

The Impressionists and Haussmann's Paris

ANTHONY SUTCLIFFE*

1. Paris and the Impressionists

The Impressionist movement in painting was the most important proto-modern art movement of the nineteenth century. It was the first to point the way towards the new subjects, perceptions and techniques of twentieth-century art, at a time when most painting – at any rate in France – was in the grip of conformism and tradition. It was the first to establish that painting could aspire to achieve a scientific, objective observation of society and the environment. It was linked to contemporary French realist movements in literature and social science, with writers such as Baudelaire and Zola admiring its paintings and associating with its artists.

Impressionism was closely linked to one city, Paris. Paris was Europe's leading centre of artistic creation in the nineteenth century, if not of the world. It was also the capital of the European art market, a place where taste and wealth came together.¹ It was the birthplace of many of the new creative tendencies of the nineteenth century. It was in Paris that a group of mainly young painters came together between the later 1860s and the early 1870s with a view to developing a new approach to painting which would create a greater immediacy and realism than current fashionable art permitted. From 1874 they became known as the Impressionists. All the leading members were of French birth and upbringing and most had been exposed to the traditional Beaux-Arts training, either at the École

* The author is grateful to Christian Neffe, Alison Yarrington, Nicholas Watkins, and an anonymous referee for advice and help. Address for correspondence: Prof. Anthony Sutcliffe, Department of Economic and Social History, University of Leicester, Leicester LE1 7RH.

¹ See e.g. John Milner, *The Studios of Paris: The Capital of Art in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988).

itself, or in its official or independent *ateliers*, or both.² Consequently they were thoroughly influenced by the previous generation of French painters such as Corot and Courbet.³ However, they also drew on Spanish, Italian and English art of various periods. They were neither iconoclasts nor dilettantes. As they acquired their reputations, Paris continued to be the focus of the lives and work of most of them. When they began to reach middle age, however, they tended to spend more and more time in the suburbs or the country, doing most of their painting there.⁴

When the Impressionists decided to display their work at their own exhibition, rather than struggling to obtain admission to the annual Salon, an adjunct of the Academy and the *École des Beaux-Arts*, they found that their first exhibition in 1874 was successful enough to encourage them to mount a further seven exhibitions, ending in 1886.⁵ All were held in premises in the fashionable districts of north-western Paris, districts which had been created or transformed during the Second Empire. Much other Impressionist activity was also concentrated in this north-western area, for this was where many of the rich, potential purchasers lived, and where most of the canvases painted by the Impressionists in Paris were set. Many of the painters had studios and homes in this area, at any rate during the period of the exhibitions. For some years, beginning in 1869 at the *Café Guerbois* in north-western Paris, many of the leading Impressionists met weekly, spending an entire evening discussing their work, plans and personal news.⁶ This close association of the components of the Impressionist movement in a rich, bourgeois Paris district was one of its great strengths, but it discouraged most of these artists from portraying the life and environment of the

² The most prominent non-French Impressionist was Mary Cassatt, daughter of a rich Philadelphia family, who spent long periods painting in Paris. The only Impressionists who were never attached to an accepted *atelier* were Cézanne and Berthe Morisot (see David Bomford *et al.*, *Art in the Making: Impressionism* [London: National Gallery, 1990], 15). For a description of life and training at the *École* in the later nineteenth century, see John Milner, *The Studios of Paris: The Capital of Art in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 17–24.

³ See e.g. the judgement of Théodore Duret, *Histoire des peintres Impressionnistes* (new edn) (Paris: H. Floury, 1919), 1.

⁴ See the map of the places where the Impressionists lived and worked, which forms the endleaves of John Rewald, *The History of Impressionism* (4th edn) (London: Secker & Warburg, 1973).

⁵ The best account of Impressionist involvement with the Salon and other exhibitions before they established their own exhibition is to be found in *ibid.* 69–270.

⁶ See B. Denvir (ed.), *The Impressionists at First Hand* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987), 70–2. Casual meetings of Manet and other artists had begun at the *Café Guerbois* as early as 1866. They continued from the early 1870s at the *Café de la Nouvelle-Athènes*. See Duret, *op.cit.*, 7.

poorer areas of the city. The Paris of the Impressionists was very far from being the whole of Paris, therefore.

If Paris – or at any rate one of the richest sectors of Paris – was the sustaining environment for Impressionism, and the location of the subjects of many of its paintings, we might expect the character of that environment to contribute to the artistic result. There was a difference here between interiors and exteriors, however. Interior settings for paintings were usually not obviously Parisian. Mary Cassatt's drawing-rooms, and Manet's bars, rarely expressed their Parisian location and the emphasis in these paintings was usually on people. The exterior environment of Paris, however, was unique among the world's major cities, and nearly all Impressionist paintings of Paris exteriors were normally identifiable as originating in the city, even though the artists were reluctant to paint distinctive monuments like the Louvre and Notre-Dame.

Paris was made up of a large, medieval and early modern core. This core was surrounded by a much larger ring of new streets which had developed after 1815, but which had seen their main expansion since the early 1850s, when the Emperor Napoleon III had encouraged his Prefect of the Seine, Georges Haussmann, to carry out a modernization programme as part of the rapid French industrialization desired by the emperor. Both efficiency and the classical aesthetic favoured by the imperial regime required that the new districts be laid out with wide, straight streets lined, as far as possible, by continuous, identical façades of five storeys or more.

This method produced the formal street perspectives first envisaged in Renaissance Italy, but on a much grander scale. However, so many were the new streets that not all could be provided with the monumental terminations that would ideally have been required to close the vistas. Moreover, many of the streets and squares were so wide or long that the ideal Renaissance proportions could not be achieved, and huge dimensions and multiple repetition were often the main result rather than visual logic and harmony. These results, however, were impossible to avoid in so large a development, and contemporaries were generally impressed with the resulting cityscape. New streets also cut through the medieval core, creating there a striking contrast between modern building along the streets, and the picturesque, older districts behind. Meanwhile, a crowded city of a million people in 1848 developed into a modern capital of nearly two million by the time the Second Empire fell in 1870.

Within this physical frame, the social environment became more varied, elegant and convenient. The workers' Paris of the east and of the old centre, it is true, was little affected by these welcome changes, but the Impressionists almost never painted in the eastern districts and

rarely even visited them.⁷ In the west, droves of smartly dressed, middle-class people, attracted by a growing tertiary economy, educational opportunities and the chance to spend accumulated wealth, circulated between their new apartments, and places of resort such as theatres, music halls and cafés. They made much use of Haussmann's impressive new streets with their effective drainage and broad, smooth pavements, which had been very rare in Paris before Haussmann's time. The Paris omnibus system, reorganized by Haussmann in 1854, and a growing cab service, also aided their movements. This was a *modern* city, and its users respected it as such. How, however, did the Impressionists respond to this modern environment?

2. Paris as an Impressionist inspiration or subject

It is a commonplace among art historians that mid-century Paris went through a process of dynamic change which was reflected in the work of the Impressionists between the 1860s and the 1880s.⁸ T. J. Clark has gone on to relate Parisian painting to the multiple aspects of a new social climate in the city.⁹ These perceptions tend to associate the Impressionists and Haussmann. Although modernization work slowed after 1870, Haussmann's approach to urban improvements was maintained throughout the Impressionist heyday in the 1870s and 1880s. A number of new avenues and boulevards were built on the lines planned by Haussmann, with the Avenue de l'Opéra (1878) qualifying as probably the most successful Haussmannic street ever built.

Haussmann and the Impressionists were of course active in different spheres, but they had at least two things in common. Both were acknowledged and self-aware modernists, and each created a new aesthetic which won worldwide acclaim. This link has obvious validity

⁷ The main exception was Sisley, always an individualist, who painted a number of scenes of the Canal Saint-Martin, such as *Le Canal Saint-Martin, Paris* (1870) (Winterthur, Oskar Reinhart Foundation).

⁸ The most recent, coherent and complete account of this context and its links to Impressionist art is R. L. Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure and Parisian Society* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), esp. 1–32. Among his many examples of this connection, his association of Manet's portrayal of street pavers in the Rue Mosnier outside his studio with 'Paris's constant metamorphosis' is especially striking, given that the pavers appear to be undertaking a purely local task (*ibid.*, 30). Theodore Reff represents Manet as a true Parisian of the boulevard whose main aim was to represent Parisian upper-class society. See his 'Manet and the Paris of Haussmann and Baudelaire', in W. Sharpe and L. Wallock (eds), *Visions of the Modern City: Essays in History, Art and Literature* (New York: Heyman Center for the Humanities, Columbia University, n.d. [1983]), 131–63. See also Denvir, *op.cit.*

⁹ See e.g. T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1985).

and it will continue to inspire much useful thought, as in the work of Clark and others interested in the Parisian background of Impressionism:

. . . it is tempting to see a connection between the modernization of Paris put through by Napoleon III and his henchmen – in particular by his prefect of the Seine, Baron Haussmann – and the new painting of the time.¹⁰

There is, however, one difficulty. It is that there are very few Impressionist paintings or drawings of Haussmannic streets, squares, and public buildings. Moreover, most of this small minority of works distorted, diminished or obscured the distinctive aesthetic character of Haussmann's work. Indeed, that so much painting could be done in a modernized Paris by modernist artists without fuller reference to the physical features and atmosphere of a unique city is at first sight very surprising, particularly as nearly all the Impressionists – except perhaps for Manet and Degas – loved to paint landscapes, and stressed the value of open-air work as opposed to the studio painting of the Salon tradition.

3. Haussmann's Paris in Impressionist painting

Nevertheless, much light is shed on the Impressionist attitude to Haussmannic Paris by the small number of works which are devoted to this subject. Conventionally, these begin with Renoir and Monet who experimented with Paris scenes in the later 1860s at a time when, inspired mainly by Manet, they were jointly developing the style and technique which would form the basis of Impressionism in the following decade. These Paris cityscapes were among a number of subjects and styles with which they experimented in these years, but they were also part of a very long tradition in the painting of Parisian views.

Such paintings had been numerous in the first half of the nineteenth century, when the Italian eighteenth-century example had been supplemented by romanticism.¹¹ The artists of this time were consistently interested in older scenes, not modern improvements. Monet and Renoir did not diverge from tradition in this respect. Herbert, in his influential study, detects a very strong association with Haussmann's improvements in some of these paintings,¹² but on close examination they appear either to avoid the products of

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 23. Clark goes on to make clear that this is merely one hypothesis, not a conclusion or an assumption. Later, he remarks that '...Haussmann's work and its aftermath [–] presented painting with as many problems as opportunities.' (*ibid.*, 71–2).

¹¹ See e.g. Colet-Robert Stanley, *Le Boulevard des Capucines vers 1828 (c. 1828?)* (Musée Carnavalet, Inv. P.1972), a streetscape viewed from the middle of one of the *grands boulevards*.

¹² See Herbert, *op.cit.*, 6–12.

Hausmannization or to emphasize nature rather than the dominating urban forms which we associate with Haussmann. Let us look more closely at these influential works.

Renoir's *Les Champs-Élysées pendant l'exposition parisienne de 1867* (1867) (private collection) was set in the park section of the named thoroughfare and rows of lush trees, rather than buildings, provided the background for leisured Parisians and their children ambling along chalky paths. In any case, the Champs-Élysées dated from the late seventeenth century and the park section had been landscaped at the same time. His *Le Pont des Arts* (Norton Simon Foundation, Los Angeles) of the same year, on the other hand, was a powerfully urban scene. Herbert sees it as an indication of the extent to which Renoir '... favoured the new city over the old'.¹³ He draws attention to Haussmann's widening of the Quai Malaquais in the foreground and the roofs of the two new municipal theatres at the Place du Châtelet, low on the left-hand horizon. What Herbert fails to detect, however, is the minimal role of Haussmannic constructions in the scene and the striking continuity of the subject from the multitude of *quai*-set Paris views, dating back to the first half of the eighteenth century, and in particular from the many views of the Institut and the Pont des Arts, looking east.¹⁴ The largest building in Renoir's picture is the seventeenth-century Institut Mazarin. The Pont des Arts of the title, described by Herbert as a 'new bridge', was built in 1820.¹⁵ The composition is asymmetrical, with foliage, the river, and a huge, dappled sky reducing the buildings to subdued punctuations in the scene. None of this would have surprised the contemporary art-lover, however. This was a traditional view which, if it suggested anything about the modernization of Paris, provided assurance that the best-loved scenes of the traditional city lived on untouched by Second Empire modernism.

With *Le Pont-Neuf* (Washington, National Gallery of Art) Renoir returned to a river-and-bridge scene in 1872. This view had not been affected by Haussmann at all, the strikingly modern bridge having been built in the late sixteenth century. The foreground was dominated by the diagonals of parapets, retaining walls and roadways, and the distant houses were old and of varying dimensions. Monet would paint the

¹³ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁴ Charles Mozin's *Le Pont Marie et le quai Saint-Paul* (1827) (Musée Carnavalet, Inv. P. 1972) was a typical, large cityscape viewed from *quai* level, with large numbers of people in the middle ground. William Parrott's *Le Quai Conti* (1846) (Musée Carnavalet, Inv. P.1842) showed a variety of people, less elegant than those in Renoir's picture, on the Quai Conti outside the Institut. The Pont des Arts was visible on the left. Paul Signac's *Le Pont des Arts* (1928) (Musée Carnavalet, Inv. P.2289), a *quai*-level treatment looking east from the Right Bank, helps confirm the survival of the Pont des Arts as a standard subject long past Haussmann's time.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

same subject in 1873, again without Haussmannic allusions.¹⁶ Even in *Les Grands Boulevards* of 1875, Renoir hid most of the towering buildings along the thoroughfare with leafy trees. Foliage, sky and a corner block formed a canopy which brought the eye down to the blurred animals and vehicles in the street.¹⁷ Contrary to appearances, moreover, this street had not been built by Haussmann, but dated from the removal of the fortifications by Louis XIV in the 1670s, with buildings dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Meanwhile, Monet's three cityscapes of 1867, *Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois* (Berlin, Nationalgalerie), *Le Quai du Louvre* (The Hague, Gemeentemuseum), and *Le Jardin de la princesse* (Oberlin, Allen Memorial Art Museum), had much in common with Renoir's Paris exterior paintings of the same year. The former was angled across the Place du Louvre, so excluding some crude neo-gothic structures built by Haussmann, partly for decorative purposes, next to the medieval church of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, which thus dominates the picture.¹⁸ The second emphasized a traditional *quai*, with no buildings dating from Haussmann's time and a screen of trees partially masking the buildings in the middle ground across the Seine. The third, like the second, was directed towards the dome of the Panthéon in the distance, but the view was angled downwards to include a large garden in the foreground. With the trees in the middle ground bearing even thicker foliage, this was a natural landscape with people and incidental buildings, rather than a cityscape. Monet's persistent use of diagonal viewing angles, which other Impressionists were to follow, neutralized the Haussmannic perspective, wherever it was present. It may also indicate that Monet was influenced by the techniques of the Paris stereoscopic photographers of the day, who also worked from elevated points and favoured diagonal views.

Monet's *Boulevard des Capucines, Paris* (1873) (Kansas City, William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art), which was exhibited in the 1874 Impressionist exhibition, was another aerial view. The subject was a street of seventeenth-century origin, but Haussmannic appearance, similar to Renoir's of 1875. The viewpoint was an upper floor of Nadar's photographic studios, where the first Impressionist exhibition would be held. It has been suggested that the friendly links between Nadar and the Impressionists are particularly reflected in this picture, with Monet adopting some of the features of early urban photographs even more

¹⁶ See e.g. *Le Pont Neuf* (1873) (Collection of Mr and Mrs Emery Reeves).

¹⁷ See also Herbert, *op.cit.*, 15.

¹⁸ Herbert, *op.cit.* 10, chooses to emphasize 'the newly cleared-out square'. However, much of the disengagement of the east front of the Louvre had been carried out in the mid-eighteenth century. In any case, the trees in the square softened the effect of the square and the buildings.

explicitly than in the past.¹⁹ Monet stressed the wide pavement on the right of his picture, and filled it with tiny, blurred figures similar to those registered in some of the stereoscopic views. The buildings on the left were largely obscured by a row of almost leafless trees. The painter gave considerable body to the trees and branches so that they acted as a complete barrier. Buildings visible on the right in the distance are a grey backdrop whose surface features cannot be interpreted. Tall houses on the boulevard on the left are identifiable as mid-nineteenth-century apartment houses with continuous balconies, but they are blurred. Their brownish monochrome is an accurate expression of Parisian building stone. Except on the pavement in the foreground, the effect is of a misty and smoky city.

Like Renoir, Monet pursued his avoidance of imperial urbanism into the Third Republic. In 1878, he painted an elevated view, *Fête nationale, rue Saint-Denis, Paris* (1878) (Paris, Collection Lucien Lindon). This showed a street with flags hanging from every floor, with crowds below. It was a perspective view along the frontages, taken from some height. This was a powerful cityscape portrayed on a great national occasion, but this was no Haussmannic parade street. On the contrary, it was a narrow street of medieval origin, lined by some of the oldest houses in the city. Monet nevertheless decided to stress the flags so that they masked most of the frontages, much as Manet did in his two paintings of the Rue Mosnier decked in flags. Monet was clearly happy with this composition, for his *La Rue Montorgueil. Fête du 30 juin 1878* (1878) (private collection) portrayed another old street decked in flags.

Monet's *Les Tuileries* (1876) looked north-west up the axis of the Tuileries gardens from an elevated position on the west front of the Louvre which recalled his 1867 work. Apart from one large Louvre pavilion on the extreme left, the picture was a broad landscape of park and trees, with the tall buildings of the Champs-Élysées district just tiny outlines near the horizon. In another park scene, *Le Parc Monceau* (1878) (New York, Metropolitan Museum), Monet stressed great areas of green with shaded people sitting in the middle of the picture, and part of a private villa visible in the distance. Meanwhile, Degas's *Place de la Concorde* (c. 1875) (destroyed) showed a small group of people against a background of the square painted like a theatre backdrop. This was a cityscape only in name, and in any case the square dated from the mid eighteenth century.²⁰

¹⁹ *Centenaire de l'Impressionnisme* (Paris: Éditions des Musées Nationaux, 1974), 159–63, entry by Charles Moffett. The author is further indebted to Shelley Rice for explanation of the significance of the diagonal view in early urban stereoscopic photography.

²⁰ The backdrop effect was also used in his *Henri Rouart devant son usine* (c. 1875).

Renoir's writings reinforce the anti-Haussmannic impressions of his painting. In 1877 he published in *L'Impressionniste*, the short-lived journal of the movement, the first of a number of statements regretting the loss of historic buildings and the monotonous alignment of the new ones, along the Haussmannic streets.²¹ He thus helped launch the Paris preservation movement which would help discredit Haussmann's aesthetic for the next fifty years and more.²²

Meanwhile, however, Haussmann's work attracted the generally unsung assembly of Parisian non-Impressionist artists and illustrators which has achieved a greater prominence in recent years thanks to displays at the Musée d'Orsay and the Musée Carnavalet. For instance, the non-Impressionist illustrator of Parisian scenes, Giuseppe de Nittis, from Naples, revelled in Haussmannic modernity. His *Percement de l'avenue de l'Opéra* (1878) (Musée Carnavalet, Inv. P.487), marked the completion of one of Haussmann's most ambitious streets by portraying a large demolition site. Jean Béraud's interest in painstaking street scenes included streets of the modern, Haussmannic type, as in *Paris, sur le boulevard*. (c. 1878–82) (collection unknown).

4. Caillebotte and Pissarro

Only two Impressionist painters made a big effort to use Haussmann's Paris as a subject. These were Gustave Caillebotte and Camille Pissarro. Neither devoted more than a few years to the subject but the results were substantial and striking in artistic terms. As exceptions to the Impressionist norm, both these painters are worth looking at closely.

(a) *Gustave Caillebotte*

Gustave Caillebotte was the most enigmatic of the Impressionists. He was also the most keen to experiment. As the richest Impressionist, he did not need to sell his paintings and this indifference made him look like an amateur to some. So did his fairly frequent gaucheries and uneven technique. Only since the 1960s has he been taken seriously, but his striking originality has now won him a place among the founding members of the Impressionist movement.

Within a very varied portfolio of nearly five hundred works, Caillebotte showed a special interest in Haussmann's Paris.²³ Caillebotte was briefly one of the leaders of the Impressionist movement in the later

²¹ See Herbert, *op. cit.*, 15.

²² See A. Sutcliffe, *The Autumn of Central Paris: The Defeat of Town Planning, 1850–1970* (London: Edward Arnold, 1970), 179–212.

²³ The main recent study of Caillebotte is K. Varnedoe, *Gustave Caillebotte* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987).

1870s, and at this time Haussmann's streets and their adjacent buildings played a much bigger part in his output than in that of any other Impressionist. He was an artist of only moderate ability, but his exhibition paintings, at any rate in 1876 and 1877, impressed most of the commentators, journalists and writers who attended the shows. They saw him as coming closest to the ideal of Realism which had been fostered by the Impressionists and their supporters since 1874.

That Realism was perceived mainly in Caillebotte's portrayals of the life of the leisured Parisian bourgeoisie, which he set in and against the buildings and streets of the Second Empire. The most celebrated of these portrayals are his big 1877 exhibition paintings, *Rue de Paris: temps de pluie* (1877) (Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago), and *Le Pont de l'Europe* (1876) (Geneva, Musée du Petit Palais). These pictures usually suggested a mood of dull, aimless boredom which set Caillebotte apart from the other Impressionists, who in the 1870s generally portrayed a lively world of youth, light, colour and gaiety. Caillebotte also essayed portrayals of working-class life in the mid-1870s, as in *Raboteurs de parquet* (1875) (Paris, Musée d'Orsay), a big success at the exhibition of 1876, and one of the few paintings that Caillebotte ever sold. He went on to paint *Peintres en bâtiment* (1877) (Paris, private collection), but did not pursue this theme of manual work any further. These two paintings, nevertheless, were clearly set within the physical environment of Haussmann's Paris and both (perhaps coincidentally) dealt with building maintenance. The former picture was almost certainly posed in the Caillebotte family mansion, and the latter portrayed a spartan street perspective which was almost certainly drawn from the vicinity of Caillebotte's home.

Caillebotte's realism sprang not so much from advanced literary and social theory as expressed in the writings of Zola, however, as from his own social milieu as a rich bourgeois. Caillebotte's attachment to his own domestic and local environment (which was firmly embedded within Haussmann's rich, north-western Paris) was unparalleled in urban Impressionism. Manet's paintings of the Rue Mosnier, outside his studio, have something in common with the Caillebotte canon but Manet did not combine interior and exterior scenes, and family and friends, to the same extent as Caillebotte. Degas's numerous treatments of female employment, from the ballet via the laundry to the lower forms of entertainment, and prostitution, represented a similar interest in daily life, but Degas was not interested in exteriors, and his interiors were normally just a featureless background for the human figures. Several Impressionists, including Pissarro and Monet, created multiple views, over many years, of their lives and environments in and around their country or suburban homes, but none emulated Caillebotte in Paris itself.

The strength of Caillebotte's family and local involvement is clear

enough from his paintings and sketches, from the recollections of the Caillebotte family, and from the family archive which has been exceptionally opened to Berhaut and Varnedoe.²⁴ There is, however, a related characteristic of his painting, perception of which rests mainly on observation and inference. This characteristic is the highly personal nature of much of his work. Directly or indirectly, it depicts himself, his life and his concerns.

This usually sombre introspection contrasted with most other Impressionist work. Caillebotte's world was that of the idle nouveaux riches who had multiplied under the Second Empire, and who figure in Zola's *La Curée*. 'Killing time' could be the sub-title of many of his paintings, with the painter implicitly killing time as much as his subjects.²⁵ Seen in this light, Caillebotte's emphasis on Haussmann's Paris takes on a personal significance. The walls, curtains and furniture of Caillebotte's rooms, and the endless façades of the streets, alike enclose their bored, wealthy prisoners. Sometimes, with his views through windows onto the towering apartment houses across the streets outside, Caillebotte combined the two environments, often with a bored observer to reinforce the point.

Caillebotte portrayed an almost aimless life in which the rich spent most of their time in minor pursuits in their homes, leaving occasionally for a stroll which would take them through stuffy streets lined by the outside walls of the houses they had just left, only to return after a while to be embraced again by the inner walls. Caillebotte's painting, most of which was clearly done in his own studio at home, or in other rooms, was less aimless a pursuit than the reading or sewing which he often portrayed. He occasionally indicated, however, that he and his work were part of this household round of tedium. For instance, in *Autoportrait au chevalet* (c.1879–80) (Paris, private collection), we see the artist at his easel with an unidentified man seated behind him on one of the huge sofas which appear to have dotted the Caillebotte homes. The man appears to be reading a newspaper, a favourite activity, this, for Caillebotte subjects. Here, as so often, the observer is drawn into the family, friends and home of Caillebotte, finally encountering the artist himself, directly or by implication. This is why the personal life of Caillebotte is of more relevance to his art than is customary among the Impressionists. In him, the city and the man come together, with the

²⁴ See Marie Berhaut, *Caillebotte: sa vie et son œuvre* (Paris: Bibliothèque des Arts, 1978) and Varnedoe, *op.cit.*

²⁵ For an explicit contemporary detection of 'killing time' in one of Caillebotte's paintings, *Intérieur* (1880), see J. K. Huysmans, *L'Art moderne* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1883), 95.

artist sometimes present in the picture in the shape of what Varnedoe has termed 'a symbolic self-portrait'.²⁶

Thanks to a huge inheritance from his textile-merchant father, who died in 1874, Caillebotte was by far the richest Impressionist, as well as the youngest (born 1848). After the Commune he gave up his law course and studied full-time at the École des Beaux-Arts. In 1874/5 he came into contact with the Impressionists and was encouraged by Degas.²⁷ For a while in the later 1870s he used both his money and his short-lived renown as an artist to hold the movement together. His greatest success was the 1877 exhibition, which he financed, organized and dominated with a clutch of very impressive canvases. The most striking of them all was a huge canvas (9 feet by 7 feet), *Rue de Paris: temps de pluie* (1877) (Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago), which showed a number of rich strollers (*flâneurs*) at a complex intersection of new streets north of the Gare Saint-Lazare, not far from the Caillebotte family mansion. A smaller picture (though still much larger than the average Impressionist painting of the day), *Le Pont de l'Europe* (1876) (Geneva, Musée du Petit Palais), had a similar theme, with elegant strollers (ignored by a lounging worker) on a new road bridge just north of the Gare Saint-Lazare.

The streets in both pictures are almost empty of vehicles, suggesting a Sunday stroll in each case, though the artist seems to have something against carriages and fails to paint the front half of the nearest vehicle, and its horse, in *Rue de Paris*.²⁸ This was probably one of the earliest of Caillebotte's weird visual distortions which would begin to annoy the critics a year or two later, but the lack of vehicles, and the stereotyped figures of the other (mainly male) pedestrians created a mechanical, almost immobile effect which diverged radically from the effects of movement achieved by Monet and some of the other Impressionists. Haussmann's streets, however, allowed Caillebotte to indulge his interests in perspective effects without disturbing his public, whereas his rigorous use of perspective in some of his interior paintings, though not entirely alien to some of Degas's work, had prompted puzzled or unfavourable comment as early as *Raboteurs de parquet*, which he showed at the Impressionist exhibition of 1876.²⁹

This stuffy immobility was even more a feature of Caillebotte interiors

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1–3.

²⁸ Caillebotte painted a rough sketch of this scene, and showed it at the exhibition under the same title (Paris, Musée Marmottan). He probably wanted to show that his highly-finished main painting, which had some of the qualities of a photograph, was a valid alternative to the rough brushwork treatment of the type favoured by some other Impressionists. This sketch was probably painted during his work on the main painting, and it is notable that no vehicles at all are shown in this version. Caillebotte later gave the sketch to Monet.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3–4.

such as *Déjeuner* (1876) (Paris, private collection) and *Partie de besigues* (1880) (Paris, private collection). These were set, respectively, in the family mansion on the Rue de Mirosmesnil, and in the Caillebotte brothers' *garçonnière* on the Boulevard Haussmann. In both, Caillebotte used dominant sombre colours (brown or black) which the other Impressionists shunned. The journalists often welcomed this 'realism' which reflected Parisian bourgeois interiors only too well, but such gloomy, enclosed compositions discouraged purchasers.³⁰

His models were mainly relatives and friends. This was not because he could not afford to pay for professional models as the other Impressionists could not, for his great wealth would have allowed such luxuries (and, we may surmise, occasionally did so³¹). More likely to have influenced him was his strong attachment to his family, and its cloistered life in the mansion on the Rue de Mirosmesnil (until his mother died in 1878), together with a certain modesty about his own painting skills. Later, in the apartment on the Boulevard Haussmann, friends (or friends of his younger brother, Martial) were the main subjects. This domestic focus meant that the interiors of the Caillebotte homes were often portrayed, and usually in careful detail. Caillebotte made memorable use of a giant, bloated sofa (or sofas) which reduced human figures reclining or sitting on it to apparently insignificant dimensions.³² Caillebotte thus portrayed, more fully than any other Impressionist, both the inside and the outside of the apartment houses of Haussmann's time. In a number of paintings he brought the two together by showing an interior figure at a window, and the buildings opposite, or a balcony, figures and the outside view.

It is unclear how far Caillebotte's choice of subjects and treatments were influenced by his use of photography. It is well known that, from the later 1860s, some of the Impressionists admired Nadar and other Parisian photographers because of their ability to create realism. Monet, as we have seen, may have deliberately used angles which recalled the compositions of the photographers. Whether or not some of the Impressionists used photographs in planning or executing a canvas is a matter of speculation.³³ Caillebotte, however, is a prime candidate. The work of Galassi, backed by Varnedoe, on the initial sketches for a

³⁰ See e.g. the eulogy of Caillebotte's accurate portrayals of the reality of bourgeois Paris and Parisian life in J. K. Huysmans, *op. cit.*, 93–8.

³¹ See *Femme nue étendue sur un divan* (1873)(private collection). Reproduced in Varnedoe, *op.cit.*, 45.

³² Most notoriously in *Intérieur* (1880) (Paris, private collection). In this painting, however, the dimensions of the reclining (and reading) gentleman appear to have been further reduced by the artist, perhaps for personal reasons.

³³ See discussion in Aaron Scharf, *Art and Photography* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974 [new edn.]), 165–79.

number of Caillebotte paintings, suggests that his brother Martial, a keen photographer, supplied images which allowed the structure of the composition to be established without distortion of the main proportions. There are also signs that some of the figures in his bigger paintings, such as the *flâneur* in *Le Pont de l'Europe*, were based on photographic images.³⁴ Use of a camera would have eased Caillebotte's task in painting street perspectives at pavement level, and encouraged him in a *genre* which disturbed the other Impressionists.

Caillebotte's theme of boredom was sometimes complemented by a sense of imprisonment.³⁵ In *Jeune Homme à sa fenêtre* (1875) (Paris, private collection) and *Intérieur, femme à la fenêtre* (1880) (Paris, private collection),³⁶ Caillebotte showed a man and a woman, respectively, looking out of a Paris bourgeois window. Caillebotte's younger brother, René, the model for the 1875 painting, died in the following year at the age of twenty-six. He may already have been ill, the open window and the adjacent chair perhaps suggesting convalescence. The woman at her window also suggests reclusion as, ignoring her apparently boorish (and reading) husband, she looks across the street to what may be a lover looking out of what is probably a hotel window opposite. This painting, together with one using the same models, *Intérieur* (1880) (Paris, private collection), was posed in the Caillebotte brothers' apartment on the Boulevard Haussmann. Caillebotte clearly knew the models, and his invitation to them to help create two scenes of marital boredom, and perhaps developing infidelity, in his own apartment may suggest that Caillebotte, a bachelor, saw himself as part of these scenes. Both paintings were impaired by characteristic Caillebotte errors, and *Intérieur*, or 'the little husband' as it became known at the exhibition of 1880, did serious damage to Caillebotte's reputation as a painter. Already moving to a freer, more colourful style of painting at his country home at Petit-Gennevilliers, Caillebotte himself seemed trapped in a Paris world where his painting could no longer evolve.

Between 1878 and 1880 Caillebotte made a last effort to combine his successful street paintings of the 1877 exhibition with a new style. Using for the most part the long balcony and numerous windows of his apartment on the Boulevard Haussmann, he painted a number of aerial cityscapes, usually stressing the typically Haussmannic streets of the district. His free brushwork suggested that he was trying to move towards the example of the street paintings of Monet and Renoir, as in

³⁴ The evidence for Caillebotte's use of photographic methods is discussed by Peter Galassi in Varnedoe, *op.cit.*, 20–40.

³⁵ Varnedoe sees this in terms of being 'walled-in' within converging perspectives (Varnedoe, *op.cit.*, 17.).

³⁶ Reproduced, *ibid.*, 126.

his *Boulevard des Italiens* (c. 1880) (Paris, private collection), but his defects of technique and his remote approach to his subjects, even without photography, often generated lifeless and joyless paintings. Some interesting street-level painting essayed in 1878 *La Place Saint-Augustin, temps brumeux*, and *La Caserne de la Pépinière* (both Paris, private collection) was not pursued, even though it caught two lively and mysterious early-morning Paris moods better than the work of any of his contemporaries.

Happily, some of his more adventurous work, such as *Boulevard vu d'en haut* (1880) (Paris, private collection), would inspire Pissarro from the 1890s, but growing attacks on the whole range of his work at the exhibitions of 1880 and 1882 contributed to his withdrawal from serious painting and from Paris. The irony was that in *Vue de Paris: soleils* (1880), a painting that has only recently been attributed to him, he pioneered the use of overlapping, coloured silhouettes viewed against a veiled sun which, like much of his work, looked forward not only to Post-Impressionism but to the expressionism of the twentieth century. For all his faults and foibles, Caillebotte must lay claim to being the greatest innovator of the Impressionist movement and a modernist before his time.

From 1887 Caillebotte lived permanently at his new country house at Petit-Gennevilliers. He continued to paint from time to time but he concentrated on gardening, boating and local government. This meant that Caillebotte's output of Paris subjects was restricted to little more than five years. His Paris paintings were a unique achievement among the Impressionists but his withdrawal from the exhibitions after his much-criticized contribution in 1882 meant that he was quickly forgotten. Most of his paintings remained in his possession and none was purchased by the national museums, so it was almost impossible for the public to view any of his work. Ironically, it was his death in 1894 at the age of forty-five which revived interest in his Paris paintings, in the eyes of one elderly Impressionist at least.

(b) *Camille Pissarro*

After Caillebotte's experiments, only one other noted Impressionist made a concerted effort to paint Haussmannic cityscapes. This was Camille Pissarro, who had played a big part in the exhibitions, but who had preferred to live and work in the country since the 1870s. Pissarro had concentrated on rural, suburban and small-town scenes since the 1860s and he had been more isolated from Paris and its life for many years than any other member of the movement, except perhaps Alfred Sisley.³⁷

³⁷ Pissarro, however, had painted a number of scenes in the outer districts of Paris earlier in his career. For instance, his *Les Boulevards extérieurs. Effet de neige* (1879) (Paris: Musée Marmottan) foreshadowed his thoroughfare paintings of the 1890s and early 1900s. However, this painting looks very rushed.

Ironically, however, the later work of Pissarro, between 1892 and 1903, included some three hundred cityscapes painted in Paris and the provinces.³⁸ Nearly all were big compositions showing large areas of space, buildings, trees and sky, with a horizon up to half a mile away. The majority were set in Paris. Some pictured the Paris of Haussmann or recent Parisian scenes marked by a similar aesthetic. Pissarro revelled in repeated street perspectives based on the same view, which he varied one from the other mainly by using different angles, and by climatic and light effects.³⁹ The result was a mass production of Haussmannic scenes.

Pissarro's move to cityscapes was a complete conversion, if we discount an occasional study in outer Paris such as his sketchy *Les Boulevards extérieurs: effet de neige* (Paris, Musée Marmottan) of 1879 and his Rouen pictures of the 1880s.⁴⁰ He may have been inspired by the retrospective Caillebotte exhibition in the Durand-Ruel galleries which he went to see in 1894, just after Caillebotte's death. Most of the critics at the exhibition attached special importance to Caillebotte's cityscapes painted from 1876 to 1880, and Pissarro may have responded to the sympathetic critic Gustave Geffroy's call for painters to follow Caillebotte's example and paint broad avenues and tall houses which lined them like cliffs.⁴¹ He was certainly a great admirer of Caillebotte and he felt a great sense of loss at his death, which he expressed in a letter to his son, Lucien.⁴²

However, there was more than example and expert advice behind his persistence in painting so many of these urban scenes. A serious eye complaint had forced him by the early 1890s to do most of his painting indoors, so street scenes painted from an elevated window were an ideal subject.⁴³ Serial painting (multiple treatments of the same subject), which attracted Monet, was developed by Pissarro into a mass production process in order to take full advantage of the expensive upper rooms and apartments which he rented as temporary studios, and because his dealer, Paul Durand-Ruel, told him that there was a ready market for such views, especially in the United States. On a normal working day, Pissarro would have up to twenty canvases in his studio at various stages of completion. He would select a canvas for further work

³⁸ There is a contrast here with Monet, who increasingly turned to pure landscape painting after the 1870s.

³⁹ See R. H. Brettell and J. Pissarro, *The Impressionist and the City: Pissarro's Series Paintings* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1992).

⁴⁰ See R. Thomson, *Camille Pissarro* (London: The South Bank Centre, 1990), 106–14.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, xxiv–xxvi. Geffroy's call for a wave of urban landscapes focused on Haussmannesque streets appeared in *Le Journal*, 25 February 1894.

⁴² Varnedoe, *op.cit.*, 10.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, xxviii.

according to light, weather, time of day and traffic conditions. He soon found that his cityscapes sold more readily than any painting that he had done during all his previous career.⁴⁴ During the late 1880s and the early 1890s he had had difficulty in selling enough pictures to cover his outgoings.⁴⁵ Pissarro was also worried that he might not have long to live and he wanted his life to end on a note of achievement.⁴⁶ Indeed, the sales allowed Pissarro and his family to live in much greater comfort than ever before.

Pissarro's achievement does not necessarily imply that the 1890s saw a resurgence of interest in the Haussmannic aesthetic, at any rate in Paris. In some ways Pissarro's success was anachronistic, at least in respect of the Haussmannic street views. By the 1890s public opinion in Paris was moving towards the sinuous, highly decorated aesthetic of the Urban Art Movement. The Art Nouveau craze exploded in the city in 1895. A few broad streets, like the Rue Réaumur, were still being built on imperial lines, but little effort was made to encourage uniformity in their buildings.⁴⁷ On the contrary, variety was officially favoured and in 1898 the City Council launched an architectural competition to that end. On the other hand, the political reaction against Haussmann's streets had now passed by and, at a distance of over thirty years, it was possible to view Haussmann's work in a more friendly light. At the same time, the Impressionist movement had won a general respect in Paris after the controversies of the 1870s. The beginnings of a sustained growth of interest in Impressionism had become visible after about 1880, and the school enjoyed near-universal admiration from the early 1890s.⁴⁸

Finally, a large number of Pissarro's paintings had been bought by American collectors since Durand-Ruel's first exhibition of Impressionist paintings in New York in 1886 and Pissarro may have leaned towards their preferences, as conveyed by Durand-Ruel.⁴⁹ He was closely advised by his dealer on the most marketable treatments and subjects. Durand-Ruel had begun as the dealer of the Barbizon painters in the 1860s and had carried on as the most important Impressionist dealer. Knowledgeable and helpful, he provided advice which was widely

⁴⁴ See R. E. Shikes and P. Harper, *Pissarro: His Life and Work* (London: Quartet Books, 1980).

⁴⁵ See J. Rewald (ed.), *Camille Pissarro: lettres à son fils Lucien* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1950), 175–296.

⁴⁶ See Pissarro's letter to his son, Lucien, on 4 March 1894, in *ibid.*, 337.

⁴⁷ See A. Sutcliffe, *Paris: An Architectural History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 112–28.

⁴⁸ L. Venturi, *Les Archives de l'Impressionnisme* (Paris: Durand-Ruel, 1939), vol. 1, 33.

⁴⁹ John Milner, *The Studios of Paris: The Capital of Art in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 68. Pissarro noted in 1894 that a number of Americans had been to see his paintings in Durand-Ruel's exhibition. He thought that there might be a link with the American colony in Paris. See John Rewald (ed.), *Camille Pissarro: Letters to His Son Lucien* (London: Routledge, 1980), 251.

respected, and which could often function as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Later, Durand-Ruel would be quoted as saying that his two exhibitions of Impressionist paintings in the United States in 1886 had saved his business. The American public took Impressionism more seriously than the French and only later did the French public follow their example.⁵⁰ His links with the American market, therefore, may well have influenced the course of Impressionism in its last active phase between 1890 and the early 1900s.⁵¹ In Pissarro's case, there may have been a link between the popularity of his big Paris streetscapes, which Durand-Ruel strongly encouraged, and the surge of interest in the City Beautiful in the classical manner after the Chicago Columbian exposition of 1893.⁵²

Pissarro's lengthy correspondence with his son, Lucien, who lived at Epping, near London, throws only intermittent light on his choice of subjects. He was restricted, of course, by his need to rent a suitable apartment or room from which to work. On 6 January 1898, on moving into the Hôtel du Louvre from which he would paint his Avenue de l'Opéra and Place du Théâtre-Français series, he wrote, simply: 'Le motif est très beau, très peintre'.⁵³ None of his correspondence makes much reference to the meaning or significance of his subjects, in country or town.

Few painters, of course, ever explain their choice of subject explicitly. What probably guided Pissarro above all was his interest in effects (*effets*). He explained in a letter of 1903 that subjects were of a secondary interest to him compared to atmosphere and effects. He went on to say that, unlike many other painters, he would stay in the same town or village for years, constantly finding new effects.⁵⁴ Paris streets were very

⁵⁰ Gustave Geffroy, *Monet: sa vie, son œuvre* (Paris: Éditions Macula, 1980) (new edn, ed. C. Jodrin, of 1924 edn, by Éditions Crès), 61.

⁵¹ For an enlightening introduction to the massive purchases of Impressionist paintings by American collectors towards the end of the nineteenth century, see Richard Brettell and Suzanne McCullagh, *Degas in the Art Institute of Chicago* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago 1984), 9–13. For instance, Mrs Potter Palmer, a society figure living in Chicago, formed most of her collection between about 1890 and 1895. Within a rich collection, she owned about *ninety* paintings by Monet (p. 10). The dates and subjects of Durand-Ruel's Impressionist exhibitions appear in *Cent ans d'impressionnisme: hommage à Paul Durand-Ruel* [exhibition catalogue] (Paris: Durand-Ruel, 1974). A total of fifty-four were held in the U.S.A. between 1886 and 1948. All were in New York. Between 1877 and 1971, the number of Durand-Ruel's Impressionist exhibitions held in Paris was only slightly higher, at fifty-seven.

⁵² Daniel Burnham, the Chicago architect who was the main inspiration of the design of the Chicago exhibition and who went on to influence the Senate Park Commission plan for Washington D.C., was an enthusiast for classical planning as applied in Paris by Haussmann. In 1909, his Chicago development plan would incorporate much of the character of Haussmann's Paris plan.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 444.

⁵⁴ See Brettell and Pissarro, *op.cit.*. Pissarro was not, however, the only Impressionist to work so exhaustively. Monet's thorough treatment of Argenteuil, Vétheuil and Giverny was similar to Pissarro's approach.

good subjects from this viewpoint because of the combination of light and climatic effects, together with, to a lesser degree, pedestrian and traffic flows.

We can, however, infer a broader context for Pissarro's choices. The artist was clearly aware that in glorifying Haussmann's streets and squares he was going against the educated taste of the day, which since the 1880s had come to regard them as ugly and monotonous. Writing, for instance, about the Avenue de l'Opéra in 1897, he told his son Lucien:

C'est très beau à faire! C'est peut-être pas [sic] très esthétique mais je suis enchanté de pouvoir essayer de faire ces rues . . . que l'on a l'habitude de dire laides, mais qui sont si lumineuses et si vivantes, c'est tout différent des boulevards – c'est le moderne en plein! !!⁵⁵

The antithesis of 'esthétique' and 'moderne' in this passage suggests that Pissarro was well aware of changes in Parisian taste at the end of the century. We have already noted the rise of the picturesque and its impact on the Haussmannic aesthetic. By the later 1890s, however, interest was growing in 'modern' design. The nature of the modern was still unclear, and Pissarro had every right to detect it in Haussmann's work, even though many of his contemporaries perceived it in Art Nouveau. This interest in the modern partly explains Pissarro's interest in Haussmann's streets, and is largely confirmed by his treatment of these subjects. Pissarro's views of Haussmann's streets and of streets with similar features emphasized the very characteristics obscured or weakened by Renoir and Monet. The façades and roofs created broad channels within which a heavy load of traffic flows and crowds of pedestrians circulate. Normally, the horizontal lines of the balconies were not strongly emphasized. The monochrome walls were varied by light pastel shades. The trees were normally a transparent screen, with boughs visible but foliage reduced to a symbolic form. All the perspective views were painted from off centre, so that one side of the street was viewed as a diagonal, while the other side was heavily truncated or invisible. Pissarro explained that this method was difficult as the sun was present for only part of the time, but his serial painting technique helped to prevent wasted time.⁵⁶

After Pissarro's death in 1903 nearly all Impressionist painting of Haussmannic scenes came to an end, and this brief flowering was associated only with Pissarro. The other surviving Impressionists did not turn to Haussmann's streets in emulation of Pissarro, though his work was generally admired by them.

⁵⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, xlvi.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, xxviii.

(5) Conclusion: Haussmann's Paris in the work of the Impressionists

We can now bring forward certain conclusions about the limited position occupied by Haussmann's Paris in the work of the Impressionists. They must be tentative for the Impressionists, like other artists, rarely left written records explaining their choice of subject or treatment. The Impressionists rarely tried to make political points or to engage in social comment, and we must assume that uppermost in their mind was the desire to paint pictures which could readily be sold, and which would enhance their reputations as artists. In this respect they conformed to Salon orthodoxy. However, a number of factors may well have influenced their decisions in relation to Haussmannic subjects.

The lapse of time between Haussmann's administration (1853–70) and the big launch of Impressionism at the exhibition of 1874 can explain little. Manet, 'the father of the Impressionists', was already a very successful painter in the early 1860s, and several of those who would come together as the Impressionists, such as Renoir and Monet, were mature artists by the later part of the decade. Haussmann's Paris had only a limited appeal for them. Moreover, Haussmann's Paris did not fade away after the fall of the Second Empire in 1870. Most of it was still clean and new in the 1870s, and in 1876 the City Council returned to the task of completing the remainder of Haussmann's streets. The Avenue de l'Opéra, completed in 1878 as the highlight of the universal exhibition of that year, retained the essence of the imperial aesthetic. Most of the private houses completed in Paris in the 1870s used pre-1870 designs, or else their architects diverged very little from Second Empire styles. Even in the 1880s, domestic architecture altered very little, reflecting the enduring influence of the Second Empire aesthetic, and its supporting land market and social system.

Political explanations have more potential. Most of the Impressionists were firmly republican in their political standpoint after 1870 and some, such as Pissarro, were much further to the Left. Those painting before 1870 – including even Manet – had suffered from the indifference or hostility of the Salon jury and the experience had tended to make them consciously anti-conservative.⁵⁷ Conservatism continued into the 1870s at central government level as the Third Republic sought national stability above the pursuit of social reform. Haussmann's streets, as we have seen, remained a lasting symbol of the Second Empire and its forceful methods, and when the Third Republic extended them on almost identical lines they symbolized a political conservatism which

⁵⁷ See Duret, *op.cit.*, 7–8.

disturbed many of the Impressionists. The Impressionists may therefore have been reluctant to justify and enhance these emphatic streets in paint. In the 1870s the new streets were seen by many in the city council and outside as symbolizing the preceding dictatorship and their style was often identified as representing the crushing of the individual. For painters who honoured the individual above all, such subjects perhaps did not appeal.

Another possible discouragement was the simple, sparse character of the domestic façades built by private speculators in the 1850s and 1860s. There was a precedent in the spartan design ordinance for the Rue de Rivoli of 1806 by Percier and Fontaine, approved by the Emperor Napoleon as the décor for a key parade street and re-adopted when the Rue de Rivoli was extended under the Second Empire. This treatment had a big influence on the new façades of the Second Empire. However, in the very long new streets built after 1853, the standardization of dimensions and the reduction of projecting masonry to a minimum produced an effect of economical, mass production which had more to do with industrialization than with the Renaissance tradition. Contemporary architectural commentators hailed the result as modernity, but this was not the kind of modernity favoured by the majority of the Impressionists.

Public buildings, on the other hand, were usually ornate, grandiose affairs. Haussmann sought to ensure that they expressed the grandeur of the Second Empire, and saw them as standing out among the simple, repetitive façades around them. These highly decorated, individualistic buildings, however, were featured even less than the domestic façades in Impressionist painting. Influential here may have been the conscious Impressionist reluctance to paint major public monuments.⁵⁸

The epitome of these new public buildings was the great opera house of Charles Garnier, started in 1861 and completed in 1876. This was an ornate, impressive building in a neo-baroque style, which the architect once described to the empress as a 'Napoleon III style' Its quality was never in question, and Garnier went on to become the doyen of Parisian architects between the 1870s and the end of the century. The opera house remained virtually absent from Impressionist painting, however, until the end of the century when Pissarro's series works gave it and the Avenue de l'Opéra prominence at last.

Another discouragement affected all painting of buildings in Paris,

⁵⁸ Monet's Rouen, London and Venice paintings are very much the exception and in any case reflect the middle stages of a very long career. In Paris, Monet's sublime railway station studies of 1877, while widely admired, were not emulated. Sisley's careful paintings of the church at Moret were particular to a rural and suburban landscapist who pursued an individual path within the movement.

and not just that of the Impressionists. The almost universal use of a high-quality, brownish limestone from the Paris region produced a largely monochrome effect. Given that a combination of high site values and pressure from the authorities to achieve full height along the new streets and squares made the continuous frontage and the five- or six-storey apartment house the norm, the monochrome stone threatened to make this environment depressing or menacing. It was softened only by the plane trees which lined the pavements of the wider streets thanks to Haussmann's insistence, and the ornate ironwork of balcony balustrades and window guards.

Finally, one practical discouragement must have played its part, even though it is hard to document directly. Artists were clearly reluctant to set up their equipment on the pavements of busy streets. Instead, they used upper rooms or balconies. This applied to all streets and squares, whether built by Haussmann or not. Parks seem to have offered enough peace for the artist to work from ground level, and some Impressionists continued to paint the peaceful, traffic-free *quais*, as generations of Paris artists had done before them. Ironically, the non-Impressionist artists of the later nineteenth century seem to have been more willing to work from street level, as in Jean Béraud's *L'Église de Saint-Philippe-du-Roule* (1877). However, they may have built up their pictures in the studio, using sketch studies and photographs. The existence of such paintings does, however, suggest a demand for highly detailed, realistic, outside scenes which the Impressionists did not satisfy.

Almost all the Impressionists enjoyed painting in the open air but they preferred to do this in the country, where they could set their easel on the ground and avoid the disturbance which, in Paris, usually required them to set up in an elevated room or on a balcony. Painting in the open air, where they could detect changing light effects, had after all been one of the distinguishing features of Impressionism in relation to Salon painting, which had normally been done in the studio. Colour, variety, asymmetry and foreground were hard to achieve in Paris cityscapes. Haussmann's streets and squares were especially unsuitable. Aerial views offered some scope for the Impressionist aspiration to scientific observation, but the people in the streets were too far away to allow much more than an impression of rush. Pissarro's late flurry of street views probably owed its success largely to American purchases through Durand-Ruel's gallery. The turn of the century was the heyday of the City Beautiful in America, and Paris was the most admired example of the classical layout and architecture which so many American citizens admired.

On the rare occasions when the Impressionists incorporated the new streets, they tended to use diagonals, or blurred treatments. The variety and asymmetry of Impressionist painting would have been difficult to

create in more precise views of Haussmann's streets. As perspectives, they would have drawn the eye to a single point. Portrayed in detail, the façades along the street would have been repetitive and therefore entirely predictable. Pissarro could deal with this problem by changing colour and light effects along the street, and by creating whirling traffic and pedestrian flows, but even he struggled to create variety and vitality in his treatment of Haussmann's streets. His late paintings of provincial towns, using diagonals and varied subjects such as docksides and factory chimneys, were more satisfactory as compositions.

This discussion of an aspect of Impressionist painting has emphasized that artists' choices of subject are normally made on purely artistic grounds. Even in their many paintings of people in Paris the Impressionists did not set out consciously to portray a society or an era. The observer can draw conclusions about the relationship between the art and the subject, but only with great care can he detect links between the subject in the painting and the historical environment. The Impressionists and their supporters were interested in Realism, but this was a literary and not a historical ideal, concerned more with forms of expression than the portrayal of objective reality.

The limited Impressionist interest in the physical forms of Haussmann's Paris therefore signifies little more than the peripheral value of the physical structures and spaces of the Second Empire as subjects or backgrounds for Impressionist compositions. Clearly, when painting in Paris, the Impressionists preferred people, even though this meant that they worked in their studios rather than in the open air. In painting people they stressed individuality, not social representativeness, and here lies the main character of their work. Here, our discussion returns from the obscure periphery to the essence of Impressionism, and here it must end, having carried out its brief. It is to be hoped, however, that it has suggested that any suggestion that Impressionism 'represented' or 'portrayed' Haussmann's Paris needs to be very carefully reviewed.