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Paris: Or, Lutetia, “The Filthy Marsh”

Paris is synonymous with modernity. Paris for David Harvey is the capital of modernity and for Walter Benjamin it was the capital of the nineteenth century. The nineteenth century was arguably the culmination of modernity, and Paris the capital of both. Achieving this status was the culmination of almost two millennia as its history stretches back to premodern Roman times. Other contenders for the capital of both the nineteenth century and modernity, such as London, shared a premodern Roman patrimony with Paris, while Chicago was much smaller and younger. As with London (as we will see in Chapter 4), the swampy beginnings of Paris are preserved in the original name of the site and the city: Lutetia, “the filthy marsh.”

As with all these cities and many others founded in a wetland, such as Berlin, Venice, St. Petersburg, New Orleans, and New York, their foundation in a wetland led in the nineteenth century to a fascination with, and horror of, the dark and sewery underside of the city in the literature and culture of the city. In the case of Paris, Balzac’s *The History of the Thirteen* in *La Comédie Humaine* and Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables* manifest this fascination and horror. The recent film of the musical based on Hugo’s novel is true to the novel in this regard. Lutetia, “the filthy marsh,” becomes, as Hugo puts it, “Lutetia, the city of mire.” In my terms, the native quaking zone of the indigenous marsh becomes the feral quaking zone of the modern mire. This chapter traces the history and literature of Paris from lowly swampy beginnings up to the dizzying heights of the capital of modernity and back down into the fascinating depths of its underworld. It argues that Paris is a postmodern city that should try to achieve a rapprochement and reconciliation between these

zones, between the city and the swamp, between the past and the present, and between the underside and overside of the city.

Paris needs no introduction as a modern, world city. Its skyline, streets, and structures, such as the Eiffel Tower, are icons of modernity. Paris for Hazan (2010: 315–316) is “the paradigm of the ‘modern’ city.” Paris for DeJean (2014: 5, 14, 16, 144, and 191; emphasis in the original) is not only “the key capital of modernity,” but also “the capital of an empire of culture,” the “capital of high fashion.” Indeed for her “Paris is fashion” and “the most romantic city in the world.” DeJean is largely reiterating Benjamin (1999a: 8), who said in 1935 that “Paris is acknowledged as the capital of luxury and fashion.” Looking back to Rome, Paris for Kotkin (2005: 72 and 73) is, or was, “the ultimate European capital city” that aimed to be “the new Rome” as the center and seat of the French empire and as the new “eternal city” of modernity. Paris aimed to be the new Rome in and of the nineteenth century and of modernity.

Indeed, Paris for Walter Benjamin (1973a; 1999a), in his justly famous writings about the city (often with this title), was “the capital of the nineteenth century.” Sloterdijk (1987: 115) revises Benjamin’s words by calling Paris “the principal city of the nineteenth century” (which neglects the way Benjamin saw that time and history had been spatialized, such that a century could have a capital). The Marquis de Caraccioli proclaimed Paris “the capital of the universe” (cited by DeJean, 2014: 6), which has both spatial and temporal dimensions. Modernity colonized time and space, and had a capital, and its capital in the nineteenth century was Paris. “The modern city,” for DeJean, “was oriented to the future rather than the past: speed and movement were its hallmarks,” with Paris as *the* “city of speed and light” (1 and 122). Yet however fast the modern city could move and travel (though never at the speed of light), and however much the speedy modern city could deny or repress its past, the repressed past and the slow rhythms of its swampy beginnings always come back to haunt it.

Unlike Benjamin’s view of Paris, Harvey (2006)¹ saw it as the “capital of modernity” and Weigel (2013:226) considered it as “the capital city of Modernity” (which acknowledges the way Benjamin saw time as spatialized in and by nineteenth-century capitalism, but neglects the specificity of the century of modernity to which he was referring). Paris for Harvey (2006: 24) is

not only the capital city of modernity, but also “the city of capital,” the city of mercantile and industrial investment and profiteering, but London is also a strong contender for this title. Paris for Hussey (2006: 310 and 318) is “the world capital of modernity” and “the capital of modernity.” Modernity is a global and temporal phenomenon founded literally in and on the basis of an earthly and local premodern marsh.

Other modern cities, such as St. Petersburg, London, and New York, could also lay claim to being the capital of modernity, or to one or another century of it. St. Petersburg might be considered the capital of the eighteenth century, New York as the capital of the twentieth century, and London or Paris as the capital of the nineteenth century. Benjamin (1999a: 427) acknowledged that London was far superior to Paris as the hub of industrial development in the nineteenth century and cites Engels, for whom London was “the commercial capital of the world.” Yet for Benjamin Paris was the capital of the nineteenth century because it encapsulated and pioneered many of the developments of the nineteenth century, such as iron and glass construction in the arcades and the department store with the *flâneur* as the denizen of both, which other cities, such as London, were to take up later and follow.

Like Benjamin, Stefan Zweig ([1942] 2014) in his memoirs acknowledges the temporal dimension of Paris. For him Paris is “the city of eternal youth” in a chapter of this title. Ancient and modern Paris is the city of eternal youth and age (though he does not mention its longevity and prehistory), rather than the city of eternal age that ancient Rome was, or aspired to be. Paris for Zweig is tinged in hindsight with nostalgia and regret because “the wonderfully lively and invigorating Paris of my youth no longer exists ... now that it has felt the iron brand forcibly imprinted on it by the hardest hand on earth” (149). Zweig was writing when “German armies and ... tanks were rolling in, like a swarm of grey termites, to destroy” the city of his youth, which lends an ironic inflection to the title of the chapter. Nazi Germany was a swarming, and so abominable, creature that inscribed itself on the surface of the soft body of the city with its hard war machines. The Paris of his youth is for Zweig “the liveliest city in the world” (156) and “this busy, fast-moving city” (158), the city of speed and modernity. Paris for Zweig is also “the most enquiring city in the world” (223). He also refers to “the warm-hearted city of Paris” (166). Perhaps this was the city of

his youth before the Nazis broke the heart of Paris. They were following in the footsteps of the Romans who ruptured the soft and warm womb of the swamp on which the city was built.

Anthropomorphizing the city as a human body with organs, such as a heart, and with associated affects, such as warmth, is the stock-in-trade of writers about the city. The heart of the city is a cliché for the commercial center of the city. From the heart of the city, major transport arteries flow out to circulate capital and life around the body of the city. For the city to have a heart and a life it had to be born and grow in the nurturing environment of its bioregion on which it still depends for its life today. Many cities were founded in and grew out of the watery womb of wetlands, often figured as the bowels of the earth. Paris is no exception (as we will see shortly). Anthropomorphizing the earth as body with its bowels, its veins of minerals, and its parks as lungs is the stock-in-trade of many writers about the body (see Giblett, 2008a). Thinking about, and figuring, the city as a body with its commercial heart, transport arteries, heady skyscrapers, cloacal sewers, and womby wetlands is a way of acknowledging and appreciating the role and history of all of these organs in sustaining the city. I return to this topic in the final chapter of *Cities and Wetlands*.

Lutetia

Paris is a swamp city. It was a swamp city before it became a modern city and before it became the capital of the nineteenth century, modernity, and the universe. Like a number of other swamp cities and marsh metropolises, Paris has a slimy beginning that has largely been forgotten, but whose traces still remain. Unlike a number of other such cities, however, yet like London, the swampy beginnings of Paris can be found in the original name of Lutetia for the site for the city and then for the city itself. “The muddy etymology of Lutetia” is linked to “the Celtic word for marshland and to *lutum*, Latin for mud” (Jones, 2005: 4). More specifically for Hussey (2006: 3 and 7) Lutetia is Celtic for “the place of mud, marshes and swamp.” The muddy etiology of Lutetia itself is also linked to what Jones (2002: 4) calls “marshy and muddy land.”

Moreover, the water of the River Seine for Hussey (2006: 4, 7, 13) was “the dirty-green water” with a “marshy swamp on the Right Bank,” which was what he also calls “the stinking and greasy bank.” This makes the River Seine sound like “the great grey-green, greasy Limpopo River” of one of Rudyard Kipling’s *Just so Stories*. Perhaps Julian Green’s ([1983] 2012: 77) translator had Kipling’s line in mind when he translated Green’s description of the Seine in flood as “*vert jaunâtre*” into “grey-green.” Jones (2002: 4) concludes that “land, water and mud thus had a more dramatic relationship with the city’s history than in recent times.” Perhaps it would be more precise to say that the city had a more overt, dramatic relationship in the past with land, water, and mud, whereas in recent times it has had a more covert relationship with them.

Paris had an overt, dramatic relationship with the city’s swampy location and history during Henri IV’s reign in the late sixteenth century. Writing a century later, Nicolas Delamare, the original historian of Paris’s municipal governance, wrote that at the beginning of Henri IV’s reign “Paris had wide stretches of barren terrain—fields, prairies, and swamps” (cited by DeJean, 2014: 7). Yet swamps are highly fertile terrain. Rather than barren wombs, or tombs, swamps are fertile wombs. Henri transformed this fertile terrain into the barren terrain of a new city. In the process, he drove the swamps, and history, of the city underground, only for them to reemerge with a vengeance in the nineteenth century.

Paris had a covert, dramatic relationship with the city’s swampy history in the nineteenth century. The repressed swampy beginnings of Paris, and any other city for that matter built on or by a wetland, return repeatedly in its history, particularly in tropes. For example, d’Aurevilly (cited by Benjamin, 1973a: 25) invokes “the sediment of rancor which has accumulated” in cities. Paris and other cities were founded on the sediment of its wetlands, and this repressed foundation returns as a rich source of metaphor for its cultural life, usually, as here, in the pejorative register. Rather than the Seine being a green, greasy river, Auguste Barbier (cited by Benjamin, 1999a: 739) figured Paris as “an infernal vat / ... Ringed by three bends of a muddy yellow river.” Paris as hell at whose center resides the devil was a commonplace of nineteenth-century figuration of this, and other, especially swamp, cities.

The buried wetland history of Paris as Lutetia also returns in Baudelaire’s figuring of “the mire of the macadam,” *la fange du macadam* (cited by Berman,

1988: 156). Berman relates how “*la fange* is not only a literal word for mud; it is also a figurative word for mire, filth, vileness, corruption, degradation, all that is foul and loathsome” (160–161). In and with the modern city all that is solid not only “melts,” or is sublimated, into air, but also is desublimated, or “melts,” into slime. The modern city, especially its slums, founded in and on swamps, is figured in terms of swamps, but these are “man-made” artificial swamps of what Schenker (2009: 30) calls the “dark hole of poverty,” of its slums, and of the filthy mud of its sewers above and below ground. For Horne (2002: 78) “the City [of Paris] in 1594” was a city of slime of human and animal waste. A little later in the seventeenth century the streets of Paris were, Smith (2012: 172) says, “famously filthy and the mud that coated everything was notorious,” which was hardly surprising as “Parisian streets were effectively open sewers.”

Two centuries later the city was hardly any better in this respect. During the mid- nineteenth century under the Restoration and Louis-Philippe “health and hygiene lagged in Paris” to the point that one contemporary report noted the pervasive presence of “bad gases and pestilential miasmas” (cited by Horne, 2002: 218) bearing airborne diseases, of “insalubrious smells” and of waterborne cholera. Up until the late nineteenth century the miasmatic theory of disease that diseases, such as malaria (literally “bad air”), could be carried by bad air was the prevailing medical orthodoxy. Yet for Hussey (2006: 210) Paris in the nineteenth century is “the most beautiful and powerful city in the world.” Both cities lived side by side with glorious buildings situated by sewery streets, and both cities were situated one above and below the other with the buildings posed above the sewers and beneath malodorous skies. Paris was an architectural and engineering contradiction.

The buried wetland history of Paris as Lutetia also returns in Benjamin’s (1973a: 171) figuring of the Paris of Baudelaire’s poems as “a sunken city, and more submarine than subterranean.” Benjamin goes on to refer to “the chthonic elements of the city,” such as “its topographical formation, the old abandoned bed of the Seine.” Paris rests, or floats, on the old bed of the Seine, and its marshes. The motto for Paris is “it floats but does not sink” as depicted in its coat of arms with its Latin motto, *Fluctuat nec mergitur* (Horne, 2002: illustration following 138). Paris, however, is not a floating city like Tenochtitlán. It appears to be a floating city like Venice, but is actually

built on land, also like Venice. Hussey (2006: 7) relates that “one of the most popular Christianized myths was that Lutetia was founded by Lucus, the seventeenth descendant of Noah, who came here to make a city on the water.” The city would have been a kind of ark, full of the goods and beasts of the earth, appearing to float on water like Venice. The famous Situationist graffiti slogan of May 1968, “*au dessous les pavés, la plage*” (beneath the pavement lies the beach; cited by Smith, 2012: 274) should be revised to “*au dessous les pavés, lutetia*” (beneath the pavement lies the filthy marsh).

The insalubrious quality of the air was a common cause for complaint in the nineteenth century. Balzac ([1833–1835] 1974: 322), for instance, in *The Girl with the Golden Eyes* first published in 1835 as the third and final part of *History of the Thirteen* (and in turn part of *La Comédie Humaine*), relates how

if the air of the houses in which majority of the middle-class citizens live is foul, if the atmosphere of the streets spews out noxious vapors into practically airless back premises, realize that, apart from this pestilence, the forty thousand houses of this great city have their foundations plunged in filth, which the authorities have not yet seriously thought of enclosing within concrete walls capable of preventing even the most fetid mire from percolating through the soil, poisoning the wells, and making the famous name Lutetia still appropriate, at least underground. Half of Paris sleeps nightly in the putrid exhalations from streets, back-yards and privies.

For “Lutetia” in this passage the English translator has a footnote that reads, “in Celtic, ‘the town in the marshes.’”² The buried and repressed history of the city in the swamp is enshrined in its original name of Lutetia and returns in its fetid mud and stinking sewers. Lutetia, “the filthy marsh,” becomes, as Hugo (1992: 1088) puts it in *Les Misérables*, “Lutetia, the city of mire.” Commenting on the poor state of the air in Paris as Balzac does was a commonplace of the nineteenth century, such as Victor Considerant (cited by Vidler, 1978: 68) in 1834 who described how

all these windows, all these doors, are so many mouths begging to breathe: and above all this you can see, when the wind is still, a leaden atmosphere, heavy, blue-grey, composed of all the filthy exhalations of the great sewer. This is the atmosphere that Paris breathes and beneath which it suffocates. Paris is an immense workshop of putrefaction, where misery, plague and illness work in concert, where air and sun hardly penetrate.

Lutetia is remembered in the name of the Hotel Lutetia that opened in Paris in 1910 and is still operating. Benjamin (1999a: 516) acknowledges “the unconquerable power in the names of streets, squares, and theaters, a power which persists in the face of all topographic replacement.” How much more so does the unconquerable power of the name of Lutetia not only persist in the name of a hotel, but also endures in the massive topographic replacement of the filthy marsh of Lutetia by the city of Paris?

The repressed marsh returns in the figures for other parts of the city. Balzac ([1833–1835] 1974: 34) in *Ferragus*, the first part of *History of the Thirteen* (and in turn part of *La Comédie Humaine*) figures “street ends” as “Parisian marshes.” These are not the native or natural marshes in which the city was built but the cultural or feral marshes that the city has become. Elsewhere for Balzac other spaces in Paris were a desert. In the “Conclusion” to *Ferragus*, Balzac describes

the space enclosed between the south railings of the Luxembourg and the north railings of the Observatoire, a space in Paris which has no sex or gender. There, in fact, Paris has ceased to be; and yet Paris is still there. This place smacks at one and the same time of the street square, the boulevard, the fortification, the garden, the avenue, highway, the province, and the capital; certainly it has something of all that but it is nothing of all that: it is a desert. (151)

Hazan (2010: 4, n.2) suggests that “perhaps Victor Hugo had this passage in mind” when he describes the surroundings of the Salpêtrière in *Les Misérables*,

where it might be said that Paris disappeared. It was no longer a solitude, for there were people passing; it was not the country, for there were houses and streets; it was not a city, the streets had ruts in them, like highways, and grass grew along their borders; it was not a village, the houses were too lofty. What was it then? It was an inhabited place where there was nobody; it was a desert place where there was somebody; it was a boulevard of the great city, a street of Paris, wilder, at night, than a forest, and gloomier, by day, than a graveyard. (Hugo, [1862] 1992: 374)

Perhaps at times it was also colder and wetter than a marsh, and at other times drier and hotter than a desert. It was a liminal place, a feral quaking zone. It

was a place where the elements of earth, air, fire, and water were mixed in an unholy alliance and not as they do in the marsh in a holy intercourse. At any time its air was unhealthier than a marsh.

The buried and repressed history of the city in the marsh returns in the metaphors for the city. In 1838 Vicomte de Lannay (cited by Vidler, 1978: 69) remarked

how ugly Paris seems after an absence, as one suffocates in these dark, narrow and humid corridors that one would rather call the streets of Paris. One thinks one is in a subterranean town, the atmosphere is so heavy, the darkness so deep. And thousands of men live, move, press together in these liquid shadows, like reptiles in a marsh.

Paris becomes again metaphorically the marsh it once was except that now it is a “man-made” or feral marsh whereas it had once been a “natural” or native marsh. Delphine de Giarardin (cited by Prendergast, 1992: 87 and 262) “stood aghast ‘before an underground city’ whose inhabitants lived ‘liked reptiles in a marsh.’”

Hausmann: Boulevard blaster, modernity bludgeoner

Although Walter Benjamin (1999a: 83) was aware of the Roman name for the city as *Lutetia Parisorum*, he does not discuss the meaning of the word “Lutetia” (his editors do that) or note that the city was founded in and on the swamps of Lutetia, even though Hausmann, the blaster of boulevards who for Harvey (2006) “bludgeoned the city into modernity,” and the novelist Balzac do, both of whom Benjamin cites repeatedly in *The Arcades Project*, though necessarily selectively (as does Harvey in his footsteps). Hausmann’s project is even figured in terms of engineering the urban landscape figured as wetlandscape, such as when Jean Cassou (cited by Benjamin, 1999a: 793) describes how “Hausmann built broad, perfectly straight avenues to break up the swarming, tortuous neighborhoods, the breeding grounds for mystery ... the secret gardens of popular conspiracy.”

General Maurice Janin (cited by Prendergast, 1992: 86) referred to “a swarming and oozing population.” Swarming creatures are an abomination

according to the Levitical (11:41) interdiction that “every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth is an abomination.” Swarming creatures, Mary Douglas (1966: 56) has commented, are

both those that teem in the waters and those that swarm on the ground. Whether we call it teeming, trailing, creeping or swarming, it is an interminable form of movement ... “swarming” which is not a mode of propulsion proper to any particular element, cuts across the basic classification. Swarming things are neither fish, nor flesh, nor fowl. Eels and worms inhabit water, though not as fish; reptiles go on dry land, though not as quadrupeds; some insects fly, though not as birds. There is no order in them ... As fish belong in the sea so worms belong in the realm of the grave with death and chaos.

Swarming creatures cut across the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water and belong to none in particular and some in general.

Wetlands also cut across the four Western elements as they are made up of the elements of earth and water, and are often in transition from one to the other. They mix two Western elements of earth and water, and air and fire too in hot and steamy climes. Wetlands are out of place in all the major Western categories of matter: solid, gas, heat/light, and liquid. They are dirt in Douglas’s (1966: 35) sense of “matter out of place.” The typical Western response to the dirtiness of wetlands has been to try and put matter back in its proper place wherever possible and where it is impossible to denigrate their deviation from the norm. Drainage, for instance, is putting the earth and water of the wetland back in their respective, and respectable, places. In the process wetlands are put in their subjugated place and drylands substituted in their place instead.

Just as the swamp was considered to be the breeding ground for malaria in the mistaken view of the miasmatic theory of disease, so the slum was considered the breeding ground for class revolt and a pretext for the boulevarding of the city. Along similar lines, Aragon ([1926] 1994: 14) regarded Haussmann as the importer of “the great American passion for city planning” whose “redrawing the map of our capital in straight lines” would “soon spell the doom of these human aquariums” of the arcades. The glass enclosures of the arcades were for Aragon, as they were for Benjamin, “the true sanctuaries of a cult of the ephemeral, the ghostly landscape of damnable pleasures and professions.”

In the late 1850s and through the 1860s Haussmann, the prefect of Paris in Napoleon III's authoritarian right-wing regime and one of the fathers of what Benevolo (1971: 63) calls "neo-conservative town planning," blasted boulevards through old Paris. The modern city with its boulevards is a sublimated military feature if the etymology of the word "boulevards" is anything to go by for, according to Horne (2002: 123), it is "a corruption of the German word *Bollwerk*, meaning a bulwark or rampart." Haussmann, in the words of Berman (1988: 150), blasted "a vast network of boulevards through the heart of the old medieval city. Haussmann envisioned the new roads as arteries in an urban circulatory system ... The new Parisian boulevard was the most spectacular urban innovation of the nineteenth century, and the decisive breakthrough in the modernization of the traditional city." Spectacular indeed for the boulevards were the site for the development and institution of the "society of the spectacle" with what Berman calls their "great sweeping vistas" that "helped to make the new Paris a uniquely enticing spectacle" (151). But a city whose heart had been blasted open and whose arteries were no longer connected to its heart, yet whose arteries need to be connected to a heart for the body of the city to live.

Haussmann for Hussey (2006: 11) "evokes the original meaning of Lutetia as 'the filthy marsh' to vindicate his plans" to blast boulevards through some of the poorer areas of Paris. In his own words, he "ripped open the belly of old Paris" (cited by Horne, 2002: 234) and thereby in Horne's terms "lance[d] the festering abscesses of the old city." Haussmann in his own words is a surgeon performing a caesarean section to make Paris give birth to a new Paris out of the pregnant old one where the new birth is figured not as an embryo but as abscess. Perhaps he was really a backyard abortionist who killed the old Paris growing in its womb of the maternal marsh before it reached its full term and instead gave birth to his own new Paris as his brainchild out of his own brainbox, a bachelor machine for a bachelor birth.

Michel Carrouges (1975: 21) defines a "bachelor machine" as "a fantastic image that transforms love into a technique of death" (see also Carrouges, 1954; and de Certeau, 1984: 150–153; 1986: 156–167). Theweleit (1987: 330n.; see also 315) describes Bachelor Births from Bachelor Machines as "attempts to create a new reality by circumventing the female body [and the swamps and marshes of the Great Mother Earth]—to engender the world from the

brain.” The Bachelor Birth from a Bachelor Machine is a brainchild (see Sofia, 1992: 380). It entails what Theweleit (1989: 127; see also Giblett, 1996: Figure 1) later calls “cerebral parthogenesis (the masculine form of the virgin birth).” The womb is sublimated into the head that gives birth to the brainchild like Zeus who gave birth to Pallas-Athena out of his head (see Michael Meier’s engraving in Theweleit, 1989: 345).

Perhaps it is only fitting that in a completion of the metaphoric circle, Paris for Julian Green ([1983] 2012: 9) was “shaped like a human brain.” Haussmann’s brainchild was a brain-shaped child. Haussmann’s brainchild of boulevards militarized the city of Paris. “Boulevard” according to Giedion (1967: 757) “means literally a walk on the walls of a fortified town, the word going back to German *Bollwerk* (bulwark)” (as we have seen). The city for Smith (2012: 321) is “as a bulwark against the vagaries of a hostile universe.” Haussmann’s boulevards were the first step in the Haussmannization of the universe to build a bulwark within and without the city. Arguably there is more hostility to be found within the city itself than within the universe. The universe (and the earth within it and its wetlands) on this view is no longer a home and both have been “Haussmannized.” The city is also increasingly barricaded within against terrorist attacks. The barricaded city (see Flint, 2006: 238–239), the gated and ungated “communities” of the enclave estate, is the direct descendent of the bulwarked city.

Paris, or Lutetia, as woman, as goddess, as Great Mother, and as dialectical image

It is hardly surprising that Paris, according to Horne (2002: xiii), is “fundamentally a woman.” But which woman? What sort of woman? And for whom? For masculinist men? Paris for Hussey (2006: xv) can variously be regarded as “a beautiful woman, a sorceress and a demon.” It is not just any sort of beautiful woman, but a particular sort of beautiful woman, a woman with a French name that sums up all these qualities to some extent, a *femme fatale*, an enchanting and dangerous woman with surface charms, interior labyrinths, dangerous depths, and fascinating passages. Venice for some writers is

a whore and a decrepit courtesan (as we will see in Chapter 5), whereas Paris for Ralph Rumney (cited by Hussey, 2006: xvi) is “the corpse of an old whore” and “the body of Paris” for Harvey (2006: 36) is “either a harlot or a queen.” For these writers, she is never Lutetia, the Great Goddess swamp mother.

Walter Benjamin also figured Paris as a labyrinthine whore. In *The Arcades Project* Benjamin (1999a: 523) cites a nineteenth-century account of “the true Paris [which] is by nature a dark, miry, malodourous city ... swarming with blind alleys ... and ... with labyrinths that lead you to the devil.” Solnit (2000: 209) argues that Benjamin figures “Paris as labyrinth ... whose center is a brothel.” The city for Benjamin is ultimately a labyrinthine female body. Indeed, for Benjamin (1999a: 519) the darkness of the streets “greatly resembles the lap of a whore.” The sexually and spatially repressed is the bodies of the prostitutes embodying what Solnit (2000: 209) calls his “transformation of city into female body.” Benjamin (1999b: 141–143) also figures “Paris as Goddess.” In writing about Paris, especially in his labyrinthine, monumental, and monstrous *Arcades Project*, a femme fatale of a book, Benjamin was primarily interested in Paris as “the capital of the nineteenth century” as he put it, and in critiquing, as Baudelaire put it, “the goddess of Industry” (cited by Benjamin, 1973a: 79) figured as an orally sadistic monster with her “jaws” that consume with greed and gluttony rather than celebrating the “goddess of the city,” as Benjamin (1999b: 143) also put it, in the preceding centuries going back to its beginnings as Lutetia as an orally satisfying Great Goddess or Mother of the marsh.

Traces of the swamp nevertheless can be found in the *Arcades Project*. Baudelaire’s writing is one of the central proof texts for Benjamin with good reason. Baudelaire for Berman (1988: 147) is “universally acclaimed as one of the great urban writers,” especially of the modern city, and so of Paris. Baudelaire for Benjamin (1973a: 81) performs the labors of Hercules to “give shape to modernity.” Benjamin does not mention that one of Hercules’s labors was to kill the brazen-beaked Stymphalian birds that lived in a swamp and figured as orally sadistic monsters who consume with greed and gluttony and who defecate with impunity on all and sundry (see Giblett, 1996: 180–181). Benjamin’s Herculean labor was to kill the monstrous goddess of industry, rather than to also celebrate the Lutetian Great Mother goddess of the marsh. The former gave birth to *The Arcades Project* somewhat surprisingly

described by Pike (2007: 67) as “the most sustained meditation to date on the devil (*inter alia*) in the nineteenth-century metropolis.” The monstrous goddess of industry for Benjamin is certainly a satanic figure of ambiguous and dubious gender; monstrous Satan for Milton ([1667] 2003: 230) in *Paradise Lost* (X, 530) was certainly a swamp monster of slimy origins (see Giblett, 1996: 183–185). The slimy and swampy origins of Paris (as with other cities) make it an ideal location for the engendering of satanic and monstrous industry that consumes the earth, its inhabitants, and its resources. France for Papini (cited by Pike, 2007: 67) is “the promised land of Satan” and Paris is its capital.

Benjamin’s account of Paris focuses on the culture and history of the city in the nineteenth century, a big enough undertaking in itself as the sheer bulk of *The Arcades Project* demonstrates. Yet his lack of attention to the matri-focal prehistory of the site for the city, especially when it reemerges in the literature of the nineteenth century, is somewhat surprising given his interest in Bachofen’s work on “mother right,” or the Great Mother or Goddess of the “swamp world” (Benjamin, 1999b: 808). This interest is expressed in *The Arcades Project* (Benjamin, 1999a: 361), in his review of Bachofen’s book on the topic (Benjamin, 1996: 426–427), and in his essay on Kafka written on the tenth anniversary of Kafka’s death (Benjamin, 1999b: 808–809).

If Benjamin had been aware of the beginnings of Paris in the swamps of Lutetia, or the meaning of the name, he may have made the connection between the work of Bachofen, the history of Paris as manifested in *The Arcades Project* (Benjamin, 1999a), and its prehistory. He may have seen Paris as the city of the Great Goddess of the swamp and not only, or even, as a labyrinthine whore. He may have also seen the city as not only the site for the interpenetration of building and action but also as founded on the invagination of fertility and procreation. Unfortunately he did not make these connections, and so it is left to others to do so as best as they can, following him in his big footsteps. Bachofen (1967), as Benjamin (1999b: 808–809) points out, discusses the “hetaeric stage” of the prepatriarchal or matrifocal “Mother Right,” or “Great Goddess,” of the “swamp world,” when the world was swamp. Benjamin comments that “the fact that this stage is now forgotten does not mean that it does not extend into the present. On the contrary: it is present by virtue of its very oblivion” (809). This statement not only could

have served as the epigraph for *Cities and Wetlands*, but it is also the motto for my discussion of the absence and absencing of wetlands from the cities discussed in *Cities and Wetlands*, and for their ongoing presence in the present by virtue of their very oblivion. The fact that the swamps of Paris and other wetland cities are forgotten does not mean that they do extend into the present. On the contrary, they are present by virtue of their very oblivion. The majority of the residents of these wetland cities today have largely forgotten about, or are ignorant of, their lost wetlands, but they are still present (in the present) by virtue of their very absence.

In others words, and in Benjamin's own word, the stage of the swamp world has left a trace. In fact, for anything from the past to be forgotten and to extend into the present by virtue of its very oblivion is a precise definition of the trace. The trace is current absence and past presence, and presence in the present by virtue of absence. *Cities and Wetlands* reads the traces of the absent wetlands of cities in history, literature, geography, cartography, and photography. Absent wetlands also leave other traces in technology and climatology. All machines and vehicles powered by steam and internal combustion engines are a trace of the stage when the world was a swamp as its fossilized remains fuel these machines and vehicles in the era of carboniferous capitalism and the age of global warming.

Nineteenth-century French literature manifests not only this forgetting as the Great Goddess is not mentioned in it, but also this extension into the present as Lutetia is frequently invoked (as we have seen). Balzac and Hugo do not make the connection between the two, nor does Benjamin. The past of what Benjamin calls "the dark, deep womb" of what Bachofen calls (citing Arnobius) "dirty voluptuousness (*luteae voluptates*)" (Benjamin, 1999b: 809) is present in the past name of Paris, Lutetia, not merely as dirty voluptuousness, but as dirty *swampy* voluptuousness, or, as Gilles Deleuze (1989: 52) puts it in discussing Bachofen, "the lustful chaos of primeval swamps." The reminder in the present of the past name of Paris as Lutetia "takes us back," as Benjamin puts it, to the past of the swamp world in which Paris began, the world of the Great Goddess, though Benjamin forgets about this too. The present figuring of Paris as Goddess takes us back to when Lutetia the swamp *was* the goddess, and not just merely figured as such. Lutetia is an uncanny return to the repressed.

The repressed, rich, dark past of Paris swamps returns in a one-act vaudeville performance in which, as Benjamin (1999a: 56) puts it, “Lutèce emerges from the bowels of the earth, at first in the guise of an old woman.” The city of Paris emerged literally from the bowels of the earth of Lutetia, the swamp, and swamp goddess. The editors of *The Arcades Project* briefly note that “Lutèce” is the “Roman name for Paris” (Benjamin, 1999a: 959, n.12), whereas it was previously the Celtic name for the wetland site of the city. Similarly in their “Guide to Names and Terms” the editors of *The Arcades Project* gloss “Lutèce” as “ancient name for Paris. From Latin *Lutetia* (‘city of mud’)” (1038). However, as Benjamin says later (and as we have seen), “Lutetia Parisorum,” not just Lutetia, is “the old Roman city” (83). In the vaudeville performance that Benjamin paraphrases Lutetia is an old woman; in Bachofen’s terms, she is the Great Goddess who lives in the bowels of the earth, the swamps.

One of the ways in which for Benjamin (1999a) the hetaeric stage extends into the present is as a point of ecological critique of the present. For him, “the murderous idea of the exploitation of nature, which has ruled over things since the nineteenth century . . . could have no place so long as the prevailing image of nature was that of the ministering mother, as reflected in Bachofen’s conception of matriarchal societies” (361), or, in more recent terms, matri-focal societies. The green or ecocritical Benjamin has not been noted or commented upon much by Benjamin scholars, nor by ecocritics and environmental theorists either for that matter (see, for exceptions, Giblett, 2009; 2011; Mules, 2014; 2015).

How ironic that the rule of “the murderous idea of the exploitation of nature” should have its beginnings for Benjamin not only in the nineteenth century but also in Paris as “the capital of the nineteenth century” whose original name of Lutetia precisely evokes “the ministering mother” of the swamp world. Lutetia in Benjamin’s (1999a: 462) terms in *The Arcades Project* is “a dialectical image” for, as he goes on to elaborate, “while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation to what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent.” Lutetia is the dialectical image of the what-has-been of Paris as marsh and of the now of the recognizability of Paris as metropolis, between the filthy marsh and the miry city. Marsh and metropolis come together dialectically in the image of Lutetia, of Paris as marsh metropolis.

Benjamin (1999a: 464) elaborates further that “in the dialectical image, what has been within a particular epoch is always, simultaneously, ‘what has been from time immemorial.’” Lutetia has been from time immemorial and has been in the particular epoch of the beginnings of the history of Paris. “The dialectical image” for Benjamin is “the primal phenomenon of history” (474). Lutetia is the primal phenomenon of the history of Paris. Of course, Lutetia can be and has been forgotten by the majority of the residents of Paris, but that does not mean that “it does not extend into the present. On the contrary: it is present by virtue of its very oblivion,” as Benjamin (1999b: 809) said of the hetaeric stage of the swamp world and Bachofen’s (1967) conception of matri-focal societies. Lutetia extends into the present and is present by virtue of its very oblivion in Paris today and in other marsh metropolises and swamp cities. Benjamin’s statement is a reminder of the motto for Paris (“it floats but does not sink”), as well as a fitting motto for *Cities and Wetlands*: “the wetlands are largely forgotten but are present by virtue of their very oblivion.”

Voltaire thought Paris “half gold, half filth”; Goethe thought it “the world’s head”; Balzac ([1833–1835] 1974: 33) in *Ferragus* thought it “a monstrous miracle” (also translated as “a monstrous marvel” (Jones, 2005: xx; see also Hussey, 2006: 243), “an astounding assemblage of movements, machines and ideas ... the world’s thinking box.” The Paris of modernity in these terms is a bachelor machine for a bachelor birth from Haussmann’s brain box. Balzac ([1833–1835] 1974: 64) later in *Ferragus* elaborates that “Paris may be a monster, but it is the most monomaniacal monster.” The monster “falls into the slough of despond.” Paris is a monomaniacal monster lurking in its monumental labyrinth. Balzac in *Ferragus* feminizes the monster and figures the city as body for

Paris is the most delightful of monsters: here a pretty woman, farther off a poverty-stricken old hag; here as freshly minted as the coin of a new reign, and in another corner of the town as elegant as a lady of fashion. A monster, certainly, from head to foot: its head is in the garrets, inhabited by men of genius; the first floors house the well-filled stomachs; on the ground floor are the shops, the legs and feet, since the busy trot of trade goes in and out of them. (32)

Balzac (1949–1953, 2: 389) in *Ferragus* also considered that for its devotees Paris “*est un creature*,” translated variously by Fanger (1965: 26 and 31) as “a

living being” and “a living thing” and by Hunt as “a sentient being” (Balzac, [1833–1835] 1974: 33).

Paris has been figured in even more diverse ways. For Hussey (2006: xv) it “has been variously represented as a prison, a paradise and a vision of hell.” That is the point, pride, and shame of the city of Paris and of other cities such as London to be variously all three, often at the same time, in different places within it, a prison of gridlocked traffic jams, of gridironed streets, of tenements, of suburbia, but also a paradise of parks, arcades, department stores, beautiful houses, and gardens, as well as a hell of slums, sewers, polluted streams, “regions of ruin and rust,” wastelands. “The city is Heaven. The city is Hell,” as Gilloch (1996: 184) concludes. More precisely, the modern city is heaven; the modern city is hell.

Whereas the medieval Christian Dante ([1314] 2006: 630) figured the underworld as swamp, the post-Christian modern writer figures the nether world of the city as swamp (Gissing, London), or cesspool (Doyle), or the swamp as underworld (Forester), or the sewer as hell (Hugo), or the city itself as hell as with Balzac ([1833–1835] 1974: 309) in *The Girl with the Golden Eyes* in which “this vast metropolitan workshop for the manufacture of enjoyment” is not merely figured as hell but is hell: “it is not only in jest that Paris has been called an inferno. The epithet is well deserved. There all is smoke, fire, glare, ebullience; everything flares up, falters, dies down, burns up again, sparkles, crackles and is consumed.” The modern city not only takes place in a place in space but also occurs in a moment in time, in a period of history. The hell of the modern city is not only found in the city itself, in its dark and dirty places but also in the hell of the modern, in its hot and fetid events. Modernity for Benjamin (1999a: 842; see also 1999a: 544) is “the time of hell.” Why? Because “the eternity of hell” is constituted by the fact “that which is newest . . . remains, in every respect, the same.” The modern is cut off from prehistory and is constituted by its severance from prehistory. Most residents of all the cities discussed in *Cities and Wetlands* have no knowledge of the prehistory of the city in which they live. Benjamin (1999a: 544) earlier on the same page defined the “modern” as “the new in the context of what has always already been there.” The modern city in general and Paris in particular are new in the context of the swamp that has always already been there.

Tours of the sewers

The hell of the modern city is enacted in what Prendergast (1992: 88) calls “the great novel of the Parisian sewers, Hugo’s *Les Misérables*,” first published in French in 1862. Lehan (1998: 56) relates how

as in most novels of romantic realism, Hugo superimposes an extended religious [and epic, I would add] trope onto the city itself. *Les Misérables* describes [“the descent into the secular hell of the city”] and a climb out of hell toward a secular kind of redemption. As part of this scheme, Jean Valjean becomes a secular Christ. At one point, he is literally buried alive and then resurrected from the grave. When he enters the gigantic Parisian sewer system, carrying the wounded Marius like a cross, he is entering a Dantean nether world ... he crosses a River Styx and is freed from this underworld.

For Dante ([1314] 2006: 63; see also Giblett, 1996: 27–29) in the *Inferno* (VII, 103–130), the Styx is not a river, but a slimy marsh; for Hugo also, the Styx is not a river, but a sewer. The sacred swamp, the divine marsh becomes the secular sewer. The Styx, as in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, is located in the underworld. At the point in the recent film production of the musical *Les Misérables* when Hugh Jackman playing Valjean enters the Paris sewer, some members of the cinema audience at which I was present gasped in horror. The epic hero descends into the underworld, just as Odysseus (Ulysses) did, to emerge with his manhood vindicated. Hugo ([1862] 1992: 1101) concludes book two of the Jean Valjean part of *Les Misérables* with the emphatic pronouncement that “*to descend into the sewer is to enter the grave*” (his emphasis) and then segues into the following book with Jean’s descent into the sewer.

As such, Jean was following (literally) in the footsteps of Bruneseau, the sewer inspector Napoleon commissioned to explore the tunnels and create an exhaustive map of the sewers. Hugo ([1862] 1992: 1093) calls him “the Columbus of the cloaca” and relates his exploits in book two of *Les Misérables*. Bruneseau went on a journey of discovery into the new world of the sewers of Paris. In the 1930s Benjamin (1999a: 87) briefly referred to “underground sightseeing in the sewers” of Paris. Continuing today, a guided tour of the sewers of Paris following “the history of the sewers, from the days of Lutèce

to the present day” is a current tourist attraction during the summer months (*Musée des Égouts de Paris* online).

Whereas the flâneur “goes botanizing on the asphalt” (Benjamin, 1973a: 36), the cloacer, or what Hwang (2013: 34) calls “the degraded flâneur,” goes self-baptizing in the sewer. Both are unlike Henry David Thoreau whom Buell (1995: 389) eloquently calls “nature’s flâneur” who goes botanizing and self-baptizing in the swamp rather than the city (as we will see in Chapter 10). Both are also unlike Benjamin himself who could be called culture’s flâneur who goes botanizing in the bog of books in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* where he collects specimens of species to array, display, and study in his cabinet of curiosities called *The Arcades Project* with its convoluted taxonomy of genres arranged alphabetically. The urban cloacer is to the underworld of the city as the urban flâneur is to its overworld; the sewers are subterranean arcades. Just as the flâneur reads off the signs of the above ground city in its arcades, the cloacer reads off the signs of the underground city in its sewers. Both do not read off the traces of the former marsh city in its streets and sewers.

Similarly the photographers of the streets and sewers of Paris read these signs of the city, but not the traces of the marsh on or in which the city was built. Benjamin (1973a: 162; see also 1999a: 6) relates that when Felix Nadar “embarked on taking pictures in the sewers [of Paris in the 1860s] ... for the first time new discoveries were required of the lens” as Nadar used artificial light, the first photographer to do so (Hwang, 2013: 64). Nadar’s lens does not discover the old and largely hidden (to the naked eye and camera) history and buried past of Paris as a former marsh metropolis (for his photographs of the sewers of Paris, see Benjamin, 1999a: 413; Hwang, 2013: 65, figure 1.7). Nor does Eugène Atget a couple of decades later when he photographed the streets of Paris as what Benjamin (1979: 256; 1999b: 527; see also 1973b: 228; [1940] 2003: 258) called “the scene of a crime.” These photographed streets are not only the scene of a crime, the stage on which a crime has taken place, but they are also a crime scene in themselves. These streets are the scene of a crime, the crime of the killing of wetlands, what I “call aquaterricide,” a war crime committed in the founding of the city. An ecological crimes tribunal would prosecute the mass murderers of wetlands. Along similar lines, Nadar photographs the sewers of Paris as a crime scene. They are also the scene of

a crime against wetlands which were murdered in giving rise to the city. In pondering Atget's photographs, Benjamin (1979: 256; 1999b: 527) wonders if "every square inch of our cities [is] a crime scene." In viewing Atget's and Nadar's photographs of the streets and sewers of Paris, every square inch of our former swamp cities and marsh metropolises, our aquaterrapolises, is a crime scene of aquaterracide.

Benjamin (1979: 250; 1999b: 518) concludes that Atget's photographs of the streets of Paris "pump [or suck] the aura out of reality like water out of sinking ship." "Aura" is Benjamin's term for the unique appearance of an object imbued with a strange weave of time and space that he found in early photographs with long exposure times and slow shutter speeds, and not in Nadar's and Atget's photographs. Benjamin differentiates aura from trace on the basis that aura is present presence whereas a trace is past presence and present absence (see Giblett, 2008b: 59–63; Giblett and Tolonen, 2012: 32–36). Nadar's photographs of the sewers of Paris and Atget's of the streets of Paris drain the aura of the reality of Paris as a city, just like the city that drained the marshes in and on which it was built. These photographs drain the aura out of the reality of the matrifocal Great Mother of the marshes that preceded the patriarchal city. These photographs drain the aura of the reality of Paris as a ship floating (but not sinking) on or in its prehistorical marshes in accordance with its Latin motto.

These photographers inscribe the visible surface of the city and drain the aura of its reality whereas some writers trace the invisible depths of the city and present its absent reality. Unlike these photographers, the writers of the streets and sewers of Paris, such as Balzac and Hugo, trace its hidden history and buried past as a former marsh metropolis. These writers illustrate and portray the motto for *Cities and Wetlands* that these wetlands are still present (in the present) by virtue of their very absence; in a word, they have left a trace. In *The Arcades Project* Benjamin (1999a: 411–412) cites Hugo in *Les Misérables* extensively on the topic of the sewers of Paris, concluding with one passage describing Bruneseau's "descent into the sewer" complete with its "mire" with "no solid ground" and "miasmas" with its "unbreathable atmosphere ... Nothing equaled the horror of this old voiding crypt." Benjamin does not go on to cite Hugo ([1862] 1992: 1094, 1095, 1096) further that this is "the digestive apparatus of Babylon."

Although Benjamin does not cite Hugo's Babylonian intestinal and machinic metaphor that figures the city as body and as machine, he does cite the conclusion to the story of Bruseneau's descent into the sewers in which for Hugo "the mind seems to be prowling through the shadow ... that enormous blind mole, the past." Indeed, the mind was prowling through the past of Paris, the miry miasmatic marsh, the native quaking zone, of Lutetia on which the city was built and which still extends into the present in the feral quaking zone of man-made sewers of the city of Paris through what Breton ([1928] 1960: 154, 155) called "a mental landscape" of "the great living and echoing unconsciousness" of Paris and himself.

The psychoanalyst of the city, the psychoanalytic urban ecologist, reads the symptoms of the repressed beneath the surface of the city in its sewers as traces of the swamps in or on which it was built. Hugo ([1862] 1992: 1098) knew that "Paris is built upon a deposit singularly rebellious ... to human control ... There are liquid clays" and "soft deep mires." Wetlands historically have been intractable to human control until the invention and deployment of wind-mills and later steam dredgers and pumps.

In book two of *Les Misérables* entitled "The Intestine of Leviathan," Hugo meditated deeply on the sewers of Paris, the belly of the beast of the body politic in Hobbes's terms. Early on in this book Hugo ([1862] 1992: 1088) contrasts "Paris, that model city ... that metropolis of the ideal ... that nation city," the city above ground, with "a Paris of sewers," which has its "slime" and which are "grotesque" and "monstrous," the city underground (1089). The sewers are figured as a monster for they have "a maw" (1088) and "the mouth" of one sewer "with its pointed iron grating [. . .] looked like a row of teeth" (1093), which the makers of the recent film of the musical seem to have had in mind in their use of iron grating at the entrance of the sewer into which Jean Valjean descends. This sewer is both an orally sadistic monster that consumes and an aerially sadistic monster that exhales for it is also "like the jaws of a dragon blowing hell" that breathes out "the pestilence" (1093) for which it was famous. Both sides of Paris coalesce for Hugo (1088) in the "eternal city, unfathomable sewer" and "the sublimity of abjectness." In doing so, Hugo was returning to and enacting the principles he had enunciated earlier in his career as a writer.

In 1827, thirty-five years before he published *Les Misérables*, Hugo reflected at length in the "Preface" to his play *Cromwell* on the grotesque in relation to

the sublime and the beautiful. For Hugo ([1827] 1910: 345; emphasis in the original) “the modern muse . . . will realize that everything in creation is not humanly *beautiful*, that the ugly exists beside the beautiful, the unshapely beside the graceful, the grotesque on the reverse of the sublime, evil with good, darkness with light.” For Hugo the modern muse in realizing this is merely “doing as nature does, mingling in its creations—but without confounding them—darkness and light, the grotesque and the sublime; in other words, the body and the soul, the beast and the intellect” (345–346). Hugo himself mingles them in *Les Misérables* for which his earlier “Preface” was the manifesto and blueprint. Hugo concludes later in his “Preface” that “it is from the fruitful union of the grotesque with the sublime that the modern spirit is born” (346).

The modern city, including Paris, particularly the modern swamp city and marsh metropolis, is, however, not born from the same fruitful union as the novel of the grotesque with the sublime, the monstrous with the monumental, the abjective³ with the objective and subjective. Yet the modern city is born of the fatal union (and fetal) of city and swamp, marsh and metropolis, in which the mother swamp dies, or is killed, in giving birth to the city, in Haussmann’s case by caesarean section or stillbirth by abortion. The truly postmodern city would achieve a rapprochement and reconciliation between the modern city and the premodern mother goddess of the swamp.

Hugo’s manifesto on the grotesque and the sublime did not go unremarked by Mikhail Bakhtin, the most famous theorist of the carnivalesque and grotesque. Bakhtin ([1965] 1984b: 43) relates how, “in the 1820s, there was a revival of grotesque imagery in French Romanticism. We find an interesting presentation of the problem, and one typical of the French Romantic spirit, by Victor Hugo, first in his preface to *Cromwell*.” Bakhtin goes on to note that for Hugo “the aesthetics of the grotesque are to a certain extent the aesthetics of the monstrous” as we have seen with *Les Misérables* (43). Bakhtin then goes on to critique Hugo’s “Preface” in no uncertain terms: “but at the same time Hugo reduces the intrinsic value of the grotesque by declaring that it is a means of contrasting [*sic*] the sublime. The two complete each other” for Hugo in holistic and functionalist complementarity, whereas for Bakhtin the grotesque counters and subverts the sublime in unceasing socialist struggle both in the body and the city, as well as in the city as body (43). The sublime,

grotesque, and monstrous city is a persistent theme in the following chapters of *Cities and Wetlands*; the city as body is taken up in the final chapter (for the sublime, grotesque, and monstrous body, see Giblett, 2008a: chapters 4 and 5).

The temple of Lutetia of the grotesque lower earthly and bodily strata (as Bakhtin called it) of the monstrous feminine *was* the swamp, whereas the arcades are temples of the God of greedy capitalism, of the capital(ist) city, of new, modern, monumental Paris. The arcades, or interior passageways, of Paris in the nineteenth century for Benjamin (1999a: 37 and 546), are “the hollow mold form which the image of ‘modernity’ was cast” and “temples of commodity capital.” Balzac (cited by Harvey, 2006: 33) describes one street in Paris as “one byway in the labyrinth ... forming, as it were, the entrails of the town. It swarms with an infinite variety of commodities ... stinking and stylish.” Paris is a monstrous body whose production and consumption of commodities takes place in its intestinal organs and whose commodities are swarming creatures subject to the Levitical interdiction that they are an abomination.

Elsewhere Balzac (cited by Harvey, 2006: 33) calls “Speculation” “the monster.” Speculation is the monstrous appetite that drives the production and consumption of commodities in the belly of the beast city assisted by the servants of the capitalists. “The stomach of Paris,” for Balzac ([1833–1835] 1974: 318) in *The Girl with the Golden Eyes*, is the place “in which the interests of the city are digested and compressed ... by some acrid and rancorous intestinal process” by “lawyers, doctors, barristers, business men, bankers, traders.” The city/monster displaces and takes over the place of the swamp/monster. Benjamin cites an illustrated guide to Paris of 1852 in which “an arcade is a city, even a world, in miniature” (cited by Benjamin, 1973a: 37 and 158). An arcade is a miniature city and world of commodity capitalism that displaces and replaces the macro-earth and economy of swamps and marshes that nevertheless leave traces in the history of, and metaphors for, the city of Paris, and its sewers, and its prehistory as marsh.