s orderly progress through the cities of Lyon and Dijon was in direct contrast to his movement through the villages and towns in the French countryside. At the resort of Saint-Georges de Commiers, “the train coming from Grenoble stops, we see the door open suddenly out come many passengers, at full speed, rushing to another train: it’s the train to Mure and one must hasten to get a good seat at the back of the car; otherwise they will enjoy the landscape only imperfectly, because you must have the right place to see it.”¹⁶⁶ Getting to remote villages was a challenge for travelers like Beaufort. “The art of engineering was forced to seek its way out of the valley de Vaulx, reaching almost to its base and then must leave its highest part: also, for an hour, the road

¹⁶⁴ Beaufort, *Voyage en Dauphiné et en Savoie*, 79-80: « La Rue de la Gare nous mène à la Place Darcy ainsi nommée de l'Ingénieur qui a créé les deux réservoirs et les fontaines publiques de la ville. On a érigé en 1886 la statue de Rude (1784-1855) le sculpteur. Derrière cette place, la jolie Promenade du Château d'eau et sur les côtés de belles maisons neuves. Plus loin est la Porte Guillaume de 1784. à l'entrée de la ville proprement dite. La Rue de la Liberté mène directement de là à la Place d'Armes. »

¹⁶⁵ Beaufort, *Voyage en Dauphiné et en Savoie*, 86: « La Route de Paris, à gauche de la Rue de la Gare en revenant de l'intérieur de la ville, conduit au Jardin botanique et à la Promenade de l'Arquebuse, près de la Gare. »

¹⁶⁶ Beaufort, *Voyage en Dauphiné et en Savoie*, 39: « chaque jour pendant l'été, à la station de Saint-Georges de Commiers, à l'arrêt du train venant de Grenoble, on voit les portières s'ouvrir brusquement et descendre de nombreux voyageurs qui, au pas de course, se précipitent vers un autre train: c'est le chemin de fer de la Mure et il faut se hâter pour avoir une bonne place au fond des wagons, sous peine de ne jouir qu'imparfaitement du paysage, car il faut se placer à droite pour la vue. »

twists like a snake, back constantly on itself, even crossing viaducts superimposed before winning Motte Aveillans.”¹⁶⁷

In Dijon and other provincial cities, Beaufort’s movement through the city was effortless, as if all of the city’s monuments are located along a single promenade. For example, in Lyon, Beaufort described visiting the Pont du Palais de Justice, the Celestine Theatre, the church of St. Nizier, and the Palais St-Pierre of the Arts, among other buildings, in rapid succession in a single afternoon.¹⁶⁸ While urban improvement projects certainly made it easier for tourists to navigate provincial cities, however, they could not place all of a city’s monuments along a single promenade. In reality, Beaufort’s route zig-zagged through Lyon, stopping at every sight he deemed worthy of a visit; he had to actively navigate the city in order to reach the sights he describes in his account. Beaufort ignored the piecemeal elements of Lyon in his description of the city much in the same way that Lille’s photographers created views of the station and Rue de la Gare that emphasized uniformity.¹⁶⁹

Throughout Beaufort’s account, it is clear that he found the provincial cities he visited similar to each other. Beaufort reinforced his conception of a provincial city belonging to a ‘new’ France by drawing specific attention to the most modern aspects of city architecture in his descriptions. In Grenoble he remarked on the “large and beautiful Place de la Constitution, surrounded by remarkable modern buildings.” In Annecy he

¹⁶⁷ Beaufort, *Voyage en Dauphiné et en Savoie*, 40: « L’art des ingénieurs a dû chercher le moyen de quitter le vallon de Vaulx, atteint presque à sa base et dont il faut sortir par sa partie la plus élevée: aussi, pendant une heure, la voie se tord comme un serpent, revenant sans cesse sur elle-même, franchissant même des viaducs superposés avant de gagner la Motte d’Aveillans. »

¹⁶⁸ Beaufort, *Voyage en Dauphiné et en Savoie*, 10-12.

¹⁶⁹ De Certeau suggests that urban planners create uniform, modern urban scapes, but that “walkers” create their own paths/values of the city. As with Lille’s photographers in the previous chapter, Beaufort’s account of Lyon directly opposes this assertion; the reality of the city was jumbled and Beaufort and the Lille photographers who depicted or described the urban landscape as uniform were simply trying to impose a sense of order on the jumbled reality of the city.

commented on the “the Prefecture, grand and beautiful modern building in the style of Louis XIII”, and in Lyon he made sure to visit the “beautiful modern neighborhood of Brotteaux” on the left bank.¹⁷⁰ Verly followed a similar path through the city; in addition to remarking on the boulevard which made Périgueux easy to navigate, Verly commented on the grand monumentality of the Place de la Bourse in Bordeaux. What struck him most in Bordeaux was not the grand boulevards and buildings of the city however, but the noise and activity of the city. “The docks are full of noise and bustle,” he remarked, “of endless strings of cars cluttering the waterfront, cars and trucks cross the roadway and pedestrians jostle busy sidewalks.”¹⁷¹ Like Lille’s photographers in the previous chapter, for Verly Bordeaux’s grand monuments served as a backdrop for the crowd of the city.

Indeed, Beaufort was able to navigate the cities he visited easily and quickly because he *knew* what to expect in terms of the city’s layout and appearance. As with tourists who visited Lille, Beaufort used the railway station as a reference point while navigating the city. In Aix-Les-Bains, “The Avenue de la Gare, where our hotel is located,” he wrote, “leads to the Place du Revard, near the park. On the left, Rue du Casino, where there is also an entry in the Grand Hotel d’Aix, is the most important, to the right Chambéry street, and a little higher in the continuation of the left side of the street Place Carnot, formerly the Central Square.”¹⁷² As in his earlier trip to Dijon,

¹⁷⁰ Beaufort, *Voyage en Dauphiné et en Savoie*, 30, 79, 13-14. Grenoble: « la grande et belle *Place de la Constitution*, entourée d’édifices modernes remarquables. » Annecy: « la Préfecture, grand et bel édifice moderne dans le style Louis XIII. »

¹⁷¹ Verly, *De Flandre en Navarre: notes d’un bourgeois de Lille*, 139: « Les quais sont pleins de bruit et d’agitation d’interminables chapelets de wagons encombrant le bord de l’eau, les voitures et les chariots se croisent sur la chaussée, et les piétons affairés se bousculent sur les trottoirs. Voilà la place de la Bourse avec ses façades monumentales... »

¹⁷² Beaufort, *Voyage en Dauphiné et en Savoie*, 67: « L’Avenue de la Gare, dans laquelle se trouve notre Hôtel, aboutit à la Place du Revard, près du Parc. A gauche, la rue du Casino, où se trouve aussi une entrée du Grand Hôtel d’Aix, est la plus importante ; à droite la rue de Chambéry, et un peu plus haut à gauche la continuation de cette rue du côté de la Place Carnot, ancienne Place Centrale. »

Beaufort used the Avenue de la Gare as point of reference in describing the layout of the city, much as other tourists used Lille's Rue de la Gare to navigate his hometown. Similarly, Verly oriented himself using the grand artery in Périgueux, a boulevard not unlike the Rue de la Gare, which led from the train station to the city center in Lille. Lucas also used provincial railway station as a navigational point in the city in his account, often noting the location of his hotel in each city in relation to the railway station. In Lyon, his hotel l'Univers was the closest one to the rail station; in Berne, he noted one option for accommodation was the Schweizerhof, located across from the station.¹⁷³ The development of commercial zones around stations, and the construction of similar boulevards (often called 'Rue de la Gare') to lead into city centers, made unfamiliar cities familiar to provincial travelers, as visitors recognized the structures and orientations of other places as similar to their own.

A Common Identity

Throughout their travels, therefore, Beaufort, Lucas, and Verly did more than distinguish between the Old France and the countryside and the new France of the city. They remarked upon and treated the various provincial cities they visited as possessing fundamentally similar identities. Modernizing programs across France made provincial cities previously regarded as representing the particular traits of particular regions or *pays*, appear increasingly similar. While Lucas's disregard for cities may have been due to his obsession with the Alps, Beaufort and Verly were both interested in the provincial city. Yet, their descriptions of the city lacked the same intensity as their descriptions of country life.

¹⁷³ Lucas, *Un premier voyage: Savoie et Suisse*, 12, 71.

This may have been because they presumed their readers (like themselves) were already familiar with the appearance and character of urban life, because other provincial cities were similar to their hometowns. Beaufort, Verly, and Lucas's books were all published for a provincial urban audience. Beaufort intended his account to be a contribution to the Société de géographie de Lille, of which he was a prominent member. His publisher, L. Danel, specialized in geographical and agricultural maps and texts, and around the turn of the century published a series of travel accounts for the Société de géographie de Lille, of which Beaufort's tour of Dauphiné and Savoy is one example. Verly's *De Flandre en Navarre: notes d'un bourgeois de Lille* was also published in Lille, by A. Leleux, a friend and business partner of Verly. Verly and Leleux collaborated on several humorous accounts of traveling in France, including not only *De Flandre en Navarre*, but also *Zigzags en France: notes d'un bourgeois de Lille* in 1876. Lucas's *Un Première Voyage* took a less direct route to publication; originally a personal diary of his travels, Lucas decided to publish his account, he said, because many of his friends and family members "begged me to tell them about my trip....this small work completed, I was afraid of not being able to copy enough times to satisfy everyone."¹⁷⁴

Beaufort, Verly, and Lucas's accounts also reveal that they saw something special about the provincial town that set it apart from Paris, the "capital of the nineteenth century." None of the three travelers dealt with Paris in the same way as with the countryside; they instead treated it as a different sort of reference point in their texts. For instance, though Lucas neglected and regretted visiting Dijon and Lyon, he spent more

¹⁷⁴ Lucas, *Un premier voyage: Savoie et Suisse*, 1: « A mon retour, mes amis et mes parents me prièrent de leur raconter mon voyage. J'ai vu tant de choses, dis-je, qu'il me faudrait des volumes pour décrire mes impressions et merveilles que j'ai admirées....Ce petit travail termine, je craignis de ne pouvoir le recopier assez de fois pour contenter tout le monde. C'est ce qui m'a déterminé à le faire imprimer. »

time in Paris at the beginning and end of his trip. “After leaving lunch,” he wrote, “we walked through the new neighborhoods and boulevards, which I found most animated and noisier than ever.” Lucas was similarly enchanted with Paris after attending the play *The Queen of Cyprus*, writing, “I fell from wonder in wonders! After admiring the grand staircase, I went on a stroll through the foyer, sparkling with gilding and lights.”¹⁷⁵ Lucas perceived Paris as something different from other provincial cities, a place worthy of his attention because it was something else entirely. Verly also went to Paris at the beginning of his travels, but unlike Lucas he seemed to dislike the French capital. His only comment on the Parisian scene referred not to the beauty or spectacle of the boulevards but to the rain, for which he was grateful because it was “thanks to the rain that dilutes the tarmac, I can take my notes without being bothered by the noise of cars, and without the dust disturbing the black crystal of my espresso.”¹⁷⁶ Verly’s disdain for Paris contrasted directly with his protracted interest in the cities of the countryside, suggesting that he too perceived Paris as unique, as separate and different from the rest of France. Beaufort meanwhile entirely ignored the wonders of Paris in his works, mentioning only the days and times that he traveled through Paris to get to other cities.

Other towns could also be outside the norms of urban provincial France. When Verly visited Lourdes, an immensely popular tourist destination with its own railway station, in 1875, he took a rather cynical approach to the site. Originally a minor village, Lourdes transformed in the 1860s, after a local woman named Bernadette Soubirous claimed that the water in a nearby grotto possessed healing powers. Verly documented

¹⁷⁵ Lucas, *Un premier voyage: Savoie et Suisse*, 105: « Je tombai de merveilles en merveilles! Après avoir admiré le grand escalier, j’allai me promener au foyer étincelant de dorures et de lumières. »

¹⁷⁶ Verly, *De Flandre en Navarre: notes d’un bourgeois de Lille*, 11: « c’est grâce à la pluie qui délaie le macadam, que je prends mes notes sans être incommodé par le bruit des voitures, et sans que la poussière trouble le noir cristal de ma demi tasse. »

the continued popularity of the tourist town over a decade later; “these are travelers, summer loafers, cosmopolitans, and spa customers,” he wrote, “Bretons, Normans, Flemish, Swabians, Saintongeois, Auvernats, casques à mèche, madras basque, Spanish Mantillas, all by the hundreds, and pleasantly interspersed with monks...it is like a bouquet of flowers.”¹⁷⁷ In spite of this variety of visitors, however, Verly himself was unconvinced with the supposed value of Lourdes as a city. Throughout his visit, Verly mockingly referred to the “miracles of Lourdes,” the first being the “industrious activity of the cars, guides, holy medals, images with prayers and indulgences, and flasks and bottles” available for sale, and a second concerned the rapid appearance of over a dozen hotels in a village which until recently only had one.¹⁷⁸ For Verly, Lourdes was not a real city akin to Lille and Rouen; the streets, hotels, and shops its inhabitants produced were not created by the city itself. Lourdes simply did not qualify as part of the vision of France found among the real provincial cities of Périgieux and Lille; it did not merit to be considered alongside such cities.¹⁷⁹

The urban improvement projects undertaken by provincial cities in the nineteenth century therefore led to the creation of a strong urban identity in France that was self-consciously not Parisian. Although they reacted to it in different ways, Beaufort, Lucas, and Verly all recognized both increasing division between the provincial city and the countryside. They recognized a pattern of provincial urban development that was different, a process in which the older city embraced modernity in a particular fashion

¹⁷⁷ Verly, *De Flandre en Navarre: notes d'un bourgeois de Lille*, 64: « bretons, normands, flamands, souabes, saintongeois, auvergnats, casques à mèche, madras basques, mantilles espagnoles, tout cela par centaines, et agréablement entremêlé de moines...Que c'est comme un bouquet de fleurs. »

¹⁷⁸ Verly, *De Flandre en Navarre: notes d'un bourgeois de Lille*, 62.

¹⁷⁹ This is not to say that Lourdes was not *modern* in its own way; Ruth Harris has suggested that Lourdes was a manifestation of modern Catholicism in the aftermath of the scientific revolution and Reformation. See Ruth Harris, *Lourdes. Body and Spirit in the Secular Age* (London: Allen Lane, 1999).

and reoriented itself around the realities of the train station. This common pattern made it easier for provincial travelers to navigate other French cities they visited, as the layout and orientation of each became increasingly recognizable as urban improvement projects were carried out. This process could not be ‘faked’ as Verly’s comments on Lourdes show.

Conclusions: The Transformation of the Provincial City

To date, the literature on the urban history of nineteenth-century France has focused almost exclusively on Paris, and with good reason. Long identified as the political and cultural capital of the French state, Paris provides a stunning example of the urban improvement projects undertaken in France in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Provincial cities underwent a separate and distinct transformation in this period.

John Merriman and William Cohen recognized the importance of including the provincial city in any discussion on French society as a whole; their works provide an overview of political culture in the provincial city in the late nineteenth century.¹⁸⁰ Like Sewell and Mann's examinations of Marseilles and Lyon as individual cities, however, Merriman and Cohen have centered their studies on the urban impact of new forms of industrial production, rather than the cultural transformation of the city and the increased circulation of people and goods. Notable exceptions to the study of the provincial city as industrial include Haug on Nice and Alice Garner on Arcachon, both of which examine the impact of dramatically increased tourism on provincial urban life. Of course, a much larger literature exists on consumption within the Parisian context, including on the

¹⁸⁰ John Merriman, *French Cities in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1981) recognized the necessity of including the provincial city in histories of nineteenth-century France; see also William B. Cohen, *Urban Government and the Rise of the French City Urban government and the rise of the French city: five municipalities in the nineteenth century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

spectacles discussed at length by Matthew Truesdell, Ellen Furlough, and so on, but such works neglect the provincial city almost completely.¹⁸¹

The goal of this project was to examine the transformation of the provincial city in a new and different way, by studying the ways in which provincial cities transformed with the advent of regular rail travel. This transformation could be seen in terms of politics, in terms of the urban landscape, and in terms of the perception that there is something identifiable as a provincial city in France in the nineteenth century (as opposed to regional capitals, whose culture and appearance was seen as wholly distinctive). It could be seen, in particular, in the changing relationship of the train station to the rest of the city.

In Lille and Arcachon, the railway station acted as a public space in which citizens could gather and interact with national leaders; it acted as a platform on which politicians could stand and present themselves to the provincial mass public. The importance of the political events at these stations was reinforced by a variety of factors, including the fact that citizens were almost universally given the day off when politicians visited their city. This experience was immersive; the noise of the crowd, of the Marseillaise, and of the train itself conveyed the significance of these events. Printed media, in the form of newspapers and books, reinforced the significance of such events. They provided citizens with a window into the ceremonies within the train station, which were otherwise restricted to local officials and dignitaries. Print media alone was not enough to connect the people to the French nation, however. The ceremonies at the train

¹⁸¹ Matthew Truesdell, *Spectacular Politics: Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte and the Fête impériale, 1849-1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Ellen Furlough, *Consumer Cooperation in France: The Politics of Consumption, 1834-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-siècle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

station allowed people to actively participate in the national community. Becoming part in the crowd allowed provincial French men and women to actively place themselves within the imagined community of the French nation.” The foundation of the imagined nation was first laid at the train station; it involved a transformation of the politics of the provincial city.

These railway tours also altered the structure and relationship of local and national politics; local officials served as critical intermediaries between the national officials and the citizens of the provincial city. In addition to providing municipal officials with new authority within the city, this new relationship also altered the French political system, as local and national officials became a part of the same political hierarchy. This transformation of the local political system was limited by the reach of the railway station, as national officials only visited (or passed through) those towns with a railway station.

The ceremonial significance of the area around the station continued during World War I, although in a different fashion. In 1914, the station became gateway to the war for the inhabitants of the provincial city. Now, it was not the arrival of national politicians but the departure of local heroes off to war that saw townspeople gathering at the railway station. They gathered again frequently, through the period from 1915 to 1919, in order to welcome back the wounded and others returning from the front. The station also remained a space of mass politics after the war; the personalized politics of an earlier era were replaced with a new meaning of the French nation, one based in the shared experience of the trauma of the war. In many places, however, the railway station remained a site of mass politics, as many war memorials and commemoration events

occurred at or near the railway station. The railway station thus served as a platform and gateway for national politics in several different incarnations; the station was a public space in which people experienced their connection to the nation.

When Charles Floquet visited Arcachon in 1890, his route from the station into the city involved several long and wide boulevards, along which local citizens could watch his passing. Such boulevards were of relatively recent vintage, a consequence of a variety of different urban pressures, not the least of which was the construction of the railway station. Historians have remarked on the importance of hygiene, water, and so forth, on urban transformation, but few have recognized the extent to which the provincial city re-centered itself around the train station. Lille, for example, underwent extensive urban development due to a variety of urban pressures in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and the railway was central to this experience. The railway station was not only a cause of this urban transformation; it became an axis around which the new city was oriented. This transformation was neither quick nor easy, however, as the municipal council considered a multiplicity of plans for the layout and appearance of the Rue de la Gare. Although the council ultimately chose the plan that was the most destructive to the city, this decision was never automatic. In spite of these differences, however, the railway station was always at the heart of the council's plans. The railway station was also the focus of numerous renovations and expansions from the 1860s to the 1880s, resulting in a station characterized by piecemeal architectural style, a reflection of the jumbled reality of the modern city as a whole. Lille was never a finished modern city; modernization projects never completely transformed the city.

The photographers and artists who depicted the Rue de la Gare and the station minimized this jumbled quality. They purposely sought out perspectives of the station and boulevard that made them appear uniform and cleanly planned. Their images showed the boulevard in the middle of the day, when it was packed with people; for the photographers and artists, the modernity of the city was not only in the uniformity of its architecture, but also in its accommodation of the crowd. The uniformity of the station and boulevard transformed them into a backdrop for the modern life of the city. Such depictions of the boulevard as a frame for modern urban life depended on a sense that the station and the Rue de la Gare were (and always had been) an essential part of the fabric of the city. The train station and boulevard became permanent landmarks on the urban landscape.

Locals presented their cities to outsiders in these terms, both in visual representations and in guidebooks for visitors. Tourists, meanwhile, also explicitly recognized the extent to which the provincial city had been transformed. Indeed, the railway played a major role in fostering the idea that certain cities were attractive tourist destinations. Rouen owed its very existence as a tourist destination to the expansion of the French railway system and the implementation of Rouen as a regional hub. Rouen's role as a regional hub in turn encouraged a perception among travelers that the city was important simply because so many trains stopped there.

When provincial Frenchmen traveled to other cities, they recognized that this transformation involved more than just the city's layout or appearance; it involved the mental separation of the city from its surrounding countryside. Although Verly, Lucas, and Beaufort ascribed different values to the countryside and the provincial city during

their travels, they all recognized that the two worlds were fundamentally different. They also recognized, with varying degrees of consciousness, that their difference laid in the modernity of the city vis-à-vis the timeless France of the countryside. While in the provincial city, Beaufort and Verly devoted most of their time to seeing modern neighborhoods and monuments. Beaufort did more than just point out the existing modernity of the city, however. Much like the photographers in Lille who used specific perspectives of the railway station or Rue de la Gare, Beaufort constructed his descriptions of the routes he took through Lyon or Dijon to emphasize uniformity and modernity within the piecemeal reality of the city. In the countryside, Beaufort and Verly instead explored the natural beauty and ancient sites of rural France. Beaufort in particular was able to navigate the cities he visited easily and quickly, because the urban layout he encountered in Lyon and Dijon, centered on the railway station, reflected that of his hometown, Lille. As in his hometown, the railway station served as a major axis and reference point in the cities he visited. The development of commercial zones around stations, and the construction of similar boulevards (often called the 'Rue de la Gare') that connected the station into the city center, made unfamiliar cities familiar to provincial travelers, as visitors recognized the structures and orientations of other places as similar to their own.

Beaufort, Verly, and Lucas all found that provincial cities across France possessed fundamentally similar identities by the end of the nineteenth century, thanks in large part to the modernization projects of the earlier decades. Throughout their works, none of the three travelers ever described the layout or appearance of the cities they visited in any detail; for them, and, they must have assumed, for their hometown readers,

those aspects of the provincial city were so familiar that there was no need to remark upon them. This new similarity made provincial cities easier to navigate, because travelers knew what to expect when they first arrived in a new city. The result was the creation of a strong urban identity in France that was distinct from that of Paris. By the end of the nineteenth century, the provincial city was had developed along its own distinct lines, separating it both from its rural hinterland and from the capital.

The mass political events held in Lille and Arcachon, the urban improvement projects of Lille and Rouen, and the perceptions and actions of Lucas, Beaufort, and Verly together explore a new facet of European railway development - the ways in which railway stations altered the urban landscape and urban society in nineteenth-century Europe. Further, this thesis also challenges our idea of how planning helped shape the modern city. Provincial cities did not experience the total and complete transformation typically referenced in accounts of Haussmann's development of Paris. Finally, this thesis reinforces the place of the provincial city in discussions of French politics. As Merriman recognized, no discussion of nineteenth century French history is complete without the inclusion of the provincial city.

Appendix

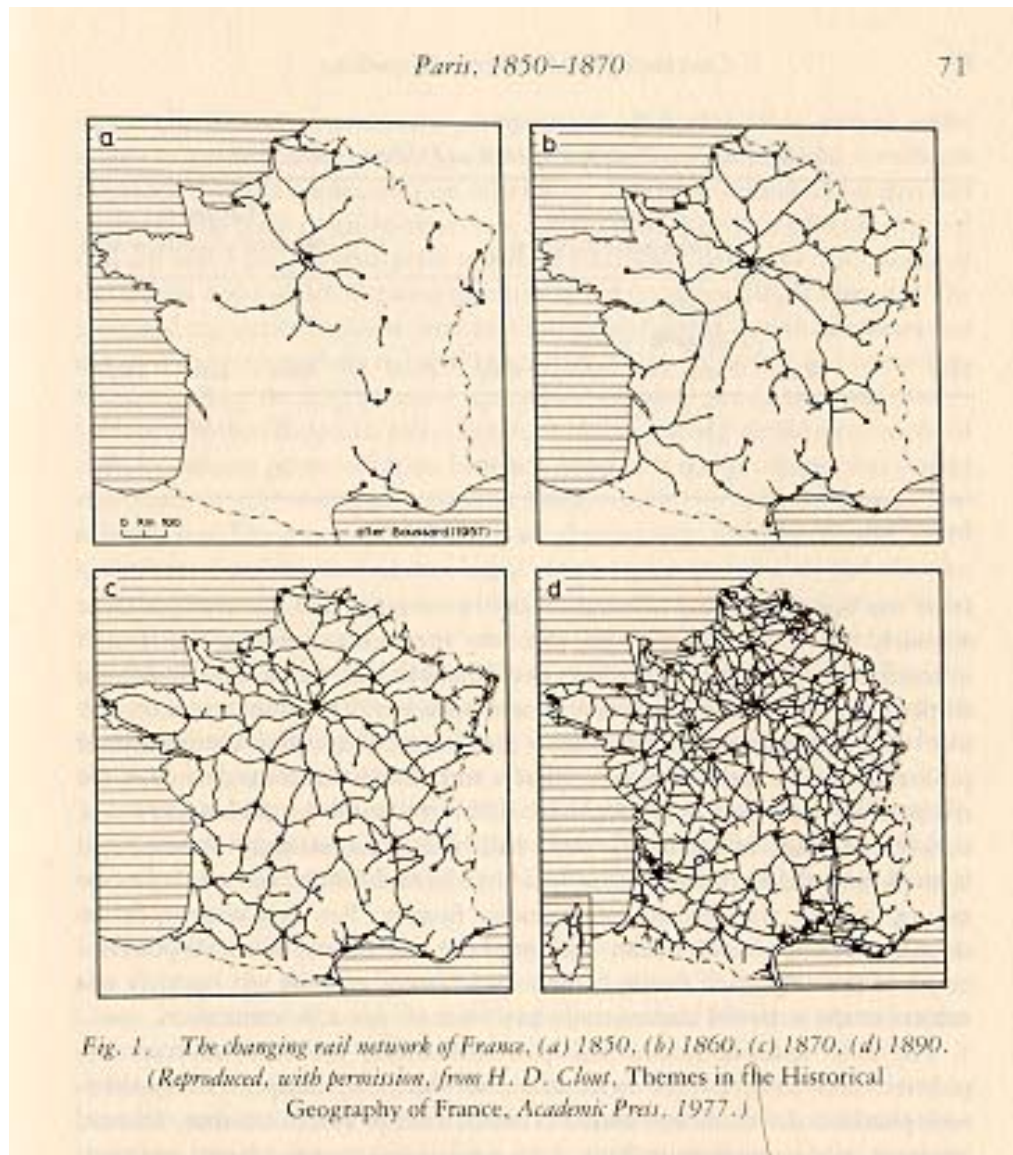


Figure 1. Hugh Clout, “The Changing Rail Network of France,” reproduced from Robert Schwartz, “Mapping Paris: Railway Transportation Comes to France,” <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/courses/rschwartz/hist255-s01/mapping-paris/railroads.html> (accessed April 18, 2013).



Figure 2. Alphonse le Blondel, "Lille: Rue de la Gare pendant la démolition en 1870," Photograph, 1870, Bibliothèque municipale de Lille, France, alb E1, 8, <http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/recherche?q=Bibliotheque+municipale+de+Lille%2C+alb+E1%2C+8>. (accessed January 14, 2013).

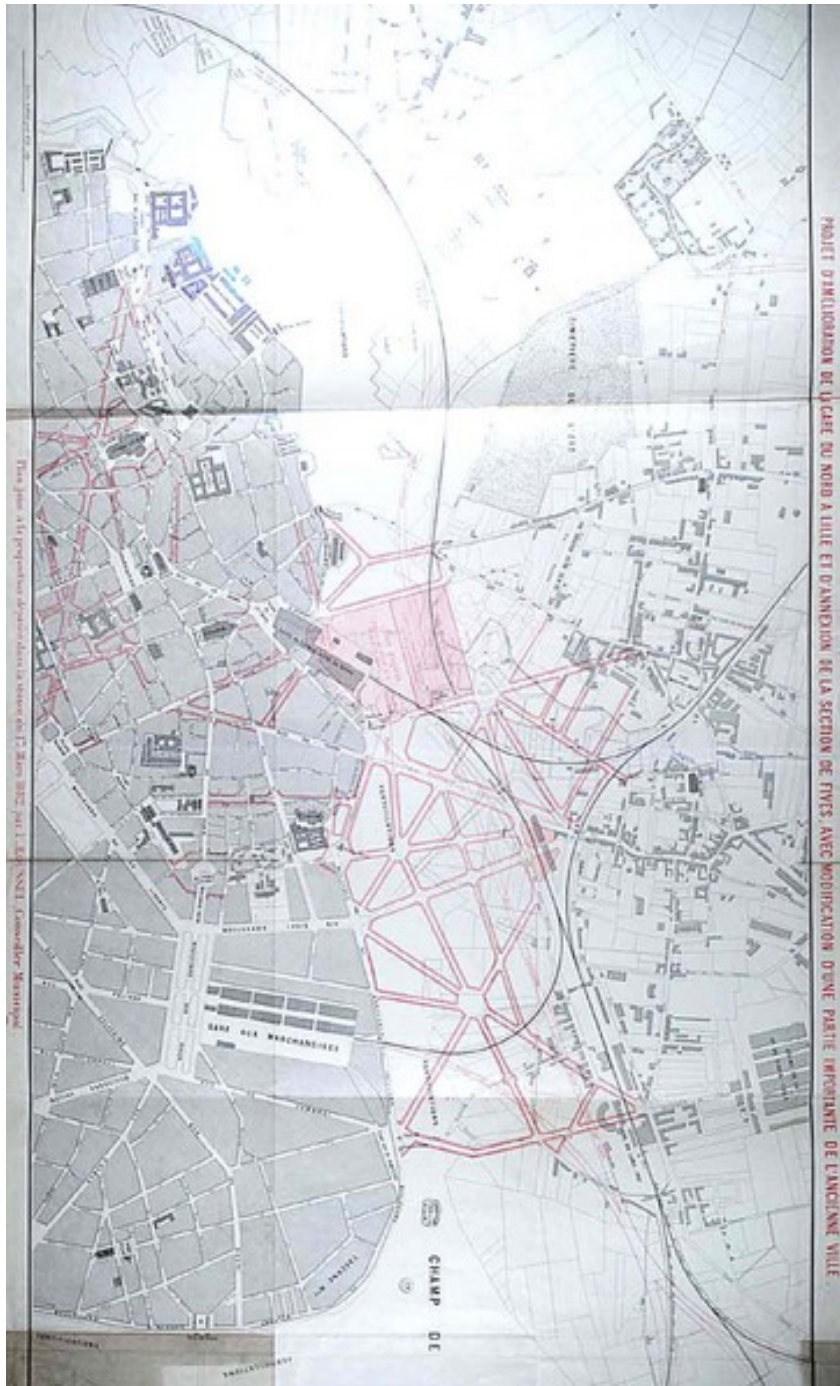


Figure 3. F. Roussel, "Projet d'amélioration de la gare du nord à Lille et d'annexion de la section de Fives, avec modification importante de l'ancienne ville (Paris: Impr. Broise et Courtier, 1882)," map, BM Lille, carton 5, 4, http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/carton_05/ca05_04?p=5 (accessed January 28, 2013).

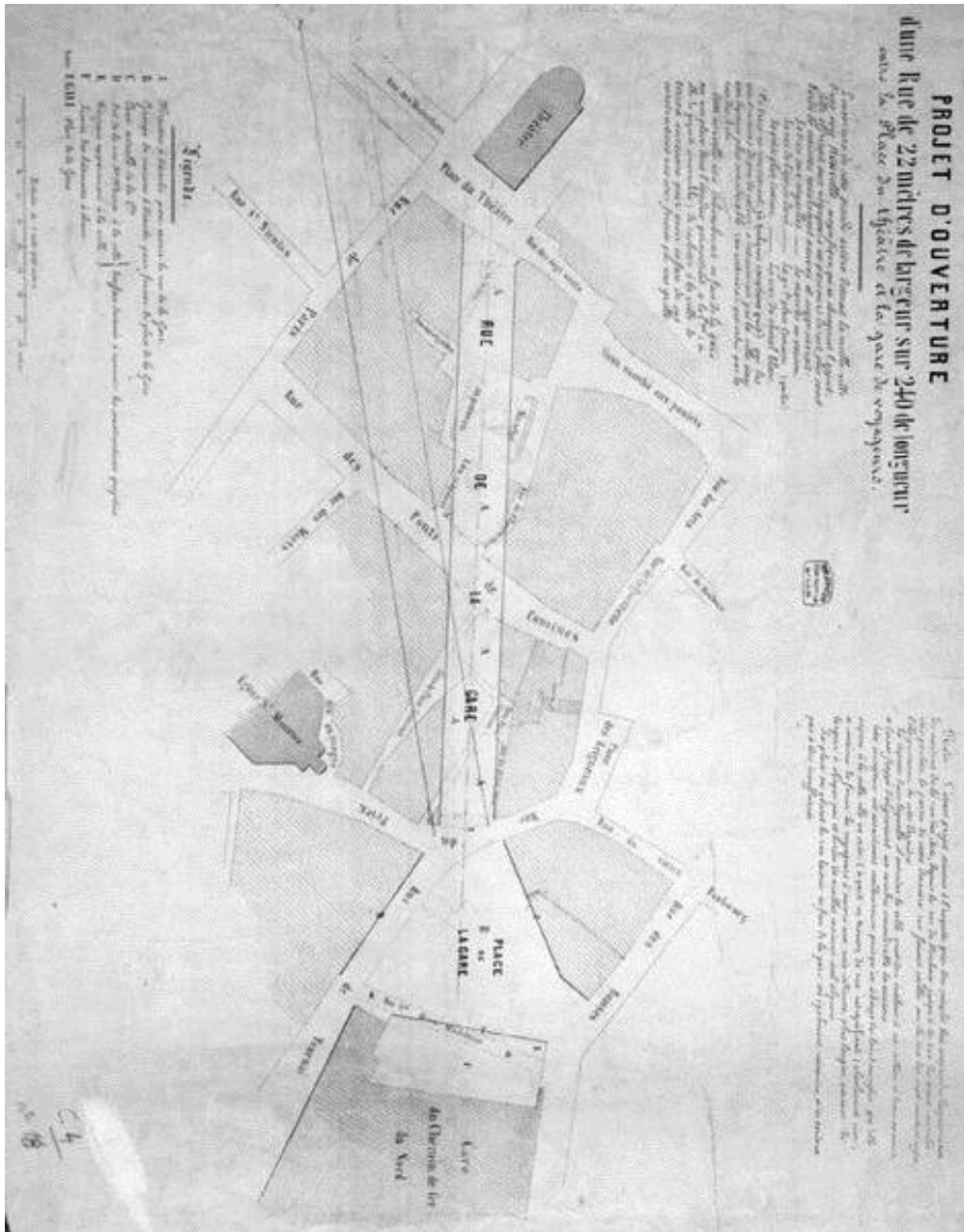


Figure 4. J. Leterme, "Projet d'ouverture d'une rue entre la place du théâtre et la gare de voyageurs," map, 1864, BM Lille, France, carton 4, 18, http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/carton_04/ca04_18?format=pdf (accessed January 18, 2013).

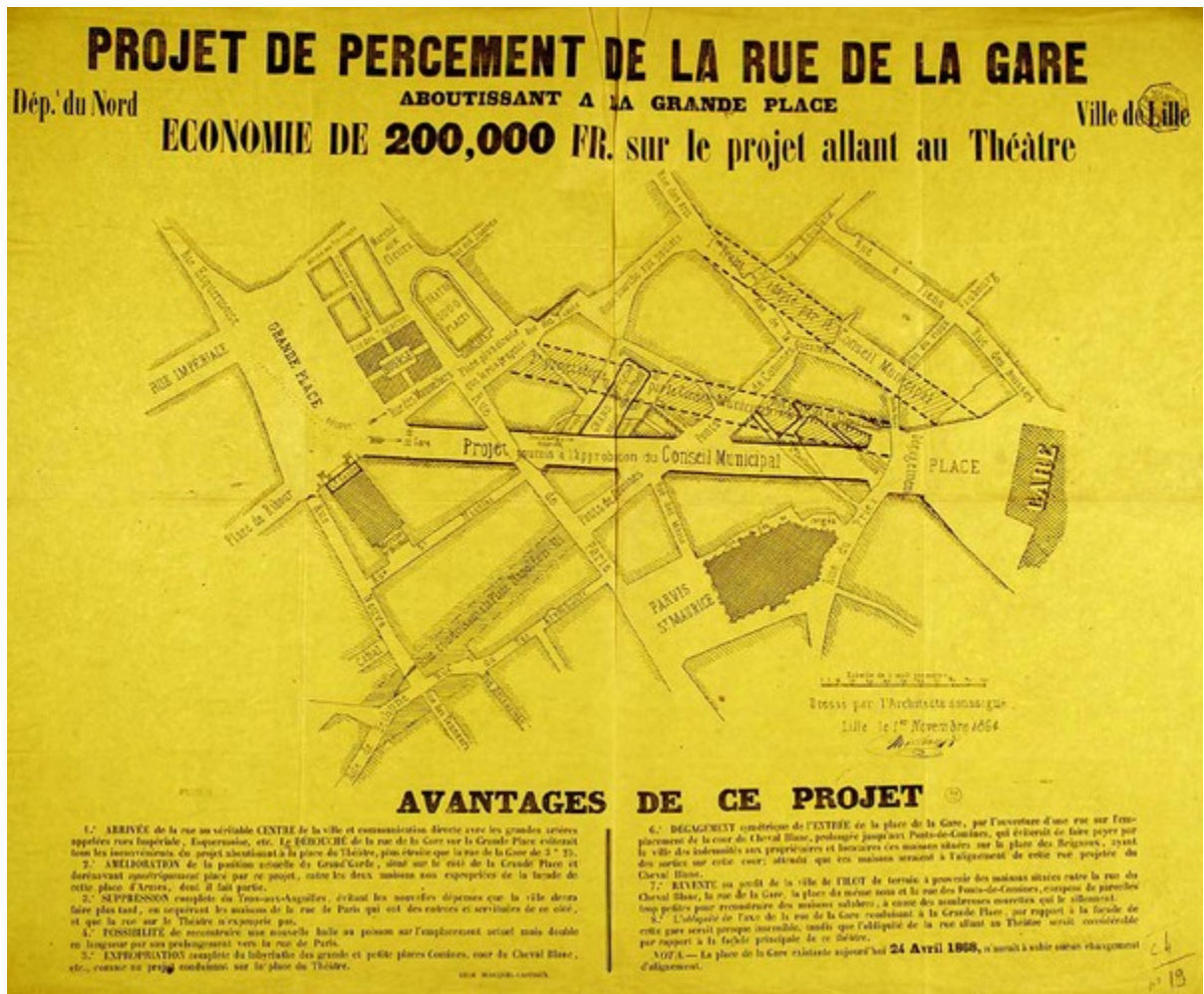


Figure 5. L. Michaux, "Projet de percement de la Rue de la Gare aboutissant à la Grand Place plan," map, 1864, BM Lille, France, carton 4, 19, http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/carton_04/ca04_19?p=2 (accessed January 18, 2013).

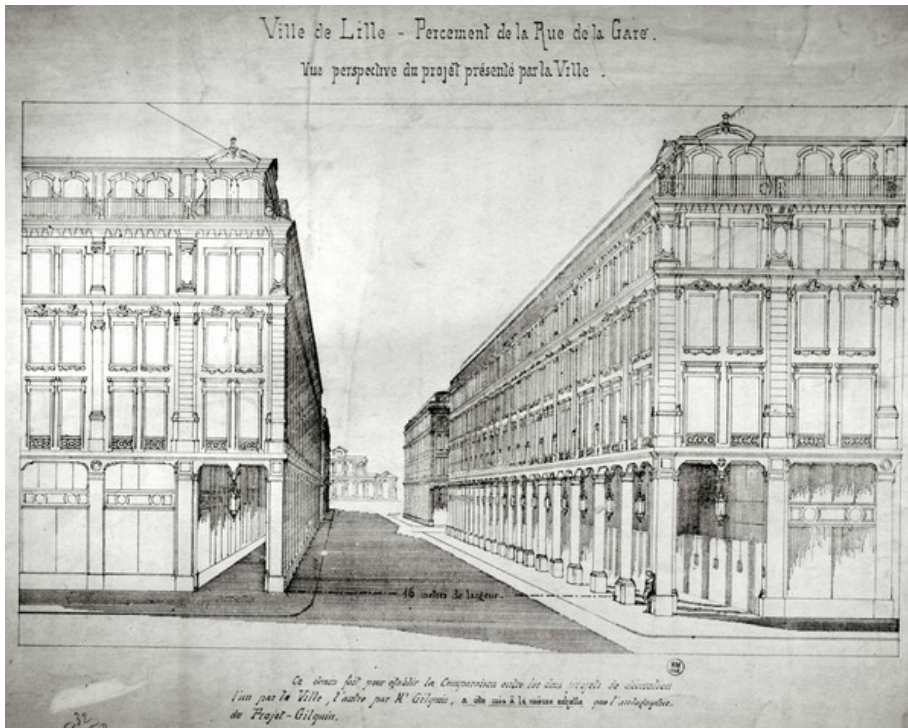


Figure 6. City of Lille, “Ville de Lille: Percement de la rue de la gare. Vue perspective du projet présenté par la ville,” perspective plan, 1868, BM Lille, France, carton 32, 11, http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/carton_32/ca32_11?p=1 (accessed January 18, 2013).



Figure 7. Louis Gilquin, “Ville de Lille: Percement de la rue de la gare. Projet avec galerie saillante éclairée du dessus,” perspective plan, 1868, BM Lille, France, carton 32, 12, http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/carton_32/ca32_12?p=1 (accessed January 18, 2013).



Figure 8. Alphonse Le Blondel, "Lille: La Rue de la Gare en 1878," photograph, 1878, BM Lille, Alb E3, 4, http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/album_E3/albe03_04?p=1 (accessed January 18, 2013).



Figure 9. E.C., "Lille- La Gare," Postcard, 1900, BM Lille, France, 11, 25, http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/lefebvre_11/lef0011pag15car025?p=1 (accessed January 18, 2013).



Figure 10. L.B., "Lille, La Gare," Postcard, 1900, BM Lille, France, 44332, 2-1, 1, http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/44332/44332_2-1_1?p=1 (accessed January 18, 2013).



Figure 11. Lefebvre, "Lille, La Gare," Postcard, 1900, BM Lille, 11, 26, http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/lefebvre_11/lef0011pag15car026?p=1 (accessed January 18, 2013).

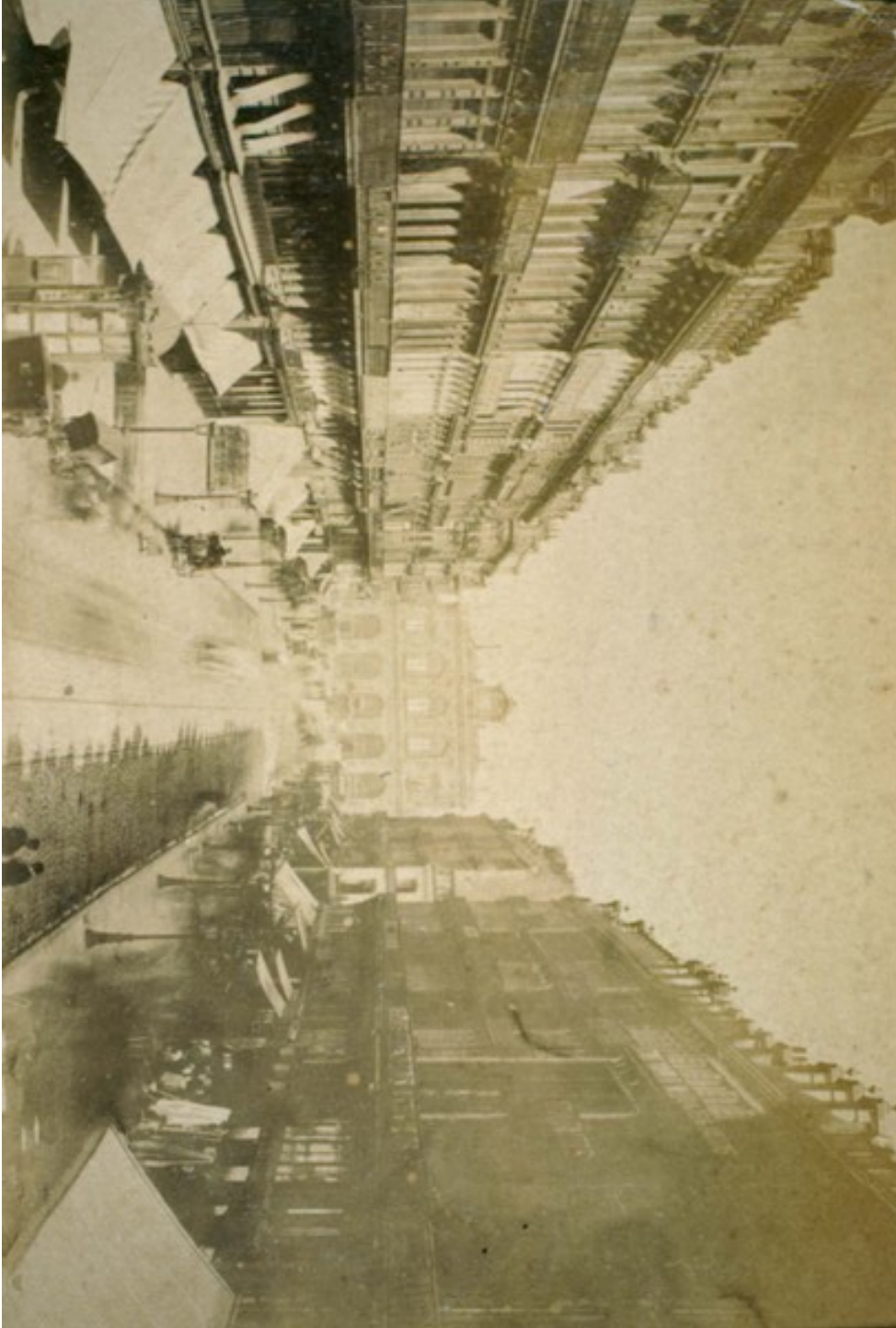


Figure 12. Paul Carlier, “Lille: Rue de la Gare, aujourd’hui rue Faidherbe boulevard,” Photograph, fin XIX siècle, BM Lille, France, alb B12, 12, http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/album_B12/albB12_12?p=1 (accessed January 14, 2013).



Figure 13. Edouard Boldoduc, “Lille: Démolition of the Rue de la Gare,” drawing, 1868, BM Lille, 44213, planche 30, http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/44213/44213_30?p=1 (accessed January 18, 2013).

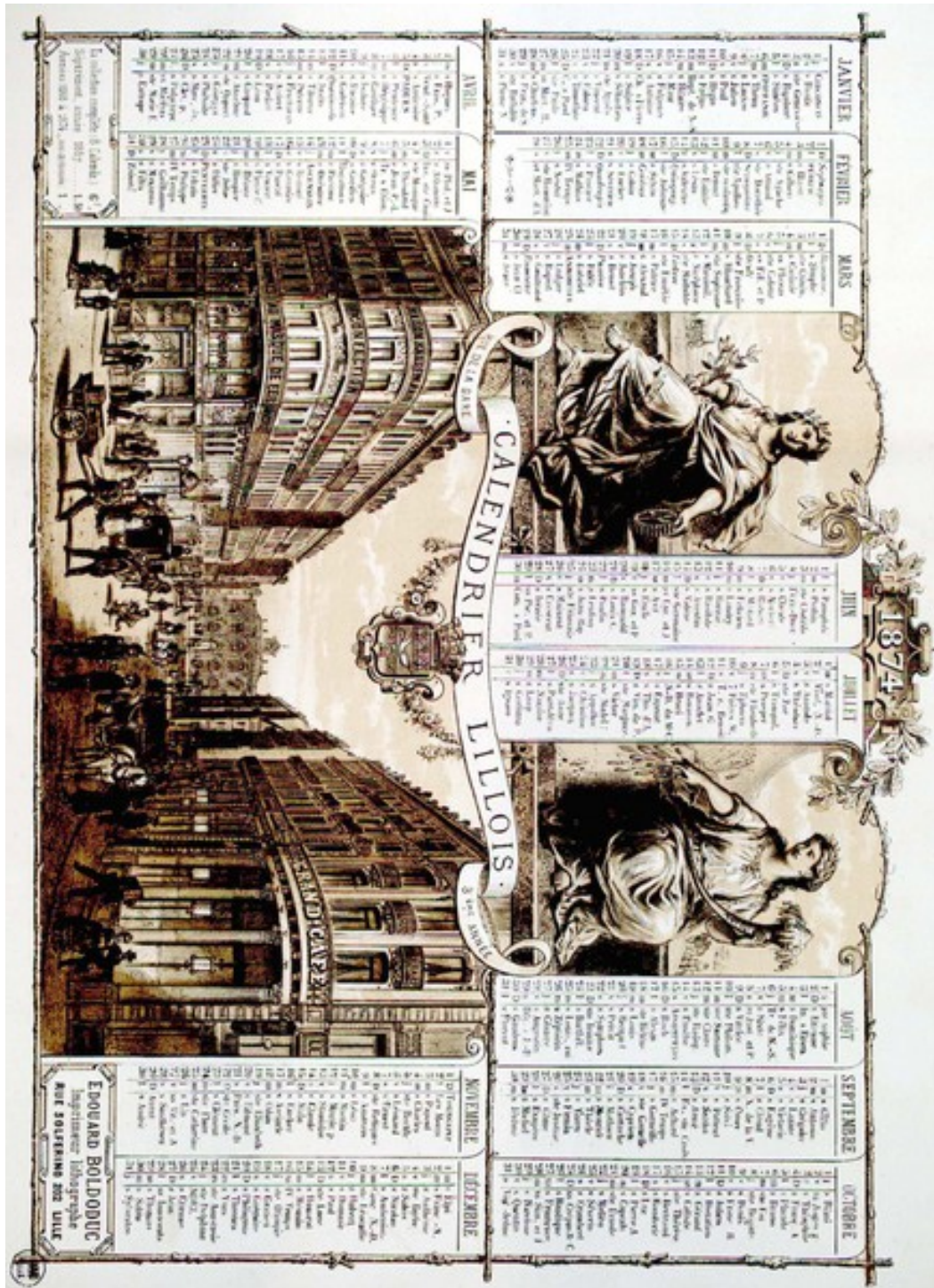


Figure 14. Edouard Boldoduc, “Calendrier lillois: rue de la gare,” Calendar, 1874, BM Lille, carton 32, 10, <http://numerique.bibliotheque.bm-lille.fr/sdx/num/recherche?qid=&q=calendrier%20lillois&p=1> (accessed January 28, 2013).

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