

Louis-Philippe cut a rather dwarfish and insubstantial figure when compared against his city, embodied in this way as a collective (male) force of nature. The king's efforts to bring the city under his mastery added to his unpopularity. The government's unwillingness to bring the ministers of Charles X to trial caused a good deal of agitation in the capital, where radical groupings were now re-forming in the newfound freedom. A provocative decision by Bourbon supporters to hold a commemorative mass in the church of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois on the anniversary of the duc de Berry's assassination led to the church being sacked and burned by the anti-clerical descendants of the sans-culottes. Although the cholera epidemic of 1832 quietened things down somewhat, 1833 and 1834 witnessed a long series of acts of collective militancy. In a horrible incident in 1834—the so-called 'massacre of the Rue Transnonain'—the forces of order killed rebels and bystanders in cold blood. If popular agitation died down from mid-decade, it had not gone for good, as was to be shown by the revolutionary *journées* of February 1848 which deposed Louis-Philippe.

8.1: Rue Transnonain

One day when he was fifteen years old, standing in front of a grocer's shop on the Rue Transnonain, he had seen soldiers with their bayonets red with blood and with hair sticking to their rifle butts . . .

This graphic description of the aftermath of the massacre of the Rue Transnonain of 12 April 1834 is a literary one. It comes from Flaubert's *Sentimental Education*, completed in 1869. The massacre it evokes occurred during the 'pacification' of Paris, following an uprising instigated by the radical *Société des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* in solidarity with an insurrection by silk-workers in Lyon. A score or more barricades went up on the Right Bank in the region of the Rues Saint-Denis, Saint-Martin and Beaubourg—a far from isolated occurrence in the turbulent period which followed the 1830 Revolution. Economic conditions and the ravages of cholera had disenchanted much of the working population of Paris with the July Monarchy. 'The people were all the more saddened and angered following the promises that had been lavished upon them by the government,' the stonemason Martin Nadaud would later recall. The barricade was an active symbol of resistance and a political demand for change.

As in other such risings, the National Guard under Louis-Philippe's

orders along with troops of the line set about bringing calm to the area, moving systematically through it over a period of several days. Responding to alleged sniper fire from number 12 Rue Transnonain, close to one of the highest and most impressive of the barricades, troops under the orders of General Bugeaud (who subsequently denied responsibility) entered the building. When they found doors slammed in their faces, they proceeded to clear the building, shooting, sometimes at point-blank range, all its inhabitants. Twelve individuals, men, women and children, died at their hands.

Although the rising ended almost immediately, this incident caused a tremendous outcry. The government's version of events—that the troops were encountering armed resistance and firing in self-defence—was baldly contradicted by numerous eyewitness accounts published in the press. Several months afterwards the caricaturist Honoré Daumier published a famous lithograph of the scene in which a defenceless man dressed in nightcap and gown lies dead over the corpse of a young child.

It was the mismatch between civilians and soldiers which gave the incident the appearance of an atrocity. The massacre appalled the Left, and even caused shock within the army: Bugeaud was nicknamed 'the butcher of Rue Transnonain', and his men were for some time shunned by other troops. Flaubert's reference to the incident shows that it had become a kind of urban legend. Stendhal too cited it—at a time when the blood was still warm—in his novel *Lucien Leuwen*, which was unfinished when he died in 1834. The massacre disgusts Stendhal's eponymous hero with thoughts of a military career. Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, published in 1862 but the fruit of decades of work, also drew on events of this uprising (in which he claimed almost to have been shot by the National Guard as a Saint-Simonian radical). The pathos of the death of the young Gavroche on the barricades in *Les Misérables* draws on the powerful emotion which the Transnonain massacre had stirred.

The Rue Transnonain massacre occurred at the heart of one of the most turbulent areas of *le Vieux Paris*, where the spirit of local community had shaped a powerful tradition of political radicalism. It was also one of the poorest and most disinherited parts of the old city. Haussmann seems to have had both radicalism and poverty in mind when he set about transforming the neighbourhood in the 1850s and 1860s. A number of straight, wide streets and boulevards were driven

through crumbling urban tissue. Running north from the Rue Transnonain was the Rue Beaubourg, and the two streets were realigned and widened. At the same time the creation of a new crossroad, the Rue de Turbigo, which ran from the Halles through to the Place de la République, also involved extensive demolition along these streets. Haussmann took the opportunity to merge the Rue Transnonain into the Rue Beaubourg, and thereby to expunge from the Parisian atlas the name of a key site of working-class memory. An old street sign at 79 Rue Beaubourg and a few old houses are all that now remains of the Rue Transnonain.

If the Rue Transnonain massacre lost its emotive charge in Parisian memory, this was partly due to Haussmann's street-name deletion. But probably more important was the fact that the radical tradition in Paris would have far more bloody events to commemorate before long—the repression of the 1871 Commune.

The *Trois Glorieuses* and the popular agitation of the early 1830s reinvigorated Paris's world-wide renown for revolutionary activism in the name of social progress. For good or ill, Paris seemed to be the embodiment of revolution, an irresistible, elemental source of energy. Writing in 1833, Auguste Bazin defined 'riot' as 'the almost recurrent convulsion in an illness that we acquired in breathing the air of freedom. We carry it in our breast; it walks with us; we sleep with it.'¹¹ Prominent among home-grown radicals who warmed to the myth of Paris-as-Revolution were the numerous students of the Latin Quarter, whose bohemian lifestyles (idealism, attics, hunger, romance, *grisettes*, etc.) were presented eulogistically by Henri Murger in his *Scènes de la vie de bohème* (1851). Every imaginable revolutionary sect in political exile also regarded Paris as their *patrie*. Karl Marx lived here between 1843 and 1845 and met his lifelong collaborator Friedrich Engels in a café in the Palais-Royal.

While the political elite lauded (or else deplored) Paris's role as the bearer of a powerful tradition of political upheaval, for many other contemporaries it was the way of life that one found in Paris that made it truly modern. For Balzac, Paris was 'the head of the world, a brain exploding with genius, the leader of civilisation, the most adorable of fatherlands'.¹² The city had reassumed its reputation as a maelstrom of intellectual and artistic activity. After 1815, partly by dint of the sale of the art commodities of the Napoleonic elite, it became the centre of the European art trade. Despite the loss of many

Paris 'between Napoleons' may thus have appeared politically less dramatic than the Revolutionary and Napoleonic regimes which preceded it, as well as the Second Empire after 1851. Yet in fact this belied the extensive re-shaping of the city and the major social shifts that were taking place in the first half of the nineteenth century. Population increase caused largely by immigration was, moreover, placing the existing structures under severe strain. Parts of the centre were coming to be perceived as a zone of economic stagnation and social deprivation, but the far bigger problem was the widening divide between a wealthier north-western sector and an eastern half of the city which was more heavily industrial and more impoverished. Paris seemed to have become a two-tiered, two-speed city.

This emergent social geography was starkly evident in the impact of the cholera epidemic of 1832. There was no clinical reason why the disease should not have been evenly spread among the population, yet in fact, as the journalist Jules Janin acerbically noted, cholera turned out as an affliction pre-eminently of the poor, 'who die first and alone, and whose death gives the lie, bloodily and fundamentally, to the doctrines of equality with which we have diverted ourselves for half a century'.³² Indeed the cholera-specific death rate of the wealthiest rentiers and landowners actually fell in the course of 1832 (largely because they were able to protect themselves by flight and sequestration), while that of day-labourers doubled. The poor areas, with their narrow, high-sided streets, mired in filth, were consequently more heavily hit than the wealthier north-west of the city. 'Cholera', a placard posted in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine announced, 'is an invention of the bourgeoisie and the government to starve the people.'³³

In fact, even though cholera was socially selective, the horrid (and horribly swift) lethal outcome of the disease severely distressed the social elite. For there seemed a real threat of a vaguely understood contagion reaching into wealthy as well as poor homes. The water-borne character of the disease was only appreciated much later, and the presence of epidemic disease was normally equated with bad smells. It fed a haunting feeling among the bourgeoisie that the city as a whole had become pathological. In the 1780s Mercier's *Tableau de Paris* had expatiated at length on pathogenic environments within the late eighteenth-century city. But this was before the massive influx of adult labour had placed added strain on the structures of everyday living. One of the most striking experiences recorded by early nineteenth-century tourists to the city, for example, was the range of sensory extremes to which the visitor was exposed. No pure sensation seemed possible in this context. The dazzling brilliance of shop-windows, arcades and the like con-

trasted with the aerial assault by emptying chamberpots and the acts of 'bestial filth' which Fanny Trollope complained she had to witness in the streets (she was referring to casual urination and defecation).³⁴ Similarly, the pleasing conversational hum of the cafés and salons was set in stark relief by the unsettling din and racket of the streets. The perfume of bourgeois interiors was unable to resist the sheer stink of the city. When the east wind blew, the emetic stench of the rubbish tip out at Montfaucon penetrated into the very heart of the city.

The city's death-rate was higher than that of the rest of the country—or other contemporary big cities such as London. One-third of all births were illegitimate, and around one-tenth of new babies were abandoned to the foundling hospital. Sixty per cent of abandoned children died within the first year of their life in care. One-sixth of all French suicides occurred within the department of the Seine. Poor-relief expenditure was double that of France as a whole. Immigrants to the city found that, despite Paris's evident attractions, its streets were not paved with gold. Indeed at mid-century, perhaps as much as one Parisian in ten was dependent on charity or poor-relief, and three deaths out of four produced pauper funerals. All demographic data was also socially skewed. It was among adult male immigrants in the eastern parts of the city that death-rates were aberrantly high. Those eastern, and some disinherited central neighbourhoods, provided disproportionately more illegitimate births, more foundlings, and much higher levels of poor relief. They were also centres of vice and crime. There were fashionable brothels up in the wealthy north-west of the city, but the east was the home of working-class prostitution—on a massive scale, given the gender imbalance among adults. Criminal underworlds seemed to thrive here too, particularly in the Faubourgs Saint-Victor and Saint-Marcel in the south-east, where nearly all the indices of deprivation, crime and social pathology (begging, theft, infanticide, insanity, suicide, etc.) were highest.

Careful scrutiny of crime statistics has led many historians to adjudge Paris's reputation for pathological levels of vice and criminality exaggerated.³⁵ No matter, it was the view of contemporaries which counted: the *classes laborieuses* (working people) were equated with the *classes dangereuses* or 'dangerous classes'. Crime and vice proceeding from the poor were viewed as social diseases which might stop the city of modernity in its tracks, just as the contagion of cholera had threatened to do in 1832. Crucial in bringing this message home to the urban bourgeoisie were the best-selling novelists of the age, who dramatized the 'facts' uncovered by social investigation in ways which made them more palatable. Balzac's summary of the underlying urban plot was brutally succinct: in Paris 'life can be consid-

ered as a perpetual conflict between rich and poor'.³⁶ The sixty-five volumes of his *La Comédie humaine* (first edition 1842) provide a purposefully panoramic vision of Parisian society revolving around this theme, and drawing copiously on the work of social investigators. Similarly, Eugène Sue's *Mystères de Paris* (1842–3) purported to enlist his readers into knowledge of the grim class realities beneath the city's glittering surfaces—and in the process used Parent-Duchâtelet's investigation of Parisian prostitution, Frégier's work on urban workers and Villermé's analyses of public health problems. Again, in Victor Hugo's classic account of the Parisian underclass, *Les Misérables* (1862), the memorable passages on the Parisian sewers had as their inspiration Parent-Duchâtelet's erudite work on the topic.³⁷

Parisian public health issues and questions of crime and vice would have made good melodrama even without the novelists. But the way in which novelists narrated social distress gave them immense cultural visibility. For Balzac, the newspaper byline. 'Yesterday at four o'clock a young woman threw herself into the Seine from the Pont des Arts' represented the kind of *fait divers* 'before which drama and fiction pale in comparison'.³⁸ Yet Balzac's fiction deliberately used such social 'facts' as the raw material for his plots—which allowed him to claim that his novels were quasi-ethnographic documents of scientific validity. Like many of his contemporaries he saw the impoverished inhabitants of the city as forming a race of savages or barbarians, subject to some degenerative condition: 'a horrible people to behold', was his expression, in *La Fille aux yeux d'or* (1834). Their faces—'wan, yellow, weatherbeaten, . . . contorted, twisted'—were 'masks rather than faces, masks of weakness, masks of force, masks of wretchedness, masks of joy, masks of hypocrisy'.³⁹ A similar conceit was evident in Alexandre Dumas's *Les Mohicans de Paris* (1854), in which the novelist brought the eye of the anthropologist of North American Indians to the world of Parisian vice and crime. Paris's subterranean caverns and catacombs were an occasional decor of much of this kind of fiction—the underground was a suitably apocalyptic milieu for the dangerous new underclass. More generally, however, such fictions were set in the workers' faubourgs. These were viewed—again the words are Balzac's, in his novel, *Facino cane* (1836)—as so many 'seminaries of revolution, which contain heroes, inventors, practical savants, rascals, rogues, virtues and vices, all compressed together by poverty, stifled by necessity, drowned in drink, worn out by strong liquor'.⁴⁰

The idea that the faubourgs fostered political radicalism and potential anarchy as well as vice and crime became more firmly entrenched as the July Monarchy wore on. The government, wedded to a stringent laissez-faire social philosophy, was patently failing to find adequate remedy for the social

problems linked with the capital city. This was certainly the message of French radicals, international political exiles and campaigning journalists, who were becoming increasingly vociferous through the 1840s. Yet even conservative critics of the regime saw the class struggle in the city as becoming more than superficial political squabbling. By January 1848 Alexis de Tocqueville was telling his colleagues in the Chamber of Deputies that 'we are sleeping on a volcano', and he prophesied 'the most redoubtable revolutions'.⁴¹

In the same year the volcano duly exploded in a new political revolution. A conjunction of political crisis engineered by the regime's opponents and economic hardship triggered by bad harvests and a downturn in the business cycle produced an uprising in February 1848, with barricades springing up again around the city. The king abdicated with almost indecent haste, racing to the Channel ports to take refuge in England. Mérimée correctly concluded that the Orléanists had 'destroyed royalty in France'.⁴² Louis-Philippe was indeed to prove the last king of the French. Paris's Hôtel de Ville again held the destiny of France in its hands—and this time plumped for a Republic, which immediately introduced humane liberal legislation, bringing in universal male suffrage, abolishing slavery in French colonies, setting the working day at ten hours and establishing national workshops to provide work for the hungry and unemployed.

Yet the seeds of the Second Republic's destruction were sown almost straight away. Just as in 1794, the bourgeoisie had drawn away from the radicals of the popular movement once they felt that popular energies were worsening matters, so now the provisional government turned on the Parisian radicals, closing down the national workshops and driving the descendants of the sans-culottes to the barricades in protest. Radical wild-man Auguste Blanqui had warned that 'a Saint-Bartholomew's Massacre of proletarians' was on the cards.⁴³ And in the 'June Days' of 1848 the regime brutally crushed the radical street opposition of the Parisian faubourgs. Despite the apparent unanimity of the February Revolution, social division was now placed at the heart of the new Republic. Some 4,000 civilians were killed (there were over a thousand military casualties) and 11,000 taken prisoner. In the subsequent clean-up, over 4,000 of the rebels would be deported to Algeria.

The February Revolution of 1848 had seen Parisian street militancy—as in 1789, 1792–3 and 1830—dictating to France's government. The June days reversed the trend. In fact the elections in April 1848 had already undermined the capital's claims to represent the nation, by returning a massively conservative majority. In December 1848 the people of France elected

Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte as its president, incidentally humiliating Parisian politicians who had made their name in the course of the Revolution. Universal male suffrage had given rural France a voice—and with that voice it elected a man who was untainted by Parisian politics and who was a nephew of a man whom the peasantry credited with the land settlement of the First Empire and restoring Catholicism. Though the political elite tended to write off the new Bonaparte, he had the last laugh. Furthermore the Second Empire which he inaugurated in 1852 would again make Paris the centre of his projects; but it would not be the Paris of Revolutionary modernity, but the city of urban transformation and new styles of living.