PARISIAN LANDSCAPES:

PUBLIC PARKS AND ART URBAIN, 1977-1995

A Dissertation in

French

by

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ABSTRACT

Having evolved from a profession that has undergone profound transformations since the beginning of the century, renewed municipal political and administrative structures, and Parisian’s own expressed wishes for more and improved green space, the large urban parks created by the City of Paris from 1977 to 1995, including the Parc André-Citroën, Parc de Bercy, and Promenade plantée, dramatically altered perceptions of urban landscape design potential. Aesthetically complex, theoretically sophisticated, and mindful of their social role within the city, these parks were developed by architects and landscape architects selected through high-profile design competitions and were grafted into sectors of the city undergoing renovation and renewal. As such, they provided a true alternative to the uniformity, functionalism, and traditional style that had been the trademark of the city parks service, laboring under the weight of Second Empire’s style municipal and the reductive spatial grammar of Modernism. Rather, these parks offered fresh approaches to the garden tradition and reoriented the symbolic geography of the city.

This dissertation proposes a cultural analysis of Parisian public parks during the period 1977-1995 with the aims of analyzing these parks from an aesthetic and cultural point of view, and exploring their impact on broader questions of cultural memory, image construction, and contemporary urban design, using this phenomenon as a prism through which to better understand contemporary France.

My formal and contextual analysis of these parks is situated at the intersection of two fields: French studies and landscape and garden studies. The former, which draws methods and perspectives from the cultural history of the present as applied to the everyday urban environment, provides an understanding of the socio-cultural context and political stakes of urban park creation. The latter offers concepts and theories addressing society’s culturally-mediated relationship to nature, drawing on related disciplines whose shared purview is the articulation and qualitative perception of space, such as the visual arts, architecture, and cultural geography. Both fields practice poststructuralist readings of visual culture. This study is ultimately conceived as a contribution, through the object park, to French cultural studies, for which the city, public space, the environment, and ecology are subjects of increasing scholarly interest.

The study shows how each of the three parks, by using traditional stylistic elements devalued or abandoned in Modernist green space design, and by engaging with history and memory as well as with current contexts, become heterotopic sites (to borrow Michel Foucault’s terminology). Rather than owing this otherness to their soothing vegetal elements in contrast to the roil of the surrounding city, the symbolic and poetic nature of these parks predominates over nature and its representation, so that they stimulate an allusive, metaphorical, or allegorical experience. This quest for an aesthetically and symbolically engaging experience in the urban context resonates with Bernard Huet’s vision of l’art urbain, meaning urban design grounded in principles of interdisciplinarity, a heightened appreciation for the city as the site of everyday life, and sensitivity to perception and representation within the urban landscape. The choice to project complex aesthetic and ecological sensitivity into the public sphere while taking up historical themes and styles in a critical manner suggests a possible definition of a French postmodern garden. This turn to the qualitative as part of an effort to reconcile a storied past with not just the concrete demands of the present but also the contemporary imagination is central to urban design and architecture in Paris as in urban centers around the globe.
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Introduction
The choice of topic for this dissertation can be traced back to my fondness for the vibrant quality of Parisian parks as well as to my interest in the centuries-long French commitment to the art of gardens in the urban context.

This appreciation was accompanied by an intellectual curiosity, as it became evident that, in France, political agencies, landscape professionals, and the public alike expressed a strong, renewed interest in public parks in the last quarter of the twentieth century. In the capital, several landmark new urban parks commanded attention and triggered for me a series of ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions which evolved into a more elaborate and specific set of research questions. I articulated my project around these issues, starting from the physical reality of the parks, which I was able to experience, and moving beyond this reality to theoretical considerations, as well as between the latter and the parks’ larger context in order to gain an understanding of this phenomenon, which proved, upon examination, to be quite complex.

Research questions

The parks themselves bring both beauty and urbanité to their neighborhoods and to the capital. I begin therefore by asking: what does their aesthetic dimension consist of and how do they act as social sites? That is, how do they construct and convey meaning? Next, I ask what parks teach us about a contemporary French sensibility in landscape design, and, furthermore, how parks are integrated into French society and politics on a municipal level. Finally, how do tensions play out between modernity and postmodernity, between modernist and postmodernist sensibilities, within the issues under consideration? These questions allowed my research to progress from an engaged but somewhat
tentative investigation of parks to a more precisely focused project. Yet they also allowed
the project to retain what initially attracted me to the topic: the built city and its history;
the integration of an aesthetic point of view into a study of public space; and the complex
and compelling experience of visiting these parks as they exist today. These questions
bring me to the overarching objective of this dissertation, which is to address how parks,
as an element of the urban environment, engage with and express broader themes in
French society and culture.

As ethnologist Marc Augé posits in his essay *Pour une anthropologie des mondes
contemporains*, the city is the space within which converge the multiple “worlds” through
which individuals construct their social identity. Therefore, to understand contemporary
human society and culture, created according to Augé through the intersection and
overlapping of these contemporaneous worlds, it is necessary to study the city. And
within the city, as the landscape architect Michel Desvigne puts it, “il est urgent de faire
un nouveau détour, par les jardins cette fois, pour mieux revenir dans les espaces qui sont
ceux du monde contemporain” (32–33). Desvigne’s remark highlights an important fact
(or realization), namely, that although city parks have long been viewed as picturesque
and calming islands of greenery where city-dwellers may find temporary refuge from the
stress and overcrowding of fast-paced, industrialized modern life, they ought instead to
be considered as full-fledged agents in the urban milieu.

In coherence with Augé’s and Desvignes’s perception of parks as active agents in
both the concrete and abstract facets of urban space, I also look to Michel Foucault’s
concept of *heterotopia* as an important lens through which to better understand the role of
parks and gardens within other manmade spaces. Foucault defines heterotopias as spaces
situated among and placed in relation to other social spaces in which “tous les autres emplacements réels que l’on peut trouver à l’intérieur de la culture sont à la fois représentées, contestées et inversées” (755). Among the key characteristics of heterotopias are that they have the power to “jusxtaposer en un seul lieu réel plusieurs espaces, plusieurs emplacements qui sont en eux-mêmes incompatibles,” creating a “totalité” in a small space. Foucault names the garden as “le plus ancien de ces hétérotopies” (756–57). Here, Foucault adapts the general trope of a garden as a microcosm of a larger area and lends to this notion the important cultural tasks of representation, contestation, and inversion within a given society. In my analyses of these parks, I seek to discover to what extent and how each of them accomplishes these tasks.

Background

The growing importance of parks in contemporary cities is linked to an evolution that has taken place since the 1970s in the definition and understanding of the city. This evolution has occurred through mutually influencing currents among the intersecting—and increasingly interdisciplinary—fields of architecture, urbanism, and landscape architecture, irrigated by theoretical concepts shared with other disciplines ranging from cultural anthropology and sociology to the visual arts. While these revised acceptations of the city contribute to a new vision for public parks, innovations in park design aim to transform in return the way cities are perceived and experienced and therefore, how they are maintained and developed.

Continental philosophy since World War II has taken up the project of re-evaluating the Enlightenment ideal of self-aware, emancipated individual subjects
interacting in an egalitarian public sphere in order to govern themselves. After such pronouncements as the Structuralist “death” of the subject and its subsequent resuscitation, the impossibility of resolving psychic trauma (Lacan), the failure of the Enlightenment to live up to its promises (Adorno and Horkheimer), and the consequent liquidation of the meta-narratives of universal progress (Lyotard), there has been a turn, particularly in France, toward a careful reworking of modernity (Lyotard) as well as reconstructing a set of parameters within which a certain amount of intersubjectivity, agency, and democratic self-government are still possible (Todorov). This “humanisme bien tempéré” no longer sees a utopian future as its end point but basic tenets of the Enlightenment, such as the ability to make ethical judgments on the basis of universally held values, nevertheless remain a (perhaps never totally attainable) horizon.

In parallel to this philosophical work, “urbanité” and “citoyenneté” have emerged as possible, desirable modes of behavior and therefore the public space of the city has become the locus of renewed attention. For French theorists of urban society, urbanité may be defined as a model of social behavior occurring within urban public space that includes openness and respect for the humanity of others, negotiations and representations of a collective identity and collective norms of sociability, and the willingness to enact a public identity. Rediscovering (in a mode of careful examination, as opposed to a nostalgic simulacrum) and encouraging urbanité have seemed to become a form of resistance not only against isolation and aggressive behavior (fear of which marks the recent French political climate) but also against the implacably increasing complexity and dehumanization of the late modern condition in general, and of the city in particular. Citoyenneté, a more specifically political term, further connotes the cultural
association between urban space and democracy. According to Marc Augé, investigating
the future of the city is a profoundly political act, which implies a fundamental ethical
and philosophical question, “Quel est le droit de l'individu à devenir citoyen?” (Augé,
_Non-Lieux_ 170).

While this dissertation does not directly engage with the idea of _citoyenneté_, it
adopts the premise that _urbanité_, understood as the desire to seek out public space and the
presence of others, together with the set of behaviors that allow a group of strangers to
share space and activity, however ephemerally, is a precondition to _citoyenneté_. Public
parks, spaces that are intended to be open to and voluntarily occupied by all city-
dwellers, can, as settings, encourage _urbanité_ in a number of ways. As we shall see, this
encouragement can come in the form of reviving and shaping collective memory, which
instills in their visitors a better understanding of the city’s past; developing awareness of
the surrounding city and the interplay between its various neighborhoods, thus lending to
visitors a sense of mobility through different slices of Parisian life; or taking
opportunities for developing a sense of environmental consciousness and heightened
awareness of the myriad ecological and botanical possibilities of even the smallest
spaces. Finally, parks as public space simply allow people, as the American landscape
architect Mark Johnson put it, to “be alone together” if they wish.

This vision of the city as the point of convergence of disparate “contemporaneous
worlds,” within which the qualities of parks (among other spaces) may encourage or
discourage _urbanité_ and _citoyenneté_, is itself grounded in a certain vision of urban space.
Prior to the time period examined in this dissertation, high modernist urbanism
throughout France in the 1950s and 1960s had been intended to palliate the postwar
housing shortage and to accompany expanding industrial production as the French economy recovered from the Second World War. Centralized planning following functionalist, rationalist principles led to expansion of the (mostly working class) suburbs around Paris and the creation of five “villes nouvelles,” while the city center was largely neglected. The broad philosophical movement outlined above, the effort to make sense of the May 1968 uprisings in the universities, and the end of the Trente Glorieuses years of uninterrupted economic growth caused politicians, planners, and designers to become aware of the loss of legibility inflicted on cities by the postwar building boom that had created the “metropolis.” The modern city, it was widely felt, had ceased to inspire collective and individual identification, and was no longer at the service of the community it sheltered. Within the city limits of Paris, the situation was perhaps less dire, as the acknowledged value of the architectural patrimoine and prestige of the capital spared the city most tabula rasa urban operations. However, building projects such as the Maine-Montparnasse complex, the Olympiades sector of the Thirteenth Arrondissement, or the expressways along the banks of the Seine showed the slant of the administrating préfecture (as well as the administrations of Presidents de Gaulle and Pompidou) toward rentabilité and ease of movement over considerations of the continuity and coherence of the urban fabric.

The backlash against the negative consequences of the modernist urbanism of the 1960s and 1970s and the rise of the postmodern—as a contemporary “condition” in Lyotard’s terms, but also as a much-decried architectural style—led to a return of interest in the city as not only a functional object but also an aesthetic composition with potentially broad psychological impact. As René Magnan wrote in Urbanisme in 1966:
Formant transition entre l’architecture qui concerne des bâtiments (ou groupes de bâtiments) correspondant à un programme déterminé, et l’urbanisme, dont le rôle est précisément de coordonner des programmes de toute nature, l’art urbain a pour but non seulement l’aménagement jusqu’en ses moindres détails du domaine public (rues, places, espaces libres …) qui sépare et relie tous ces éléments divers, mais aussi l’harmonisation des constructions qui donnent à l’espace public son cadre immédiat, ses prolongements, ses perspectives. (57)

Originally associated with the nineteenth-century architect Camillo Sitte and his theoretical treatise *City Planning According to Artistic Principles*, the idea of *art urbain* made a tentative reappearance, beginning in the late 1960s, as part of a return toward a more attractive, historically conscious, human-scaled form of urban design (Lucain 5). The idea appealed not only to landscape architects such as Pierre Donadieu but also certain architects interested in landscape, including Bernard Huet, who stated that *l’art urbain* “intéresse directement la construction de la ville comme entité physique, sa forme, ses espaces publics, son architecture, et … passe par le projet” (Huet, Edelman, and De Roux). *Art urbain* should therefore be taken into as much consideration as urbanism, which “relève de la planification territoriale, de la gestion et de la distribution des grandes fonctions d’aménagement.” Violating the modernist dictum, Huet declares his engagement with architectural and urban form as more than a direct byproduct of function. Moreover, rather than taking up the modernist city planning approach in which the separation of functions was intended to compensate for the negative aspects of city life, for example, through the creation of vast amenities on the city outskirts, such as a single large park meant to serve an entire city population (or individual citizens’ habit of
fleeing to their rural vacation houses), urban nuisances began to be addressed in the entire area of the city. *L’art urbain* envisioned the city as a more inviting whole in which a harmonious (and not only utilitarian) network of public spaces, open to many potential functions and occupied or appropriated by many different social groups successively, were given priority over private or mono-functional spaces. Public space was thus restored to its vocation as a sphere of committed collective political action, a support for social integration and mixing, and as a site of fun, complex beauty, and festival. And as public space was increasingly perceived as inviting, parks no longer needed ramparts against the encroaching city, but rather more permeable boundaries.

**Object**

The three parks I study in this dissertation, the Parc André-Citroën, the Parc de Bercy, and the Promenade plantée, share an epoch and similar timelines for their design and creation; they are all the work of the City of Paris; and they are each recognized as major parks. Lastly, they each participate in a renewal of city space.

All of these parks were created following the 1977 transition in Parisian municipal government from administration by a State-nominated préfet de la ville and a préfet de police to a system composed of an elected mayor, elected city council, and (beginning in 1983) additional elected officials, the *maires d'arrondissements*. Jacques Chirac, the first mayor to serve under this system, was twice re-elected, then became President of France in 1995. Thus the period 1977–1995 was a coherent period in the city administration. During this period, urban planning documents were also revised, resulting in an appreciation of historical urban fabric, as opposed to punctual preservation of
historic buildings, a trend that will be discussed further in Chapter One. This period of transition in urban design thought, overseen by a stable and relatively autonomous city administration, lent a certain flavor to the numerous renovation projects undertaken during this time. For this reason it is important to distinguish these parks from the Parc de la Villette, which, although planned, designed, and constructed during the same interval, did not involve the same actors and institutions and was subject to a somewhat different environment. Suffice it to say here that it came to be, such as we know it today, not as a municipal park but as a presidential grand projet, particularly marked by decisions taken under Mitterrand’s first mandate, and as a product of the first international competition for the design of a park ever held in France.

During this eighteen-year period, approximately 150 hectares (371 acres) of green space were created within the city limits of Paris and some existing parks were restored. Much of this new park area was comprised of small squares and gardens of less than one hectare. However, several major new parks were created: the three case study parks, but also the Parc Georges-Brassens, in the Fifteenth Arrondissement, and the Jardin des Halles, on the site of the former Halles markets at the center of the Right Bank. Of these parks, I chose the parks that received the most attention, not only in France but internationally, in the specialized press as well as from the public at large, and were the most influential in terms of later park design. While the Parc de Bercy and the Parc André-Citroën were both subject to design competitions, and were thus foci of interest well before their first trees had been planted, the Promenade plantée did not receive as much interest during its planning phase. Only after it opened, when its novelty was
recognized and it became a model for the reuse of railway lines in the urban environment in other major cities, did it achieve widespread recognition.

This last point leads us to the final commonality among the three case study parks: they were all part of efforts to reuse areas of the city that had once been in some way associated with industry. The Promenade plantée repurposed a nineteenth-century railway viaduct and railway right-of-way leading from the Place de la Bastille to Vincennes. The Parc de Bercy was once one of the city's wine warehouse districts. And, as its name suggests, the Parc André-Citroën occupies the site of a relocated Citroën automobile factory. New, even prestigious uses serving the new needs and desires of city-dwellers are currently found for sites that once served other purposes. This reuse breaks with the modernist spirit of tabula rasa and instead embraces the age-old historical processes of evolving urban functions and adaptations, processes that Antoine Grumbach calls “la dialéctique des contraintes” and that result in a complex, multi-layered “ville sédimentaire.” Mentioning the Bercy and Citroën sites by name, Grumbach states, “[c]’est le type même du processus d’abandon, de rejet et de ressaisie qui gouverne la transformation des villes” (142). Each of these sites had lost its previous occupants and function through Paris's de-industrialization in the late twentieth century. By becoming parks, these spaces (along with all of Paris's Seine waterfront) regained value within the urban environment.

In terms of location and as an entity that re-inscribes a space vacated by an obsolete équipement, the Parc de la Villette was based on the same logic. But, primarily for the reason already stated, and secondly because numerous studies have already been performed on this park, Villette will figure in this dissertation only in relation to my three
case study parks. As a self-consciously avant-garde park that claimed the status of a landmark from its earliest design phase, this self-baptized “parc du vingt-et-unième siècle” was erected by critics as a model against which other parks might be measured. Therefore this dissertation considers the Parc de la Villette only in light of its role as a purported model for other parks.

**Typology**

These parks fit within the city of Paris’s park system but may be distinguished from other city green spaces according to a number of criteria. Most informally, green spaces in Paris are typically named “parc,” “jardin,” or “square.” While this categorization does not seem to be entirely rigid and the proportion of spaces called one or the other varies over time, the title “parc” certainly connotes a larger space than a *square* or a *jardin*, while a *jardin* connotes more elaborate vegetation than a *square.* The City developed a typology for parks in 1978 (which will be further discussed in Chapter One), combining both size and types of activity offered (*Schéma directeur des espaces verts. Annexes. Volume 1*). Within this typology the Parc de Bercy and the Parc André-Citroën would fall under the category of *parcs urbains polyvalents*, to be distinguished from *parcs urbains spécialisés, espaces à fonction restreinte*, and *jardins de mauvaise qualité*. However, it is not clear how the Promenade plantée, constructed a decade after this typology was established, would be categorized. On the one hand, this typology allows the case study

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2 Before 1950, 99 percent of green spaces in Paris were called “squares,” with only three “parcs.” From 1950 to 1977, most new green spaces were called “jardins.” Since 1977, it seems that, with the exception of the large green spaces treated in this dissertation, “square” has become more common again (Vayssière).
parks to be compared with other sizable parks in Paris, such as the Jardins du Luxembourg or the Parc des Buttes Chaumont. The scale of the park, the potential for varied plantations and smaller gardens within it, and the range of activities are all clearly greater than in a square or a garden. On the other hand, these two examples, the Luxembourg gardens and the Buttes-Chaumont, suggest the range of garden styles and qualitative experiences available within these broad categories. Moreover, the Promenade plantée’s complexity and interest seem ill-served by designating it, for example, an “espace à fonction restreinte.” This typology is therefore of only limited use in understanding the position of these parks in relation to their urban environment and in relation to other Parisian parks.

In the City’s typology, the case study parks fall on the large, complex end of the scale (if we exclude the Bois de Boulogne and the Bois de Vincennes). Considering these parks in relation to other, larger urban parks will better situate these parks on the overall continuum of urban green spaces. The recent edited volume Large Parks includes a foreword by landscape architect James Corner that proposes a typology for these urban and suburban parks. The contributors to Large Parks agree that to be considered “large,” a park must be at least 500 acres (202 hectares) or greater. In the Paris region, only two parks conform to this category: the Parc du Sausset in Aulnay-sous-Bois, north of the city, and the Bois de Boulogne. Through Corner’s discussion of the common qualities of these “large parks,” it becomes possible to draw out, by contrast, the common characteristics of the case study parks, which are about a tenth of their size.

Corner begins by stating that the “virtues” of large parks include the fact that they offer a “full experiential range” and a “consolidation of a public’s sense of collective
identity and outdoor life.” Moreover, they “afford a rich array of social activities and interactions that help to forge community citizenship and belonging in dense and busy cities” (11). While the parks I study offer a broad experiential range, possibilities for the consolidation of a public collective identity, and some opportunities for social activities, no one park truly provides all of these characteristics in full.

Corner’s discussion of scale offers further distinction between “large parks” and the case study parks. For Corner, large parks offer “dramatic exposure to the elements, to weather, geology, open horizons, and thick vegetation.” The case study parks, however, are still part of the city, its microclimate, its primarily manmade topography and its artificially implanted vegetation. Large parks also offer “ecological functions” such as “stor[ing] and process[ing] stormwater,” “channel[ing] and cool[ing] air temperatures in the urban core,” and “provid[ing] habitat for a rich ecology of plant, animal, bird, aquatic, and microbial life” (11). Again, the contrast is evident between these “large parks” and the case study parks. While the latter offer islands of respite to the city’s heat, they do not include natural waterways, wetlands, or other hydro-geologic features. They are (for the most part) maintained in such a way that natural plant communities and succession are discouraged (with the partial exceptions of the Jardin en mouvement in the Parc André-Citroën and the eastern end of the Promenade plantée). Although they are precious shelters in the urban environment for wildlife, they typically can only harbor a limited range of species that are already adapted to the urban environment. Thus, while the case study parks, when considered as part of a network of green spaces, could contribute to all of these ecological functions, each park standing alone is too much influenced by the
city’s microclimate, its topography, and the human interventions in and around it to be considered a “large park.”

Finally, Corner states that large parks “exceed singular narratives” and are “larger than the designer’s will for authorship” (13). They often take shape over decades and are the product of numerous phases of design. Here too, the difference between the case study parks and “large parks” is palpable: the case study parks’ scale does, in fact, accommodate the full expression of a garden idea that can be elaborated into the smallest detail. Though none of these parks has a singular designer, they are all the fruit of a coherent design team that, within a limited period of time, fully imposes its aesthetic vision upon the site.

Implied within all of these criteria is the way that large parks inscribe the geography of the entire city. The Bois de Boulogne, New York’s Central Park, and Berlin’s Tiergarten are all legible and influential at the scale of the city as a whole. The case study parks, while large enough to offer a sense of refuge, of repose, or of difference from the city space surrounding them, are still strongly influenced by the city around them. Moreover while significant and influential on the scale of a neighborhood or a quadrant of the city, they simply do not have the impact on the entire city that “large parks” do.

These parks may also be compared to another model, the parc urbain as elaborated in the brief for the Parc de la Villette and in the winning design submission by Bernard Tschumi. The “parc urbain du vingt-et-unième siècle,” as these documents envisioned it, would epitomize the accessibility, openness, and programmatic diversity of urban space (Tschumi, Parc de la Villette). By attracting visitors from the suburbs as well
as Paris’s center, from a diverse variety of social backgrounds, to partake in cultural, scientific, and social initiatives, in a space open twenty-four hours a day, the park was intended to generate lively exchange and encounters in such a way that “the spirit of the city [would] infuse the park” (Yaari 325). This position stands in contrast to the parks I study, which rather than developing an urban character within park space, call upon the lessons of garden and landscape design to contribute to the city, thus following in the footsteps of the Abbé Laugier, who declared, “Que le dessin de nos parcs serve de plan à nos villes” (223).

Parks have revealed themselves to be complex, multifaceted, and challenging objects to study. A catalogue of every single item in a park would require a complete knowledge of botany, horticulture, zoology, engineering and architectural techniques, hydraulics, geology, and meteorology. Anthropology and sociology would account for groups of people, their routines, their interactions, and their activities. City planning would allow one to see the interplay of infrastructure and utility systems within the parks with the many hidden networks that keep the city running. Landscape architecture, art history, and architectural history allow us to grasp aesthetic currents and historical antecedents. Park planning, design, creation, and maintenance involves landscape architects and architects, elected officials at numerous levels, citizens' action groups, the city administration and its many civil servants, gardeners, and myriad specialized workers who often remain unsung. Any study of public parks must, due to this complexity, remain partial and selective.

Next, parks, by virtue of their many living elements, but also through their status as public works, are constantly changing. As park designs make their way through the
construction process, the designer’s original idea must conform to many building code regulations, to site constraints, and to the pre-existing city. Budgetary fluctuations may result in substitutions of materials, plants, and techniques. Once the park is built, the health of the vegetation is subject to numerous contingencies, and as vegetation matures, then eventually ages and dies, maintaining the original image of the park may become difficult. Styles and fashions change, not to mention theories of best practices in park management. New tools and techniques replace older ones, all of which influence the upkeep of vegetation. Moreover, the non-vegetal aspects of parks are constantly changing. New equipments, such as playgrounds or buvettes, may be added to the park. Statuary or art installations find a home there. New uses, whether punctual such as festivals or exhibitions, or ongoing such as community gardens or playing on the grass, take over and place new demands on traditional park space.

Lastly, parks have proven difficult to research because of the nature of their documentation. First, parks are not necessarily fully documented in writing or in drawing; a great deal of knowledge is institutional or experiential and is transmitted in person, without the intermediary of a textual support. Second, the numerous, but incomplete, written traces belong to varying genres, from specialized drawings to administrative memos to political debates to design competition documents. These challenges will be addressed, and at least punctually resolved, with a number of theoretical and methodological tools.

Although a broad variety of reports, studies, and analyses have already been performed on these parks and these diverse works make important contributions to my dissertation, academic studies on these parks are somewhat limited. While numerous
doctoral theses, both in the United States and in France, examine historical parks, studies on contemporary parks, landscape, and garden design remain rare.\textsuperscript{3} However, academic theses at the Diplome d'études approfondies and Master/maîtrise level do exist, each addressing one park only, including numerous studies on the Parc André-Citroën (see for example Folléa, Jambor, and Jeon). Additionally, since these theses are in the fields of Landscape Studies or Architecture, the disciplinary position, approach, and methods are different from my own. Because of my approach, which is situated at the intersection of garden and landscape studies and French studies, in which the object park is addressed as a contribution to French cultural studies, my addition to the existing literature on these parks takes a broader and more cultural approach.

\textbf{Approach: Parks as Cultural Objects}

In his editorial for the first issue of the landscape architecture journal \emph{Carnets du paysage}, Pierre-François Mourier remarked that:

\begin{quote}
[L]e paysage a en effet ceci de particulier qu’il nécessite, nous semble-t-il, une attitude volontairement \textit{transversale} de la part de celui qui l’étudie—sans doute, tout simplement, à cause de la complexité des notions qu’il lui faut intégrer, et avec lesquelles il lui faut jouer. (1)
\end{quote}

Under this sign of “transversality,” I draw from a number of approaches and methods in order to construct my arguments. The overarching concept that will guide this analysis of parks is that of parks as \textit{cultural objects}. This dissertation adopts a view of parks as objects that simultaneously absorb and reflect the broader cultural currents of the day. In

\textsuperscript{3} Among them are Ingallina’s thesis on geography, \textit{Les politiques de réhabilitation et de reconquête des espaces intra-urbains}, which compares a project in Florence with the Citroën sector renovation and Arrif’s thesis, \textit{Pratiques et représentations des usagers d’espaces verts: Le cas du parc de Bercy}. 
order to analyze these objects, I look first of all to Monique Yaari’s typology of approaches within the general field of “French culture studies”: cultural studies, cultural history, and cultural analysis (37). My approach fits best within the latter, cultural analysis, although it takes up some of the concerns germane to the two former approaches. On one hand, cultural studies, particularly as understood in Great Britain and the United States, takes a more social and political stand, which only to some extent informs my work. On the other hand, while my study touches on, and makes a modest contribution to, a cultural history of the present, its argument is not primarily historical in nature.

Mieke Bal describes cultural analysis as a method that “requires the integrative collaboration of linguistic and literary, of visual and philosophical, and of anthropological and social studies” (7). Bal defends the contemporaneity of the object and of the analyst, describing the outcome of cultural analysis as the creation of “cultural memory in the present” (1). Bal and Yaari also fully advocate an interdisciplinary approach. Most importantly, Bal and Yaari adopt broad definitions of text and of discourse, which is understood “to encompass a variety of media” (Bal 7). Lastly, Bal emphasizes the situated-ness of culture, that is, the importance of space, of place, of the body, and of positioning of language (11–12). All of these elements of cultural analysis lead me to a study that provides a judicious investigation of the context of these parks—historical, social, geographical—and then examines these parks as multi-media works or complex texts; a study moreover, that acknowledges my own, inevitably contingent, presence and point of view within the same time and space as these ever-changing parks.
I also draw upon cultural history, contemporary history and the history of the present (understood as the time period within living memory) to frame my approach to these parks. Lynn Hunt’s introduction to *The New Cultural History* provides a valuable bridge between historiography and cultural analysis, foregrounding the notion of culture as text and the importance of representation (13, 16). More specifically, the article “Ecrire une histoire contemporaine de l’urbain” by Rémi Baudouï et al. is of particular interest for Chapter One and sections of other chapters in which the recent historical context must be established. This article enunciates the contribution of historiography to urban studies as follows: “trouver des points d’intersection ou axes de lecture rassemblant les effets des processus à l’œuvre dans la ville contemporaine” (105). Among the issues that researchers must confront enumerated by this article, several are clearly relevant to my thesis: the “espace-temps compact” that influences social life and movements; the coexistence of varying temporal rhythms—demographic, political, administrative, and economic; the difficulty of understanding local political forces including the influence of elites and the twists and turns of municipal politics (although the political in the strictest sense is for the most part bracketed in my study); and an examination of *aménagement* that takes into account both completed and incomplete or canceled projects (100–01). As we shall see, despite the fact that I maintain my focus on a cultural analysis rather than on making a historical argument, these issues of local space and site; of the rhythms of change in cities; of a complex political situation; and of the influence of unrealized as well as realized projects are important considerations for these parks.

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4 See also Roger Chartier and Pascal Ory, other cultural historians whose framings of the field have contributed to my understanding.
I draw further elements of my approach from the histories of built objects, sites, and works of art. From the fields of the history of architecture and of urbanism, I rely on the contributions of such scholars as Françoise Choay, François Chaslin, and Antoine Grumbach, all of whose research is driven at least in part by a social and cultural theoretical standpoint, rather than a purely functional or formal one. I also draw upon historians of landscape and of gardens, voices in a field that has truly come into its own only in the past thirty years, among them Jean-Pierre Le Dantec, Monique Mosser, Marc Bédarida, Michel Baridon, Michel Conan, and John Dixon Hunt. Lastly, I look to art historians and poststructuralist art theorists who engage with ideas germane to gardens and landscape, including Anne Cauquelin, Yve-Alain Bois, and Rosalind Krauss. As contributors of both theoretical perspectives and historical information, these authors, among others, appear punctually in various chapters and also share a general sensibility that underpins my arguments as a whole.

Methodology

My research for this dissertation was composed of three main steps, which were not necessarily performed in a specific order: in situ critical visits of the selected parks, archival research on their conceptualization and development process, and interviews with key figures involved in French park and landscape design. This research, conducted in the U.S. and in France from Fall 2005 to Spring 2008, including a total of twelve months spent in Paris, led to a reading of the parks and their attendant discourses informed by contemporary social, cultural, and theoretical currents.
The first component of my methodology focused on meticulous consideration of the physical features of the site. Two leading French landscape and architecture journals, *Carnets du paysage* and *Le Visiteur*, espouse this methodological approach, the “critical visit” model. In his inaugural editorial for *Le Visiteur*, Sebastien Marot, its then editor-in-chief, describes what this journal proposes to examine as “situations”:

Une situation n’est pas un objet, mais un moment de territoire articulé à d’autres, un moment du monde. L’expérience courante qui lui correspond n’est pas vraiment la contemplation, mais plutôt l’habitation, c’est-à-dire l’usage sous toutes ses formes, qui implique une perception distraite. Quand cette expérience se fait active et intentionnelle, elle devient visite, promenade, voyage. (3)

Visits to the three case study parks, the Parc André-Citroën, the Parc de Bercy, and the Promenade plantée, as well as to other historic and contemporary parks in the greater Paris region, were scrupulously documented through photography, written notes, and sound and video recordings. These visits were spaced to occur during various seasons, times of day, and days of the week in order to observe fluctuations in visitor frequency and behavior, the aspect of the park, and public activities provided by the municipality. While most visits were accomplished alone, I was sometimes accompanied by friends and I took guided tours when available. I took into account the treatment of the interface between the park and its surrounding neighborhood; the park’s overall composition; perspectives toward external landmarks; arrangement of furniture; layout of pathways and lawn, shrub, and wooded areas; sounds, smells, light, and touch; and historical or stylistic allusions. The strengths of these visits were the opportunity to experience the parks as they actually exist, to better grasp the many forms of representation (textual and
graphic) of park space, and to develop an understanding for the park as a multi-sensory experience. The disadvantage of this method is that it risks becoming highly personal, reflecting only the contingent experiences of one subject situated within a cultural context and a social milieu.

Documentation collected in archives and specialized libraries further elucidated the origin, design process, and reception of these parks. I consulted maps, city and regional planning documents, historic images, and texts by or about the parks’ designers at the Paris Archives, the Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris, the Bibliothèque administrative de la ville de Paris, the Atelier Parisien d’Urbanisme (the capital’s urban planning study bureau), the Pavillon de l’Arsenal (a municipal architecture and urbanism documentation center), the Institut de l’aménagement et de l’urbanisme de la région Ile-de-France, the Centre de documentation de l’urbanisme of the Ministère de l’écologie, de l’énergie, du développement durable, et de la mer, and the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

The documents gathered offer a glimpse into the conflicting stakes and interests affecting park creation as well as the role played by institutional practices. More specifically, these documents allowed for a reconstruction of the history of the site—and an understanding of which aspects of that history were privileged in official discourse and in designers’ proposals. They allowed me to gain a fuller grasp of the institutions behind the park’s creation, particularly the city administration, its key actors, and its processes including the competition process. Next, they provided evidence of individual designers’ intellectual trajectories, theoretical positions, and professional careers. Lastly, certain
articles in the specialized and general press allowed for an understanding of critical opinions on these parks and a glimpse at their popular reception.

However, two limitations on documents and archives appeared over the course of my research. First, given that the time period in question falls under the French government’s thirty-year moratorium on most archived documents, these records were not fully accessible. While most of the key documents for each park were nonetheless available at the Atelier parisien d’urbanisme, not all documents were available for all parks. For example, the APUR’s Centre de Documentation includes a compilation of all of the competitors’ written texts and images from the Parc André-Citroën design competition, but these documents were not available for the Parc de Bercy competition. Second, I was never able to access a similar documentation center at the Direction des parcs, jardins et espaces verts, if such a center exists. Therefore, the point of view of this branch of the city administration is represented by documents from the Archives de Paris, which except for documents exempted from the moratorium, such as reports and publicity information, all dated to 1978 or before.

Lastly and importantly, interviews with the parks’ designers, scholars in the field of landscape studies, and park service and planning officials have deepened and nuanced my understanding of the parks themselves and of the political, social and intellectual milieu within which they were built. These interviews have brought to light substantial new information about these parks’ creation, which to date has not been conveyed in any published form. I was able to interview at least one person involved directly in the design of each park. In addition, interviews with other landscape architects gave me a broader
perspective on the field, including its recent history, landscape architects’ concerns and frameworks, and the typical scope of their practice.

This research has enabled me to establish a complete intellectual and cultural history of each park. I then proceeded with a fine-grained formal analysis that, through a judicious employment of poststructuralist theory, relates design elements of these parks to historical and symbolic references, as well as to key issues in French contemporary culture. The basic structure of each chapter is as follows: First, a brief description of the park in question, including any necessary historical background and its geographical and social context. Next, an examination of the park conception, planning, design, and realization process that elucidates the aims of the client, the city of Paris, and the designer(s), while accounting, where possible, for various choices made and paths not taken, particularly in the concours process.  

Overview of Chapters

Introduction

After announcing the research questions and objectives that guide the dissertation, the introduction addresses the specificity of the park as a research object and defines my interdisciplinary approach to this object under the field of French Cultural Studies. The research methodology is presented, and a preliminary park typology is established.

Chapter One: Situating the Parks

5 The architect Patrick Berger, one of the Parc André-Citroën’s designers, calls for a history of the programme, of the project, and then of its reception in Formes cachées, la ville (66, 92–95). Frédéric Pousin’s analysis of projects for the Croix-Rousse sector of Lyon in Carnets du paysage (5) offers a model for similar analyses in this thesis.
This chapter presents the historical, political, and urban planning context that led to the creation of the three case study parks. It opens with the development of a public parks network by Haussmann and Alphand during the Second Empire and ends on the eve of the design competition for the Parc André-Citroën in 1985. Events, trends, and key personalities in these contexts, especially as they touched Paris, are interwoven with creative currents and intellectual trends in both landscape architecture as a practice and landscape as an academic object. Lastly, this chapter demonstrates the divergence between internal, institutional discourses within the City of Paris administration, generally focused on a functionalist approach, and the reappearance of the garden as an image and a reference point both in the City’s public discourse and in the burgeoning field of landscape studies at the end of the twentieth century.

Chapter Two: The Parc André-Citroën

Commonly understood as a counterpoint response to the Villette design competition, the Parc André-Citroën constitutes a return toward increased emphasis on the garden aspect of public parks. The product of four architects and landscape architects designated ex aequo competition winners, the park is based on compositional, symbolic, and thematic tension and counterpoint. Its radically novel Jardin en mouvement, the brainchild of the iconoclastic landscape architect, theorist, and writer Gilles Clément, demonstrates both a highly specific type of biodiversity and a new set of gardening practices developed around increased knowledge, greater ecological awareness, and broader responsibility on the part of the gardeners charged with its upkeep. These aspects of the park signal the coming ecological shift in French contemporary culture and a shift in the dynamic
between garden designer, gardener, and garden visitor. Thus, an evolved sensibility makes possible the park’s productive juxtapositions of the aesthetic and the ethical, of “l’informe” and formal rigidity, brought about by its collective, dispersed authorship.

Chapter Three: The Parc de Bercy

In the 1987 competition to create a large park in southeast Paris, the winning design team, led by the architect Bernard Huet, dubbed their project “Jardin de la mémoire.” This park design assembles traces of the past, both from the site itself and gathered from other Parisian landmarks, and incorporates them with new built, vegetal and furnishing elements that also refer to past garden forms. But does this garden manifest an art of memory? May it be considered an allegory? This chapter investigates the formal choices, juxtapositions, and cultural references made in Bercy, with a particular focus on the landscape feature of ruins, an investigation that leads to a consideration of collective memory as a cultural phenomenon through the theories of Walter Benjamin and Pierre Nora, among others. Ruins, allegory, memory—the physical object, the poetic trope, the psychological and social phenomenon, all address the role of park in its temporal context and its spatial setting: the renovated city.

Chapter Four: The Promenade Plantée

This chapter focuses on the visitor’s experience of moving through city space. The Promenade plantée reflects the tradition of Parisian public parks inherited from Haussmann and Alphand at a century and a quarter’s remove, examining the interplay between modern technologies and visual perception while strolling through the park. This
particular way of seeing is first discussed as it is isolated in the architectural effect of parallax, but is then integrated into two new experiences brought about in the modern era, train travel and early film. Elements of poststructuralist theory as applied to contemporary sculpture allow the analysis to expand from an account of the experience of the Promenade plantée based primarily on visibility and sight to one that focuses on the body and a more integrated, multi-sensory perception. These types of experiences, when framed by theory from art history, architecture, and landscape architecture, converge in the notions of the “sublime picturesque” and the “phenomenological picturesque.” These ideas allow us to better grasp the interest of the Promenade plantée as a dispositif that blurs the boundary between city context and park content.

Conclusion

The conclusion draws together the common threads found in all of these parks and revisits issues addressed above, including the situation of these parks within theories of modernity and postmodernity, and these parks’ status as heterotopias. Next, several social issues addressed in each chapter that are of ongoing concern both in landscape and in the Parisian context are highlighted: the emergence of ecological consciousness in the parks, the question of commemoration and identity, and the notion of mobility in the city as an aspect of public space. Looking ahead, the potential of these parks to serve as models into the twenty-first century (as did the park system of the Second Empire for over one hundred years) is discussed. To some extent, this potential is shown to be called into question by the dramatic shift in the design and management of Parisian parks since 2001, under a Socialist-Green coalition in City Hall. These changes include more
emphasis on residual green spaces; a drive toward ecological design and management; and the involvement of citizens in such initiatives as community gardens. However, some elements of public parks policy remain stable, particularly the use of design competitions and the involvement of internationally known landscape architects in park design; the use of green space to renovate and revive neglected or run-down neighborhoods, and the transformation of industrial land into green space, especially at the fringes of the city. While design styles continue to evolve, a vision of public parks as aesthetic sites that present symbolic and allegorical clues, often borrowed from the garden tradition, for visitors to decode remains dominant. Finally, the recent design competition for the Grand Paris, sponsored by the French national government, is a reminder that the most pressing problems of the twenty-first-century city are found at its margins, not at its center; and that these problems combine issues of public space design, ecological and sustainable development, and the socially equitable distribution of resources. For this reason, I touch on recent parks developed in Paris’s region, which use varying strategies to confront these issues. These pressing concerns all engage the public parks of the future.

The Conclusion thus reinforces the position argued throughout this dissertation, namely, that parks are an important and telling element of urban life, and as such a fruitful object of cultural analysis.
Chapter One: Situating the Parks
Introduction

Beginning with the Second Empire and ending on the eve of the design competition for the Parc André-Citroën in 1985, this chapter will present the historical, political, and urban planning context that led to the creation of the three parks of primary interest to this study, the Parc André-Citroën, the Parc de Bercy, and the Promenade plantée: I focus on interweaving events, currents, and key personalities in these contexts, especially as they touched Paris, with creative currents and intellectual trends in both landscape architecture as a practice and landscape as an academic object. As we shall see, very few parks, gardens, and squares were developed in Paris after the turn of the twentieth century, and both the declining quality and inadequate size of existing spaces were repeatedly decried. Artistic movements in landscape became increasingly confined to private garden design, while the modernist planning ideology of the post–World War II era as well as landscape architects’ training and the expectations placed on them worked against the inclusion of further green space in the historic center of Paris.

Instead, attention focused on the grands ensembles of the suburbs, the villes nouvelles, and other large-scale projects. Changes to the Capital’s administration in the mid-1970s and the evolution of landscape architects’ training and self-perception brought renewed interest to Parisian parks; yet, the end of the twentieth century was marked, in Paris, by a return to Second Empire conceptions of park design and park networks. This change, alongside others such as the growing importance of design competitions fostering unique designs, a legacy of functionalism but also the return of the garden image, and formal

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6 Unless otherwise noted, modern and modernist in this chapter refer to architectural modernism, a movement of the twentieth century that rejected traditional architectural style and materials as well as local, vernacular forms in favor of standardized models, limited ornament, new materials, and “functionalism,” that is, the notion that architectural form should be directly derived from such uses as working or dwelling.
innovation but also a lack of consideration for environmental and social factors, will be examined in this chapter. As we shall see, despite the high quality of the parks that are the focus of this study, the question of the precise definition of “urban park” (in contrast to a private garden or a suburban or rural recreational park) remains open to discussion.

In the Beginning was Alphand

For Paris, public parks, promenades, and squares are practically synonymous with the Second Empire and the names of Georges-Eugène Haussmann, Napoléon III’s préfet of the Seine (1853–1870), and of Haussmann’s director of the newly established Service des promenades de Paris (founded in 1854), Jean-Charles Adolphe Alphand. Many of the most recognizable and memorable public parks in Paris were produced during this period, including the Buttes-Chaumont and Montsouris parks. In this period, too, the Parc Monceau was redesigned, the Bois de Boulogne and the Bois de Vincennes were renovated and expanded, and dozens of smaller squares were planted. Before this period of renovations, royal and aristocratic parks and gardens formed the majority of the green space in Paris. The Tuileries Gardens, Paris’s first “public promenade,” the Luxembourg Gardens, and the Palais-royal were all attached to royal residences (“Espaces verts dans Paris” 11). In the seventeenth century, the Jardin des plantes, as well as mails and boulevards, was added to these green spaces. Through the eighteenth century, some convent gardens were opened to the public and the Parc Monceau was created (“Espaces verts dans Paris” 11–13). Many promenades, such as the Champs-Elysées, were opened
to all only after the 1789 Revolution, having been reserved for the upper classes before that time (Le Dantec and Le Dantec, “La Naissance” 7).  

Parks were one method by which Haussmann aimed to achieve the régularisation of the city. Concurrent with public works focusing on traffic circulation, provision of water, and evacuation of waste, the “espaces verdoyants” would provide “respiration” to the dense urban space. Since Haussmann considered green spaces to be a public works project akin to road, water, and sewer networks, the same principles of hierarchy, distribution, uniformity, and systematization across the city applied to parks as to these other networks. In addition, parks were also called upon to occupy “residual spaces” between these networks and the pre-existing urban fabric (Choay, “Introduction” 13–15). The Second Empire, therefore, fully integrated green space into urban planning and the renovation of the city.

Paris’s two forests, Boulogne and Vincennes, anchored the city’s Second Empire parks network. Alphand and Haussmann, envisioning them as day trip destinations, remodeled them as “parcs à l’anglaise.” Parks such as Buttes-Chaumont and Montsouris, built on terrain annexed to the city in 1860 and developed in a naturalistic and picturesque style, were meant to be accessible from nearby working-class housing within a half day. Smaller squares, no farther than a half-hour’s walk from any residence, were

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7 See Poëte, La Promenade à Paris au XVIIe siècle, for a fuller discussion of the development of open spaces in Paris during this time period.

8 Haussmann describes green spaces as “dispensateurs de la salubrité, défenseurs de la vie humaine.” And, as Françoise Choay points out in her introduction to Haussmann’s Mémoires, Haussmann did not believe in the “vertus moralisatrices de la verdure,” which limited his view of the meliorative effect of parks on physical health (15).

9 Michel Vernes proposes an alternative vision of the promenades (and, in general, the greening of city streets through tree alignments and other plantations). In Alphand’s work, Vernes detects the first symptom of an ambition, which he attributes to the modern movement in architecture: that of using “greenery” or gardens as “the seductive part of an increasingly complex and restrictive apparatus” and “an anticipation of the uniformly green city” to “erase all traces of urbanity” (“Cities and Parks in Opposition” 57).
conceived of as sites of street life, “rencontre et contact,” and were typically associated with large intersections (“Éspaces verts dans Paris” 13). According to Le Dantec, the new parks resulted in a “décrématisation de l’espace public” (Le Dantec, Le Sauvage 10).

Moreover, the development of parks in different regions of the city represents an effort to please various constituencies and maintain social equilibrium. For example, the redevelopment of the Bois de Vincennes followed that of the Bois de Boulogne to provide an “equivalent” for the “workers of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine in particular” (Haussmann, Mémoires, quoted in Schenker 207). In total, Paris boasted 2,000 hectares (nearly 5,000 acres) of parks, gardens, and squares.

The municipal style relied on new techniques for planning, planting, and maintaining parks. It cultivated views that featured curving paths and roadways, modeled relief, carefully placed irregular “massifs d’élégants arbustes,” “des pelouses vallonnées, ornées de plantes rares qui recréent les yeux,” and “des fontaines jaillissantes” (Alphand LIX). While the text of Alphand’s Promenades de Paris and Haussmann’s Mémoires tend to place the accent on the parks as a network, on the new technologies and engineering feats necessary to carry out park designs, and on the skill of the various technicians in the employ of the City, these texts do not fully transmit the spirit or atmosphere of the new parks. The parks are the outgrowth of not only what Jean-Pierre Le Dantec labels Alphand’s “préjugé[s] scientiste” and “positiviste,” but also the talent of his designers, especially the “génie insolite et fabuleux” of Jean-Pierre Barillet-Deschamps (Le Sauvage 10–11). Through the engraved illustrations of Les Promenades de Paris, the picturesque style of the parks, especially of the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont, shines through.
In sum, the two faces of Haussmann’s urbanism policy recognized by historians and theorists are identifiable in the park system: on the one hand, as one of the last proponents of the traditional, aesthetically harmonious European city, Haussmann oversaw the production of novel and beautiful gardens. On the other hand, Haussmann and Alphand, early exemplars of the (architecturally) modern systematic planner, always subordinated these gardens to a strict vision of the necessary distribution and functions of public green space. As we shall see, the Parisian park administration perpetuated both aspects of this legacy for most of the twentieth century. However, the predominance of high modernist planning ideology in the postwar era meant that although an Alphandian style of garden design persisted, this longevity can be attributed more to neglect and institutional inertia than to an actively managed policy. Upon the renewal of Parisian park construction and garden design, Alphand’s legacy will be cited only in relation to questions of investment and a renewed effort to provide proximate green space to all Paris’s citizens, and not in relation to a shared vision of public parks as garden art.

Around the same time as Alphand’s heyday in Paris, the Ecole nationale d’horticulture was established at Versailles for the “formation des enseignants-chercheurs de la ‘science horticole.’” These teacher-researchers would form the teaching corps of écoles pratiques of agriculture and horticulture or would train pépiniéristes (Blanchon et al. 23). For the gardeners of Paris, Alphand founded the Ecole municipale d’arboriculture, now the Ecole du Breuil, in 1867 (22). The seeds of both urban park design and landscape architecture as a profession, one based on a scientific understanding of plants, particularly in the urban milieu, were sown.

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10 See Choay, “La Règne de l’urbain et la mort de la ville,” and Portzamparc, “Préface,” Oliver Mongin’s Vers la troisième ville?
Paris’s Parks, 1900–1939

In the City of Paris, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were dedicated to carrying out Haussmann and Alphand’s plans, while urban thought was beginning to flourish and members of the new profession of “urbanists” conceived of various approaches to the integration of green space into urban design. Some of the founders of the discipline of urbanism (a word first used by the Catalan architect Arturo Soria y Matos) believed that vegetation was the foundation of urban development, as in Ebenezer Howard’s Garden City, for example, or Tony Garnier’s ideal city (Vilmorin 31). Others, such as Eugène Hénard, saw vegetation as one element among many of urban planning policy, as in his *Etudes sur la transformation de Paris* (1903).

Jean-Charles Nicolas Forestier, another early urban planner but also an accomplished garden designer, succeeded Alphand as director of the Parcs et promenades department, serving for forty years (1887–1927).11 His interest in regional planning was the impetus for his work *Grandes villes et systèmes de parcs* (1906), which extended Haussmann and Alphand’s concept of a park network beyond the city limits of Paris and into the surrounding region, following their vision of parks’ primary role as *équipement* rather than “embellissement ou dégagement” (Blanchon et al., 19). In order to argue that Paris and its region needed more parks, Forestier compared the parks of Paris to those of other world cities, and along with Eugène Hénard, decried Paris’s insufficient green space (Lortie 39). It would seem that relatively soon after Alphand’s passing, the park system of Paris began to be deemed inadequate, even if the quality of Alphand’s parks was not

11 Forestier did not, however, inherit all Alphand’s powers, nor his scope of action: under the Third Republic, Alphand had acquired the directorship of the *Travaux de Paris* and Paris’s water and sewer system, as well as preparations for the Exposition universelle of 1889.
criticized at that time. Indeed, Alphand’s collaborators and successors, including Edouard André and Eugène Dény, continued to codify Paris’s garden design principles. And, this official style became the dominant model for public parks in France (Le Dantec, *Le Sauvage* 11). This general situation would persist into the interwar years, as calls for more green space were coupled with reverence for the Alphandian tradition of garden design in public parks. The strength of this legacy resulted in the persistence of the *style paysager*, as the Parisian, Alphan
dian style came to be known, in public parks, even as garden designers sought other styles.

**Garden Design in the Early Twentieth Century**

Private gardens, in contrast, witnessed rapid transitions among stylistic movements. After a brief revival of the *style régulier* or *jardin à la française* at the turn of century, which resulted in the restoration or redesign of gardens at the chateaux of Vaux-le-Vicomte, Champs, and Courances, the *art d’eco* movement emerged in the interwar period (Imbert 53). Often geometrical in design, the private gardens of the 1920s were conceived as “a visual construct, a barely vegetal tableau” (Imbert 54). This “‘New French Garden’ hovered between the fine and decorative arts, between cubist and *art deco* influences, and moved away from landscape toward architecture” (Imbert 55). Indeed, architecture students were expected to design gardens to accompany their projects, and the best known garden designers of the period, whether *avant-gardistes* such as Robert Mallet-Stevens and Gabriel Guévrékian, or those continuing the Beaux-arts tradition, such as Jacques Gréber, were architects by training (Le Dantec, *Le Sauvage* 51, Blanchon et al. 19).
Despite the innovative work of these talented creators, who were aware of new trends in other artistic fields, garden art was generally perceived as “gardien de la grande tradition française des arts décoratifs et mineurs,” as the 1925 and 1937 exhibitions represented “la version la plus compassée du système des Beaux-Arts” (Vayssière 32). Whether one lauds the gardens of the time as being part of a “great tradition” or critiques their “affectedness,” this point of view leads to a relative devalorization of horticultural expertise in favor of design virtuosity and an “architectural” conception of gardens. In addition, gardens connoted luxury, elitism, and even reactionary political positions among wealthy and leisured patrons (Le Dantec, Le Sauvage 14).

In Paris, the next wave of parks expansion was anticipated on the ring of fortifications built around the Capital during Louis-Philippe’s reign, augmented by a zone non aedificandi and a number of outlying forts. The city acquired the “fortifs” in 1919 and soon after began dismantling them. As early as 1903–1909, studies proposed transforming this land into a “ceinture verte,” arguing, like Forestier had done, that Paris was lacking in green space compared to other capitals such as Berlin and London (Amar 71). These spaces were needed, it was argued, not only for the physical health of the working classes as Haussmann had believed, but for a broader conception of “hygiene” in which physical fitness was considered part and parcel of psychological health and moral fortitude (60). Public parks were thus further distanced from private gardens through this emphasis on physical activity and leisure sports. Though some elements of art deco did appear in the Parisian squares of the period, such as the Square Saint-Lambert, the

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12 The Parc Pommery in Reims, designed by Edouard Redont for the workers of the eponymous champagne company, was designed to encourage hygiene, morality, and exercise in a picturesque setting (Imbert 53–54). Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympic Games (beginning in 1896), likewise believed that “sport was the springboard for moral energy” (“Pierre de Coubertin”).
Square Croulebarbe (now Square René-Le-Gall), the Parc de la butte du Chapeau-Rouge, and the Parc Kellerman, “l’histoire du square Napoléon III reste un modèle déposé omniprésent, à la fois trop récent et encore en situation de monopole en 1940” (Vayssière 31).

The period from the mid-nineteenth century to 1939 saw the development, codification, and entrenchment of a Parisian municipal garden style, one that became more and more distanced from innovations in garden art. While a desirable public park space became available on the zone, most of it remained undeveloped until after World War II. The Occupation and reconstruction would completely transform public space conceptualization and production.

**World War II, Reconstruction, and the Trente Glorieuses**

Around the Second World War, changes to the City administration and movements within the profession of landscape architecture renewed both the practice of park design and upkeep in Paris and the professional status of landscape architects in France.

During the Occupation, a Parisian Service de l’urbanisme was formed in part to provide jobs and to prevent workers from being sent to German factories. Robert Joffet, ingénieur en chef des travaux and head of the Service technique de l’aménagement de la zone, fused these two departments to form the Service des travaux neufs. Coupled with the Service de la conservation des parcs, jardins et espaces verts, this department, charged with maintaining green spaces and developing new ones, was most notable for constructing numerous sports fields on the zone (Blanchon 193; Imbert 56).
As of 1940, the establishment of the Ordre des architectes and the new regulation of that title meant that landscape architects could no longer call themselves architectes-paysagistes.\(^\text{13}\) They first unsuccessfully asked the Ministère des beaux-arts to establish a title and a diploma to recognize their status. Their request that a special section of the Ecole nationale d’horticulture in Versailles, under the tutelage of the Ministry of Agriculture, be instituted for “l’enseignement supérieur de l’art des jardins” was granted after the Liberation. This instruction was a supplementary year, later expanded to two years, after the diploma of “ingénieur horticole” (Blanchon et al. 25; Blanchon, 195).

The decree establishing both the title of Parc de la butte du Chapeau-Rouge paysagiste diplômé par le gouvernement (DPLG) and the Section du paysage et de l’art des jardins, signed by De Gaulle, stated that landscape architects would be charged with the design of a wide range of green spaces, including “le cadre d’édifices publics, de stades, et de villes entières.” They would be responsible for transforming the natural environment to create spaces that would be “beau[x] mais aussi utile[s] au plan de l’hygiène.” They would “réaliser des agglomérations urbaines” and “participer aux travaux de reconstruction” (qtd. in Blanchon 192). These steps to recognize and defend a title and to establish a specific academic track redefined landscape architecture as a profession rather than a métier, reflecting the “schéma classique d’[une] profession libérale,” according to sociologist Françoise Dubost (432).\(^\text{14}\) At the Liberation, both landscape architects as a fledgling profession and Paris as a city seemed poised to change

\(^\text{13}\) The use of the word paysagiste to refer to someone who designs gardens, rather than an artist who paints them, is quite new. Paysagiste was first used as an adjective appended to architecte and was only accepted as a substantive near the end of the nineteenth century (Dubost 433). In all other countries, landscape architect (architecte-paysagiste) is the accepted title (Dubost 438).

\(^\text{14}\) Jean-Pierre Le Dantec argues that l’art des jardins had acquired the status of a liberal art in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and that this status was lost over the course of the nineteenth century (Le Sauvage 9).
radically the way parks were designed and built, and to create the parks that had been missing all this time.

However, once the work of reconstruction got under way, landscape architects struggled to participate in this new environment. While De Gaulle’s decree announced the participation of landscape architects in the reconstruction effort, it was not at first clear, though, what, how, and when they would contribute to the “urban agglomerations” desired. It quickly became clear that the “Section du paysage” “n’a[vait] pas assez de moyens pour créer de véritables professionnels pluridisciplinaires.” Moreover, the profession was “généralement conservatrice,” and landscape architects “[furent] peu [nombreux] à penser en dehors du domaine du jardin” (Blanchon et al. 28–29). Thus, they were unprepared to design the green spaces surrounding the new grands ensembles (Blanchon 195). Among the planning authorities, landscape was generally accepted as necessary, but only after architecture, infrastructure, and engineering (Blanchon et al. 29–30). This led to a commande that was “pas” or “mal formulée” (49). Jacques Leenhardt notes “un manque d’ambition du discours de commande adressé par les édiles aux paysagistes,” observing that even today, “[d]es élus capables de traduire en notions spatiales leur pensée politique sont rares” (Leenhardt 38). It was not until 1954 that landscape architects worked on a grand ensemble and only a few projects included the participation of a landscape architect in the conception process.15 Budgets, both for creating and maintaining green space, were very limited.

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15 The first grand ensemble whose “residual” spaces were designed by landscape architects was the Quartier de l’Aubépin, Chalon-sur-Saône (Blanchon 199). Jacques Sgard was part of the interdisciplinary team that designed La Maurelette in Marseille (1959), while Michel and Ingrid Bourne contributed to the design of the ZUP des Minguettes in Vénissieux, a suburb of Lyon (1966) (Blanchon 202–03, 204).
Underlying these poor conditions was the fact that landscape architects were never entirely at home in the modern ideology. The *commande*, such as it was, demanded that they be modern and novel, as did the spirit of the times: “l’époque se [voulait] être celle d’une rupture avec le sens même de la composition traditionelle” (Vayssière 31). Yet the theory and the logic of high modernism tended to exclude any serious consideration of landscape. Despite the efforts of some landscape architects to respond to modernity, such as Jacques Sgard and Michel and Ingrid Bourne, many landscape architects continued to feel “peu concernés” by debates on modernism, doing no more than adapting the vocabulary of the nineteenth century to the new context (Blanchon et al. 50).

Most crucially, the ideas of Le Corbusier, one of the most influential architects of the modern movement, were ultimately unfruitful for landscape. Le Corbusier did give some attention to views of the site and the horizon in his architecture, for example in the Villa Savoie and but in his later work, such as the Ronchamp chapel, and called for the celebration of “l’alliance de l’homme et de la nature.” But his ideas about the modern city, as put forth in *Destin de Paris* among other works, adopted by the Congrès international d’architecture moderne (CIAM) in its *Charte d’Athènes*, and forming the basis of French urbanism policy in the postwar era, reduced landscape to “une image abstraite, dénuée de tout rapport au sol” (Blanchon 196). In the *Charte d’Athènes*, Article 37 suggests that “surfaces vertes” between the large residential buildings would primarily be “utiles” occupied by such collective services as schools, nurseries, and sports fields (Le Corbusier 61–62). Succeeding articles paint a picture of vast expanses of preserved or restored natural landscapes, “de véritables prairies, de[s] forêts, de[s] plages naturelles ou...
artificielles,” sites of “utile délassement,” so that time off from work would be “vraiment vivifiant pour la santé physique et morale” (63–64).

However, other than a remark in Article 40 that “l’industrie de l’homme crée en partie des sites et des paysages répondant au programme,” the Charte d’Athènes seems to take little notice of the complexity of green space design (64). As Jean-Pierre Le Dantec describes it, green spaces became the sea upon which modern buildings floated like the paquebots by which they were inspired (Le Sauvage 182). In accordance with the general notion that the modern is built upon a tabula rasa, the Charte does not mention historical garden sites or practices. As Imbert states, “garden and landscape were almost systematically reduced to an abstraction, as an essential but generic component of the trilogy sun-space-vegetation” (57). For the urbanist Bruno Vayssière, “le vert, à l’instar du ‘soleil,’ était simplement agité comme une énergie doctrinale sans autre forme de sollicitude” (32). The Charte d’Athènes thus rejected two major tenets of garden design: first, dismissing the relationship between gardens and architecture, and second, ignoring the role of gardens “en tant que création participant à la ville contemporaine” (Le Dantec, Le Sauvage 182). It is no wonder that landscape architects found little to orient or to inspire them in this text.

The “Floralies” exhibitions of the 1950s and 1960s represent another facet of modernism in landscape and garden design. The designs on display during the Floralies harkened back to the art deco style of the interwar era. Inspired by the experiments with abstraction in the paintings of the time, these gardens sought to create “effets plastiques désirés comme dans un tableau abstrait,” which were obtained “en forçant la nature.” Like other facets of modernism, the Floralies decorations were based on a tabula rasa: “le
site est une abstra

In addition to a modernist ideology that rejected tradition, the very idea of landscape was somewhat suspect in the immediate postwar period, as it could potentially connote the “vertus du retour à la terre” so dear to the Vichy regime (Blanchon 196). By the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, the notion of garden design was generally perceived as “hédoniste et individualiste,” the opposite of “de grosses opérations hors de l’échelle d’un jardin” included in the grands ensembles in a more functionalist and social spirit (Leenhardt 38). These negative connotations may have served to undermine the validity of the garden design tradition in the eyes of the public, other professionals involved in planning and construction, and landscape architects themselves.\textsuperscript{16}

This is not to say that all landscape architects struggled and were marginalized in this period. In fact, some thrived, using, first, forestry and agricultural techniques to reduce costs and select species and, second, planting designs that required little to no gardening upkeep once they were in place (Blanchon 201–02). The education of landscape architects began to change to adapt to these new demands and ambitions. Jacques Sgard was instrumental in renewing the curriculum of the Section du paysage in the mid-1960s (Dauvergne 20–21). In 1967, the section added a class on ecology (Blanchon 205). Lastly, the field of “le paysage d’aménagement,” or “le grand paysage” emerged as a specialized response to the needs of large-scale planning, such as in the villes nouvelles or regional planning. Quite different not only in scale but also in approach and methodology from the thread of landscape design that emerged from the

\textsuperscript{16} The garden restoration movement of the early twentieth century had likewise been associated with an anti-Semitic and reactionary milieu (Le Dantec, Le Sauvage 21).
history of garden art and horticulture, this field was formalized by the establishment, in 1972, of the Centre national d’études et de recherches du paysage (CNERP), associated with the Ministère de l’environnement and located in Trappes (Yvelines) (Blanchon et al. 67). Specialists in le grand paysage would be able to synthesize history, agronomy, sociology, and ecology (58–59). They worked almost solely in the public sector, at the planning stage, distancing themselves from design and execution (Dubost 437, 441). These educational reforms and the institution of a new specialization redefined the area of expertise of landscape architects from gardens alone to the entire living milieu (441).

In addition to Sgard, another influential figure, Jacques Simon, emerged from this generation of landscape architects. Having worked with the socially engaged, interdisciplinary Atelier d’urbanisme et d’architecture (AUA), Simon was known for designs, such as that of the Parc Saint-John Perse in Reims, that “appeared independent of all formal traditions,” were “reminiscent of agrarian imagery,” or recalled land art (Imbert 57; Blanchon et al. 62). Beginning in the early 1970s, he published a series of guides or idea books, illustrated by drawings and photographs, on various aspects of park design. He served as editor of the “Espaces verts” section in the journal Urbanisme, then of the journal Espaces verts, one of the first periodicals addressed to landscape architects. During his editorial tenure from 1970 until 1977, Simon wrote commentary and critiques of a number of aspects of urban design and green space policy. In particular, Espaces verts was highly critical of the grands ensembles and of functionalist ideology, decrying its consequences in various public spaces such as playgrounds.17 Moreover, the journal published a number of articles critical of Parisian parks, beginning in its very first issue in

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17 For example, a review of the Cité des Courtilières in Pantin stated, “une dizaine d’appareils de jeux sont plutôt là pour neutraliser l’action des enfants victimes” (“Grands ensembles” 4). See also Espaces verts 40, a special issue with the title “Les Jeux pour enfants.”
1967 (Chasseraud, “Les Espaces verts urbains”). While Espaces verts also included paeans to traditional garden design in its earliest issues, the majority of articles suggested that traditional garden styles and design techniques were not appropriate for present day needs (Bernard 6–7). Thus, though the journal was critical of some aspects of modernism, its spirit was generally modernist in the sense that its contributors sought new, innovative garden solutions.

Paris in the Trente Glorieuses

Paris, left relatively unscathed after World War II and lacking in the large open spaces needed for the grands ensembles, was in some ways out of step with larger modernist urbanism currents. The only exception to this was the zone, of which large portions were still vacant at the end of the war. The Trente Glorieuses was a time of many plans and few concrete outcomes in Parisian parks.

Although the City completed some elements of the ceinture verte in the 1950s, including the green space around the HLM of the Porte Brancion and the Porte de Vincennes, the ceinture became, according to Bruno Vayssière, “l’occasion manquée” of this period (31). The City coveted the open spaces of the zone, some of which had become shantytowns due to the acute housing shortage in Paris, for housing, roads, and other équipements. City councilor Bernard Lafay proposed a compromise, passed as a law under his name in 1953: for any built area on the ceinture verte, the City would be required to open up an equivalent amount of green space within Paris. In practice, it was far simpler to build on the zone non aedificandi than to create parks in the center of Paris, rendering the law ineffective. As of 1985, the series of laws that formed the framework
for the *ceinture verte*, including the Loi Lafay, were abrogated (Ambroise-Rendu, *Paris-Chirac* 295–96).

During this period, numerous plans were developed for parks and gardens in Paris. In 1958, the préfet de la Seine developed a Programme global de création de parcs, jardins et terrains de sport. Next, the 1962 *Plan d’urbanisme directeur* for Paris, approved in 1967 but applied much earlier, was integrated into the *Schéma directeur d’aménagement et d’urbanisme de la région Parisienne* of 1965 (SDAU) (“Espaces verts dans Paris” 19). This plan, which transformed the entire Ile-de-France region and launched the *villes nouvelles*, was strongly anchored in the principles of the *Charte d’Athènes*. Premised on an increasing concentration of work and of leisure, the *Schéma directeur* posited a greater demand for leisure and for nature going hand in hand with the expansion of Paris and the urbanization of its surrounding environment. These demands would be satisfied by large periurban parks, rendered accessible by public transport and highways. While “proximity parks” are mentioned in passing, these larger, exterior parks are portrayed as better serving city-dwellers’ needs (*Schéma directeur d’aménagement et d’urbanisme* 193–96). The *Schéma directeur* did provide for 160–70 hectares of green space within Paris proper, including 25–35 hectares on the former *îlots insalubres*, plus 100 hectares on the *zone*. The intended result would be an approximately 13.5 percent increase in green space within the city limits, at a rate of about 15 hectares constructed (including four hectares newly purchased) per year (“Espaces verts dans Paris” 19). The notion of articulating “proximity” spaces within Paris to large regional parks in a hierarchized and evenly distributed parks network certainly follows in both Alphand’s and Forestier’s footsteps, though local squares and smaller parks were perceived as less
compelling compared to large, new, rural parks. The *Schéma directeur* also aimed for more precision in the quantitative evaluation of green space needs, calculating the park area in square feet per person and measuring the average distance from the parks (*Schéma directeur d’aménagement et d’urbanisme* 202–03).¹⁸

Despite this ambitious plan, actual green spaces were brought into existence painfully slowly. While certain properties were zoned as reserves for *espaces verts*, they could only be transformed into parks when they were acquired from other proprietors (in many cases, the State) or had gone through the expropriation and renovation process (for *îlots insalubres*). In either case, the process was slow and costly. As property values in Paris rose, only half of the planned land purchases were made per year, and by 1970 only 27 percent of the compensatory spaces of the *ceinture verte* had been created (“*Espaces verts dans Paris*” 19). Competition among housing, infrastructure, and *équipements* played out in both space and budget allocations. The City prioritized roadwork and renovation over budgets not only for park land acquisition but also upkeep, which could be as high as 12 percent of the original construction cost per year.

Another obstruction to park development in Paris at this time was that the lots within Paris allocated for green space were not necessarily well adapted to this purpose. As Vayssière states, “la carte des îlots insalubres n’affichait que résiduellement des préoccupations paysagères” (32). Despite the functionalist ideology of the SDAU, in reality, new green spaces were not placed precisely where the need was greatest, or where the land would best be adapted to its park functions. The new design practices of the 1950s and 1960s discussed above, whether developed out of sheer pragmatism or in the

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¹⁸ It is unclear whether any landscape architects were involved in the creation of the SDAU. Landscape architects rarely had an opportunity to weigh in on planning practices before the late 1970s.
spirit of the modern movement, were not adapted to these residual spaces, many of which were in the middle of city blocks or at least partially surrounded by buildings. Overall, the Paris of the Trente Glorieuses was “en dérapage continu,” seeking “une cohérence impossible” (Vayssière 32). These issues of the cost of land, the lack of suitable spaces for parks, the slowness of urban planning and development, and elected officials’ lack of landscape sensibility, continue to affect park creation today.

To avoid painting too bleak a picture, it is worth mentioning a few parks in Paris dating to the Trente Glorieuses that illustrate the slow but undeniable changes in city park planning and design. The most important of these may have been the Parc floral, sited on former military lands within the Parc de Vincennes for the 1969 Floralies internationales. While the Parc floral had a decidedly modern aesthetic of smooth, regular curves, suggesting that the city parks service was not entirely attached to the Alphandian tradition, other parks, including the Square Sainte-Odile in the Seventeenth Arrondissement, were designed in a recognizably “Parisian kitsch” style, a “syncrétisme par défaut” of “des perspectives classiques d’avant-guerre” and “exercices d’ouverture et de modelé des espaces” (Vayssière 32). The majority of green spaces created in Paris during this time were not associated with roads and intersections (as squares had been under Haussmann) but rather with housing developments, reflecting the modern association between leisure and dwelling. Lastly, as Bruno Vayssière noted, each new housing operation in Paris “fait preuve, même en miniature, même trente ans après, de sa volonté précise de hisser le taux d’espace vert par habitant.” Over time emerged “un réseau intersticiel complexe” of “espaces verts de négociations” (Vayssière 31). In sum, the park creation process in Paris from 1950 to the early 1970s was disunified both in
terms of planning practices and design styles, yet it was not entirely stagnant or marginalized.

**Crises and Transitions of the Mid-1970s**

May 1968, the pivotal event of contemporary French society, but especially for French architecture, surprisingly had little immediate effect on landscape architects and their profession.\(^{19}\) Perhaps this apparent lack of impact could be explained by the small size of the Section du paysage, in which graduating classes tended to number in the teens; by the geographical isolation of the horticulture school in Versailles; or by the institutional isolation brought about by the school’s status under the Ministère de l’agriculture. As we shall see, however, both the disciplinary and educational crises that struck architecture and the broader societal shifts that occurred during and around May 1968 profoundly touched landscape architecture.

The mid-1970s was an era of numerous crises and changes that, on various scales, affected architecture, landscape, and urbanism generally but also the practice of these fields within Paris. The Circulaire Guichard of 1973 halted the construction of *grands ensembles* amid mounting criticism. The oil shock of 1974 and the ensuing economic crisis slowed demographic and economic growth and, therefore, construction, even further.

The regulatory framework for urban design was radically altered during this time as well. In addition to a revised SDAU, a new planning document for Paris came into effect in 1976, the Plan d’occupation des sols (POS). Based on a detailed mapping of

\(^{19}\) Gilles Clément, for example, claims to have spent the month of May actively ignoring the political upheaval while collecting specimens for his plant collection (*La Sagesse* 55).
Parisian street patterns, lots, building typology and morphology, it established strict footprint, density, and height regulations tending to preserve the historic building proportions and streetscapes found in various Parisian neighborhoods. These new regulations were completely different from those put in place at various previous moments in the twentieth century, which had tended to allow for increased heights and for façades set back from the street line, generally disregarding historical building conventions except in the most historical, central neighborhoods. Other goals furthered by the SDAU and the POS included maintaining rather than increasing population density within Paris, protecting and restoring historical sites, and improving the quality of life within Paris for residents. The SDAU aimed for the “prise en compte de l’agglomération dense ajoutant un souci de ‘reconquête’ du tissu existant, du patrimoine, etc.” (Schéma directeur de la région d’Ile-de-France 10). However, the 1976 SDAU announced no major new projects on a par with the villes nouvelles launched by the 1965 SDAU.

During this time, three new, related concepts emerged in urban design and planning: public space, environmentalism, and “quality of life.” “Public space,” a concept that came to urban design from the social sciences, can be understood in an “immaterial” sense, the sphere of public political debate and action, as defined by the philosopher and sociologist Jurgen Habermas, or as an open space, accessible to all, as understood by the sociologists Isaac Joseph and Richard Sennett (Bassand 36). In Paris, the City government began to detect an emerging desire for public space or sense of ownership, as described in an interview with an architect from the Atelier parisien d’urbanisme:

Dans les années 1960, les citadins rêvaient d’avoir un pavillon à la campagne pour y cultiver leurs fruits et leurs légumes. Puis, dans les années 1980, une
catégorie de parisiens plus aisés a réinvesti la ville. Cette nouvelle génération a voulu se réapproprier l’espace public. (―Christiane Blancot‖)

The “reoccupation” or “reappropriation” seems to combine both the immaterial and material aspects of the concept. It applies to parks in that here, public space connotes not only action or involvement but also shared leisure time, an activity that builds collective identity.

Environmentalism became a political issue on the heels of the May ’68 protests, which resulted in the first official French text on the question, “100 mesures pour l’environnement” (1970) and in the establishment of the Ministère de la protection de la nature et de l’environnement in 1971 (Vilmorin 11).20 One of the “Quatre finalités” of the SDAU was to “mettre en valeur les ressources naturelles et le patrimoine bâti,” in order to “améliorer le cadre et les conditions de vie des habitants de la région parisienne,” while one of the “quatre principes” was “la protection et l’aménagement de l’espace rural” (Schéma directeur de la région d’île-de-France 1976: 10). It would seem that “environment” taken in an urban development context meant not only the natural resources but also the built heritage.

According to a doctoral thesis in geography by Christine Tobelem-Zanin, the concept of “quality of life” was closely linked in France to environmentalism, particularly in its origins. While “quality of life” can refer to subjective, individual perceptions of “des projets, des aspirations, des satisfactions ou des déceptions” the expression can also refer to “l’existence d’un certain nombre de caractères objectifs du cadre de vie, de la situation économique, des projets possibles,” measurable

20 This ministry, a fusion of the Ministère de l’équipement and the Ministère de l’environnement, was called the “Ministère de l’environnement et du cadre de vie” from 1978 to 1981 (“L’Expérience”).
characteristics that may be influenced by public policy (6). The conceptualization of this set of qualities originated from the rapid urbanization and increase in the average standard of living of the *Trente Glorieuses*: on the one hand, “le mal de vivre en ville” was exacerbated by unattractive, poorly built new housing developments that tended to isolate and demoralize their residents (19, 24). On the other hand, as salaries rose much faster than prices, most people’s basic needs were more easily met and, particularly among city-dwellers, expectations for standard of living and qualitative judgments about their surroundings rapidly escalated (29–33). By the early 1970s, the government, the press, and other actors such as marketing agencies had carried out numerous surveys and studies in order to measure both perceptions of ecological preoccupations and general perceptions of quality of life (33–34, 38). In the political sphere, environmental policy preceded quality-of-life policy, which became especially associated with Albin Chalandon, ministre de l’aménagement du territoire from 1968 to 1972, and Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, president of France from 1972 to 1981 (47–48). These ideas thus permeated public consciousness, political discourse, and urban planning and design.

We can find traces of each in the discourses underlying the creation of each of the case study parks, though these concepts are rarely mentioned explicitly. While “quality of life” was certainly an important justification for park creation, little research or thought seems to have gone into the notion, and especially the question of how to define this quality for different social groups. Though my case study parks are new public spaces in an era in which the increasing privatization of space was being decried on both sides of the Atlantic, there is evidence of only very little overt consideration of parks’ roles in
building *civitas*, the political sense of not only shared space but a shared project.\(^{21}\) More broadly, the increasing demands on Paris’s public space mean that both the administration and designers seem tempted to crowd parks with as many activities and specialized subspaces as possible, rather than leaving them both physically and symbolically open.\(^{22}\) Lastly, the parks of the era are certainly a response to an increasing desire for nature to visibly permeate the city, without representing a turn toward more profound environmental thought or toward the use of ecological processes in park management.\(^{23}\)

**1975: The New Parisian Government**

In 1975, Parisians elected the Gaullist Jacques Chirac to become their first mayor since the Commune. As we shall see, the ramifications of an elected mayoralty affected both politics and the City administration.

While public parks would be dramatically transformed during his administration, Chirac did not initially seem to have any marked affinity for parks in particular or for questions of urban design in general. Chirac’s campaign platform did not include parks as a major plank, though he did make fabulous promises to “multiplier par deux les espaces verts municipaux autres que les Bois de Vincennes et de Boulogne” and “supprimer les clôtures et les murs qui cachent les jardins” (Liffran 24–25). Moreover, the new administration took note of the fact that the Green party received 10 percent of the vote during the first round of elections (Liffran 202). As mayor, however, Chirac seemed generally uninterested in urbanism, supposedly remarking with relief that, during his

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\(^{21}\) The Parc de Bercy seems to evince this consideration the most, given the working of history and memory into its design.

\(^{22}\) The central lawn of the Parc André-Citroën is the major counter-example.

\(^{23}\) Here again, the Parc André-Citroën, specifically its *Jardin en movement*, is an example of environmental consciousness and emerging ecological considerations.
1983 re-election campaign, “on n’en parle plus” (Liffran 206). In his views on urbanism as in other realms, Chirac emulated Georges Pompidou’s thoroughgoing modernism, declaring for example his regret that the Voie Express Rive Gauche highway along the Seine was called off by Giscard (Ambroise-Rendu, Paris-Chirac 264).

Rather than expanding the possibilities afforded by the new municipal regulations for participative or consultative democracy, Chirac tended to rely on administration by technocrats, maintaining strict control over the Conseil de Paris and, after 1983, even the maires d’arrondissement. This reliance on top-down decision-making and bureaucratic procedure, coupled with Chirac’s apparent perception of politics as an accumulation of individual or local constituent needs, led to a general policy of providing small, local équipements (Liffran 26). Parks were generally considered in this manner. The large, prestigious parks such as André-Citroën and Bercy were thus the exception to this overall policy.

Though Chirac as mayor proposed a series of grands projets for Paris, partially in competition with presidential grands projets, parks were not counted among them. Yet Chirac was not entirely ignorant of parks and their value to the city, stating in an interview given near the end of his third term, “J’ai le sentiment que c’est précisément autour de ces parcs et jardins urbains que le tissu de Paris a le plus de cohérence et de force” (Chirac 157). Chirac both acknowledged the popular appeal of public parks and

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24 This perspective also made the mairie vulnerable to accusations of various forms of preferential treatment. However, the numerous scandals related to architecture, building, and real estate during Chirac’s and his successor Jean Tiberi’s terms do not seem to have reached into park construction.

25 These projects included Paris’s unsuccessful 1992 Olympic bid and a planned Centre des congrès at the Porte Maillot, canceled because of the APUR’s opposition to architect Olivier-Clément Cacoub’s design (the current Centre des congrès at Porte Maillot was designed by Guillaume Gillet and renovated by Christian de Portzamparc) (Liffran 225–230). A movie theater, the “Grand écran” at the Place d’Italie, did not become the combination museum and high-tech projection space that had been hoped for (223–24). The Palais omnisports du Parc de Bercy is the sole mayoral grand projet still operating successfully.
implied that this appeal was somewhat unrealistic, stating, “Croyez moi, l’aspiration profonde des Parisiens est d’avoir toujours plus d’espaces verts” (157). Though these statements suggest that Chirac understood the perceived value of parks for his constituents, and parks’ contributions to the overall landscape of Paris, they do not imply that Chirac appreciated the contributions of parks as social structures or as aesthetic spaces in their own right.

Neither the change in political structure nor Chirac’s personal influence was the determining factor in shaping Parisian park policy in the years to come—instead, the changes to the City administration were the major impetus. First, the head of the Atelier parisien d’urbanisme (APUR), founded in 1967 as a consultative body for Parisian urban projects, was also named directeur de l’aménagement urbain in 1978. With this reorganization, the APUR was transformed from an “instance théorique et critique, contestataire souvent” to an “organisme opérationnel.” One of the first actions taken by the new APUR was to suspend and rework most of the zones d’aménagement concertée (ZACs) or renovation sectors, over the following two years (Dumont 64).26 Among other problems, the ZACs were found to have insufficient green space and to give too much priority to “réalisations rentables” (Amar 92). In the revised plans, the total area of green space was enlarged, and all the green areas grouped together and placed to make them more accessible from the streets and pedestrian walkways rather than being enclosed in the middle of city blocks (Espaces verts de Paris 77).

Second, the park administration underwent a number of changes. Jacqueline Nebout, a member of the Parti radical who had gone over to Chirac’s camp during the

26 See issue 21/22 of Paris projet, the journal published by the APUR, for an overview of the new direction taken in the ZAC projects.
electoral campaign, was named “adjoint chargé de l’environnement et des parcs et jardins,” at the time a sous-direction of the Direction des affaires domaniales. As she stated in an interview, Nebout was somewhat skeptical when she took office: “Je me suis sentie un peu la femme qui, parce qu’elle porte une jupe, recevait un pot de fleurs” (Nebout, “Des Jardins” 35). However, her fear of being relegated to an unimportant position was unfounded. Parks and Gardens became its own Direction within a year, which gave it a “stable base” and more freedom for action (35). Nebout and Guy Surand, the new head of the DPJEV, were considered “un des couples [d’un élu et d’un fonctionnaire] les plus efficaces de la municipalité” (Ambroise-Rendu, Paris-Chirac 288).27 In an administration in which communication was highly controlled and top-down, Nebout was notable for giving an annual press conference (Ambroise-Rendu, Paris-Chirac 326). Far from remaining a marginal or overlooked area of the city administration, Parks and Gardens under Nebout and Surand gained attention and power.

The Direction des parcs, jardins et espaces verts (DPJEV) expanded its influence during Chirac’s three terms, responding to the public’s “systématique” and “parfois irréaliste” demand for green space (Espaces verts de Paris 4). It gained control of arbres d’alignement, cemetery landscaping, and the landscaping around the périphérique (Ambroise-Rendu, Paris-Chirac 295). Within the DPJEV, a new Service de l’aménagement took charge of all new park studies, design, and construction. Previously, the DPJEV had been organized according to geographic regions, with each regional service in charge of both maintenance (its primary responsibility) and new parks (Daunat). This global Service de l’aménagement, it was implied, was much better

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27 Surand previously served in the Administration d’outre-mer and in the Assistance publique hospital system but documentation of his career has proven elusive (Ambroise-Rendu, Paris-Chirac 288).
prepared to take on the task of major new park developments than the smaller, less
specialized regional services. Next, from 1977 to 1987, the DPJEV’s annual budget de fonctionnement increased 70 percent while its crédits d’investissement increased 250 percent. Thus by 1987, its annual budget of 763 million francs was greater than that of
the Ministère de l’environnement (Ambroise-Rendu, Paris-Chirac 295). These increased budgets were needed to accomplish the priorities identified by Nebout at the beginning of her tenure. Many parks, squares, and gardens appeared “figé[s] dans le temps,” needing better upkeep, updating, and, in some cases, total renovation (Nebout, “Des Jardins” 35). As of 1970, the City was unable to fill all its open positions for such jobs as gardiens de squares or qualified gardeners because the salaries it offered were too low (“Espaces verts dans Paris” 23). In addition, renewing plant production at the Serres d’Auteuil in the Bois de Boulogne and encouraging Parisians to visit their parks were also among Nebout’s priorities (Nebout, “Des Jardins” 35). Lastly, landscape architects were brought into the administration for the first time, though with difficulty, as at first, they had no clear advancement path (41).28

Overall, the reorganization and the empowering of the APUR as well as of the Direction des parcs, jardins et espaces verts set the stage for a serious reworking of
Parisian parks policy in the late 1970s and early 1980s. As we shall see, this resulted in a new policy for parks publicized in 1981, grounded in a series of studies conducted in the late 1970s and early 1980s, which influenced the development process of the parks addressed in this dissertation.

28 “C’était une bataille de 10 ans” with the architects, according to Nebout (“Des Jardins” 41). I find this citation surprising, as I would have guessed that Parks and Gardens would have employed ingénieurs horticoles. Perhaps conflicts would emerge in the same way as when the ingénieurs du BTP of the Direction de l’urbanisme had initially looked askance at the architects in the APUR.
The New Landscape Architects

The 1970s also ushered in an era of crisis and evolution for landscape architects. Most dramatically, the Ecole nationale d’horticulture underwent a series of reforms: a parallel Ecole nationale du paysage was formed at Versailles in 1976, completely separating students in landscape from students in horticulture (Blanchon et al. 26). A new school of horticulture was established in Angers, with which the Versailles horticulture school eventually merged (Blanchon et al. 67–68). Landscape architecture students began to be recruited after two years of post-baccalauréat studies in architecture or two-year university degrees (DEUG) in various fields (Dubost 435). These students arrived with disparate backgrounds and often had little prior training in graphic expression, which was nevertheless considered as “la clé de voûte de la formation” (Dubost 435).

The “Section du paysage” faced a series of unsuccessful reform efforts, in part resulting from the aftershocks of May 1968 (Dauvergne 21). The Ministère de l’agriculture made the decision to close the school and stopped recruiting students in 1973, while the announcement of upcoming reforms led to the departure of a number of professors (Corajoud, Interview). Michel Corajoud, trained in arts décoratifs and having worked for the large interdisciplinary firm AUA with Jacques Simon, took the opportunity to accept a teaching post. The freedom afforded to him by the school in transition allowed him to develop a new pedagogical method for landscape, oriented

29 Landscape architecture education has continued to expand since this date. In 1991, a doctoral program was created at the Ecole nationale supérieure d’architecture de Paris La Villette, including a diplôme d’études approfondies (DEA) offered in cooperation with the Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS). There is now a doctoral program at Versailles and other landscape research tracks have since been established at various architecture schools around France.

around a pedagogy of *le projet* as he had learned it from the architect Henri Ciriani (Corajoud, Interview). Corajoud was joined by Bernard Lassus, avant-garde artist and *coloriste* who brought with him a culturally oriented vision of landscape (Le Dantec, *Le Sauvage* 211). The “fruitful conflict” of these two approaches to landscape enriched not only the teaching of landscape but the fundamental debates of the discipline (Le Dantec, *Le Sauvage* 211).

The premises of Corajoud’s teaching method reframed the discipline of landscape architecture as not just mastery of specific materials or a *milieu*, but an “art savant,” an intellectual pursuit rather than simply a profession or a trade (Dubost 443). The *projet* called forth a “direct implication of the student” and “psychologization of instruction” (Leenhardt 19). Landscape design was taught as a conceptual process requiring an intellectual framework, a “pensée paysagère” or a “theory” (Dubost 443). Students formulated the aesthetic component of the *projet* not as an “acte artistique totalement gratuit” (Leenhardt 34) but rather as a response to a situation or a context, with the understanding that “le paysage n’est pas un décor, il est inscrit dans une civilisation, un projet social, esthétique, politique” (Allain-Dupré 42). Lastly, Corajoud’s instruction sought to remedy what he felt was, at best, a lack of interest in cities, and at worst, an antipathy toward them at Versailles up to that point: “En considérant la nature […] comme un antidote contre la géométrie des villes qu’ils méprisaient, ils ont aggravé la situation de la ville moderne déjà très insuffisante, en y introduisant cette forme de rupture et donc une violence supplémentaire” (Chemetoff et al. 35). By affirming the interest and complexity of landscape (and, for Lassus, landscape history as part of a

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31 Lassus had previously taught at the Ecole nationale des beaux-arts and then the Unité pédagogique d’architecture No. 6. Blanchon also states that “[Jacques] Sgard [a] introduit Bernard Lassus à la Section du paysage” in the mid-1960s,” but does not specify Lassus’s role (“Les Paysagistes” 205).
larger cultural history), of context in general and the urban context in particular, Corajoud and Lassus offered alternatives to modernism in thinking about cities and landscape. Moreover, their conception of landscape as an interdisciplinary field oriented around a *projet* served to unite function, design, and theory.

Corajoud and Lassus contributed to a broader view of landscape architects’ expertise, expanded from an original focus on technical or scientific knowledge of plants and the environment to an aesthetic contribution, particularly in urban settings (Dubost 443). The very definition of *paysage* enlarged to encompass “toutes les données sensorielles et sensibles” of a site, including both nature and built structures. The *plan*, a graphic document using a code legible only to specialists, took primacy as the most important document to express landscape ideas (Dubost 443). The new curriculum also emphasized interdisciplinary influences from other arts on garden design, highlighting, for example, Le Nôtre’s training by the architect Mansart and the painter Vouet (Dubost 443). This enlarged view of landscape itself and the role of landscape architects, a new focus on the transmission of ideas through coded graphic representation, and an openness to interdisciplinary influences all marked the future Parisian parks.

The first generation of landscape architects to graduate from the new Ecole de paysage included such internationally known figures as Alain Marguerit, Gilles Vexlard, Jacques Coulon, Linda Leblanc, and Alexandre Chemetoff. The short-lived journal *Archivert* (1979–1982), edited by a group of Corajoud’s students and former students and in which he participated, transmitted some of these preoccupations, especially in its second issue, which included a series of interviews with students and practicing landscape architects on the state of the profession. Responding to Corajoud’s questioning,
three students describe their *prise de conscience* of the notion of landscape through their studies, progressing from a realization that landscape was more than simply gardens, the visual, or decoration, to attempts to define landscape through a discussion of its use of scale, of time, and its relation to vegetation and the city (Corajoud et al. 16–17). Philippe Lecarpentier, another landscape architect interviewed, defined landscape in opposition to functionalism; to an ignorance of or incapacity to appreciate qualitative aspects of the surrounding environment, seemingly endemic in contemporary society; and to bureaucratic indifference to this environment (Lecarpentier 34). He also argued for landscape as a force to “désalien[er] la conception de l’espace urbain” (Lecarpentier 34). These interlocutors thus actively contested the stances of the modernist movement of the 1950s and 1960s, although they also expressed some anxiety over their own struggles to define landscape within the new contemporary world they envisioned.

In their efforts to solidify their professional status, landscape architects confronted their closest neighbors and sometime rivals, architects. As discussed previously, landscape architecture followed similar steps as architecture on its way to becoming a profession (as opposed to a trade) and to establishing a self-reflexive autonomous theory and critique. According to Alexandre Chemetoff, “il y a toujours le sentiment qu’il y a entre [architectes et paysagistes] une sorte de combat [qui serait] des lieux contre des objets, du vide contre les pleins” (Chemetoff et al. 36). In fact, the competition between architects and landscape architects, with the latter feeling unfairly disadvantaged, was a major theme of the Parc de la Villette design competition of 1983. Yet at the same time, according to Gilles Clément (who criticized a lack of instruction on plant ecology at Versailles), “Une génération de paysagistes a eu un langage d’architecte” (Chemetoff et
al. 36). Some pressures of the 1970s placed architecture in a particularly close relationship with landscape: architects vastly outnumbered landscape architects and, suffering from a “crise des débouchés,” many architects turned to landscape as an alternative field (Dubost 438).³² The chief designer of the Parc de Bercy, the architect Bernard Huet, offered the perspective that architecture and landscape architecture shared the same concerns, stating, “il faudrait pouvoir se rencontrer autour de valeurs partagées (comme la ville)” (Chemetoff et al. 36).³³ Architecture and landscape architecture, increasingly concerned with the same sites, remained uneasy bedfellows.

As Françoise Dubost notes, the use of design competitions during this period brought architects and landscape architects together as competitors, and tended to push them toward developing a common language specific to this particular system (Dubost 444).³⁴ The State’s (and local collectives’) use of design competitions to award commissions for public projects such as museums, monuments, public squares, and parks had many positive but also some deleterious effects. On the one hand, the competition system allowed previously unknown young designers to compete on a relatively equal

³² *Architecture d’aujourd’hui* published responses to a questionnaire sent to architects in 1981, including Edith Girard, Christian Devilliers, Bruno Fortier, Anne Kriegel, Henri Gaudin, and Paul Chemetov, asking “Quelle avez-vous des espaces verts?” “A votre avis, Architecture et Paysage sont-ils des concepts différents ou confondus?” and “Qu’est-ce qu’un site?” (Chemetov et al. 16–17) The architects’ responses can be juxtaposed with an article titled, “Etre paysagiste” in the same issue (Corajoud, “Etre Paysagiste”). The article’s tone and the individual architects’ responses suggest that they perceived no overt conflict between the two disciplines, and that at least the most influential and theoretically oriented architects, even those with a profoundly modernist worldview, had long since begun to think about the question of architecture versus landscape.

³¹ Indeed, Huet’s interest in park design seems to stem from his general interest in the evolution of historic cities, including not only their built fabric but also open spaces, an interest also manifested in his redesign of the Place Stalingrad, the Place des fêtes, and his contributions to the Champs-Elysées.

³⁴ Since 1986, French law has required that “for any architectural or engineering work involving public funds and with fees in excess of FF 900,000 [137,000 Euros] the design must be subject to a competition; when fees fall between FF 450,000 and 900,000, the architect must be chosen by competition based on a portfolio of work (Articles 108a and 314a) (Loew 124). The situation is somewhat more complicated for parks than for architecture, as garden and landscape projects can be categorized as “du bâtiment” or “de l’infrastructure,” with slightly different regulations applying to each (Daunat, Interview).
footing with experienced ones. As we shall see, the Parc André-Citroën competition paired the team of Gilles Clément and Patrick Berger, both relatively young and never having designed and built a public park, with Allain Provost and Jean-Paul Viguier, both of whom had extensive experience. Competitions also raise the profile of projects underway, typically leading to “various education, information, and public awareness campaigns,” “widen[ing] the debate and involv[ing] people who would probably otherwise not be involved” (Loew 126). The design competitions for my case study parks resulted in a round of publicity in architecture periodicals as well as daily newspapers. Lastly, the use of concours tended to bolster a more aesthetic approach to landscape, that is, an approach in which composition and the manipulation of visual elements took precedence over the engineering and logistical skills necessary to properly organize and carry out landscape construction, allowed “‘artistes’ de prendre place auprès des ‘professionnels’” (Dubost 444).

On the other hand, some effects of the competition system that Dubost identifies are equivocal or potentially undesirable. According to Dubost, competitions have caused park style and aesthetics to return to the traditional jardin à la française style—a style that is more “construit” and “architecturé” than the modernist green spaces of the grands ensembles and, therefore, more legible on a two-dimensional plan. However, this evolution tends to place the needs or desires of users in second place behind the creative aims of the designers. Moreover, the increasing demand for a highly wrought graphical and written presentation with the limited opportunity to carry out such sophisticated (if

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35 Some critics argue the opposite. However, Loew’s study of design competitions in France found that for most competitions, young architects and local architects are well-represented and only in the largest and most prestigious competitions do foreign architects and the top tier of French architecture firms dominate (Loew 124).
not precious) projects results in a disconnect between ambitions and actual opportunity (Dubost 444). Landscape architects developed virtuosity in the depiction of landscape on paper, while their capacities to master volume, scale, and materials were rarely tested. Sophisticated verbal discourses, while still secondary to images, were increasingly demanded of landscape architects. Dubost condemns the integration of theoretical concepts from other disciplines such as philosophy and semiology, stating, “[les paysagistes] se réfugient enfin dans un discours d’accompagnement qui se fait de plus en plus savant […] grâce à des emprunts divers à la philosophie et à la sémiologie” (444).

However, one of the premises of this dissertation is that much has been gained by landscape thanks to these fields; and that these other disciplines provide lenses through which we may discover challenging and provocative ways of understanding parks. We shall see these effects on garden style and discourse in the competing designs for the case study parks.

The Competition for the Parc de la Villette

The rivalry among architects and landscape architects seems to have come to a head during the Villette competition in 1983. The site, formerly a slaughterhouse complex at the edge of Paris, was marked to become the motor that would transform a relatively poor area populated mostly by immigrants through social and cultural programs. Moreover, the park and its attendant institutions, chosen as a grand projet under Mitterrand’s presidency, was guaranteed the funding and prestige to propel it far beyond an ordinary neighborhood redevelopment project. The design competition followed a previous competition for the park and the Cité des sciences under Giscard’s administration that had
resulted in a traditional garden proposal, an idea that was abandoned by the new administration. The brief, which called for a “parc urbain du XXIe siècle,” included a discussion of both the innovative social role anticipated for the sector and the aesthetic possibilities of the future park (Chaslin 12). It invited projects that addressed how parks could be active forces in the City, rather than mere sanctuary spaces of repose; and especially, how this park could reach out to a public far beyond the typical group of so-called “inactifs”—women, children, and the elderly, to which traditional Parisian park visitors had slowly been reduced.

French landscape architects, pitted against international rivals, “avaient souligné à l’envi l’importance d’une victoire qui leur permettrait de s’affirmer comme les seuls héritiers de l’art des jardins et les seuls spécialistes des parcs urbains” (Dubost 445). Once Bernard Tschumi, the French-Swiss architect, had been selected for his design—inspired in part by the aesthetic experiments on arbitrariness and chance of the OULIPO group, deconstruction, and new forms of cinematic representation—French landscape architects complained bitterly.36 Some French landscape architects felt that the brief and the jury were not attuned to landscape. For example, Pierre Dauvergne, interviewing Michel Corajoud and the philosopher Michel Serres prefaced a question by stating, “Le jury de la Villette était constitué de membres dont les idées et la pensée étaient avant tout architecturales,” while the interviewees complained that the jury “ne connaissait pas le site de façon précise” and did not recognize the aims of more landscape-oriented projects, including theirs, of course (Corajoud and Serres 6). In addition, Serres and Corajoud also remarked on how the design competition skewed projects. First, “[l]e concours meme, c’est une chose qui n’a pas de temps, qui demande un dessin,” rather than allowing for

36 Tschumi’s Cinégramme Folie expresses the design principles of the Villette project.
the long term of landscape projects (6). Second, relations of scale within the site and among the existing buildings and planned *projets* were difficult to represent in the graphical documents required by the competition (6). Thus, for Corajoud and Serres, several major tenets of landscape, namely, site, relation to time, and mastery of scale, were not taken into account in the competition process for the Parc de la Villette.

Corajoud, Serres, and Huet were all critical of Tschumi’s finished park as well, especially of what they considered a glut of “things” imposed upon the site (Huet 20). For Huet, these objects were the sad result of Tschumi’s association with the British avant-garde architectural movement Archigram (which, Huet implied, was a failure) and symptoms of a “silly world of consumption” (20–21). For Serres, the constructions and sculptures in the park represented a “mépris total pour le jardin,” since garden space simply became a “poubelle” in which to toss disparate objects which had no place elsewhere (7). These criticisms also demonstrate that French landscape architects sought to assert their own disciplinary specificity and to distance themselves from even avant-garde or experimental movements in architecture.

On the other hand, landscape architects certainly appreciated the effect of the design competition for the Parc de la Villette on subsequent park briefs. As François Brun, one of the landscape architects of the Jardin Atlantique in Paris’s Fourteenth Arrondissement, observed:

[O]n sortait quand même d’une époque où il n’y avait pas de programme pour les jardins, on disait, “vous nous faites un jardin, ça suffira, c’est une idée qui se suffit à elle-même.” [Au moment du concours de la Villette] on disait, “les jardins, ça peut illustrer quelque chose de plus spécifique, de manière plus
particulière” […] Le concours pour le parc de la Villette […] avait montré que sur un concours de parcs, […] il pouvait y avoir une étendue de propositions très large, et les jardins pouvaient être déclinés dans des sens très différents. Cinq ou dix ans auparavant on aurait dit, “on veut une grande pelouse, on veut des éléments fonctionnels.” (Interview)

Suddenly a greater appreciation for the complexity and aesthetic possibilities of gardens came to the fore. Despite the slight felt by French landscape architects over the choice of laureate, the Villette competition most certainly increased the sophistication of landscape and garden discourse in France at the time and contributed to awareness of the issues involved among a broader educated public.

Tschumi did invite several landscape architects, including Gilles Vexlard and Alexandre Chemetoff, to participate in his project by designing a series of thematic gardens along the “promenade cinématique” looping through the park. Chemetoff’s bamboo garden received a strong positive critical response and is generally considered the most successful of these gardens. Though the landscape aspects of the park continue to be the most criticized, the park and its social, cultural, and educational institutions thrive today and have continued to influence park discourse internationally.

The Villette competition addressed all the themes we have seen so far emerging in the last third of the twentieth century: the new attention to cities and potential new roles for parks to play within them, the renewal of the French landscape tradition from both the aesthetic and social points of view, and the tension between architects and landscape architects, all wrapped up in the particular challenge of a design competition. One would be tempted, therefore, to see the Parisian parks examined in this dissertation as direct
heritors of these issues. After all, the design competition for the first of these parks, the Parc André-Citroën, was launched only two years later. However, the relationship between the Parc de la Villette and my case study parks was far more complex. The influence of the Parc de la Villette seems somewhat perverse: rather than provoking landscape architects or the DPJEV to pursue their own versions of the Parc urbain du XXIe siècle, the aesthetic aspects of garden design and the engagement with the site seem to have been brought to the fore. Moreover, other issues also weighed on the city parks system. To better understand the atmosphere of city park planning, we shall now examine the various studies of Parisian municipal parks that led to the development of a new parks policy in 1981.

The First Steps to Renewal: Studies and Evaluations

As stated above, the changes to the Parisian political scene and reforms to the city parks administration in the late 1970s poised the city to develop a new parks policy. It had become abundantly clear during the preceding decades that simply establishing norms and criteria based on the most recent theories of park usage and needs was inadequate for Paris’s situation. We have already seen that the complexity of Parisian space, the higher priority and greater resources given to other valid needs, and the weight of tradition in the Service des parcs, jardins et espaces verts worked against the emergence of new parks and the renovation of existing parks during the Trente Glorieuses. The first steps in elaborating a new policy were in fact already underway, in the form of several studies. Françoise Divorne conducted the first of these studies, the results of which were summarized in 1970 in the APUR’s “house” journal, Paris projet, as “Espaces verts dans
Paris.” A team from the Laboratoire d’économétrie de l’Ecole polytechnique led by sociologist Robert Baillon conducted a study for the District de la région parisienne in 1975. Laure Amar’s dissertation for the EHESS (1978) focused on mothers and children in parks. A final survey, also conducted by the APUR in 1978, was used to prepare the new park policy introduced in 1981.

These studies each had complementary strengths. Divorne took a functionalist approach to evaluating both park space and users’ needs. Of the two City of Paris studies, Divorne’s conclusion included more innovative proposals, perhaps reflecting the APUR’s pre-1978 distance from official Parisian planning strategy. However, Baillon’s team criticized what they saw as Divorne’s occasional culturally or historically reductive statements (33–34).

Baillon and Amar adopted a more sophisticated approach to evaluating the sample of respondents and interpreting survey answers. Amar also addressed the idea of public space, comparing the behaviors and representations of park visitors (especially mothers and children) and analyzing the park as a space where children are socialized, through play interactions with other children and adults, to understand boundaries between public and private life and to learn and to negotiate casual social contact codes.

Methods

37 Another team led by Baillon completed a study on the future Parc de la Villette in 1983.
38 Amar also participated in the two studies led by Baillon.
39 For example, Baillon et al. discuss the fact that 57 percent of Parisians “ne vont jamais en forêt,” and in general, the lower one’s position on the socioeconomic scale, the less often one is likely to visit parks, gardens, or forests. This study asks whether, if the City only takes into account the opinions of people who already go to parks, this class disparity will be reinforced (12–13).
These studies each included, first, evaluations and inventories of park spaces (whether a complete survey or a sample of case studies) and, second, surveys or questionnaires given to park visitors. The former feature was an important step in moving away from an overly broad modernist approach that subsumed various spaces under the catchall term “espaces verts.” As a group, these studies consider Paris at finer and finer scales of space, looking beyond administrative divisions such as arrondissements and quartiers. By evaluating the geographic distribution of parks, calculating the area of green space per person, and defining an “area of influence” of each park, a picture of which regions of the city are better or worse served in green space becomes clear (“Espaces verts dans Paris” 15).

In addition to metrics of space and distribution, these studies attempt to establish a typology of parks and to distinguish them from other types of spaces that partially satisfy functions of “espaces verts,” such as cemeteries or streets planted with trees (“Espaces verts dans Paris” 17). Both Divorne and Baillon note that, though parks can provide some relief from elevated temperatures, pollution, noise, and dust, Parisian parks are simply too small to have a real impact on these factors. Hygiénisme was, therefore, no longer considered a major function of parks (“Espaces verts dans Paris” 10–16; Baillon 7). Baillon et al. mainly classified “espaces verts urbains parisiens” according to the structure of vegetal elements and their relation to other structures in the park (2–3). Further, this study identified another major category of urban park functions besides the “fonctions biophysiques” it dismissed, “des fonctions sociales et psychologiques,” which were “beaucoup plus fondamentales” (5–6). Within this category were three sub-categories: “[les] fonctions urbanistique et ornementale,” “[la] fonction d’espace libre,” and “[des] fonctions psychologiques diverses” (6). In comparison with this study, the
three major categories of functions identified by the City of Paris in 1978—that is, activities for small children, activities for older children and “preadolescents,” and spaces for relaxation and rest for the elderly—seem rather narrow (Schéma directeur des espaces verts: Annexes: Volume 1 1–2). These three functions, together with the size of the green space (“parcs” versus “jardins” or “squares”), were combined in the city’s park typology: a parc urbain spécialisé included a smaller range of spaces and activities than a parc urbain polyvalent, while two other categories, “espace à fonction restreinte” and “jardin de mauvaise qualité,” categorized spaces that counted as “espaces verts” but were not designed to accommodate any activities, or that failed to properly provide for these activities (Schéma directeur des espaces verts: Annexes: Volume 1 3). 40 Thus, quantitative measures of park area and inventory of functions quickly led to qualitative evaluations of park space.

Findings about Existing Parks

All the studies conclude that Parisian parks were not of good quality. In fact, Baillon et al.’s study stated baldly, “les espaces verts traditionnels parisiens […] paraissent comme totalement inadaptés à la demande” (7). According to norms established by the APUR, one-third of Paris’s population was “non desservie” by parks in 1981 (Espaces verts de Paris 4). This first conclusion aligns with the criticism of Parisian parks and squares emerging from sources such as the journal Espaces verts mentioned above. The poor and declining quality of Parisian parks (despite the new design norms put in place in 1972) resulted in distrust between citizens and the parks administration, as evidenced in

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40 This official park typology does not take other functions, such as aesthetic or ecological aspects, into account, though there is a limited opportunity for respondents to the questionnaire to volunteer remarks about other park functions.
“defense” movements for squares and for street trees (Amar 89; “Espaces verts dans Paris” 25). Divorne argued that parks were in fact “threatened” by the City itself, that is, by “une importance grandissante des pressions urbaines qui entament le patrimoine [vert] existant” (“Espaces verts dans Paris” 27). These threats included road widening around the edges of squares and underground parking lot construction beneath them that left behind insufficient soil to sustain healthy vegetation. In addition, laws that were meant to protect private green space or to require the inclusion of green space in new construction were rendered less effective due to dérogations and the small size of typical Parisian lots (“Espaces verts dans Paris” 23). Lacking in structures and amenities that once were common, such as refreshment stands or kiosques à musique, parks only offered limited activities, such as relaxation and strolling (“Espaces verts dans Paris” 38–39). The spatial organization of the parks was not well thought out and large areas of parks, such as lawns, were off limits (“Espaces verts dans Paris” 18). Rigid divisions between the street and the park space were also considered a problem. Though these studies approach Parisian parks from different angles, they all concur on these problems. The question of how to evaluate citizens’ desires for parks, however, proved more contentious.

**What Do Parisians Want?**

The four studies all included surveys of park visitors that addressed the previously neglected subject of “les attentes des différentes catégories d’usagers” (Baillon et al. 10). Divorne’s fairly limited questionnaire was only designed to learn what residents would like to change about equipment, vegetation, and regulations (Divorne 20–22). Baillon’s survey gathered more information about visitors, their motivations for visiting parks, and
their expectations of public parks. Amar’s open-ended interviews and observations of mothers and children focused on their mental representations of park space and socialization practices. The APUR’s 1978 survey included the largest sample size by far (1,900 respondents) from numerous parks, during different seasons and times of day, gathering demographic data, information about how visitors use parks, and lastly, concrete suggestions for improvements to individual parks.

Survey responses revealed that park visitors tended to define parks in contrast to the surrounding urban environment, as the “anti-ville,” or “antithèse” of the city (Baillon 25). Baillon’s survey questions pinpointed the evolution of attitudes toward parks, while Parisian parks themselves had not changed over time; and of the difference between ordinary citizens’ attitudes and those of city park administrators and park designers. Visitors’ definition of parks by opposition to the city operated on several poles: nature versus culture, timelessness versus historicity, leisure versus work, and freedom versus constraint.

Baillon pointed out that perception of parks as sanctuaries of nature in a mineral, human-shaped, anti-natural city was historically recent, dating only to the Industrial Revolution and the rapid growth of cities in the nineteenth century. Concurrent with increasing distance from nature in their everyday lives and the environmental movement mentioned previously, French city-dwellers of the 1970s began to demand a direct, physical, affective, and activity-mediated relationship to nature, imagining parks as a “fragment de nature campagnarde” or “un morceau de nature miraculeusement préservé” rather than an “aménagement trop élaboré” (Baillon 25). However, until the beginning of the Industrial Revolution and the mass population migration from the country to cities in
the 1850s, nature was readily accessible immediately outside the city walls. Prior to this phenomenon, nature in public parks was a means to hygiene or to attractive tableaux, rather than the reason for the parks’ very existence (Baillon 8–9). Nature in gardens was generally regarded as a “tableau” or a “spectacle,” something to be admired from a distance (especially if one recalls that the term landscape originally referred to painting and was only applied by extension to physical sites). The overall design principles of Parisian parks in the 1970s, relatively unchanged since the Second Empire, hewed to this vision of natural elements as merely the materials, but not the essence, of park spaces.

Perhaps this disconnect between new desires and traditional spaces explains the contradiction that Baillon noted in survey answers: respondents tended to equate Parisian parks with “la campagne”; yet, they did not cite contact with nature as a main goal of park visits (Baillon 256). This desire to perceive parks as “natural” perhaps explains why respondents rarely perceived parks as elements in a historical process of urban development, “résidus des stratifications successives de la ville” (2). Thus, respondents’ views on nature seem to represent the various, sometimes contradictory demands placed on parks in a dense urban setting as well as the historical evolution of city-dwellers’ relationship to nature.

The survey responses also demonstrated that parks were appreciated in that they offered “repos psychique” or an “ambiance de fête et de spectacle,” again implicitly contrasting the urban world of work, activity, and stress with an imagined rural world of leisure and play (Baillon 256). Finally, parks were described as “lieux de rupture,” spaces where the usual social constraints were relaxed, even when this relaxation was not observed in practice (Amar 1). The studies highlighted the difference between users’ and
planners’ perceptions of parks and the role parks play in cities. According to Amar, in contrast to the users’ view, designers were more likely to see parks as “aménagés pour leur valeur urbaine” and as an expression of “le génie humain,” while city administrators tended to perceive them as “un substitut pauvre de la nature vraie” or, as “équipements interchangeables” (Amar 3).

While the City of Paris’s surveys acknowledge the “insufficiency” of natural and landscape elements in parks, they do not seem to fully take into account the shifts in city-dwellers’ attitudes about nature or the difference between their perceptions and those of planners and experts (Schéma directeur des espaces verts: Enquête de fréquentation: Note de synthèse 8). The surveys only inquire about desired modifications to existing parks rather than asking visitors to define or give the ideal characteristics of parks as a whole. The responses to these questions are broken down in ways that tend to adhere to a functionalist vision of parks rather than to an understanding of park visitors’ underlying desires or mentalities. For example, in Divorne’s survey, “more lawns,” “more flowers,” and “more trees” are counted as separate categories of responses rather than several manifestations of one environmental demand. No indication is given of any respondents’ wishes for different forms or arrangements of vegetation (21). Finally, by posing

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41 “Espace verts dans Paris” claims, “[c]e n’est que secondairement que l’espace vert dans la ville est conçu comme un morceau de nature miraculeusement préservé au cœur de la cité. C’est avant tout, dans la mentalité collective du citadin, un refuge contre toutes les nuisances de la vie urbaine toute proche: bruit, circulation, fumées, laideur, manque de propreté des rues avoisinantes, etc…. La présence d’arbres, de pelouses, de bassins, est moins importante au fond que l’absence de voitures, de chantiers, de bousculades, de cacophonie” (9).
42 Divorne’s report does not provide the exact question asked of park visitors (21). The 1978 survey asked, “Quelles modifications souhaiteriez-vous apporter à ce square, concernant les équipements et son fonctionnement?” (Schéma directeur des espaces verts: Annexe 1: Enquête de fréquentation n. pag.).
43 Likewise, the 1978 survey groups responses such as “davantage d’arbres, de fleurs, de pelouses ou de verdure” in the category “Amélioration du traitement paysager.” Amélioration connotes qualitative improvement; but here, it is merely assumed to proceed from quantitative improvement. The “souhait d’accéder aux pelouses” is categorized as a “réponse concernant le fonctionnement,” and it is not taken up
questions only in relation to existing parks, these surveys also do not gather information about how citizens might envisage a new park, designed “from scratch.” By contrast, the surveys’ functionalist approach better accounts for the perception of parks as spaces of relaxation and leisure, since different types of play equipment or activity spaces can easily be enumerated. Lastly, the social aspects of parks do not seem ascertainable from the types of questions posed. All in all, these surveys thus complement the researchers’ other data on the poor state of Parisian parks. However, the divergence between, on the one hand, conclusions drawn by Baillon and Amar about park visitors’ expectations and mentalities, and on the other hand, the findings by the City, suggest that a gulf between citizens’ and planners views remain. Moreover, these studies do not clarify how visitors’ comments about existing parks could be projected into plans for future parks.

One major conclusion that the City drew from its 1978 study was a reinforced understanding of parks as équipements de proximité, and as best understood and managed as a network. While both of these ideas date back to the Second Empire, the distance considered “proximate” shrank in the interim. The City of Paris concluded that the distance at which a park might be considered “proximate” to a dwelling was only about five hundred meters, a distance an adult can walk in about five minutes (measured “as the crow flies” as opposed to the real pedestrian pathway) (“Espaces verts dans Paris” 19). Clearly, the prediction of the 1965 Schéma directeur that parks would be most easily accessed via cars or regional rail had been completely rejected by this time. The 1978 study describes the exception to this status as équipements de proximité as follows: “la recherche par les habitants d’une pratique exceptionnelle liée à la promenade dans des

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as a symptom of a certain attitude or mentality (Schéma directeur des espaces verts: Annexe 1: Enquête de fréquentation n. pag.).
espaces caractérisés par leur taille importante, la qualité ou la rareté de leurs équipements ou leur insertion dans des sites prestigieux” (Schéma directeur des espaces verts: Enquête de fréquentation 12). These dual desires for both nearby everyday parks and larger “exceptional” parks also imply a weekly or seasonally varied pattern of park visitation.

Next, several studies revealed the City’s (and city-dwellers’) perceptions of the destinataires of parks. As all the studies demonstrated, most park users were mothers with children, and the elderly, or as Amar put it, “inactifs,” “oisifs et étrangers [sic]” (“Espaces verts dans Paris” 38; Amar 5, 184). The presence of children in parks presented special difficulties. Parks had become one of the few urban spaces that children could freely occupy. Yet play equipment was often inadequate, too uniform, too simplistic, and typically intended for smaller children. Older children and adolescents lacked adapted spaces for their games and activities (“Espaces verts dans Paris” 18; Amar 15–16).

Moreover, the demand for children’s activities and play equipment tended to result in a “perte des qualités esthétiques et valeurs psychologiques” (Amar 7). While it had been made clear during the Trente Glorieuses that Paris’s density resulted in conflicts regarding land use, for example between parks and housing, these clashes of function were now recognized also within parks.

Indeed, this question about provisions for child users can be extended to all functional elements of parks. A focus on activity equipment results in a tendency on the part of both users and planners to perceive parks as merely a setting for equipments and activities, to the detriment of natural elements, psychological, cultural, and social functions, which then may be perceived as obstacles to activity (Amar 5; Baillon 7, 27–

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44 Amar’s thesis includes a brief overview of the cultural history of childhood, including the development of the idea that children ought to be protected from the dangers of the city streets and even that children are closer to “nature” than are adults.
The APUR’s report *Les Espaces verts de Paris: Situation et projets* even acknowledges that its own focus on “les besoins concrets” of parks results in neglect of “la fonction symbolique et esthétique” (5). Baillon gives as examples of these “symbolic and aesthetic” park functions: a “signe d’une réalité autre,” a “support d’affects profonds,” a site for “satisfactions sensorielles et psychiques,” or even a place in which there is “rupture” or “changement des rapports temporels, spatiaux, comportementaux, relationnels” (Baillon 5). Likewise, the potential functions of a park as a monumental element of the urban setting, as a demonstration of the “puissance du prince,” or a “besoin d’objectiver les schèmes structurants de sa relation au monde” are not considered in this functional approach (74). Dreams, the imagination, and the irrational, on one hand, and the political, on the other—in short, any symbolic dimension—are all missing from this functionalist consideration of parks.

However, Baillon’s discussion of symbolic functions in parks, despite its familiarity to us today, was perhaps a novel idea at the time. Certainly, the *Rapport d’objectifs* of the Parc de la Villette competition opened with a discussion of symbolic functions of parks and gardens (3–4). However, the *Rapport* cited examples of parks from the pre-Haussmann era, such as the Palais Royal and the Tuileries, to evoke these functions (4). Such symbolic functions as a “sign of a different reality,” “sensory or psychic satisfactions,” or “changes in temporal, spatial, behavioral, and interpersonal relationships,” had never been a high priority in Parisian public parks since the development of a comprehensive municipal parks service under Alphand. Gardens, on the other hand, that is, private spaces designed for the delectation of a restricted group of people, have historically been considered in these terms. The discussion of these
symbolic roles for public parks by both Baillon et al. and the *Rapport d’objectifs* of the Parc de la Villette demonstrates a strong turn away from the modernist ideology that had dominated landscape planning for the previous thirty or more years. From this standpoint, the fact that the APUR even mentions “symbolic and aesthetic functions” in 1981 is already indicative of a new vision for public parks. As we shall see, this association between *gardens* and public parks, two long-separated terms, is one of the major themes of park creation in the late twentieth century.

**Models for Parks**

These studies all reveal a parks system in distress, insufficient to meet contemporary needs and demands. The City’s evaluation of its difficulties revolves around the identification of discrete, concrete functions of parks and the identification of when and how these functions are lacking. However, the City’s studies do not take up the broader picture of how Parisians’ expectations of parks have changed, how to address the demographics of park visitors, or how to allow parks to satisfy less easily quantifiable symbolic and aesthetic functions. The question of a model, or overarching vision, is addressed in the 1970 *Paris projet* article by references to other world capitals such as London and New York, as well as other major cities in Europe and the United States (“Espaces verts dans Paris” 27–31).

In comparison to previous planning documents, the 1978 *Schéma directeur* surrendered the modernist planning ideals of the *Trente Glorieuses*, declaring that a “réseau idéal” was “impossible” and aiming for “la desserte la plus diversifiée et la mieux répartie possible” (66). This document is lucid on the difficulties of carrying out these
earlier plans, such as the 1962 PUD (99). This change in approach is best signified by the announcement that instead of rationally zoning specific future green spaces, then waiting decades for these spaces to become available from private associations or other branches of government, the City will seek to develop park space more flexibly as a “tributaire des opportunités foncières,” “dans le cadre des opérations publiques d’urbanisme” (66). The hoped-for outcome of this more “opportunist” and aleatory policy were quicker progress in park planning and development, and the inclusion, or at least consideration, of green space in every urban design action undertaken by the City.

Another difference between previous plans and the City’s 1981 parks plan, *Espaces verts de Paris*, was that it put aside references to other world capitals and evoked Haussmann. This sudden reappearance of Haussmann as a reference seems to be in accord with a rediscovery and re-evaluation of Alphand around the late 1970s and early 1980s by architects and landscape architects. After decades in which Haussmann or Alphand were hardly mentioned or roundly criticized in urban-planning circles, this document took their work as a model, stating, “Cette ambition de réaliser ce qui a été appelé un ‘système des espaces verts parisiens … hiérarchisés selon la fonction’ n’a pu être entièrement menée à bien par Haussmann. Elle a très largement été abandonnée par la suite. Les orientations pour une politique des espaces verts qui seront ici développées tendent à renouer […] avec cette grande tradition” (65). Several paragraphs further on, the reference to Haussmann is reiterated: “il faut remonter à la période de Haussmann et d’Alphand pour trouver dans l’histoire de la capitale l’entreprise d’un aussi vaste projet”

This message continued to be transmitted throughout Chirac’s mayoral terms, as in the exhibition *Parcs et promenades de Paris*, held eight years later in the Pavillon de l’arsenal architecture exhibition space. As this exhibit’s catalogue stated, “Le Paris municipal de ces dix dernières années a également cherché à renouer avec l’invention d’une tradition, soucieux lui aussi de mettre en valeur un patrimoine Haussmannien placé au-dessus de toutes les autres querelles d’écoles” (Vayssière 32).

But what exactly does this statement mean? Let us rapidly examine various aspects of the City’s plans in light of Haussman and Alphand’s park system. First of all, this reference to Haussmann could be taken simply as a comparison of the size and scale of new projects. *Espaces verts de Paris* includes a series of side-by-side maps comparing the area of an existing park, in most cases one designed by Alphand, and a planned park, showing, among other examples, the Parc Montsouris next to the Parc André-Citroën, the Parc Monceau next to the Square de Vaugirard, or the Square du Temple next to the future Square des Amandiers (n.pag.).

Perhaps this mention of the Second Empire refers to a social vision for parks. As noted, although neither Haussmann nor Alphand seemed particularly concerned with the idea that parks have some potential to improving people’s moral character, the “amélioration du sort des classes les moins favorisées” was a concern of Napoléon III (Haussmann 895). *Espaces verts de Paris* employs a flat, neutral tone and its rhetoric never suggests that park needs could be different according to different socioeconomic categories. Rather, this text suggests, parks are to be distributed so as to be equally accessible to the entire population of Paris distributed geographically. The expression “secteur défavorisé” connotes nothing more than a neighborhood where the park area
available within a certain proximity is disproportionately low compared to the population (88). For example, the center swath of the Right Bank, including such disparate neighborhoods as Saint-Lazare, Clichy, the Chaussée d’Antin and Saint-Georges, was marked as “défavorisé” (84–85).

This discussion of equitable distribution seems to contradict the report’s previously stated return to “pragmatism” and rejection of a thoroughly rational parks network. It would seem that such a network is retained as a distant, rather than immediate, horizon. As it happens, more gardens were planned for the relatively poorer east side of Paris than the west, generally as part of public renovation schemes such as zones d’aménagement concerté (ZACs). These projects would soon be grouped together in the Plan programme de l’est parisien, which overtly proclaimed as one of its goals the remediation of the East’s disparities with the West. However, this disparity—both in park needs and in the availability of park land—is not discussed in Espaces verts de Paris. Furthermore, the question of mobility and access to parks was only addressed in terms of age and not socio-economic status (85). The focus on park distribution is on equality as understood in terms of fairly basic demographic, but not socio-economic, criteria. Any social agenda for the parks remained latent.

Espaces verts de Paris proposed a new version of the Haussmannian parks network, one in which green spaces would again be articulated with a larger urban design. The parks policy would be linked with urban-planning policy, especially public projects, such that “les constructions seront conçues en relation avec l’espace vert” (66). Significantly, this policy also included in its purview waterways, including canals and “l’axe prestigieux d’organisation et d’équipement du site qu’est la Seine” (74). The five
major parks proposed in *Espaces verts de Paris*—the Parc André-Citroën, the Parc de Bercy, the Parc de la Villette (though it had been taken over by the State), the Square de Vaugirard, and the Jardin des Halles—would “renforce[r] l’image traditionnelle de Paris, ville des grandes compositions urbaines” (74). These expressions, while limited in the overall scale and focus of the report, suggest an understanding of the city as an aesthetic as well as a functional entity, and offer a vision of parks as components in an overall composition that would be legible on several different scales.

This emphasis on the parks as, primarily, a functional network and only secondarily as an aesthetic whole leaves out a number of aspects of parks that we might have come to expect, given the evolution of landscape architecture discussed up to this point. Any conception of parks as individual sites or discrete aesthetic works is absent. *Espaces verts de Paris* included no discussion at all of design competitions, which, as we have seen, became the major vector of aesthetic innovation and urban design ideas in public parks. There is no mention of the role of individual actors—architects or landscape architects—or of ways of translating surface area and desired equipment into pleasant amenity. Moreover, there is no discussion of environmental concerns. Finally, the report, though laudatory of Alphand and Haussmann, does not delve any further into a historical understanding of Parisian parks.

**Proposed Changes**

The first of these studies (“Espaces verts à Paris,” 1970) called for several changes that would be adopted by the new administration. First, it advocated protecting existing parks
and making private green space accessible to the public.\textsuperscript{46} Next, it recommended measures to improve the quality of existing parks, by investing more in maintenance and upkeep, and by developing strict norms for new parks, particularly those built atop platforms ("Espaces verts dans Paris" 35, 33).\textsuperscript{47} "Espaces verts à Paris" also recommended various changes to park rules and regulations, including their hours of operation, and most notably, lawn accessibility ("Espaces verts dans Paris" 35). The \textit{Schéma directeur} of 1982 reiterated these goals for improvement, specifically referencing children’s play equipment and activities, such as the traditional guignol theaters, accessible lawns, and water features including fountains and wading pools (98). However, the \textit{Schéma directeur} still included few recommendations for spaces and equipment that would appeal to adolescents (99). For adults, it called for quiet areas, “un contact plus direct avec les éléments naturels,” and areas for activities such as pétanque, picnicking, or clubs (99). Baillon et al. and Amar provided fewer concrete recommendations for changes to parks, perhaps in part because the former study advocated a different, more flexible outlook, proposing spaces that would be “non pas tellement concrets mais symboliques”; instead, Baillon et al. and Amar suggested that provision be made for activities that would be “pas trop contraignantes” (Baillon et al. 255). Baillon’s advocacy of “animation, rencontre, [et] communication” (31) does align with Divorne’s keywords of “accessibilité, animation, polyvalence” ("Espaces verts dans Paris" 39). However, unlike the brief for the Parc de la Villette, these studies do not link

\textsuperscript{46} Here, “private green space” refers to gardens belonging to associations, such as religious communities, museums, or hospitals that had previously not been accessible to the general public.

\textsuperscript{47} “Hanging,” rooftop, or terrace gardens were gaining attention and importance. In addition to numerous gardens atop underground parking decks, the Les Halles garden was partially constructed atop the underground mall and transportation interchange. The Jardin Atlantique, suspended on a platform above the Gare Montparnasse, is perhaps the most famous suspended garden in Paris.
social and leisure spaces to a broader vision of parks as transformative spaces, actively encouraging social mixing and integration into urban life.

The DPJEV did, in fact, adopt many of these regulations during Chirac’s administration. As we have seen, the parks budget provided additional funds to allow for these changes. New and renovated parks include updated play equipment and evidence adequate planting conditions and healthy plants, particularly on the Promenade plantée and the Jardin Atlantique (built on a platform above the Montparnasse train station). Almost all parks now allow some walking on the grass, if only on a rotating basis. The Parc André-Citroën’s lawn, intended from the start to be open to the public, was designed like a sports field to tolerate heavy use. The bilan on water features is more mixed, since some new fountains (such as the one at the Parc André-Citroën), though enticing, were never meant to be played in, and others have broken down over time. Finally, budgets became more restricted by Chirac’s last term (Ambroise-Rendu, “Au Conseil de Paris”), and today almost all the park designers interviewed for this dissertation complained that elements of their parks had fallen into disrepair. However, it is generally evident that efforts were made in all of these domains.

_Espaces verts à Paris_ (1981) announced a 25 percent increase in park area (80 hectares). Most of this area would be made up in small gardens and squares in residential areas, the total surface of which outweighed the surface of the City’s five flagship parks. All the park projects described in the _Schéma directeur_ were in fact carried out during Chirac’s three mandates (1977–1995). For these new parks, the report recommended the integration of green spaces “à la vie urbaine” and “à d’autres activités de loisir comme à des activités quotidiennes,” versus parks as “ghetto[s] vert[s]” (“Espaces verts dans
Paris” 38). Parks would be associated with schools or other complementary équipements, in order to “réunir des fonctions aujourd’hui trop étanches les unes des autres” (“Espaces verts dans Paris” 39). As we shall see, this recommendation is coherent with the City’s policy of including green space within ZACs (zones d’aménagement concerté) as mentioned above. These renovation zones, exempt from the Plan d’occupation des sols but under the control of the APUR and financed by a blend of public and private funds, combine open market housing, public housing projects, and public services, such as schools, day care centers, and sports facilities. All three of the parks studied in this dissertation were enclosed within ZACs (Bercy and André-Citroën) or proximate to them (the Promenade plantée). The Parc de Bercy, for example, is adjacent to the new Cinémathèque française and a stone’s throw from several day care centers and schools, not to mention the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the floating Piscine Joséphine Baker.

Other recommendations were apparently never adopted, or only adopted decades later. For example, the study’s recommendation to consider setting up temporary parks in vacant lots slated for future construction has only recently become policy under the Delanoë municipal administration (2001–present) (“Espaces verts dans Paris” 35; Daunat, Interview). The study advocated “pocket parks,” taking advantage of any small plantable area of public space, another idea adopted under Delanoë and extended to the idea of “vegetal walls” (“Espaces verts dans Paris” 30; Daunat, Interview). Lastly, the Chirac administration did little to include neighborhood residents in the planning process, though their influence has since increased. Two proposals from 1970, first, to involve the private sector to increase park investment, possibly through foundations for Paris parks,
and second, to either renovate cemeteries to make them more park-like or transfer them outside Paris, were never carried out (“Espaces verts dans Paris” 35, 33).

These studies, and the resulting *Schéma directeur des espaces verts* (1978), represent a clear overall turn toward parks and gardens as a major priority in Parisian urbanism, one that, while not taken up by the mayor personally, was facilitated by administrative changes, budgetary allocations, and capable political and administrative leadership.

Ultimately, the City seems to have focused on the recommendations that aimed to make parks better at what they already did: making them more attractive, better kept, and with more varied amenities (within a limited range). The City seems not to have fully considered how to integrate public parks into urban life, in line with the Parc de la Villette brief or Baillon’s conclusion. Nor did the City seek out vectors of citizen participation in park design or in the activities and animation available in parks. Further, the City does not seem to address the sociological issues raised by Baillon and Amar, whether related to the changing demographics of Paris’s population, to potential differences in perception and usage of parks, or to evolving perceptions of parks over time. These issues remain unaddressed, and it will be left to the designers of individual parks to bring their own responses and proposals to the City.

In fact, the city administration retained a highly functionalist view of parks, not only evidenced by the studies discussed above, but seemingly permeating the DPJEV’s vision of park upkeep. For example, Janic Gourlet, who succeeded Surand as director of

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48 Perhaps a similar search for private financing in New York City led to the founding of the nonprofit Central Park Conservancy in 1980 and the Prospect Park Alliance in 1987.
parks and gardens in 1991 and held that position until 2000, focused on gardens as “le lieu des conflits” among different users, stating:

[J]’estime que dans la conception d’un jardin, on doit prendre en compte très fortement ces problèmes de fonctionnement, car si on manque ce rendez-vous, je crains fort que toutes les belles idées qu’on peut avoir sur le végétal, ne résistent pas à l’épreuve du temps et des faits. (*Les Îles de France*)

While there is nothing inherently problematic in this position, it does suggest a vision in which the “functional” is perceived in opposition to “les belles idées.”

Similarly, on the television program *Le Cercle de minuit*, Jacqueline Nebout spoke with Pascal Cribier, one of the landscape architects who had redesigned the Tuileries Garden in the mid-1990s. She informed him that his project, of which he spoke in terms of restoring an awareness of the seasons and of offering contact with nature, had in fact been selected according to entirely other criteria:

[P]ourquoi on a choisi votre projet? C’est parce que nous savions que les Parisiens ont peur dans les jardins […] Nous avons 60 percent des habitants de Paris qui demandent la sécurité à un jardin. C’est-à-dire d’être vus de tous les points du jardin […] Et le choix de votre jardin était parce qu’il était transparent donc rassurant, et parce qu’il avait des coins privés qui permettaient à ceux qui le souhaitaient de pouvoir se retirer. (*Le Cercle de minuit*)

Parks seem to have still been considered as équipements “dont l’être poétique aurait cédé le pas à son double fonctionnel” (Lortie 40).

Moreover, the City demonstrated little interest in the environment or consideration of how the role of the “green” in “green space” had evolved since Alphand.
The City did not change gardening techniques in its existing parks, but instead built or acquired new “wild” gardens (Nebout, “Des Jardins” 39). Although these changes partially adapt the city’s parks system to the desire for direct contact with nature discussed above, they seem limited to only a small proportion of the overall gardened space of Paris.

The Return of the Garden in Municipal Discourse

The architect and landscape historian Jean-Pierre Le Dantec stated that, since the late 1970s, “la question du jardin est revenue” (France 3). Contrary to its continuing focus on functionality in internal documents and decision-making, the City adopted the image of a garden for its presentation of the parks to the public. One of the City’s stated goals, since 1981, was to “réaffirmer et renouveler l’art des jardins urbains” (Éspaces verts à Paris 111). However, there is little articulated evidence for consideration of what, precisely, differentiates a public or private “garden” from a public park or how or why this image was appropriate at the time.

The garden image predominates in both publicity and information publications.49

For example, in the decorative and self-congratulatory Les Jardins de Paris, published by

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the City of Paris in 1994, as Chirac was wrapping up his third mayoral term, history, beauty, and “qualité de la vie” are recurrent motifs:

Exceptionnel patrimoine végétal de Paris sans cesse entretenu, réaménagé et embelli au gré des saisons par de talentueux jardiniers perpétuant l’œuvre de leurs prédécesseurs. Ainsi, Paris s’enorgueillit de posséder toute une gamme d’espaces verts représentant tous les aspects de la création et de la recherche d’illusion depuis les premiers jardins jusqu’à ceux d’aujourd’hui. Lieux de mémoire et lieux de vie, ces jardins restent indissociables d’une certaine qualité de vie, et de Paris.

(Mairie de Paris, *Les Jardins 56*)

This focus on the garden image seems to have been adopted easily by commentators and authors outside of City Hall as well. For example, Emmanuel de Roux, journalist and architecture critic for *Le Monde*, described contemporary parks as “espaces végétaux architecturés,” stating, “Chaque jardin développe une idée, raconte une histoire, propose une vision du monde […]” and continuing, “un jardin n’existe que parce qu’il a un auteur” (1991). By using the term *jardin* to refer to a number of urban green spaces, the City and these other authors reinforced the connotation of aesthetic space, reconnecting the present to the long historical tradition of garden design in France and turning the page on the modernist movement and its nondescript *espaces verts*. Finally, the design competitions seem to have encouraged this emergence of garden discourse. Articles both in newspapers and in specialized architectural publications tended to immediately launch into analyses of the competing projects from a garden point of view, exploring the historical antecedents or models, references, poetic allusions, and theoretical backgrounds
of various creators. As we shall see, the press’s engagement with these garden aspects contrasts, in many cases, with the focus of the competition brief.

Despite the positive aspects of this focus on garden, a sort of schizophrenia seemed to persist between an ongoing functionalism of the park production process and urbanism plans, and a discourse on aesthetics and nature, used in garden publicity and in presenting the garden to citizens.

The Return to the Garden in Landscape Architecture

A “return to the garden” is likewise evident in landscape architects’ own discourse, although the exact status of the garden does vary among designers, partly based on the generation to which they belong. For the generation that began practicing in the 1960s, the garden remained off-limits. Michel Corajoud, for example, suggested that the garden represented “[un] repli sentimental ou affectif. Les gens qui n’aiment pas la ville raffolent de l’idée du jardin” (Figaro 1995). As this quote suggests, for Corajoud, the garden seems to connote a desire to isolate oneself from the city and, therefore, from public life.

However, the garden, both as an image and as a historical concept, was a central part of the education, and eventually the practice, of the first generation of Corajoud’s own students from the newly reformed Ecole de paysage de Versailles. In an interview in Archivert, Philippe Lecarpentier proclaimed, as early as 1979, “redonnons à l’espace vert le titre de jardin, redonnons-lui son contexte culturel, sa valeur esthétique, sa dimension créatrice, son aspect existentiel” (35). Michel Desvigne described the twentieth century as “une longue perte de savoir” in relation to landscape and garden design, while one effect of the turning point of the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s was for landscape architects
to “revenir à l’idée du jardin” (Chemetoff et al. 32). Desvignes’s other remarks demonstrate how deeply he held this notion. He stated, for example, “ce savoir retrouvé autorise ma génération à s’intéresser de nouveau au jardin, ce lieu où peut se constituer notre véritable langage […] [L]’on peut rêver aujourd’hui de refaire [le jardin italien de la Renaissance] Bomarzo, un jardin qui serait la transformation locale d’un morceau de nature en œuvre d’art” (Chemetoff et al. 34). For Desvigne, this “savoir réactualisé” inspired his practice in nontraditional landscape spaces, such as in the “banlieue, le long des autoroutes” (Chemetoff et al. 32). The garden can, in fact, be considered the concept that permitted landscape architects to confront the new spaces emerging from twentieth-century technology and infrastructure: “[le jardin] pourrait très bien constituer le langage de relecture du territoire” (38). Indeed, for Desvigne, it was “urgent de faire un nouveau détour, par les jardins cette fois, pour mieux revenir dans les espaces qui sont ceux du monde contemporain” (32–33). This statement suggests, first, a new harmony between the historical legacy of the garden and contemporary needs, similar to the reconciliation proposed by Huet for architects and landscape architects around the city. Second, it suggests a process of anamnesis or le retour du refoulé, that is, the fulfillment of the desire to understand, to work through, the profession’s past in order to better live in its present.

Alexandre Chemetoff noted, however, that a focus on the garden in landscape architecture education was not a panacea. He described facing, upon his graduation, “une réalité et un monde plus brutaux que ceux auxquels notre formation de jardinier nous préparait” (33). Further, this quote suggests that even with Corajoud’s influence, the traditional garden as a reference point for landscape education had never entirely
disappeared from the Ecole de paysage de Versailles, perhaps due to Lassus’s presence. Chemetoff concurred with Desvigne that even if landscape architects turn to gardens for inspiration, the garden as a typology has nevertheless become extraordinarily rare in their practice, pointing out that the small thematic Villette bamboo garden was, as of 1989, the only one he had designed (Chemetoff et al. 32). Gilles Clément is another partisan of the idea of the garden as the basis for all landscape practice. Clément began his career by designing private gardens for various clients and by creating his own personal garden as a springboard into the conceptualization of the jardin en mouvement and other related concepts.

Another difficulty faced by landscape architects in defining the role of the garden in their practice was that, for the general population, the notion of garden still suggested a space that was not urban. The urbanist Claude Eveno, for example, opened an essay on the Parc André-Citroën by stating, “la vocation d’un parc […] est d’abord de vous abriter de la ville, de vous soustraire à l’agitation des autres et de vous-même” (106). If even Eveno, who was quite closely involved in landscape architecture circles, made such statements, it was clear that landscape architects had not yet succeeded in communicating to the public their desire to reconcile a new kind of city with a new kind of landscape, despite even the médiatisation of the Parc de la Villette.

**Landscape as an Academic Field**

In the 1980s and 1990s, landscape architects found their practice doubled by an academic, theoretical discourse of landscape and garden studies. This field is, in France, oriented around the disciplines of history, philosophy, and geography. While Monique
Mosser and John Dixon Hunt are known, in France and the United States respectively, for their groundbreaking historical research on key figures and movements in park and garden design, the philosopher Philippe Nys and the geographer Augustin Berque contribute to more theoretical explorations of gardens and landscape, Berque from the perspective of Asian Studies and Nys from a Continental philosophical background. Alain Roger brings a literary perspective to the question of how the subject views landscape as an artistic phenomenon. Jean-Pierre Le Dantec’s research in landscape and architecture crosses numerous disciplinary and temporal boundaries. In addition to Hunt, two other figures, the sociologist and landscape historian Michel Conan and the architect and theorist Sébastien Marot, serve as links between landscape and garden research in the United States and France; they act as such due to their positions teaching in American universities and the former’s tenure as director of the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, a preeminent center of garden and landscape studies in the United States. Numerous colloquia and publications testify to the vitality of this field. However, with some exceptions, practicing architects are rarely in direct contact with the academic field. As the landscape architect Michel Péna lamented in an interview, although such figures as Le Dantec or Berque are very well known, “les paysagistes ne connaissent même pas” the majority of scholars in the field, nor are they able to keep up with the latest research and scholarship (Interview).

**Conclusion**

This chapter has traced the history of landscape architecture as a profession, of park planning and design in the City of Paris, and of landscape and garden design as an art
form through the twentieth century. And, in doing so, its first important conclusion is that
the tenor and direction of the field of landscape architecture, in theory and in practice,
participates in the larger postmodern character of the period. Here, I take postmodern in
the sense of the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, whose *La Condition postmoderne*
and *Le Postmoderne expliqué aux enfants* trace the general condition of a critical working
of modernity. This critical working, taking place in the absence or collapse of meta-
narratives and in a period of increasing technological and scientific complexity that
threatens human beings with alienation, is, at its best, a creative and healing process
through which some aspects of modernity are taken up and others left aside. It rejects
facile imitation of the past in the arts and demagoguery in politics.

The postmodernity of this period in park design manifests itself in the exercise of
mourning for the impossible modernist urban utopia: Although the City’s most recent
urban plans state that a modern network of perfectly hierarchized, perfectly ordered parks
is impossible in the present day, the rhetoric of these plans clings to this fantasy. Even as
the *Schéma directeur des espaces verts* and *Espaces verts de Paris* proclaim the advent of
a new era of opportunistic, case-by-case park design, this new era is still framed by
bird’s-eye views of the city and a discourse of total mastery of the park development
process.

In the absence of a master narrative of city progress and urban authority,
landscape architects are charged with making the best of these park creation
opportunities. Sites in which any original topography and topsoil have long since
disappeared, such as the Citroën factory site, or parcels containing aging infrastructure
and contoured for machines and not for gardens, such as the Bastille railway line, must be
transformed into amenities. Historic traces, such as the wine warehouses of Bercy, must be handled with delicacy, so as not to create further trauma by destroying or denaturing them, yet without surrendering to a false nostalgia. Landscape architects seem drawn to the challenges of these ambiguous situations, as evidenced by their fascination for the Italian Stalker movement, for agricultural and urban friche, and borderlands of all kinds.50

Landscape architects, when defining their profession, seem to adopt a postmodern point of view. The boundaries of their expertise are fluid. They intervene in a number of contexts, particularly the city, in which they are required to cope with numerous pre-existing site conditions. They share authority and accept incomplete control over the situations within which they work. They seem to seek out interdisciplinarity. They are preoccupied with the local more than the global, with pragmatic solutions from which their theory and approaches may be induced rather than on conforming individual projects to a theoretical a priori.

What seems clear both from this analysis and from the parks themselves is the myriad of ways in which the fate of parks is entirely intertwined with the social, political, cultural, and intellectual currents of the city and its dwellers. In this sense, the idea of a return to the garden is somewhat difficult to assimilate to the various concerns evoked above. Having defined the object of this dissertation in the Introduction in relation to other public park typologies, it is now clear that another aspect of the parks of 1977–1995 must be fleshed out: the relation between the concept of garden and public park within

these spaces. Strangely, despite the constant reappearance of the term, the definition of
garden qualities in the public park context remains unclear.

A possible definition revolves around several basic questions: In what ways does
the park embrace or reject its relation to the city? In what ways does the park reject any
relation to the city? And, in what ways do the two play upon each other to create a
whole?

First, unlike gardens, public parks are not designed in relation to a private
dwelling or to the countryside, but rather to the built city. While these parks recall garden
techniques and styles in their formal designs, they use these techniques differently to
respond to different facets of the urban environment and to the distinct character of each
neighborhood. The role of the highly structured Parc de Bercy is to lend structure to the
new neighborhood around it. This new neighborhood is “grounded” not only by the
overall grid enforced by both streets and park paths, but also by the park’s themes of
work on memory and the past. The Promenade plantée’s design is either extremely
“extraverted” to pull out the visual properties of the neighborhood around it, or almost
completely enclosed as a hidden refuge. The Parc André-Citroën, likewise, is oriented
around a rigid and highly structured major framework, both in a formal and a symbolic
sense, to impose itself on the new neighborhood created around it, yet within this strong
global framework, offers a range of spaces including a radically new vision of vegetation
in the city. What seems important here is the ability to use traditional garden composition
techniques to respond to a variety of situations. Moreover, in each case, the
neighborhood’s composition and orientation depends on the park’s.
Yet these parks do not engage fully with the surrounding urban environment. Unlike the Parc de la Villette, these parks do not “invite the city in” through institutions and spaces that portray an idealized, integrated, culturally rich, technologically advanced metropolis, but rather are only in spatial dialogue with the city.

The parks’ complementary relationship to the urban environment can also be understood through Michel Foucault’s notion of heterotopia, as discussed in the introduction. Through the garden techniques used, these parks are demarcated from the surrounding urban space. Overall, these parks reinforce selective usages and the traditional social rituals of garden strolls (as we shall discuss further). This is in contrast to the Parc de la Villette’s aim to become more city-like, and thus less garden-like, by offering a variety of novel activities and inviting creative or unusual uses of its space. However, it is worth remembering that, according to Derrida, all texts “participate” in more than one genre rather than “belonging” to any one genre alone. Thus, all genres are hybrid and all typologies are prone to slippage. Further, as we shall see, each park includes aspects that cause it to fall just slightly outside the typology thus defined.51

Chapter Two: The Parc André-Citroën
Introduction

In an article presenting the results of the design competition for the “Parc Citroën-Cévennes” as it was then called, the City of Paris’s director of parks described this new park, together with the Parc de Bercy, as an opportunity to create new large parks within Paris that “ne se reproduira sans doute jamais.” Due to the “caractère quasi historique” of this event, the City “a souhaité qu’un soin particulier soit apporté au choix du concepteur.” The article continued: “Il importait, en effet, que l’esthétique de ce parc soit à l’image du rayonnement de Paris en France et à l’étranger et surtout qu’elle imprime à l’histoire des jardins, si remarquablement visible dans la capitale, une marque réellement représentative des tendances contemporaines.” The impact of the park would be such that the task of its future designer would be “non seulement de proposer un cadre agréable aux futurs habitants du quartier, mais surtout de conférer à ce parc une personnalité et un rayonnement à l’échelle d’une grande métropole moderne” (Surand 7). A palpable air of anticipation surrounded the competition and the unveiling of the park design.

Tucked into the very southwest corner of the Left Bank, on the site of the former Citroën factory along the Seine, the Parc André-Citroën was created as the centerpiece of the redevelopment of this sector in the Fifteenth Arrondissement as a zone d’aménagement concerté (ZAC) (Figure 2.1). Its size, thirteen hectares (32 acres), is

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52 A ZAC or zone d’aménagement concerté is a type of redevelopment project, piloted by a municipal government, combining public and private investment but placing some limits on speculation. Instituted in the late 1960s to replace the ZUP (Zone à urbaniser en priorité), it was the Atelier parisien d’urbanisme’s primary instrument for urban development and renovation during the time period studied. Although the procedure for creating a ZAC only defines a perimeter and a juridical framework, and pre-1977 ZACs include tours et barres, the ZAC procedure is associated, in Paris, with the implementation of the new POS in 1976 and the advent of the APUR as not only a study group but an agent in urban renovation (Pinon 283–84). The ZAC allowed the city government to determine the activities—public services, private commerce, housing, architecture—particularly through competitions and by appointing a “coordinating architect” for the sector, and public space planning of a defined sector. Citroën-Cévennes, Bercy, and Reuilly are all ZACs that will be discussed in further chapters of this dissertation. See Chapter 1; Dumont,
comparable to the size of the Parc Montsouris ("ZAC Citroën-Cévennes" 159). Its major features include a flat, rectangular green lawn unfurling from two monumental greenhouses, then sloping gently down to the Seine. Around the lawn are arranged a series of intimate themed gardens and the unusual and controversial Jardin en mouvement. Two smaller squares connected to the main park like “les oreilles de Mickey” reach back into the arrondissement (Bayle 98). Facing Auteuil and in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower, the park brings interest to an otherwise nondescript primarily residential neighborhood (Figure 2.2).  

While I shall approach the Parc de Bercy as a site of collective memory operation in an allegorical mode and the Promenade plantée as a study in the relation between park and immediate context and designed space as a catalyst for phenomenological movement experience, the Parc André-Citroën foregrounds a meta-discursive approach to the understanding of gardens and gardened space, not merely within Paris alone but also in urban environments more broadly. To address this question of the garden, we must continue the discussion (begun in the Introduction and Chapter 1) of the definitions of park and garden in the French—and Parisian—context, drawing out the ways in which these two spaces are conceptually different. Moreover, the history of this park’s creation will be examined in greater detail than those of the other parks studied in this dissertation, as it was the first of the major parks developed by the Chirac administration. Therefore, the general history of the redevelopment zone, the steps of the design competition, and the surprising design synthesis that was its outcome all merit close examination.

“L’époque APUR, vingt-cinq ans d’histoire” 64–66; and issue 21–22 of Paris-Projet, on “La Politique nouvelle de la rénovation urbaine.”  
53 The budget for the park was 600 million francs, plus an additional 260 million francs to remodel the riverbank and RER passage (Capillon, n. pag.).
A park integrates green and built formal elements that contribute to a larger urban design at the level of the entire city and provides space for various outdoor activities. A garden, on the other hand, is oriented around the display of its living and inanimate features, typically as a space for contemplation and strolling. Gardens also address their visitors’ relationship to these natural elements. From the era of Alphand, public parks in Paris were conceptualized less and less as gardens, and more as functional équipements that happened to include natural elements. This trend was reinforced by the city parks service, by planners, and (as a result) by citizens.

Commonly understood as a counterpoint response to the Villette design competition, the Parc André-Citroën seems to be a return toward a greater emphasis on the garden aspect of public parks. The Parc André-Citroën was, through the design approach and theory espoused by its creators, not only a site of aesthetic interest but also a site of real biodiversity and a demonstration site for practices that, according to the new ecological worldview, as humans face the consequences of environmental degradation on a planetary scale, should be extended to the entire Earth. This approach is a sign not only of the ecological shift in French contemporary culture, but also of a shift in thinking about gardens. In the disappearance of “first” nature, that is, wilderness, and a recognition of the devastating effects of “second” nature, that is, the human environment, both urban and rural, gardens are shifted from a “third” nature, one that is last in a sequence and less important, to a central, crucial nature. Accompanying this shift, which is displayed in the Jardin en mouvement but abetted by the other gardens within the Parc André-Citroen, is a shift in the dynamic between garden designer, gardener, and garden visitor. While these roles are entirely distinct in traditional public parks, they begin to
blur in the Jardin en mouvement. The garden designer surrenders a degree of control over
the form and contents of the garden to the gardener, whose actions modify the garden
through time. Garden visitors are invited to become aware of this process and to mingle
freely with the plants that form the garden.

However, these analyses only refer to one part of the park, the Jardin en
mouvement. Overall it is necessary to understand the park as a site of numerous thematic,
theoretical and ideological contrasts.

It is the “postmodern condition” as both a condition of society and an aesthetic
mode that makes it possible to understand both this new type of garden and the park as a
whole, through a combination of key aesthetic and ethical concepts: “l’informe” and
incompleteness, collective or dispersed authorship, and a renewed importance assigned to
“minor genres.” All of these will be discussed in reference to the art theorist Ann
Cauquelin’s application of the theory of l’informe to gardens.

The design competition as well as its unusual outcome, the synthesis of the two
winning teams, was widely covered in both newspapers and specialized periodicals. A
great deal of what has already been written about the Parc André-Citroën in architecture
and landscape architecture circles focuses on the Jardin en mouvement and its relation to
ecology (Bédarida, Dagenais). There has also been some interest in the relationship
between the park and the urban context on its north side as an urban design exercise
(Lavalou, Yamashita). Unpublished projects by students at the École Nationale
Supérieure de Paysage in Versailles and theses at the DEA (diplôme d’études
approfondies) level written by architecture students, most of which were completed
within ten years of the park’s inauguration (Bennehard, Folléa, Garcia-Garcia), take
various analytical approaches to the park. The park received a great deal of publicity and attention during its creation phase and once it opened, but very little in-depth analysis or studies on the established park have been performed since then.

**A Brief Description: The Neighborhood**

The Parc André-Citroën may be reached from the Metro and Tramway stations Balard at its southeast corner, from the RER station Javel at its northwest corner, or the RER and Tramway stations Boulevard Victor-Pont de Garigliano on its southwest corner. In addition, buses run along the diagonal Rue Balard and the north-south Rue Saint-Charles, the two main arteries for this neighborhood. Though edges of the park brush these two streets, it is primarily bounded by two small, oddly sinuous new streets to the north and east: the Rue de la Montagne de l’Espérou and the Rue de la Montagne de La Fage, nomenclature in keeping with the neighborhood’s name, “Cévennes.” To the south, the new Georges Pompidou hospital and Ponant office building are contiguous to the park, while residential buildings are distributed along the diagonal Rue Balard (“ZAC Citroën-Cévennes” 151). The eastern corner of the Jardin noir and the entrance where the Rue Balard passes between the Jardin blanc and the main park might be considered the park’s two “main” entrances. For each of them (as well as for the other entrances to the park along the Seine) visitors cross a series of barriers and seemingly intermediary spaces. The park (with the exception of the Jardin blanc) is bounded at various points by walls or fences; a row of shrubs; a level change, such as the “galerie basse” of the Jardin noir or the ha-ha *(saut-de-loup)* on the north side of the park (Figure 2.3). Visitors may feel

54 The Citroën company initially reserved the right to build a headquarters along the Quai André-Citroën within the renovation zone but it seems this provision was never realized (“ZAC Citroën-Cévennes” 154).
aspirated toward the center of the park and only return to these edges, which turn out to be complex and highly sophisticated, after they have reached the central open space, the great lawn at the foot of the two imposing greenhouses. The Balard entrance and the Javel entrance, in particular, encourage this initial movement toward the center of the park.

**The Jardin Blanc**

The visitor to the Jardin blanc, in contrast, notes its lack of boundaries: no walls or fences shut it off from the neighborhood around it, nor do level changes interrupt its continuity with the Rue Balard or the park proper. A preschool, apartments, a “centre d’animation,” a public library, and a *brasserie* along the park’s boundaries harmonize with play areas for small children, an enclosed basketball court popular with teenagers, ping-pong tables, and *boules* courts, plus plenty of benches (Figure 2.4). Decorative flowering trees lend shade, interest, and a hint of green despite the somewhat dry ground, which is mostly composed of hard walkways or functional earth and gravel. This area is an obvious gathering place for the neighborhood, a safe, convivial, well-kept, and multifaceted public space. At its center, the square, cloister-like Jardin blanc proper is enclosed by stone walls punctuated by fountains that resemble the wall of the cemetery to its north (Figure 2.5, Figure 2.6). Inside these walls, a precious collection of bulbs, perennials, and

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55 Originally, a pedestrian overpass would have separated street traffic along the rue Balard and foot traffic between the Jardin Blanc and the park. Instead, a large, well-marked pedestrian crossing on the relatively quiet Rue Balard allows for more fluid traffic in all directions.
The Jardin noir

Perhaps the contemplative, solitary ambiance of the Jardin noir is influenced by the artists’ workshops next to it. Bounded by walls and a building housing artists’ studios, it is isolated both from the surrounding streets and the main park. The street-level esplanades formed by ranks of oaks and sol stabilisé serve as traffic pathways and buffers between the two sunken gardens, one at the center and the other forming a series of clos in a low gallery around the periphery of the space (Figure 2.8). These gardens each showcase one type of plant such as spiraea, geraniums, rhododendrons, Japanese maples, or arums, in sheltered, partially shaded raised beds that allow for carefully controlled soil and water conditions for optimum growth of each type of plant (Figure 2.9). The visitor’s (and gardener’s) reward for descending into this strangely labyrinthine, mildly claustrophobic set of gardens is a variety of plant silhouettes, textures, and, particularly in spring, lush blooms. Wisteria, saucer magnolia, and pines add height and complement the beds, while pruned evergreen shrubs provide contrasting backgrounds (Figure 2.10). As with the many other flowering beds in the park, bronze plaques on concrete plinths indicate the species and planting arrangements for each bed.

The sunken square garden at the center of the Jardin Noir likewise displays a sophisticated array of plants in a style that suggests a Japanese garden in its use of pines.

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56 The Jardin Blanc is designed as a square grid of five smaller squares, each of which has an identical plantation plan. Clément states that this design uses a “mandala” type motif. The garden symbolizes artifice through “artifices horticoles,” as well as “l’artifice d’une roche de carrière—sous la forme d’un moulage en bronze—dont le modèle de nature est censé se tenir entre les bambous du secteur en mouvement” (Clément and Léveque, 101).
rocks, an irregular boundary, and an arrangement that reveals points of interest from all four sides yet hides other features (Figure 2.11). The dark trunks, inky purple pansies, petunias, and tulips, and nearly black grasses embody the garden’s name against a contrasting light stone and gravel ground. Despite their differences, the Jardin noir and Jardin blanc have in common their play on openness and enclosure, height and depth, visibility and obscurity, and their function as squares—albeit dramatically different ones—with limited ranges of activities and a high proportion of mineral surfaces.

From the Jardin noir, visitors proceed on a wide pathway through a second gate and then across an as-yet-unfinished lawn area, soon to be occupied by a Jardin des vagues and a restaurant (Viguier), as the panorama of the main park opens before them.

The Central Lawn

To the right (east), two greenhouses, their walls made of panes of structural glass anchored by a network of cables to wood-covered columns, are both monumental and insubstantial (Figure 2.12). The solidity of their bases, which stand on a vast, sloping ground of granite pavers, contrasts with the network of fine cables and transparent glass panes. Their scale, proportions, and placement recall the Jeu de Paume and the Orangerie in the Tuileries gardens. One greenhouse contains a display of Australian flora, designed by Gilles Clément, while the other is an orangery. The greenhouses are flanked by the Péristyle végétal, composed of ranks of magnolias in pots in a reflecting pool, pruned into columns (Figure 2.13). Between the two greenhouses is the Péristyle d’eau, a fountain whose jets emerge directly from the pavement. Their erratic spouting is an endless source of summertime entertainment, spontaneous games, and cooling spray (Figure 2.14).
To the left, the west, the large, flat, rectangular lawn, dotted with a few sparse trees, stretches toward the Seine. The walkway leading from the Jardin noir, a diagonal toward the northwest, provides the only two access points over the narrow water course that bounds the lawn, the “lisière d’eau” (Figure 2.15). Near the river, the lawn is inflected by a slope that carries it underneath the tracks of the suburban train (RER) to the quay (Figure 2.16). This massive open space, whose orthogonality, axially, monumentality, minerality and limited palette of grass and marcescent shrubs recall Le Nôtre’s designs, changes its atmosphere according to the whims of the sky. At its best, it is as sun-drenched and convivial as a beach but it can also appear cold, windswept, and out of proportion.

The southern boundary of this lawn is marked by seven granite prisms, called nymphées (nymphaeum, an allusion not to water lilies, but to the grottoes of nymphs), that are joined by a water course and a pathway at their bases, but also connected by a broader “canal” raised above the lawn area (Figure 2.17). These severe, sober grotto fountains, the insides of which are black, seem to offer both belvederes onto the central lawn, and a way of moving from the lawn level to the upper canal (Figure 2.18). However, only the middle nymphaeum offers this possibility. Some of the others are entirely closed and others only offer stairs from the ground level to a viewing platform. The canal reflects the mirrored façade of the “Le Ponant” building whose bulk dominates this area of the park, though it is further separated by a planting bed that runs along the southern boundary fence. In this bed, a small bronze bust of André-Citroën memorializes the park’s namesake (Figure 2.19). Approaching the Seine, the park boundary angles to the southwest to allow room for the Jardin des métamorphoses, an array of plants.
displaying dramatic changes. These plants include birch, which sheds its bark, Flowering Judas (redbud), which flowers on bare branches, and bulbs that bloom before their leaves appear. At the angle of this boundary of the park and the Seine riverbank, a sloped bed of boxwoods pruned into cubes, descending between steeply terraced beds of juniper and aromatics, leads down to the lawn level (Figure 2.20). Before entering the lawn area, the visitor passes through the terminus of the canal: a chadar, an Indian style of fountain in which stones are placed at an angle to the water flow to produce turbulence, spray, and noise (Figure 2.21).

From this end of the lawn, the visitor may admire the opposite angle of the great lawn perspective toward the two monumental greenhouses. Or, visitors may pass underneath the RER tracks to the cobbled quay of the Seine. In accordance with the City’s ongoing work to revitalize and beautify the Seine riverbanks, informational panels describe and illustrate the industrial history of these quays. Continuing across the lawn to the north side, one enters a series of gardens aligned on the northern boundary of the lawn, intended to convey complex scientific and symbolic information about plants and nature.

**The Jardins Sériels**

First, the pathway leading to the Porte des termes, the entrance to the park from the Quai de Javel, illustrates the five major categories of plants according to how they survive the

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57 These initiatives include increasing pedestrian access and continuity of accessible areas and, since the completion of the Parc André-Citroën, such projects as Paris-Plage and closing the Seine Rive Droite expressway on Sunday afternoons.
Representatives of each category were planted around stone altar-like planters containing apple trees, “the tree of knowledge” (Figure 2.22) (Clément, *Les Libres Jardins*, 142). Though it appears that some of the original plants were moved or never replanted after they died, this cobblestone walkway, shaded by deciduous trees sheltering hostas, ferns, and other shade-loving plants, remains one of the most pleasant parts of the park. This wooded area leads into the most well-known and controversial part of the park, the Jardin en mouvement.

The theory of the *jardin en mouvement* will be discussed further in subsequent sections of this chapter. Upon entering the Parc André-Citroën’s manifestation of this garden, one of the first things that a visitor notices is that it has no mineral pathways. The main diagonal axis of the park, which the visitor first encountered in the Jardin noir, is expressed as a path in stabilized earth. Other paths are made from sheets of a celled plastic material through which grass can grow, while still more paths are simply mowed into the grass and low-growing plants. Boulders, flowering shrubs, landscape roses, quinces, and bamboo lend an overall structure to the garden, while annual and biannual plants, sown rather than planted, occupy the spaces between these plants. Maintained primarily by scything or mowing at specific times of the year, this garden changes its very contours and plant configurations from season to season and year to year (Figure 2.23, Figure 2.24, Figure 2.25).

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58 According to the classification developed in the early twentieth century by Christian Raunkiaer, a Danish botanist, and still used today, plants belong to one of five categories: *phanerophytes*, trees, shrubs, and other woody plants whose buds are formed in the Fall and bloom in the Spring; *chamaephytes*, small shrubs with “hibernating buds,” such as rosemary or thyme; *hémicryptophytes*, perennial grassy plants, such as dandelions, that form a terminal bud at ground level; *geophytes*, bulbs whose bud is buried underground; and *therophytes*, or annuals that seed and die in the Fall (Clément and Lévêque 142). This system was not explained in the guided tours offered, one organized by the city and the other by the *Centre des monuments nationaux*.

59 “Jardin en mouvement” refers to the portion of the Parc André-Citroën while *jardin en mouvement* refers to the concept developed in the Parc André-Citroën, Clément’s writings, and other gardens.
The Jardin en mouvement is completely different, in design and cultivation strategy, from the other areas of the park, but it is actually the first of the Jardins sériels or Jardins des correspondances aligned along the north boundary of the park. Each of the other serial gardens displays one color in particular: blue, green, orange, red, silver, and gold. Each color is associated with an element, a celestial body, a day of the week, a sense, and a stage in the water cycle, a series of correspondences that will be discussed further (see Figure 2.39). These rectangular gardens are defined by small greenhouses, like the large greenhouses designed by Patrick Berger and also composed of wooden pillars and structural glass with cable supports, set on high concrete bases (Figure 2.26). These greenhouses, containing unusual plants, are connected by narrow wooden aerial walkways, and in front of each greenhouse a fountain slopes down to ground level, defining the boundaries of contiguous gardens along the long side of each garden.

The Jardins sériels are contained within a sheltered space, separated from the main lawn by massive pruned hornbeam hedges. Each garden incorporates its symbolism and displays its key colors in a different way. The Blue Garden, for example, includes borders of annuals, aromatics, and trellised vines with either blue fruit or blue flowers, such as wisteria, as water drips from the trellis to a basin to suggest rain (Figure 2.27). Even the flowers of the plants in the Jardin vert, such as Lenten Rose, are green (Figure 2.28). The bluish river rocks in the orange garden contrast with the orange blooms of its azaleas and the brick motif in its central walkway (Figure 2.29). The Red Garden is dominated by a velvety green lawn and the glossy leaves of various plants, all the better to make the giant red tulips, pink-tinged granite of the “cascade”, and edible red cherry fruits stand out (Figure 2.30). The Silver and Gold gardens make special use of foliage,
rather than flowers, to express their color themes (Figure 2.31, Figure 2.32). Overall, these gardens lend an impression of abundance, extraordinary variety and nuance in the use of plant associations and gardening techniques. While the green, orange, and red gardens seem to be designed mainly for strolling through, the blue, silver, and gold gardens are almost always occupied by solitary readers, sunbathers, couples, or occasionally families with very young children.

**Other Observations**

Other than the playgrounds in the Jardin blanc and Jardin noir, hardly any structured activities are available within the Parc André-Citroën. While playing children are benignly tolerated in the officially off-limits fountain on the *parvis* of the large greenhouses, there are no other playgrounds, play or fitness equipment, or refreshment stands within the main park. The central lawn even lacks benches. However, one element, which was not included in the original park design, has become an important attraction: a giant hot-air balloon anchored in the middle of the park during the spring and summer months since 1999 (Figure 2.33). Operated as a private concession, the balloon allows visitors a panoramic view of the city (not unlike the view available from the nearby Eiffel Tower).\(^6^0\) While the open space is a perfect frame for the balloon, its rigging takes up a large portion of the main lawn and disrupts the panorama from the Seine to the greenhouses.

\(^6^0\) This balloon, originally a temporary attraction for the Millennium, may like the nearby Eiffel Tower become a permanent installation (Viguier). For a highly critical analysis of the balloon in the public park context, see Fourer, “La Grande Pelouse du parc Citroën: De la liberté pour tous au support de la publicité.”
A History of the Park Design Process: From Factory to Park

The Parc André-Citroën was in many ways an experimental case. Having not had such monumental ambitions for a new park for decades, the city administration had to develop new practices to bring this park into being.

The Citroën factory on the Quai de Javel had been producing cars since 1919, and previously had supplied armaments for the First World War. The site had been dedicated to industry since the late eighteenth century, when a sulfuric acid factory, backed by a group of investors including the Count of Artois (the future monarch Charles X), was built on the site (Société Historique 218). In 1971, construction began on Citroën’s new factory in Aulnay-sous-Bois and the City began urbanism studies for the site, which it agreed to purchase, with additional funding provided by the State for its future development (Milliex). The following year, the City announced that a large park would be built on the site. According to Jean-Michel Milliex, the architect and urbanist for the APUR who designed the overall redevelopment plan (Plan d’aménagement de zone), the original impetus for the park’s creation was to burnish the image of Paris, the Capital (Interview).

Five years later, in 1976, exhibits at the Hôtel de Ville in June and the Mairie of the Fifteenth Arrondissement in September and October announced the “schéma d’urbanisme” for this area. The new Schéma directeur of 1977 also included the Citroën sector among the planned “grandes opérations de rénovation” (Lesguillon 91). By this time the general outline of the park, a large rectangle contiguous to the Seine with smaller square areas aligned with each of its corners, was established, while a more precise and detailed park perimeter and overall renovation plan were developed by 1981 (see
“L'Aménagement des terrains Citroën” and “ZAC Citroën-Cévennes”). However, it was not until April 1985 that the design competition was held for the park. The City had been skeptical at first of what a competition might add of value to the parameters for the park that were developed as part of the redevelopment plan. In fact, Milliex had previously designed the nearby Parc Georges-Brassens in collaboration with a landscape architect, Alexandre Ghiulamila, and an architect, Daniel Collin. However, the Villette competition demonstrated the attention and interest that a competition, even one whose results were controversial or contested, could bring to Paris (Milliex).

The brief for the competition described the ambiance of the factories:

[les] anciennes usines Citroën [. . .] couvraient près de vingt hectares constitués de grandes halles, orientées est-ouest; ces constructions étaient masquées en bordure des voies par de hauts murs de façades en briques à caractère austère et souvent ingrat. Cet ensemble industriel était générateur d’une circulation importante de véhicules utilitaires, encombrants et bruyants, et d’un stationnement anarchique envahissant le quartier riverain. (“Consultation” 4)

In addition to the Citroën factory complex, the site housed other industrial and warehouse buildings, including a compressed-air plant whose closure marked the end of the pneumatic tube messaging network. A rail yard was sandwiched between the Citroën land and the Boulevard des Maréchaux (Galy-Dejean 72–73; APUR, “ZAC Citroën-Cévennes” 153). The Voie Express Georges Pompidou and the RER ran along the riverbank while the Petite Ceinture passed south of the site on a high embankment. Moreover, the design brief noted an “absence quasi-totale de mouvement naturel du sol” and a total absence of topsoil or any other organic elements. The park would be created
on a terrain entirely denuded of any trace of its former use (“Consultation” 3). These physical features of the terrain and relief would be so many obstacles for the designers to contend with (Figure 2.34). In addition, construction on the buildings around the park began before the park design was chosen (Bayle 98).61

The Urban Design of the Site

A model for urban planning in this sector of Paris, the nineteenth-century “plan Viollet,” had guided the construction of the neighborhood immediately to the north of the redevelopment zone (Figure 2.35). This map, showing a grid of streets with squares at their intersections, connected to major routes and bridges by diagonal axes, was consulted as a possible pattern to extend (Milliex). The Eiffel Tower, visible from the north-south streets, was the most notable Parisian landmark in the vicinity of the site (“Consultation” 6). Because the industrial sites along the Quai Javel had been in existence for so long, the residents of the southwestern part of the Fifteenth arrondissement had little sense of their own proximity to the Seine. Of the four general plans for the ZAC, the one that was ultimately selected by the city council on the recommendation of the APUR was oriented around the longitudinal park stretching from the riverbank deep into the built fabric of the arrondissement, prolonged by two smaller square spaces at its eastern corners (Milliex).

When it was presented to the city council, this plan was deemed an acceptable compromise between the opposing wishes of the City and the arrondissement: the park as a monumental space that through its design and activities would contribute to the city as a whole, and the park as a local space that would primarily serve the quotidian needs of

61 See APUR (“ZAC Citroën-Cévennes” 159–161) for a discussion of the interplay between the park, the street and the train tracks. The Parc Montsouris is cited as an example of a park constructed around a train.
nearby residents (Bayle 98). The brief called for “à l’intérieur du parc deux types d’espaces différenciés” (“Consultation” 18). For the central space, the City imagined an urban park designed on a city-wide scale, “un ensemble comportant un effet de masse consacré à la détente et à la promenade.” The two smaller spaces were described as “sous-espaces plus liés à une pratique quotidienne, plus intégrés au quartier et remplissant la fonction de square ou d’espaces de dégagement de certains équipements” (19).  

The most important feature of the park as a “structural space of representation” linked to the whole city was envisioned as “[une] ouverture sur la Seine […] la plus large possible” (“L’Aménagement” 81). According to the City’s wishes, the park proper would serve as the centerpiece of the development and as a cohesive force in relation to the variety of planned construction. This role was attributed to the park in part because none of the building programs planned for the ZAC, including a hospital (the Hôpital européen Georges-Pompidou), office buildings, artists’ studios, and both private and social housing, seemed prestigious enough to merit a choice location along the Seine or truly exceptional architecture (Milliex).  

By allocating a large, dramatic space along the Seine as a park, an evident parallelism would be traced between this new park and other green spaces along the Seine on the Left Bank. The 1980 exhibition soliciting public comments in the Fifteenth Arrondissement’s city hall described the park as “[un] parc urbain à l’échelle des grands parcs de la capitale[,] largement ouvert sur la Seine,” as a park that

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62 Perhaps the separation of the two types of programs (rather than imagining coexistence, interplay, or synthesis of local versus city-wide programs) is a reflection of the typological study done by the city leading up to the Schéma directeur des espaces verts developed between 1978–1981 and discussed in Chapter 1.

63 Olivier-Clément Cacoub was named “coordinating architect” of the ZAC, a position he was widely considered to have obtained through his connections with Chirac and in which his performance was considered mediocre (Milliex).
would “correspond à une longue tradition d’aménagement de la capitale” (ZAC Citroën-Cévennes: Enquête public 1980). The “great parks of the capital” to which this statement alludes include the Jardin des plantes, the Champ de Mars, and the Esplanade des Invalides.

Although from above these spaces appear proximate to the Seine, their elevation above the riverbank, flatness, and scale means that visitors to them tend not to associate them with the Seine. And just as these spaces are separated from the Seine riverbanks by a series of obstacles including heavily traveled roads, the perimeter of the new park did not originally extend to the Seine itself. However, the design brief for the Parc André-Citroën did encourage competitors to seek solutions for connecting the park to the river, so that the west end of the park would be “très marqué par la présence de la Seine” and as we shall see, several competition finalists proposed a variety of solutions to this problem (Consultation 19).

The two smaller spaces, which became the Jardin blanc and the Jardin noir, were envisioned as urban squares or proximity green space, in which less emphasis would be placed on monumentality, display, or features that would draw visitors from all over Paris, to the advantage of local activities, services, and the everyday leisure of nearby residents. These green spaces would also become links between the existing built fabric and the new, joining together the “four corners” of the renovation sector (Milliex, Consultation 19). The City described the boundaries of these spaces as forming

la plus grande ‘surface de contact’ entre le parc et les jardins qui le ramifient [. . .] non seulement avec les constructions nouvelles, mais avec le quartier existant: des espaces verts publics de bonne taille, bien réliés au parc central, ‘irriguent’ le
domaine bâti actuel et assurent à la fois une fonction de voisinage de type square et de ‘promenade paysagée’ vers le coeur du jardin. (“L’Aménagement” 81)

The early versions of the park plans do not indicate specific activities, but the conceptual difference between the central park area and the two smaller squares is clear in one of the texts of an exhibit on the renovation in the Mairie du Quinzième Arrondissement in 1980, which stated:

[Il] n’est pas projeté de faire du parc le lieu d’implantation d’équipements exceptionnels de loisir appelant une fréquentation issue de tout Paris. Il est proposé un traitement du parc répondant à un besoin de verdure, de calme, de promenade, et de détente dans sa partie centrale, la plus massive, ainsi qu’à une pratique quotidienne (jeux, etc) dans ses prolongements qui le soudent au XVe arrondissement. (ZAC Citroën-Cévennes)

The Brief

The competition brief took a slightly different approach from earlier planning documents, describing the park as “un parc qui participe de l’ensemble parisien par sa forme […] mais qui soit destiné essentiellement au quinzième arrondissement et aux secteurs proches pour ce qui est de sa fréquentation (Consultation 18). This statement suggests a rather strange hybrid: a park that would appeal to local residents for its activities, but to those living farther away due to its look. An aesthetic appreciation of the park is implied by this statement. Thus the general spirit of the park was to be “hédoniste et d’usage pour les habitants du quartier” yet also “structurant et de représentation à l’échelle de la ville” (Bayle 98). The park would need to include “une promenade de dépaysement,”
“accessible” lawns, fountains, “clearings” or other areas large enough to accommodate groups or specific activities for adolescents or adults; spaces that could be used for open-air art exhibitions; a theater; and more (Consultation 20). Yet the language describing these areas is vague:

Ni rigidité, ni codification extrême; la structure végétale du Parc doit être suffisamment solide, présente et permanente pour être creusée de tous les lieux nécessaires à des usages diversifiés. La forme de ces lieux devant engendrer des pratiques. (24)

The City seems to desire a design that, while functional, will also be flexible, and in which the functional aspect of the design will dominate its decorative aspects. Although no examples of parks like this were cited, the Luxembourg Gardens might be an example of a good synthesis between visually striking areas, particularly the axis from the Senate to the Avenue de l’Observatoire, and a variety of activities incorporated into the areas to each side of this main axis. The vegetal “structure” of the Luxembourg gardens, incorporating both open spaces shaded by trees in quincunx, into which the playground and tennis courts are inserted, and a section “à l’anglaise,” has evolved over the centuries as visitors’ behavior has changed.

The idea of a “structuring” and “representational” park implies, as stated above, a park that may be appreciated visually, even aesthetically. Some attention was devoted in the design competition brief to the question of how the park might look. It would have some “relation to the history of gardens,” using “tous les ‘artifices’ qu’autorisent les jardins: allées, chemins creux, labyrinthes, pergolas, tonnelles … Un belvédère pourrait ponctuer ce parcours poétique.” Due to the construction projects around the park, “des
quantités considérables de remblais” would be available to create relief (*Consultation 19*). These garden artifices would both permit a feeling of “dépaysement” and, through their complexity, lend the park a certain prestige. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, the city parks service emphasized the role of the park as a prestigious element of Paris and a new addition to its history of park creation (*Surand 7*).

Perhaps a reflection of the Parc de la Villette competition, the City’s explicit aim was to create something “contemporary” that would be a modern counterpart to such historical gardens as the Tuileries, Luxembourg, or Buttes-Chaumont. As we may deduce from the list of design elements and the use of the word “artifice,” the park was not envisioned as a natural or nature-dominated site but rather a part of the urban environment. This approach was also suggested by phrases such as the “effet renforcé du rapport ville-‘nature’” or the recommendation that, particularly on the east side of the park, it would have “un caractère plus urbain” (*Consultation 19*). Designers were also asked to consider the relation between the park and the surrounding architecture (26–29).

Lastly, the brief made an appeal to the creativity of the landscape architects, asking them to “penser ces jardins sous l’angle d’un thème [ou d’]une image dominante […] qui en renforcerait la lecture globale tout en tissant les sous-ensembles de programmes dans la même trame croisée.” This theme, image, or “vocation” “pourrait être éventuellement extrapolée du contexte historique, géographique ou local” (24–25).

However, the language of the brief seems to betray some hesitations about what this context could offer to the park, finding the site to be “un lieu dont il s’agira de ressusciter le génie” (25).64 Options cited included the industrial and technological past of the site,

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64 This notion of “le génie du lieu” is almost certainly a reference to Christian Norberg-Schulz’s phenomenological architectural theory of the *genius loci*, as elaborated in his work *Genius Loci: Towards a*
the presence of the Seine or water in general, and its geographical situation (25). Whatever the designer’s inspiration, it would be important that the park represent something; that is, it not only be a functional structure or even an attractive space; but rather become a sign.

The Competition

Writing for Paris projet, the architect Jean-Claude Garcias evaluated both the design brief and the competition projects, finding the program “trop précis et partiellement contradictoire” due to the clash between elements meant to serve the City’s aims of prestige and display, and other elements meant to be highly functional. Garcias concluded that “le nouveau parc ne pouvait trouver de légitimation que lyrique,” a heavy burden for the landscape architects responsible for conjuring this “lyrical” legitimacy (100).

As with other park competitions, including the one for Bercy, the jury was composed of elected officials, members of the mayoral administration, heads of the city parks and urbanism departments; and other architects, landscape architects, and planners, and headed by Jacqueline Nebout, the city councilmember appointed by Chirac to oversee the Direction des Parcs, jardins, et espaces verts (adjoint au maire chargé de l’environnement). Sixty-three teams responded to the initial call, from which ten

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Phenomenology of Architecture (1980) and translated into French as Genius Loci: Paysage, ambiance, architecture (1981). Close attention to preexisting site conditions, history, and genius loci is a characteristic of a number of architects working in and on Paris, including Antoine Grumbach and Bernard Huet (one of the designers of the Parc de Bercy). Numerous French landscape architects also adopt this approach, including Michel Corajoud and Michel Desvignes.

65 Note the extent to which this idea of “resuscitation” may be contrasted to Parc de la Villette’s brief. The Citroën brief calls for the “artifices” of “traditional” garden art, reworked in a “contemporary” way, instead of appealing to the avant-garde for a new direction. The Citroën brief places less emphasis on activities, on the social role of the park, and on the notion of the park in the urban setting.

66 See “Deux lauréats pour le parc des Cévennes.” René Galy-Dejean, mayor of the Fifteenth Arrondissement, was the elected official; members of the mayoral administration included Bernard Rocher,
finalists were selected. Each competing team was required to include a landscape architect and an architect, both citizens of a European Union country. The finalists submitted written statements, a plan, two perspective drawings, and a series of sections. All of these submissions have in common visually bold designs and sophisticated rendering. However, it is not always clear how the various design elements would relate to each other from the perspective of a human visitor. In fact, the lack of human figures in most illustrations is striking.

Based on the texts, available through the Atelier parisien d’urbanisme, and drawings, published in Paris projet, as well as on Garcias’ evaluation, it is possible to study the eight rejected projects. While some lacked an anchor in the Parisian context, others were too prosaic or drily functionalist. Others were too daunting technically, or were simply rejected by the jury for their theoretical approach. Some of the competing teams seemed to respond strongly to the idea of “dépaysement” suggested in the competition brief, to the point that their park designs seemed disconnected from the surrounding neighborhood or overwhelmed by fantastical garden elements. This was the case with Jean-Noël Capart and Raymond Normand, whose design seemed to conform exactly to the list of activities and spaces included in the brief, yet also seemed miniaturized and fragmented. Their text also had a whiff of pastiche or ersatz, referring to “biotopes de substitution semblables et inspirés des modèles naturels.” Likewise, despite the beautiful rendering of the British team of Peter Low, architect, and John

adjoint au maire chargé de l’urbanisme; members of the city administration included Guy Surand, Directeur des parcs, jardins et espaces verts, Alan Grellety-Bosviel, directeur de l’aménagement urbain, and Nicolas Politis, director of the APUR. Other members of the jury included Xavier de Buyer, director of the Agence des espaces verts de la Région Île-de-France, one landscape architect, and three architects including Olivier-Clément Cacoub, coordinating architect for the ZAC.

67 Capart would later work with Jacques Simon on the Parc de la Deûle on the outskirts of Lille, which won the Prix du paysage 2006 (Vogüé).
Medhurst, landscape architect, the complex shapes seen from above do not seem to clearly translate into a human’s perspective on the ground; the design’s style “à l’anglaise” and occasional high-tech “gimmicks” failed to impress (Garcias 111).

On the other hand, other projects seemed to be too rigidly subservient to the urban plan around them, not offering the part de rêve for which the brief called out. Though the project by François-Charles Debulois (member of API, the firm that designed the Parc de Belleville and also competed for the Jardin Atlantique) won a mention from the jury, it carved up the park into perfectly parallel lawns and rows of trees. The Italian team of Alessandro Giannini and Carlo Bruschi borrowed “la rue Saint-Charles en decumanus” from which to orient a “neoclassical” project with overtly monumental aims. Garcias interpreted their text as a “réfutation hilarante des thèses convivialo-technologiques mises en oeuvre à la Villette” but also an ode to contextualism and “reconstitution à la [the architect Aldo] Rossi ou à la [the philosopher Walter] Benjamin d’une histoire de Paris à demi rêvée” (Garcias 108). Lastly, the project by the landscape architect Ian Le Caisne and the architect Marylène Ferrand, the team that would go on to win the Parc de Bercy competition with Bernard Huet, was described by Garcias as “renouant avec Le Nôtre par-dessus la tête d’Alphand” for its geometricalty and its use of terraced earthworks (Garcias 108).68 Despite his praise for the design, Garcias suggested that the building along the riverbank, dominating the highly symmetrical and “introverted” central section in a manner that recalled the Palais de Chaillot, would have automatically disqualified the project in the eyes of the jury.

68 Garcias, looking back on Bernard Huet’s recent designs for the Champs-Elysées, the Place Stalingrad, and the Place des Fêtes, notes his influence on this project, calling it “un projet dont la rigueur néoclassique était paradoxalement en avance sur l’esprit du temps” (108).
Another category of projects perhaps appeared too daunting (and expensive) to carry out, particularly in proportion to the effects they would produce. This was the case for the eminent landscape architect Jacques Sgard’s project with architects Jean-Paul Martin du Gard, Laurent Beaudoin and Christine Rousselot, which created a canal above the buried roadway on the park side of the RER tracks, a sort of double of the Seine with a second riverbank. Garcias found the contrast disturbing between this “immobile and mute” basin above and the hustle and bustle of traffic below, and marveled at the engineering prowess required to create it (Garcias 111). Landscape architect François Brun (who would go on to win the competition for the Jardin Atlantique, suspended above the tracks of the Montparnasse train station, with Michel Péna) and architect Pascal Catry were criticized for the unrealistic twenty-five meter high slope they named the “Champ de la vacance” for its moor-like vegetation (104). Nevertheless, their proposal’s goal, to attract adolescents and young adults, displayed an awareness of this demographic’s needs, unfulfilled by traditional Parisian parks (Aménagement, n. pag.).

Lastly, as Garcias noted, the landscape architect Claire Corajoud and the architect Rem Koolhaas, proposed a project that resembled Koolhaas’s design for the Parc de la Villette, including a foray into Koolhaas’ concept of “cross-programming,” an athletic center built on several levels overlooking the Seine. Moreover, the project statement announced:

Grâce au développement d’une série formelle de relations-dédoubllements, nous avons essayé d’établir des liens directs et des analogies entre les architectures existante et projetée […] nous nous sommes donc efforcés de créer une esthétique

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69 Aménagement du Parc André-Citroën is the unpublished document in which the written statements of the ten competing teams were assembled.
végétale qui puisse rivaliser avec la beauté puissante—mais encore ignorée—du paysage urbain de la fin du XXe siècle. (*Aménagement*)

Garcias’ distaste for Koolhaas’ approach, which he described as “faire surgir la beauté d’un excès de hideur,” may have been shared by the jury (Garcias 103).

These designs reveal the difficult aspects of the competition process as the competitors struggled with the contradictory elements of program. Each team had to decide how much weight to give to different programmatic or formal desires, given the sometimes vague or, on the contrary, sometimes extremely specific wording of the brief. For example, in a note added to the competition brief, the City seemed to strongly suggest a passage under the RER tracks as the best solution to the problem of the riverbank, yet only two teams, Provost-Viguier and Capart-Normand, took this hint. Similarly, the teams were asked to address ways to coordinate the north boundary of the park with a yet-to-be-designed apartment complex. However, most of the designers simply copied the purely hypothetical volumes indicated on the *plan masse* they were given (Milliex). More broadly, as we have seen, the designers each offered their own interpretation of the proper balance between *dépaysement* and integration into the city context and between the gardened aspect of the site as an artifice and the garden as a predominantly natural space. The brief implied some openness to new or unusual functions, though it did not seem to question the social role of parks in the urban context as had the Villette competition documents. Certainly, the park was not expected to become an actor for social integration or cultural politics.
The Outcome

In the end, the jury chose “majoritairement, et à égalité, de retenir deux lauréats,” the team of Gilles Clément, landscape architect, with Patrick Berger, architect; and Allain Provost, landscape architect, with Jean-Paul Viguier, architect (“Deux lauréats” 30). Provost had already encountered a similar situation in the 1972 Parc de la Courneuve design competition, in which he and the landscape architect Gilbert Samel were asked to combine their projects (Racine 45). According to the director of the city parks service, “Les deux projets ont été choisis pour leurs qualités intrinsèques respectives, leurs parts de composition générale présentant des similitudes ou des propositions complémentaires” (Surand 7). Indeed the two projects are surprisingly similar at first glance (Figure 2.36, Figure 2.37). Each is oriented around a large, rectangular lawn facing the Seine, with a canal along one of its long sides. The jury specified which attributes of each project it preferred to keep. In Gilles Clément’s and Patrick Berger’s project, these were “la qualité du traitement général, la position du canal et les abords de la partie centrale du parc ainsi que l’aménagement des jardins ou terrasses.” In the project by Allain Provost and Jean-Paul Viguier, the jury highlighted “[l]a rigueur générale du projet, le traitement de l’ouverture du parc vers la Seine, la qualité de ses perspectives” (Nebout 109). On the contrary, “[l]e jury a ressenti dans l’un et l’autre projet la nécessité que soit réétudié et traité le front urbain de l’espace principal du parc,” that is, the interface with the architecture at the park’s east end (“Deux lauréats” 30).

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70 This possibility was mentioned in the Règlement du concours (article VI): possible outcomes included choosing one laureate; choosing no laureates so the concours would only be for “[l]’acquisition d’idées”; awarding “une ou plusieurs missions partielles de maîtrise d’œuvre”; choosing several teams; or creating “une équipe de maîtrise d’œuvre d’une ou plusieurs équipes” (“Consultation”). Provost later remarked that “le jury dans l’incapacité de choisir […] s’en est donc remis au Maire” (Racine 132). The former mayor of the Fifteenth Arrondissement, René Galy-Dejean, also hints in his memoirs at Chirac’s personal intervention in the jury’s decision (73).
These two projects, which appeared similar, were in fact based on profound theoretical differences. As we shall see, the “quality of the general treatment” of Berger and Clément’s project had an elaborate theoretical basis, one which in part contrasted with the approach that led to Viguier and Provost’s “rigor.” However, despite the arduous task of combining the projects, Viguier noted that the teams did have some complementarities, stating, “Gilles Clément […] est, lui, un paysagiste du contenu, c’est-à-dire, lui s’intéresse peu à la structure du parc, il s’intéresse à ce qu’il y a dans le parc, il est plus botaniste que paysagiste,” in contrast to Provost’s long experience in park design and realization (Viguier).

The Laureates: Gilles Clément and Patrick Berger
At the time of the Citroën park design competition, both Clément and Berger were relatively young and little-known. The competition was not only Clément’s first, but also the first time they had worked together, although Berger had approached Clément before the competition about possible collaborations (Clément, Interview). Clément stated about the park’s brief that “le programme au départ était pratiquement zéro, alors que nous avions le genre d’idée générale directrice qui manque aux projets privés” (Jones 84). In the same recent interview, Clément recalled that this overall, guiding idea referred to “le vocabulaire du jardin” and was “commandé par l’esprit du jardin.” The textual element of their project is striking for its manifesto-like tone, serving not only as a guide to the park design but also as a general catechism of Clément and Berger’s shared ideas about gardens. The central image or intellectual theme of the garden would be movement,
whether physical motion, metamorphoses, or transmutations, while a major design theme would be openness and the interpenetration of the garden and the city.

Patrick Berger had been gaining recognition for his modest but meticulous projects, in particular the rehabilitation of an apartment building on the Rue Quincampoix near the Centre Georges Pompidou (1983). He was also responsible for two other buildings in Belleville (1984, 1987) and HLM housing in Meaux. All of these projects shared extraordinarily sober façades and subtle integration into the architectural and urban context without relying on pastiche or returning to any particular historic style. Since his success in the Parc André-Citroën competition, Berger won a competition to rehabilitate the Viaduc Daumesnil, part of the Promenade plantée, which will be discussed in Chapter Four. He also designed the headquarters of the UEFA, the European soccer federation, in Lausanne, and authored a theoretical text with Jean-Pierre Nouhaud, *Formes cachées, la ville* (2004).

After graduating from the “Section paysage” of the Ecole d’Horticulture de Versailles in 1969 with degrees in landscape architecture and agronomy, Gilles Clément began his career by creating and restoring private gardens. On his own property, La Vallée, in the Creuse, he began experimenting with gardening techniques in 1977, developing the ideas that would lead to his concept of the *jardin en mouvement*. These experiences, as well as his travels to Bali and New Zealand beginning in 1983, laid the foundations for his future philosophical orientations and garden designs, though at the time of the Parc André-Citroën competition, he had only published one article on his gardening approach and its ecological (or, as he put it at the time, “biological”) implications (Clément, “La Friche Apprivoisée”). Following the design of the Parc

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André-Citroën, which brought him publicity and notoriety, he continued to develop a theoretical approach to landscape and ecology displayed in a 1999 exhibit, *Le Jardin planétaire*, in the Great Hall of the Parc de la Villette and in his work *Manifeste du tiers paysage* (2004). He was awarded the Grand Prix du Paysage in 1999 by the Ministère de l'Aménagement du Territoire et de l'Environnement. Having published novels and far-ranging essays that take up gardens and gardening, ecology, art, the history of science, and more, as well as created other parks including the Jardin Henri Matisse in the new Euralille development in Lille, Clément has become a well-known public figure beyond gardening circles.

**Berger and Clément’s Project**

Berger and Clément seized upon the Citroën site as “la page blanche” upon which they could inscribe their ideas for a new type of garden, since traces of neither history (architecture or garden) nor nature remained upon it after the demolition of the factories. As Clément stated, “c’était le lieu possible d’un manfeste, d’un apport: un terrain pour l’imaginaire” (“Créations” 40). The guiding principle of the André-Citroën project was that “le jardin est lui-même sa propre représentation.” For that reason, the two designers proclaimed their aversion to “la tradition figurative désuète qui faisait évoquer tel lieu, tel mythe, ou tel exotisme lointain,” or any evocation of an exotic “elsewhere” or Other (*Aménagement*). Thus, any *mise en scène* in the garden would be of the plants themselves.

Moreover, their park design aimed to change the relationship between humans and the garden. Visitors would become “actors” and “passengers,” and gardeners would
become “creators.” For both garden visitors and gardeners, this transformation would be accomplished through awareness of natural processes, knowledge of plants and their interrelationships, and involvement in these networks of relationships. This dynamic vision, expressed in terms of the transformations and behaviors of plants and animals in the garden, but also in the visitor’s or gardener’s apprehension of the garden through his or her own movement, would become a total immersive experience.

The garden design would enlarge the idea of “movement” to include various types of transformations, and their representations, which would take on different forms. In Berger and Clement’s project proposal, physical movement would be represented by the invitation to dance on the Piste du Bal and the trembling tree leaves of the Jardin des vents. Literal metamorphoses would be found, such as those of insects in a “Jardin des papillons.” Water would change states, including “un nuage qui se forme au-dessus du Jardin blanc.”

Lastly, the project aimed to “[r]éintroduire l’idée de la nature dans la constitution même de la ville […] dans la fondation même d’un quartier.” This interplay of the urban, architectural environment with nature, poetically evoked in the text as “le vis-à-vis de l’arbre et de la pierre qui définit un jardin,” would literally be carried out on the edges of the garden, which were conceived of as porous “thresholds” rather than barriers. This “urbanité du jardin” would come from “la facticité de pénétration”—the garden would be completely open, “travers[é] en tous sens, en tous lieux et tous temps.” There would literally be no monumental entrances or gates. Rather, entrances would be marked more for evocative value. Each one would be different, for example, “un arbre sur l’eau et un
fragment de jardin” on the Seine, or a bronze door for the mineral garden (Aménagement).

This project contrasts the “statique” of traditional parks with a design that would “s’insérer dans le mouvement” by “les connaissances que l’on a des liens, des tensions, des relations existant entre les différents éléments vivants du jardin.” The proposal text explains the jardin en mouvement as a theoretical concept rather than a series of practices. For this reason, it may have seemed obscure for jury members not already versed in botany. In fact, Milliex remarked that he felt the jury did not appreciate the subtlety and complexity of Berger and Clément’s thought (Interview).

Berger and Clément’s general design concept was very close to the park’s design as it was actually realized, with a notable exception: the Jardin en mouvement, located in the northwest corner of the site in line with the Jardins sériels, was originally much larger, occupying the central lawn space. “Salons,” smaller semi-enclosed gardens, would be placed around it, including a “Jardin de lumière,” a “Jardin de l’ombre,” a “Jardin des transparences,” and a “Jardin minéral.” All in all, it is sometimes difficult to correlate the drawings to the text in order to decipher where these sites would be located within the park area, how they would relate to each other, or even how they would accommodate the various programmatic elements at which the brief hinted. The strength of the project, however, is in its evocative description of what these various gardens would do, and what they would be like to experience.
The Laureates: Allain Provost and Jean-Paul Viguier

The team of Allain Provost and Jean-Paul Viguier already had a great deal of experience in public commissions. Viguier noted, as well, his interest in the architect-landscape architect collaboration required by the City. Having worked with Provost before, Viguier held him in high regard, stating, “Je trouve que dans ce qu’on appelle l’urbain, le parti de composition, il a toujours été un des meilleurs paysagistes français” (Interview). Viguier and Provost presented their project as “reasonable and objectively feasible,” and the tone of their text was authoritative. The project was framed as following the modern tradition. It would not only cover the park area itself, but also improve the legibility of the neighborhood through axes and a hierarchy of spaces, even correcting the faults of the urban design around it.  

Provost had carried out a number of major projects in the Paris suburbs, in villes nouvelles and housing ensembles including the Parc départemental de la Courneuve (1972–2000). In Paris, he was the author of the Jardin des plantes aquatiques in the Parc Floral of the Bois de Vincennes as well as of a design (never carried out) for the garden of the Elysée palace (under Valéry Giscard d’Estaing) (Racine 29, 216). He also designed numerous gardens in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.  

Provost was the head of the maîtrise d’œuvre department of the newly formed Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Paysage de Versailles and later taught at the Ecole Supérieure de l’Architecture des Jardins (Racine 11). Lastly, he was awarded the biennial Grand Prix du Paysage by the Ministère de l’Equipement in 1994 (Baridon 7).

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72 In this, Viguier and Provost seem to follow the precept of Laugier, who proclaimed in his Essai sur l’architecture, “Que le dessin de nos parcs serve de plan à nos villes” (223).
73 For details on all of the parks mentioned, see Michel Racine, Allain Provost Paysagiste: Paysages inventés 1964–2004.
Provost’s diverse, even disparate theoretical influences included Roberto Burle-Marx and landscape architects such as Edouard André, a contemporary of Alphand, but also Ian MacHarg, the influential author of *Design With Nature* and Dan Kiley, an American modernist landscape architect (Racine 10). Though he came of age in an era of strong hygienist discourses, for Provost parks were not primarily “une nécessité physiologique” but instead “une exigence culturelle créatrice de son propre langage spatial” (Donadieu, “En Marge” 22). Provost’s modernist roots are expressed in a tendency toward garden design as domination of nature by human intellect. As Pierre Donadieu stated, “Deux tentations seront toujours présentes dans ses œuvres de création: l’écriture géométrique, qu’elle se traduise par la droite ou la courbe, et l’allégeance à une idée de nature soigneusement pervertie et ordonnée” (Donadieu, “En Marge” 23) Rather than conceptualizing gardens as works that evolve over time, “[l]’art de certains jardins privés d’Alain [sic] Provost est celui du paysagiste soucieux d’échapper à la folie ravageuse du temps, muselant la fébrilité végétale dans des formes assignées et taillées. Le décor est défi au temps” (Donadieu, “En Marge” 23). Provost has a tendency to repeat that “seule la tradition est contemporaine,” or to call for “la modernité dans la tradition revue et corrigée, dans les racines culturelles des uns et des autres” (Mandon and Provost 209–10). However, Provost’s few published interviews and essays suggest a reluctance to discuss the theoretical foundations of his work.

After having trained as an architect at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and as an urbanist at Harvard, Jean-Paul Viguier had designed large housing complexes in the Paris suburbs. Since having created the Parc André-Citroën, Viguier is best-known for his French pavilion at the 1992 Universal Exposition of Seville and for the new Pont du Gard
museum and visitor’s center (1991). He has also designed corporation headquarters in the
Paris region, including those of Alstom (the makers of the TGV), Bristol-Myers Squibb,
AstraZeneca, and the France Télévisions headquarters along the Seine just steps from the
Parc Citroën. Lastly, he designed the Coeur Défense skyscraper at La Défense and a hotel
tower in Chicago. From his time in the United States, Viguier acquired the conviction that
an architect designs space but does not create *art* and in fact must avoid that “permanent
temptation of transgression” (Jodidio 14).

Viguier was attracted to the park design competition primarily due to his interest
in urban planning and design. As he saw it, the city “reached its limits” through the
Citroën-Cévennes development downstream to the west and the Paris Rive Gauche-Bercy
projects upstream and to the east. In his opinion, these two sectors were poorly designed.
The Parc André-Citroën would, in his view, “régénérer le quartier, […] redonner une
espèce de force que la ZAC n’allait pas lui donner” (Interview). Viguier concurred with
the competition brief’s call to model the park on other open spaces along the Seine,
though with a nuance. Face-to-face open spaces situated on opposite banks of the Seine,
for example the Place de la Concorde facing the Assemblée Nationale, or the Chaillot hill
and palace facing the Champ de Mars and Eiffel Tower, form a series of visual “agrafes”
along the river. Viguier felt that this type of transversal space would be desirable for the
Citroën sector, but in the absence of a corresponding open space on the Right Bank, the
park would need to play up its proximity to the river as much as possible. The gentle
slope of the main lawn created an optical illusion: standing at the top of the slope and
looking down, the flat plane of the Seine seems to tilt slightly upward as it occupies a larger portion of the field of view.74

**Provost and Viguier’s Project**

The Provost-Viguier project’s basic rhetorical device is equilibrium between opposing poles. It would be artistic and poetic, as evidenced by the following epigraph to their competition text, which, though unattributed, is in fact a quotation from the *Rapport d’objectifs* of the Parc de la Villette design competition:

> Si le Jardin dans la nature n’est déjà plus la Ville, le Jardin dans la ville n’est pas la Ville. Entre Nature et Ville, le Jardin est un entremonde qui parle de Dieu et des hommes […] Il est important de garder à l’esprit cette dimension symbolique. 75

This notion of “entremonde” suggests distance from an understanding of the park as purely functional or fundamentally urban. It suggests a symbolic or spiritual aspect, something that would capture the imagination. But the park would also be realistic, as evidenced by the statement that “nous avons toujours eu à l’idée, la crédibilité des proportions, leur réalisme, leur faisabilité sur le plan technique et financier.”


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74 Le Nôtre’s design for the Petit Parc de Versailles creates the same effect. The slope leading down to the Grand Canal creates a tilting effect because the eye tends to perceive the slope as flat and the flat Grand Canal as tilting up.

75 Provost had submitted a project in this competition (Racine 224). Several questions are raised by this unattributed quotation: First, did Provost and Viguier intentionally include a quotation from the Villette brief in their project? I find it hard to believe that they did, but hard to believe that this could be unintentional. Second, did anyone on the jury notice? How widely was the “Rapport d’objectifs” distributed, and who would have read (and remembered) it? (*Parc de la Villette* 3).
free of this form, since this shape was “identique aux autres espaces majeurs parisiens: un rectangle.” Yet, the park would also be “un parc urbain d’un genre nouveau,” actualizing “une idée d’espace contemporain claire et distincte” (a phrase that is suffused with Cartesianism) (Aménagement). For Provost, as we have discussed above, the synthesis of the contemporary and the traditional was certainly possible, as evidenced by his remark that “la modernité est dans la réinvention de la tradition […] la manière la plus contemporaine, la plus simple, la plus absolue, en dehors du temps est de s’appuyer sur notre culture” (Racine 20). Judging from the park design, this “tradition” or this “culture” is French rather than necessarily Parisian or necessarily continuous in the twentieth century.76

The park would be natural, the goal being to “créer un Parc avec un maximum d’éléments de la nature, équipés de suffisamment d’installations pour l’agrément courant des riverains” (Aménagement). This natural orientation would be based on “les fondamentaux du jardin”: “la terre, l’eau, le végétal, trop souvent oubliés dans les créations récentes trop souvent compliqués à loisir.”77 Yet the park would not be dominated by wild or seemingly natural areas since, according to Provost, the history of gardens is not an effort to “copier la nature, mais à se servir des éléments qu’elle leur fournit pour exprimer leur conception la plus haute du bonheur en fonction de leur culture” (Aménagement). Thus, in garden design, “il faut que l’art supplée à l’insuffisance de la nature” (Racine 19–20).

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76 Viguier stated, “le parc à l’anglaise, c’est probablement celui duquel on se sent le plus éloigné à Citroën, de toute cette période, probablement, le parc romantique, les grandes courbes, les grands jardins, les petits kiosques, etc. c’est un parc qu’on n’a pas, dans le design, dans l’esprit de ce parc, c’est celui probablement dont on a voulu le plus s’éloigner” (interview). This comment reinforces the disinterest Viguier and Provost felt regarding the “style municipal” or a park tradition that would be strictly Parisian, as opposed to French.

77 This may be a reference to the Parc de la Villette brief.
Provost and Viguier proposed a design that would not contribute “une complexité supplémentaire” to the surrounding environment. Generally, Provost is a proponent of simple, ordered compositions, referring to the present-day city as “un ‘foutoir’ urbain” and stating, “Je revendique des compositions géométriques, fortes, simples qui s’opposent au contexte le plus souvent anarchique. Je défends les grands tracés, les grands axes” (Mandon and Provost 210). The design for the park, “au lieu de subir le contexte, le digère” (Aménagement). This “digestion” would take place through the use of scale, maintaining most of the central rectangle as a unified lawn and working on perspectives and visual angles; and through the creation of tension through the northwest-southeast diagonal and the arch over the RER tracks.

Viguier and Provost approached the functionality and activities of the park with the following preamble:

Nous n’avons pas voulu suivre la tendance des superpositions théoriques, des créations fictives, par tous et pour tous, des réponses à trop de vagues demandes, à trop d’aspirations et d’appropriations. Nous avons évité le catalogue d’idées comme nous avons évité l’équipement unique autour duquel tournerait le Parc, comme nous avons évité le projet “en mouvement” à usages multiples, superposés (un projet en devenir et qui le serait à jamais).

Rather, they state, “Nous avons répondu aux fonctions ordinaires et sages d’un parc,” and propose a list of possible activities, without indications of where these activities would take place. These activities include “promenades et contemplation” as well as “activités de groupe” and “activités spécifiques” including “pelouses accessibles.” The text mentions the activities listed in the design brief, with the addition of pétanque and
without mentioning goals and backboards for sports. Their proposal divides the category “services à usage public” into “activités commerciales” including a “marché aux fleurs,” “restaurant” and “buvette croissanterie” (not requested in the brief) and “services” such as “informations/accueil” and “entretien.” This division does demonstrate a certain consideration of what would be essential for a park (services) versus what would be supplemental and more aleatory (activités commerciales). Nevertheless, this design never questions the general conception of an urban park either in its design or in its imagined functionality.

The Synthesis

When the two teams were combined, Allain Provost became the *mandataire commun*, the person officially in charge of carrying out the project. This choice reflected both Provost’s extensive previous experience in carrying out large-scale park construction, and the focus on the park as a garden space rather than an architecture space (Viguier, Interview). The combined team was obliged to find a project that would respect Clément and Berger’s design for garden as a coherent theoretical whole with an overall hermeneutic and symbolic meaning, as opposed to Provost and Viguier’s primary concern, the park’s insertion into the urban landscape, both proximate and large-scale. One might even argue that the realism and pragmatism of the latter would provide a reasonable curb to the imagination and flights of fancy of the former; as even Clément self-deprecatingly admitted, “je délirais beaucoup, je me suis beaucoup amusé sur ce parc” (Interview).
The biggest change from Clément and Berger’s original project was that the Jardin en mouvement was moved from the central space to the northeast corner of park. The Jardins sériels adjacent to the Jardin en mouvement, whose series of color and element correspondences were elaborated at this phase of the project, provide a formal counterpoint to the “informal” Jardin en movement and also served to demonstrate Clément’s ability to manipulate traditional garden design elements, lest his skill be placed into question by the Jardin en mouvement (Clément, Interview). Hedges appear separating the Jardins sériels from the main lawn.

The Jardin blanc and Jardin noir changed dramatically from Provost and Viguier’s original conception and became more differentiated in their expected public and activities. The Jardin blanc became more obviously an open, fluid space and the Jardin noir became more introverted, more obviously dedicated to a cloister-like calm.

The final design retained the small greenhouses from Clément and Berger’s original design, which also fitted neatly into Provost and Viguier’s conception of the north boundary of the park. Where Clément and Berger’s design seems to show one greenhouse facing the main lawn broadside and Viguier and Provost’s original project placed an esplanade with trees in quincunx, the two monumental greenhouses with the fountain or “péristyle d’eau” between them are clearly a product of the combined team. The synthesis project also placed the wide canal on the south side of the lawn as in Clément and Berger’s project, displacing the Nymphéas from the outer to the inner side of the canal.

The Jardin des métamorphoses replaced the lawn and hedge areas between the Ponant building and the Seine. Lastly, the area between the Jardin noir and the main park
(which remains unfinished) was more clearly designed (it will house a restaurant and other concessions). Provost and Viguier’s design of the central lawn, surrounded by the *lisière d’eau*, and transected by the diagonal from Balard to the riverbank, was kept, as was their extension of the lawn under the RER tracks to the riverbank.

In order to guide the design synthesis, Provost formulated the concept of “contrepoints successifs.” With the question, “quelle idée de nature aujourd’hui pour un jardin?” as its point of departure, the combined team was able to establish four principles, “[la] nature, [le] mouvement, l’architecture, l’artifice” around which to orient the park design. Progressing from the river (more natural, more movement) to the city (more artificial, more stable), the “mouvement” of plants and plant life would contrast with “architecture” or the minerality of the greenhouses standing on their stone piazza. But the park could also be read from the city to the river, as the designers’ intent was to have a reversible, dynamic interpretation rather than a linear, unidirectional one (Provost, “Parc André-Citroën” 2).

Once this thematic and conceptual synthesis was achieved, the two teams divided the park approximately in half so that each pair would be responsible for actually carrying out the construction of certain elements. Clément and Berger took on primary responsibility for the Jardin blanc, the greenhouses, the Jardins sériels, and the Jardin en mouvement. Provost and Viguier took charge of the Jardin noir, the Parterre vert, and the Jardin des métamorphoses, including the canal and Nymphaea (Pousse 37). The designers divided the honoraria proportionally based on each person’s responsibilities for carrying out the park, rather than on the relative intellectual origins of the compromise design (Racine 132). On September 26, 1992, the City inaugurated the park to great fanfare,
except for the passage under the RER tracks to the riverbank, which was not inaugurated until 1999 (Delcroix).

**Evaluations upon the Park’s Opening**

The Parc André-Citroën immediately received attention. According to Frédéric Edelmann, writing for *Le Monde*, the park was notable compared to older parks and the Parc de la Villette design for its vegetal variety and interest. Critics noted that aspects of the park resembled a traditional *jardin à la française*, in contrast to the more “English” Alphandian designs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Joffroy 32). The critic Jean-François Pousse developed a contrast between “jardins récréatifs de loisirs et d’agrément,” with “activités aussi bien ludiques que culturelles” and “un parc de concepts, aux antipodes du jardin pittoresque” (35). While I would argue that this is a misuse, or at least a very superficial use, of the term *pittoresque*, it is interesting that a contrast was defined in this way.

The most important and enduring outcome of the park’s inauguration was immediate and massive attention given to the Jardin en mouvement. In fact, this attention resulted in conflicts among the members of the design team, particularly when articles in architecture journals and newspapers about the Jardin en mouvement seemed to attribute the whole park to Clément or, simply, to ignore the existence of the rest of the park (Clément, Interview). The Jardin en mouvement is now seen as a precursor of environmental trends in public gardening and the management of vacant urban space.
Symbolism

To a greater degree than the other parks which will be discussed in this dissertation, the Parc André-Citroën was presented to the public with an elaborate unpacking of its hermeneutic structure. A press packet distributed for the inauguration included sections titled “Principes d’interprétation” and “Les Végétaux: Nature et Disposition,” demonstrating the City’s evident pride in a park whose theoretical, formal, and vegetal complexity required a guide to be fully understood. Bronze plaques scattered throughout the park, indicating the name of each garden and giving a planting diagram, bring visitors’ attention to the symbolic nomenclature and logic of the plant choices (Figure 2.38). However, these plaques seem destined primarily for people who are already well-informed about horticulture. Since the park was opened to the public, guided tours given by the City of Paris and the Centre National des Monuments Historiques also explain the thematic structure of the park to visitors. Finally, Clément’s work *Le Jardin en mouvement*, which has gone through four revised editions, also includes a discussion of the park. While some find the symbolism of the park too complex and hermetic (Milliex), others call it “insistent” (Dagenais 317).\(^7\) Certain elements of the garden’s symbolism seem especially difficult to detect (if they continue to exist today in their original form). For example, the four square sunken beds inserted into the green lawn are meant to provide a clue to the symbolism of the *jardins sériels* by day, while by night a grid of luminous points placed in the central lawn would display the atomic number of one of the seven elements of the *jardins sériels* (Beaufils and Sabatier 110). Perhaps these points are (or were, for a time) visible from the RER, or from the nearby buildings.

\(^7\) During a tour led by a guide from the Centre des monuments nationaux, the other tour participants agreed that they would not have understood the subtlety of the *jardins sériels* had the guide not explained it (“Guided Visit”).
The questions I would like to address in the aesthetic and intellectual analysis that I aim to provide of this park are less concerned with what this park symbolizes than why and how the park symbolizes, and what this manipulation of symbolic meaning tells us about contemporary parks.

Les Jardins sériels: Under the Sign of Alchemy?

The most intentionally intense symbolic section of the park is Les Jardins sériels, located on the north side of the park between the Jardin en mouvement and the Jardin blanc. Each of these gardens is associated with a color of the spectrum, but also with an element, a celestial body, a day of the week, a sense, and an element of the water cycle (Figure 2.39).

The association of elements, planets, colors, and senses suggests an overall theme of alchemy. However, closer examination reveals that this suggestion is not a literal translation of alchemical thought. Although one of the goals of alchemy was to find a “philosopher’s stone” that would allow the transmutation of “base metals” into gold, the alchemical hierarchy of metals does not follow the order of the gardens (Hutin 74). And despite the fact that certain metals and certain steps of the transmutation process were associated with colors the associations between metals and colors in the garden do not follow the alchemy tradition (Hutin 81, 89). These associations in the Jardin en mouvement, while more poetic than historic or authentic, do not eliminate the power of the symbolic associations in these gardens.

The alchemical symbolism of this garden may be explored on several levels. First, Clément selected the plants in these gardens according to their ability to symbolize and
represent the chosen themes and symbolism, primarily through color but also through texture or perhaps through other characteristics.\textsuperscript{79} This symbolic function contrasts with the plants of the Jardin en mouvement, which were (seemingly, as we shall see) not selected for their symbolism but rather for their behavior and their ecological niche.

Second, this sector of the park demonstrates how systems of knowledge or thought may be represented through garden art. In this sense, the Jardins sériels are similar to the central section of the Parc de Bercy, in which each garden is associated with a cardinal direction, a season, a color, and an element. Other parts of the park accomplish the same demonstrative function, including the Allée des termes, demonstrating Raunkiaer’s classification system (See Footnote 58), or even the Jardin noir, in which plants are grouped according to their botanical families. This presentation of a knowledge system contrasts with a consideration of parks as purely leisure spaces, in which the knowledge necessary to produce their effects is carefully hidden. For example, one may appreciate fountains without understanding them as demonstrations of the principles of hydraulics and fluid physics.

Lastly, some alchemical concepts could also frame an understanding of the Jardin en mouvement or the park overall. These concepts arose from the alchemical tradition that informed the hermetic philosophy of the Renaissance. The notion of a microcosm that represents a macrocosm suggests an understanding of the Jardin en mouvement as a representation of worldwide ecological processes (Parmentier 31). The denial of a difference between matter and spirit, between animate and inanimate, suggests the ways

\textsuperscript{79} There are intimations from Viguier and Clément that the plants selected may contain symbolism that would only be evident to someone with extraordinary expertise, perhaps in the symbolism of their Latin names, their juxtapositions or even in the number of each species planted in a garden (Viguier, Interview; Clément, Interview). The guide for the city of Paris tour stated that, for example, the twelve trees in the \textit{jardin argenté} referred to the twelve lunar cycles per year.
in which all types of matter and material may be combined to produce garden spaces (Parmentier 32). The emphasis in hermetic philosophy on complementary principles, including sexual dualism, suggests the use of conceptual opposites to structure the park (Hutin 63). The role of the sun as a force of transmutation in alchemy and as a theological center in Hermetic philosophy has a counterpoint in our present-day understanding of the sun as the energy source that drives the water cycle (Hutin 62, Parmentier 36–37).

Moreover, all atoms of iron and elements heavier than iron such as those symbolized in the serial gardens are synthesized from lighter elements in certain types of stars. Thus, our Sun is both the motor of the terrestrial water cycle and the potential site of the natural process that alchemists hoped to imitate. In light of these concepts, it would seem that the alchemical allusions of the Jardins sériels are not merely distant echoes from the cultural past that, no longer being considered scientifically accurate, are now put to service as decoration, but rather suggestions for an approach to understanding the park as a whole.

**Voids**

Despite an abundance—almost a glut—of symbolism, the park also contains a number of voids, spaces that are surprisingly empty, serving as frames or theaters for action, or are inaccessible. The central lawn and the piazza in front of the greenhouses, the area between the Jardin noir and the main park, and the center of the Jardin rouge, are all such spaces. Other such spaces include the ha-has, the sunken square planters in the central lawn, the nymphéas, the monumental hedges to the north of the central lawn, or for that
matter various water spaces, such as the “Grand Canal” or the “péristyle végétal,”
magnolias pruned into columns, in pots in a shallow pool of water.\footnote{80}

According to the architecture critic Christope Bayle, the central lawn, which in
the finalized park was based on Provost and Viguier’s design, was the most important
aspect of the Provost-Viguier project (98). This area also seemed to strike Chirac’s
imagination once the two projects were selected as finalists (Viguier). According to
Provost, the central flat lawn with the “lisière d’eau” was “ce qui reste de l’idée d’un
grand miroir d’eau que j’ai eu avant l’esquisse et dont je n’ai pas voulu prendre le risque
au moment du concours” (Racine 130). Of all of the proposed designs, this was the one
that left the largest unbroken, open space.

Provost also stated that the park project was inspired by the gardens of Marly-le-
Roi, “ce dont personne ne s’est jamais rendu compte” (Racine 20). The château and
gardens of Marly were created beginning in 1679 as Louis XIV’s retreat from life at
Versailles. At Marly, a square royal Pavilion of the Sun on the long axis of a reflecting
basin was flanked by two facing rows of small courtiers’ pavilions. Behind these
pavilions, which were “set amid trellised bowers,” a “network of bosquets” gave way to
the surrounding forested hills (Zega and Dams 163–65). In fact, the finalized park
resembles Marly even more than Viguier and Provost’s original project, since six of the
seven Nymphaea face the six raised greenhouses emerging from the greenery of the
jardins sériels.

Recently there have been more and more inadvertent contributions to this accumulation of voids and
inaccessible spaces due to temporary barriers and closures. While one of the large greenhouses, housing
plants from Australia, is often open to the public, the other is only open for special exhibitions and is often
closed to the public for private events such as fashion shows (Guided Visit of the Parc André-Citroën,
Mairie de Paris). The small greenhouses are more likely to be closed (they have only been open once in all
my visits to the park). Often, some or all of the lawns are off limits due to maintenance or in the winter
season, and occasionally parts of the Jardin en mouvement are blocked off, perhaps to allow the plants to
recover from trampling.
The central lawn, which could have been a central reflecting pool, suggests the primacy of a purely visual relationship between visitors and the garden. By first imagining the central space as an inaccessible reflecting pool and then limiting access to the rectangular lawn to the two points at which the diagonal crosses the Lisière d’eau, the design restricts physical occupation of space. For Viguier, who stated, “je pense que ce parc ne pouvait exister, n’avait de sens que s’il était construit autour d’un vide,” the concept of a central void is one of the keys of his architectural production (Interview). Viguier aims through his buildings to develop the sense that architecture is composed of absence as well as presence; that buildings hide as well as reveal; and that architecture is composed of the volumes sculpted out of a building’s space as well as the volumes that make up its structure. The open lawn at the center of the park, framed by landscape and architectural elements, translates this architectural concept into landscape form.

Smoothness

Smoothness, “le lisse,” is another important concept for the park. According to Viguier,

[l]e lisse, c’est l’idée qu’une architecture contient de l’énergie, ce rapport entre l’énergie et la matière qui m’intéresse beaucoup, et donc il faut, quand vous faites un bâtiment et quand vous le regardez, que vous ayez l’impression qu’il contient une énergie à l’intérieur, et plus la façade, plus la peau extérieure est lisse, plus elle fait une impression d’énergie contenue, de tension. (Interview)

The extreme smoothness of the various materials used in the park, from the structural glass of the greenhouses and granite surfaces of the piazza and the nymphaeas, to the smoothness of the water in the lisière d’eau and the canal, or even the smooth, closely
cropped grass of the central lawn, contribute to a general impression of high polish on all of the plane surfaces.

Just as, for Viguié, smooth volumes and planes can give an impression of contained energy and tension, certain lines in the park likewise reinforce a sense of tension. First, the diagonal path called “La Traversière” creates a link between the two Métro stations and between the Pont Mirabeau and the southern edge of Paris. Within the park, it develops tension with the main axis orthogonal to the Seine. As Michel Racine put it, “l’oblique crée toujours l’exceptionnel” (Racine 6). Second, the overhead RER crossing along the riverbank is marked by the Arc, a “faux viaduc.” This structure was not technically necessary to support the RER, but was retained to create “un appel visuel, une résistance, une tension entre les deux côtés du rectangle” (Aménagement). These two taut lines, one framing the Seine and the other stretched between the two farthest corners of the park, also create visual tension and force, like a strung bow.

These two elements of Viguier and Provost’s project, the scale of the central space and the jeu of several key axes, lend force to the park design. For the architect Carlos Eduardo Garcia-Garcia, who wrote a DEA thesis on the park, the “tracé” was the [completed] park’s “formal and symbolic link” with French garden history, specifically, the formal gardens of the seventeenth century, despite the fact that the major axis of the park “ne reprend pas la notion d’un rapport au pouvoir” (23). The surroundings of the park did not destine it to become the background, frame, or setting of a prestigious, monumental building, contributing to a particular institution’s self-assertion. In this way, it differs from the Esplanade des Invalides’ relation to the Hôtel des Invalides, the Jardin du Trocadéro in relation to the Palais de Chaillot, the Tuileries Gardens and the Louvre,
or the Luxembourg Gardens and the Senate. All the same, the formality of the design’s central lawn undoubtedly evokes a certain domination by the city administration of nature and of urban leisure space. And this space is occupied by park visitors only to the extent that the restrictions of the design, and the restrictions of the city, allow.

The Contrapuntal Design of the Park

Like its thematic structure, the Parc André-Citroën’s overall formal design plays on oppositions and tensions. The sections of the park designed by Berger and Clément tend to strictly separate the gardened from the architectural. One finds architectural forms throughout the section of the park that they designed: the raised planters of the Porte des termes, the raised greenhouses and fountains, or the central walled area of the Jardin blanc. But even when they support, contain, envelop or delimit gardens and other natural elements, these architectural elements are never to be confused with them. There is a clear distinction between the orthogonal, hard, smooth, monochromatic, defined architectural elements and the rambling, profuse, curvy, tufted, multicolored, multi-textured vegetal elements.

However, in the parts of the park overseen by Provost and Viguier, vegetal elements take on a more architectural nature through various gardening techniques, principally pruning. The boxwood hedge in the Jardin des métamorphoses, the hornbeams, and the magnolia columns are all examples of this; of course, the smoothly maintained lawn is as well.\(^81\) Simply the fact of naming the fountain the *péristyle d’eau*

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\(^81\) The choice of magnolias is particularly striking to me since, having grown up in the South surrounded by magnolias, I wouldn’t dream of pruning a *magnolia grandiflora* and missing out on its naturally lush pyramidal shape, its dinner-plate-sized, fragrant blossoms, or its elegant clusters of bright red seeds.
and the magnolias, the péristyle végétal, suggests the transmutation of things normally considered to be living and changing into static architectural elements.

The Jardin en mouvement seems to contrast with the rest of the park in which it is situated. The analytic, semiotic, cultural bent to the dense, coordinated symbolism of the Jardins sériels contrasts with the Jardin en mouvement, an apparently non-analytic, non-structural, non-formal, shifting, changing space. Moreover, the Jardin en mouvement requires scientific, botanical knowledge to understand its intention while historical, cultural knowledge is necessary to understand the other parts of the park. Another contrast might be drawn between the work required to maintain the Jardins sériels and that required by the Jardin en mouvement, which is more open-ended. This is due to the ongoing care needed to maintain the plants and the endless ramifications introduced by the relations of plants to each other. Moreover, while the Jardins sériels are generally static, the Jardin en mouvement includes the potential for novelty and progressive change, since “migratory” plants, if they appeared there, would be allowed to stay. This work contrasts with the work required to maintain the “architectural” elements of the other parts of the garden, work that is performed to keep the plants static, rather than work done to highlight their changes.  

82 The jardin en mouvement was not the first garden type designed to bring gardens more in harmony with “natural” or “wild” practices. The term “wild garden” was first used and subsequently developed by William Robinson, the “father” of the English cottage garden, in his 1870 text, The Wild Garden, or the Naturalization and Natural Grouping of Hardy Exotic Plants with a Chapter on the Garden of British Wild Flowers. See Aggéri and Donadieu, “Le Retour du sauvage dans les parcs publics: Un nouveau jardinage,” on different types of “wild” or “natural” gardens.
A Closer Examination of the *Jardin en Mouvement*

I will now focus more precisely on the *jardin en mouvement* as both an innovation in Parisian park design and a period in Gilles Clément’s theoretical trajectory, one that has many implications about the very definition of gardens.

The *jardin en mouvement* demonstrates the force of natural processes such as plant succession and seasonal change, growing out of Clément’s infectious fascination with these processes. In a typical cultivation, whether it is a decorative garden or a productive field, plants are often maintained statically over time. And in a mature forest, completely uncultivated, a fixed group of species dominates the ecosystem, in stable proportions. In contrast to these two examples, on land abandoned by humans or disturbed by natural phenomena such as fire, different species of plants succeed each other in a predictable pattern, in which the first species prepare the habitat for their successors. In the *jardin en mouvement*, Clément has selected plants belonging to families that participate in this succession at the stage of the “friche armée”, or the stage at which large, thorny bushes have partially taken over the site. This stage is highly biodiverse, since the shrubs and bushes provide habitat for many other plants and animals.

Rather than enforcing a static configuration of plants or allowing these plants to pass through the different stages of succession, the garden is maintained in a dynamic equilibrium. Clément’s transition from the *jardin en mouvement* to the *jardin planétaire* was marked by an increasing awareness of the fragility of these processes when confronted with humankind’s exploitation of Earth’s resources. Developing the notion of the garden as a “planetary index,” Clément moved from the concept of the *jardin en*
mouvement as one entity and toward the garden as both a part of larger ecological systems and as a representative of these systems. As Clément states, “[U]n jardin, tous les jardins, sont des index planétaires; ils assemblent au dedans de l’enclos des êtres qui, par leur seule existence, désignent le dehors” (“Où est le jardinier?” 185). The jardin planétaire is also a politicization of the garden in the sense that, as an analogy between microcosm and macrocosm, it is meant to sensitize visitors to the care of the earth as a “garden” that must also be cultivated rather than dominated. This trajectory of Clément’s ideas has several important consequences. First, Clément’s later discourse has tended to move toward non-aesthetic criteria for garden cultivation. Second, gardens have long symbolized various aspects of human experience but for Clément, gardens are indexical, that is, they are an immediate trace or symptom of what they represent. For Clément, the way that nature is cultivated in gardens is a direct and immediate indicator of how nature is cultivated outside of gardens.

However, these are aspects of Clément’s theory that, while certainly en germe in the elaboration of the Parc André-Citroën, do not entirely bear fruit until later.

**Integrating the Jardin en Mouvement into Traditional Park and Garden Discourse**

When Clément presented his ideas to the jury and, the competition won, to the city administration, he faced strong skepticism that his project could succeed since the Jardin en mouvement was not immediately recognized and accepted as a garden. Clément faced

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83 While Clément does not seem to employ the concept of index precisely according to the semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce’s definition, the idea remains that the garden and the global ecosystem have a direct and immediate relation as connoted by the verb désigner (Peirce 107–111).

84 Philippe Rahm states, “Le jardin en mouvement n’a pu naître qu’une fois retiré au jardin tout devoir de représentation symbolique, sémantique ou morale” (8). But though the index is a specific kind of sign, it’s still a sign.
these critiques by, first, establishing his general competence as a garden designer. According to Clément, the Jardin en mouvement would not have been accepted had the Jardins sériels not been placed alongside it to demonstrate his mastery of traditional garden styles and techniques (Interview). Next, he discussed the experience he had acquired at his property in La Vallée. These methods contrasted with the use of tradition by Viguier and Provost, not only to persuade the jury of the viability of their own project, but in discussions of the project as a whole. In an interview, Viguier stated that during the design synthesis process, the team reflected on the park and garden tradition in France and the relation of different aspects of their design to this tradition: “on a beaucoup analysé cette espèce de séquence d’époques, pour nous c’était très important […] sachant qu’on voulait que le parc soit fondateur dans l’histoire des parcs, comment positionner le Parc Citroën par rapport à tout ça. C’est […]un parc qui prend un peu de tout ça” (Interview).

When the City presented the park to the public, it likewise used a discourse of actions to explain the Jardin en mouvement. To counter possible arguments that this part of the park seemed like a “friche” or a neglected parcel, documents listed the types of plants selected for this section of the park (countering the assumption that these plants were simply “weeds”); described the techniques that the gardeners used to maintain the garden, techniques that differed from the rest of the park but that had their own logic; and explained that gardeners would continue to work to select and guide the plants (“Principes d’interprétation” 3). While the Jardin en mouvement may not seem like a

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85 The original name of the garden was “la friche apprivoisée,” the connotations of which “terrified” the city officials (Clément and Paquot 11).
garden at first glance, and the plants cultivated in it are not typical of traditional gardens, it is presented as a garden due to the relationship between garden and its gardeners.

**Philosophical Background for the *Jardin en Mouvement*: Robert Pogue Harrison**

The relationship between gardener and garden is defined by what the philosopher and literary scholar Robert Pogue Harrison, in his work *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition* calls care. For Harrison, garden cultivation is a metaphor for one of the fundamental characteristics of the human condition, repeated actions over time which link humans to each other and to the natural world (6). For Harrison, care is satisfying on an individual level. Moreover, care seems to offer a path for dealing with the difficulties of a modern world that does not always respond to the universal needs of the human intellect and spirit. These actions, however, have only limited scope, as “powerlessness and even helplessness are as intrinsic to the lived experience of care as the latter’s irressible impulse to act, enable, nurse, and promote” (27). For Harrison, the “gardener’s acceptance of the intrinsic limitation of his powers of action, his anxious but open passivity before the forces of nature, and his allegiance to the efforts by which life struggles to maintain its regime of vitality on Earth” all help him (or her) better accept the possibilities, and limits, of human existence (37). Understanding care in gardening, as well as in life, means accepting these limits and entering into a non-dominant relationship with nature.

Clément seems to share Harrison’s conceptualization of garden care as a metaphor both of human action and of its limits as “le jardinier façonne sans relâche un ensemble mouvant” (Clément, “Créations” 38). Clément’s texts represent gardening as a physical
and intellectual immersion in natural processes. Gardening as a deeply satisfying synthesis of activity and thought is manifest in the character of Thomas in Clément’s novel *Thomas et le voyageur*, who is preoccupied with the natural and human life of his hamlet of “Saint-Sauveur-du-givre-en-Mai.” Photos of Clément himself tending his garden in La Vallée in several of his books and articles cast the gardener as someone whose whole being, body and spirit, is occupied and fulfilled by gardening task. Lastly, the narrative Clément offers of the development of the *jardin en mouvement* (as well as of his gardening theory overall) is informed by scholarship, but originates in his everyday practice and his own experiences as he shaped a garden to fulfill his own psychological needs, linking his ideas with Harrison’s notion of care.

One consequence of Harrison’s approach to gardens, which is also present in the *jardin en mouvement*, is that the garden is not always or necessarily an expression of human domination of natural processes. We have discussed, above, the ways in which a public park may express power and domination through the shaping of space and natural processes. According to Clément, in France, both agriculture and traditional gardening are differing expressions of domination of nature. Fallow or unproductive, unaesthetic land is perceived as “une grave défaite” (Clément, *Le Jardin en mouvement* 1990, 6). The *jardin en mouvement* deliberately bypasses this idea of public parks as traditional expressions of power, either as an exemplar of humankind’s capacity to dominate nature that results in beautiful, useful, spaces or as a specific expression of the city administration’s mastery of its territory. In the *jardin en mouvement*, the gardener is no longer an actor in this domination, but rather someone who participates in an integration with nature (Clément, “De L’Animisme” 228). Instead, the *jardin en mouvement* makes
room for a dynamic, evolutionary or biological order (Clément, *Le Jardin en mouvement* 1990, 19). For Clément, this biological order is both more legitimate and more real, and also in urgent need of recognition in the current environmental climate. This contrasts with the areas of the parks that do borrow from traditional expressions of power, particularly those of Louis XIV’s châteaux, the most power-encoded garden designs that exist in France.

**The Jardin en Mouvement as a Redefinition of the Gardener’s Role**

This concept of “integration” or a non-dominant relationship with nature relies on the fact that behaviors and actions, of both humans and plants, define the *jardin en mouvement*. Plants are selected for the *jardin en mouvement* due to their behavioral qualities in addition to their appearance. The gardeners’ understanding of each plant’s sprouting, blooming, seeding, and other behavioral cycles determines their work in the garden. Some of the gardener’s actions are unexpected in the garden setting (scything and sowing), while the gardener refuses to perform other actions that one might expect, such as weeding or mowing.

These varied actions, performed after careful study and observation, are a radical change from the direction of gardening practices in public green spaces in the twentieth century. The emphasis on functional, more uniform, and simpler spaces in modern public parks and squares, the increasing use of mechanical equipment such as mowers and leaf blowers, and increasing division of labor among gardeners all tended to diminish the level of knowledge and specialization required of gardeners. Clément decried the typical gardener’s “carence de connaissances” in plant maintenance strategies and remarked that
most public park maintenance was reduced to “techniques gestionnaires qui ne demandent absolument aucune connaissance des plantes.” In a typical park, the gardener has a “simple model” to follow. “Il reconduit ce modèle constamment. Pratiquement ça ne doit pas changer, ou très peu. Il nettoie, il taille, il refait toujours les mêmes gestes” (Interview).

Other French landscape architects writing about park upkeep and the role of gardeners remark upon the decline in sophistication of gardening techniques in the twentieth century. For example, Rumelhart and Chauvel decry the increased pressure on gardeners in public parks to maintain larger spaces while the scope and variety of their activities are reduced. These pressures tend to “réduire toutes les plantes aux fleurs,” that is, plants are only considered for their visual, decorative qualities and not as living organisms. Moreover, these forces also “ramène[nt] l’entretien au nettoyage,” that is, rather than cultivating plants, gardeners focus on removing debris and keeping plants within their allotted spaces and forms (27). The gardener’s role is reduced to that of “tapissier d’extérieur,” a decorator who “change le décor chaque saison.” This lack of consciousness of the interaction with living plants is “une abdication grave du savoir jardinier” and “une perte de sens” (27–28). According to Clément, in the jardin en mouvement, by contrast, the gardener “n’est plus un technicien de surface,” “il est celui qui reconnaît les espèces donc il est un savant, il est celui qui a un jugement esthétique donc il est un plasticien. Il devient le concepteur” (Clément, Interview).

As this last remark suggests, in a public park, there is a clear division of tasks in which the gardener is entirely excluded from any creative role. “Les jardiniers sont très malheureux aujourd’hui parce qu’ils ramassent les crottes de chien; ils balaient les
feuilles mortes; ils n’ont pas l’initiative de création. Le seul moment où ils ont une
initiative de création est pour faire des fleurissements obligatoires dans des jardinières sur
des rond-points.” The limited creative scope offered by choosing a color scheme for the
annual flowerbeds is, in Clément’s eyes, pernicious rather than being a welcome relief
from the gardeners’ monotone existence because these meager opportunities “aboutissent
à des désastres esthétiques et qui n’ont aucun sens par rapport à la question de la nature
aujourd’hui” (Interview).

This change in the role of the gardener espoused by Clément and called for by his
_jardin en mouvement_ must be situated within the larger context of a transformation in
gardeners’ roles in Parisian public parks at the time. According to Jean-Paul Viguier,
before the early 1980s, being a gardener in a public park was considered unqualified
work, fit only for the handicapped or those incapable of doing anything else (Interview).
However, some of the changes instituted by Guy Surand, head of the Parks and Gardens
department of Paris during this time, were to support more sophisticated garden design
and techniques, and to provide continuing education programs, not only for Parisian
gardeners but also for other municipal gardeners around France.\(^86\) In fact, one of the
City’s aims for the Parc André Citroën was to showcase sophisticated gardening
techniques.\(^87\)

While the entire park includes a variety of plants that require varying types and
levels of care, allowing gardeners to play a more active role in maintaining the look of

\(^{86}\) See the discussion of Guy Surand in Chapter 1. Viguier added that in the base of the greenhouses, there
were classrooms for continuing education for Parisian gardeners as well as others from around the world
(Viguier). I have not been able to confirm this using other sources.

\(^{87}\) According to Jacques Vergely, the Parc André-Citroën was the first of a number of parks and gardens in
which thematic gardens were used as a compromise between showcasing a broad variety of plants and
rendering the upkeep of the garden excessively burdensome (Vergely).
the park, the specificity of the *jardin en mouvement* is not only that, as Clément puts it, the concept is “puisé dans la pratique même du jardin, ce qui fait allusion à son entretien,” but also that the upkeep of the *jardin en mouvement* is in itself a creative process. Rather than enforcing a strict division between the garden designer, who first draws up the contours of the garden and selects the plants to occupy each space, and the gardener, who merely follows the designer’s wishes, the “design” of the *jardin en mouvement* is ongoing. “Dans le cas du jardin en mouvement, c’est à l’entretien que se fait la conception, autrement dit en aval de la mise en oeuvre et non en amont, contrairement à toutes les pratiques” (Clément, “Créations” 43). Thus, gardeners become creators of the garden: “[ils] deviennent les concepteurs de ce lieu en permanence, en le remodelant constamment suivant ce qui arrive sur le terrain” (Clément, “Entretien” 135).

The *jardin en mouvement* fits with Clément’s more general statement of his concern with gardeners:

> Chaque fois que je réalise un jardin, je m’inquiète de savoir quel sera le niveau de conscience de celui qui ratisse ou de celui qui intime l’ordre de ratisser […] un jardin n’existe pas tant qu’il n’est que planté, il prend sa vie après qu’il ait trouvé son maître, un jardinier, un enfant, un vieillard, peut-être, mais peu importe, un ensemble de gestes qui forment le langage par lequel le jardin, avant toute chose, est une demeure ésotérique. (Clément, “Le Geste et le jardin” 8) 88

This perspective on the gardener’s role and, particularly, the gardener’s urge to change parts of a park design as a manifestation of a profound creative urge, gives insight into a conflict observed in another park that will be discussed in a subsequent chapter, the

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88 Clément also published an entire book, *La Sagesse du jardinier* (2004), about just this question. Moreover, he himself prefers the term *jardinier* to *paysagiste* for his own activity (Clément and Roux, “Ma spécificité est d’être relié au vivant”).
Promenade plantée. Philippe Mathieux and Jacques Vergely, the architect and landscape architect who designed the Promenade, each remarked on their dislike of “flowers,” that is, showy annuals in beds, which they did not include in the park’s design. However, the gardeners occasionally planted flowers, or made other changes to the landscaping, despite their objections. Mathieux and Vergely felt that the gardeners’ actions betrayed their lack of theoretical understanding of the park design (Mathieux, Interview; Vergely, Interview). According to Clément’s interpretation of the gardeners’ situation, their latent discontent with merely maintaining the site reflects their desire to leave their own personal mark on the site or to create something new. This fundamental human need (if we agree with Harrison) would inevitably predominate over an intellectual understanding of the landscape project.

However, the question does arise: Was this intention carried out? Do the gardeners in fact use the site as a place to create the garden and modify it over time? According to Clément, discussing the Parc André-Citroën in 1994, the gardeners “prennent le site à leur compte,” and “inventent des projets capables de s’intégrer à la dynamique propre du jardin en mouvement” (Le Jardin en mouvement (1994) 66). Others who have studied the park seem to have picked up on this aspect of the jardin en mouvement, for example, Bertrand Folléa, who stated that the dichotomy between the “creator” of the garden and “celui qui l’entretient” disappears: “le paysagiste est légitimé dans son intervention sur la durée,” and “Le jardinier est forcément paysagiste et le paysagiste jardinier” (Folléa 53).
The Role of the Garden Visitor

While Clément retains his agency as a designer in the park, and while gardeners acquire agency and a creative role within the designed environment of the garden, what is the role of the garden visitor in a public park? Clément observed that visitors to the Parc André-Citroën, though not active partners in the garden’s cultivation, have a different sort of experience from what might be expected in a typical park. “I believe in an immersion of man into the garden,” states Clément, that is, being physically surrounded by the natural elements of the garden and in contact with these elements through all five senses, but also emotionally and intellectually engaged (“Changing the Myth” 35). This type of immersion implies the possibility of a creative epiphany. According to Clément, contact with the Jardin en mouvement incites creative outpourings on the part of visitors: “ils s’installent, ils jouent des pièces de théâtre, ils font de la musique.” It is a place of both creative freedom, and a more general, pervasive sense of lack of constraint. The garden is “saisi d’emblée comme un espace de liberté, il est occupé comme tel” (Clément, Le Jardin en mouvement (1994) 66). People tell Clément it recalls their childhood, a notion that suggests freedom and perhaps a closer connection to the unconscious, to imagination, or to play (Clément, Le Jardin en mouvement (1994) 67). However, the visitor’s role in the garden is, inevitably, less rich than it could be. In a public park in Paris today, it seems nearly unthinkable that park visitors could work side by side with professional gardeners on the upkeep of the Jardin en mouvement, though this seems to be the logical outcome of Clément’s philosophy.89

89 The Mains vertes program, begun under Mayor Bertrand Delanoë, allows neighborhood associations to plant community gardens within Parisian parks. While this program is still very limited, it suggests a glimmer of movement in the direction of more visitor participation in public park design and gardening.
This sensation of creativity and released inhibitions, and the association Clément draws between the garden and childhood, suggest the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard’s concept of the *inhuman*. Lyotard asks, at the beginning of his text *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, whether humans are “becoming inhuman”; and whether “the proper of humankind is to be inhabited by the inhuman” (2). Lyotard here distinguishes between two modes of the inhuman. The first is the inhumanity of the postmodern world, with its increasing “complexification” and self-perpetuating “development” without regard for what truly serves the human condition (7). The second is associated with children’s’ indeterminate temperament, with the unconscious, and with creative potential (3–4). Between these two poles of the inhuman, the human is defined as an enlightened, autonomous, rational subject. Lyotard takes care to avoid an overly dichotomous scheme in which one pole of the inhuman is always, automatically beneficial while the other is always detrimental, or in which given phenomena are always identified with one or the other pole. He states, for example, that “all education is inhuman because it does not happen without constraint and terror” (5). There is a symbiotic relationship between the childhood or unconscious inhuman and the human, and the task of contemporary humankind is to recognize the germ or grain of the inhuman necessary for the human. This much-needed inhuman must be shielded from the other, postmodern, techno-scientific, ever-more-complex inhuman.

If we adopt Lyotard’s understanding of the inhuman, the park, and especially the Jardin en mouvement, seems to be a haven for the childhood, creative inhuman, a response to the pressures of the metropolis, the physical manifestation of the ever-increasing demands for speed and complexity of postmodern inhumanity. Perhaps this is
an approach to understanding the feelings of “liberty,” of childhood, or of creativity that Clément reports above. Though the garden itself is not a manifestation of the inhuman, because it is as much a product of careful study and the application of scientific knowledge as a creative, intuitive work, it opens a space where the inhuman is invited to exist. The *jardin en mouvement* maintains an equilibrium between the two notions of everyday care bound up in a profoundly human practice of constant cultivation, and of creative (inhuman) expression.

**The Jardin en Mouvement and “Third Nature”**

This approach of defining a garden in relation to the inhuman is not alien to other approaches to understanding both gardens and park spaces. I would next like to examine various historical definitions of gardens, as well as myths of how and why gardens originated, in order to examine further the role of this garden within the Parc André-Citroën.

John Dixon Hunt, the garden historian, examines the role of gardens, as translated by our notions of their origin, through the concept of the “three natures.” From an original wilderness, humans first developed useful cultivation (agriculture), and then, cultivation for non-utilitarian, artistic goals (gardens). 90 For Hunt, the interest of the three natures is that they allow for “an understanding of gardens that is topographical and conceptual,” that is, this schema promotes the western, contemporary vision of nature as culturally constructed, and of place-making as highly contextual and “essentially related

90 We find historical evidence for this understanding of “three natures” in Renaissance Italian texts on “la terza natura,” themselves inspired by texts from Latin Antiquity. These texts describe a synthesis between “art” and “nature” in the garden. See Beck, “Gardens as a ‘Third Nature’: The Ancient Roots of a Renaissance Idea” for an analysis of the relation between texts from the Renaissance Antiquity.
to its immediate topography” (34). Theorizing the three natures exposes the weakness of the formal-versus-informal typology of gardens that is often the degré zéro of formal garden analysis (51). The three natures are, however, symbolic, rather than literal, and Hunt does not imply a hierarchy among them.

The first nature, which as Max Oelschlager theorizes, emerged as a concept upon the development of agrarian society, is wilderness, where Nature dominates and which was often considered to be the territory of the gods (Hunt 51). The goals of second nature, both agriculture and urban development, were “survival and habitation,” labor and productivity. Such second-nature activities as clearing land, building walls, and terracing were the “beginnings of an activity similar to the place-making that we call gardens” (Hunt 58–59). Third nature is “those human interventions that go beyond what is required by the necessities or practice of agriculture or urban settlement.” It is recognized by its intentionality, the ways that its formal elements take precedence above functional needs, its conjunction of metaphysical experiences and physical form, and lastly its artistic endeavor (62). Gardens were also differentiated from the first two natures because they represented these other natures within their space.

All three natures—garden, utilitarian cultivated land, and wilderness—may be found represented in gardens in different ways at various points in history. During the Renaissance and Early Modern periods, land surrounding a manor or château was oriented by an axis, originating in the manor, which passed through a representation of

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91 In French, this dichotomy is referred to as “jardin à la française” versus “jardin à l’anglaise.” An article by Nebout in Urbanisme categorized the ten competing designs as “parcs ‘parisiens classiques’ se rattachant explicitement à la tradition ‘française’”; “parcs ‘parisiens réinterprétés,’” which include a “composition classique avec un axe fortement marqué”; and designs with “une composition à plus forte dominante paysagère,” a categorization essentially based on this opposition between “française” and “anglaise” (“Le Parc Citroën-Cévennes,” 109). Publicity materials for the Parc André-Citroën included a postcard reading, “Ni à la française, ni à l’anglaise … tout simplement différent” (Le Parc André-Citroën n. pag.)
each type of nature in turn, while in the eighteenth century, although picturesque designs disrupted this axial order, the “varied treatment” of landscaping around the manor included representations of each type of nature. Overall, states Hunt, “gardens represent within their own area that scale of natures” (51). Thus, a garden is a mise en abyme of the entire natural world.

Gardens arose after agriculture, Hunt argues, because basic needs, such as food and shelter, take precedence over more advanced needs such as social structuring, art and aesthetic expression and because “more leisure and more technical skill” are required to create, maintain, and use gardens. Gardeners must have some surplus of effort and knowledge that they can focus on their garden. Finally, because gardens are fundamentally private in Hunt’s view, they are predicated on a society of sufficient complexity that people have a desire to withdraw into such private spaces (63). For Hunt, gardens represent both a hierarchy of human needs and a topographical inscription of a temporal process.  

Harrison, by contrast, proposes that gardens arose before utilitarian modifications to the landscape, first citing “the intuition of poets,” for example the American contemporary poet W. S. Merwin. Harrison also posits that the process of domestication and mass cultivation of plants would have taken too long to be originally undertaken for immediate benefits. Gardens must have first been cultivated for other reasons, “more to do with enchantment than with procurement,” for ritual, for pleasure, or possibly for “opiates, spices, hallucinogens, or healing agents” (40). Further, Harrison argues that the innate “craving in human beings to transfigure reality” is as fundamental as physical

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92 This understanding of human needs is based on the psychologist Abraham Maslow’s theory of the hierarchy of needs, first formulated in his 1943 paper “A Theory of Human Motivation.”
needs, pointing as evidence of this craving such precarious gardens as those created by
the homeless in New York City. “Self-expression is a basic human urge,” according to
Harrison, and gardens are primarily creative objects, expressions of this “irrepressible
urge to create, express, fashion, and beautify […]” (42). For Harrison, “gardens mark our
separation from nature even as they draw us closer to it” since they are made from natural
elements, yet satisfy “human needs that are not reducible to animal needs,” thus
becoming an “affirmation of humanity” (41). Therefore, gardens do not represent a
surplus or excess of energy, intellect, creative inspiration, or material possessions, but are,
instead, representations of primary, essential human activities.

While both Harrison and Hunt share some common ideas about different ways the
modification of nature relates to the human psyche, they draw different conclusions from
these premises. Indeed, some aspects of Hunt’s argument raise questions about two of its
underlying premises in ways that seem to offer some credence to Harrison’s ideas. First,
Hunt assigns some gardens and landscape interventions to the category of “second
nature” because they mark off “space as crucially different” from wilderness, for example
poles placed by Aboriginals in the middle of temporary settlements; Breton standing
stones; trees planted at the center of Greek and Ottoman villages; or geoglyphs in South
America (59–60). Hunt’s categorization of these “cultural and ideological colonizations
of first nature”—some of which are “sacred space or sacred markings”—as “second
nature” either contradicts his assertion that second nature fulfills “utilitarian” purposes, or
implies that the needs, particularly religious ones, that motivate various types of human

93 See Diana Balmori’s Transitory Gardens, Uprooted Lives on homeless people’s gardens and Kenneth
Helphand’s Defiant Gardens: Making Gardens in Wartime, on gardens in such hostile settings as wartime
trenches, internment camps, and refugee camps.
interventions in the landscape are far more complex and non-hierarchical than originally implied in his argument (61–62).

Second, a portion of Hunt’s discussion of Third Nature addresses the “interpenetration” or “porousness of two natures” (64), noting that the separation of the “beautiful” and “useful,” both conceptually and concretely in gardens themselves, is a recent phenomenon (64–65). Citing Kenneth Helphand’s research on gardens in such forbidding conditions as World War I trenches, internment camps, and the west Bank, further examples of gardens that might seem to be taking precedence over “second nature,” Hunt argues that these gardened spaces refer, conceptually, to the orderly structure of three natures in previous or imagined future peace times or places (65). While it is true that these gardens may have conceptual referents, the argument that a need for creative expression that is as strong as (and may even sometimes take precedence over) physical needs, a need that spurred these gardens’ creation, still seems to stand.

**Third Nature and Tiers Paysage**

This discussion of the three natures is pertinent to the jardin en mouvement in that Clément suggests another re-working of the three natures for the contemporary era in works such as Manifeste du tiers paysage. While focusing his his attention on the tiers paysage, Clément also implies that in the urban and periurban environment, gardens—“lieux d’artifice absolu” (Roux and Clément, “Le Jardin renvoie à une représentation du monde”)—and agriculture form the “first” and “second” landscapes respectively. The tiers paysage is constituted of “tout ce que l’homme a décidé de laisser intact—ce qui lui cause bien du souci—mais aussi tout ce qu’il n’a pas encore attaquée (la calotte glaciaire,
le tréfonds des mers, etc.)” but also “les zones d’ombre, les recoins, les secteurs oubliés, loin de toute surveillance parce que ne répondant—pour l’instant—à aucun enjeu économique réel” (Clément, “Le Jardin comme index planétaire” 392–93). Thus both untouched landscapes—whether they are inaccessible (as in the ice caps or the sea floor mentioned above) or whether they are “réserves” that have explicitly been set aside—and “les délaissés,” that is, seemingly useless or inefficient areas generated on the margins of rural and urban development, form the tiers paysage (Clément, Manifeste 15). This rearrangement of the categories for a contemporary world recognizes the dominance of the urban environment, home of the majority of the world’s population since 2007.

Second, it encodes the pressure on agricultural land, or second nature, which must now be carved out of and protected from the encroaching urban environment. Last, actively conserved wilderness is paired with abandoned, neglected, and residual land, a category that does not elicit Hunt’s or Harrison’s consideration. The post-industrial landscape of brownfields, landfills, and strip mines are so disturbed, even destroyed, that they are no longer commonly recognized as natural sites. These délaissés, by being paired with wilderness, are elevated from non-landscapes to the most important landscapes via the notion of the jardin planétaire, within the contemporary context of ecological urgency. Moreover, by recognizing délaissés, Clément recognizes the processes of succession and adaptation that allow sites to recover from the ravages of industrial exploitation. Over time, Clément’s thought has shifted to place a priority on the ecological crisis over aesthetic concerns. Clément tends to assign to aesthetic endeavor the tasks of rendering délaissés identifiable and of preserving them, and argues that aesthetic endeavor should

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94 The notion of tiers paysage is a direct allusion to the Abbé Sièyes’ 1789 pamphlet Qu’est-ce que le Tiers Etat? (Clément, La Sagesse du jardinier 81).
be at the service of this ecological thrust. Aesthetic interests can help make people aware of the importance of conservation, render these délaissés attractive, and provide a link between this devalued type of landscape and the needs fulfilled by traditional gardens.

Clément’s redefinition of the three natures is worth considering since, instead of being carved out of wilderness, as they once were, today, human-constructed environments, both urban and agricultural, have become the predominant feature of the earth’s geography and environment. Untouched wilderness has almost entirely disappeared. The unbounded expanse to which garden practice lends meaning is therefore no longer wilderness but this manmade environment.\(^95\) Harrison’s assertion that gardens “give human dimension to an otherwise unbounded nature” or to “an otherwise unbounded urban expanse” supports this interpretation of the role of gardens (and of parks) (43). Clément seems to follow this same line of reasoning, suggesting that this “human dimension” is not just physical, but conceptual, allowing an individual to visualize the planet as a whole and to imagine the consequences of his (and others’) actions upon it. The garden allows [us] to “envisager l’utopie réaliste d’une gestion des paysages de la planète entière avec un souci de jardiner dans son enclos devenu immense” (Clément and Eveno, 12). The power of Clément’s concept of the tiers paysage lies in these two facets of the notion: its re-interpretation of place-making within the contemporary, human-dominated environment and its power as a metaphor connecting individuals’ experience to a global scale.

To return to our discussion of the inhuman, the original wilderness, or “first nature,” out of which agriculture and gardens were carved might be considered inhuman

\(^{95}\) A similar observation is made by the urban historian Françoise Choay, who identifies the contemporary, generalized urban development (as opposed to historic cities) as l’urbain (Choay 33).
in Lyotard’s second sense of the word: a reserve of the unconscious, the irrational, and of creative potential (since it was the “territory of the gods”) (Hunt 51). But today, the general urban milieu, a product (at least in part) of the postmodern acceleration of communication and of technological innovation, has for the most part replaced wild nature. This general urban milieu could be said to be a product of Lyotard’s first sense of the inhuman. As the “background” milieu against which culture—in the narrow sense of cultivation and the broader sense of the products of human civilization—has changed, so has the type of inhuman against which cultivation responds. How, therefore, should one consider the rest of the Parc André-Citroën in relation to the human and the inhuman?

Perhaps the strictly ordered nature of the Jardin blanc, the Jardin noir, and the Jardin des métamorphoses is a manifestation of what education, reason, and the rational bring to the inhuman to render it human. And perhaps the coldness of the central lawn of the park is a reminder of the coldness of the human when every trace of Lyotard’s second inhuman has been banished.

**The Jardin en Mouvement: Reconciling the Ecological and the Aesthetic**

In the larger context of Clément’s thought, the *jardin en mouvement* transmits an ecological message. It pairs the conditions for the fulfillment not only of humankind’s most basic need, that is, the conservation of humans themselves as well as of the planet’s ecosystems and biodiversity, with possibilities for fulfilling less tangible but no less important human needs, such as creative expression. Given the subsequent development of Clément’s thought toward a more and more ecological focus, it would be tempting to argue that the *jardin en mouvement*, while offering creative possibilities to the gardeners
and even an invitation for creative expression to its visitors, in fact restricts these creative options within an ecological framework. Environmental engineer Danielle Dagenais analyzed the relation between the aesthetic and ecological implications of the *jardin en mouvement*. A detailed study of the plants selected by Clément for the *jardin en mouvement* led Dagenais to conclude that, in the Parc André-Citroën, criteria such as “attractiveness of foliage, flowers or texture in the landscape” predominated over ecological criteria, such as “native” flora, those endemic to Paris’s *déléissés*, or plants generally considered to be “wild” in the selection of plant species to be sown (325, 328, 332). For Dagenais, “garden art concerns predominate over ecological ones were they prospective” in the Parc André-Citroën’s *jardin en mouvement* (328).

Other landscape theorists have noted the overall movement in French society toward an aesthetic perception of the landscape. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, both urban and rural residents perceive their surrounding landscape as primarily visual, spectacular, and leisure-oriented. As the majority of the French population no longer lives on farms or feels a direct connection to the land, it no longer perceives landscape as utilitarian and productive. According to the geographer and landscape theorist Pierre Donadieu, “[l]es sociétés urbaines occidentales [. . . ] repèrent, dans les paysages ruraux, les structures observées dans les jardins: les terrasses de vignes, les canaux, les prairies ou les haies, et élaborent, à partir d’elles, les images prometteuses des jardins désirés” (“L’Agriculture” 114). For Donadieu, today’s westerners see second nature as if it were third nature. Since rural areas are today perceived primarily in terms of their aesthetics, conservation campaigns must highlight these aesthetic aspects. Today, “second nature” must be made legible in terms of “third nature.” This finding lends
support to the approach of the *jardin en mouvement*: to be persuasive, ecological concerns must be transmitted aesthetically.

Though it seems clear that the *jardin en mouvement* is a space of creativity and aesthetic response, one which responds to notions of “garden art” throughout history, should it be considered as art? The philosopher and specialist in aesthetics Anne Cauquelin, who examines various types of contemporary gardens, approaches the *jardin en mouvement* as a work of contemporary art. Cauquelin states:

De l’art contemporain, les jardins de Gilles Clément ont les marques les plus significatives: ils sont *in process*, ils sont métissés, ils sont éphémères puisqu’en mouvement. Les frontières y sont fluctuantes, les espèces sont mêlées (173–74).

Specifically, the *jardin en mouvement* is a work of art “without qualities.” Cauquelin defines this type of work by “la recomposition permanente des qualités qui définissent un caractère de telle sorte que ce caractère même devient indéfinissable” (183). For Cauquelin, *sans qualités* and *informe* are two strains of contemporary aesthetics that revolt against the traditional aim of art, “s’élever du fond à la forme” (181). Cauquelin defines the term *sans qualités* in such a manner that it represents an effort to transcend both this traditional aim, also described as a “quête illusoire de l’essence,” and an opposite effort to “rejoindre le ‘fond’, c’est-à-dire, le chaos premier” (181). The *sans qualités* and the *informe* in contemporary art therefore also represent (for Cauquelin) a

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96 The reference is to Robert Musil’s novel *The Man without Qualities.*
97 Cauquelin seems to base her definition of the *informe* on the concept as developed by Georges Bataille in the short-lived journal *Documents* (1929-1930). As explicated by Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss’s introduction to an exhibition at the Centre Georges Pompidou, the *informe*, for Bataille, was grounded in a crisis of the modernist subject, and consisted of “un certain nombre d’opérations qui prennent le modernisme à contre-courant [...] et qui délitent en l’insultant l’opposition de la forme et du contenu” (Bois and Krauss, 11). Cauquelin adopts this opposition of form and content without taking up the question of modernist aesthetics, instead addressing the opposition as characteristic of “traditional” art and its transcendence as a characteristic of (some) contemporary art, “l’esthétique actuelle” (180-181).
transcendence of the dichotomies of figure and ground, “bruit” and “forme,” “fond” and “surface” (180-181). This transcendence is made possible through an emphasis on process versus the operations of chance, on the effacement of the boundaries of the work of art and also of the definition of the work’s author, as well as on the mixing of genres.

The sans qualités emerges from several characteristics of the jardin en mouvement that have been discussed up to this point. First, a work “without qualities” is characterized by an ongoing creation process that is not “déterminé à l’avance par des règles strictes.” Here, “strict” is the operative word. General parameters for action allow for infinite variation over time. As Cauquelin states, the work is “quotidiennement sujet à variations. Il admet l’aléa, l’hésitation, voire l’à-peu-près” (178). As we have seen, the Jardin en mouvement of the Parc André-Citroën is the product of a specific process, but this product varies and changes over the seasons and years.

Because of its emphasis on process, the informe or sans qualités is not entirely aleatory: “Le résultat est imprévisible, indéterminé … mais il est néanmoins déterminé dans son niveau de complexité” (183). This quality of the “without qualities” certainly applies to the Jardin en mouvement. While it is maintained at a specific successional stage, the friche armée, and therefore includes a carefully calibrated level of biodiversity and series of plants, it appears to constantly be in flux. This difference between conceptual and methodological rigor, on the one hand, and formal unpredictability, on the other, was precisely the issue that Clément confronted when presenting the original park design to, first, the competition jury and, next, the city administration.

Cauquelin states that works without qualities often have no frontiers. While the Jardin en mouvement of the Parc André-Citroën does appear to have well-defined spatial
boundaries, it is temporally open-ended: the process of creation and cultivation, led by the gardeners, will (if the original concept is respected) continue into perpetuity. And, even though the garden itself is limited to one section of the park, its process allows for the introduction of new, external elements—such as seeds from other plants in the park or from elsewhere in Paris, or the intervention of the thousands, if not millions, of visitors to the park over the course of its existence. More broadly, the jardin en mouvement concept may be adapted to almost any ecosystem or spatial situation.  

In a work without qualities, “[I]’homme n’ [ . . . ] a pas le dernier mot [ . . . ]” (178). In the Jardin en mouvement, forces that act upon the garden include humans (both gardeners and the voluntary and involuntary actions of garden visitors), animals, which consume or deposit plant seeds, and other natural forces such as weather, climate, and even disease. Clément refuses to define himself as an artist, stating that, “en matière de jardin, sauf exception, l’auteur n’existe pas seul, sous la forme d’une personne, identifiable et repéré aux yeux de tous comme ‘l’artiste’” (Clément, La Sagesse du jardinier 100).  

Lest it seem that the sans qualités is simply an abdication of authorship or a refusal to fully attain the status of art object, Cauquelin argues that the “sans qualités” requires activity and effort, since it is “une tentative d’échapper à une forme trop bien définie [ . . . ] [a]dmettre d’être sans cesse en chantier, et s’y tenir” (181). The sans qualités “rédui[t] la distance entre rigidité formelle et déshiscence” (182).  

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98 Cauquelin also states that the garden as contemporary art tends to be found in an exhibition or installation context (144–46). Clément developed a highly successful and innovative exhibition on the jardin planétaire (of which the jardin en mouvement is a part) in the great hall of the Parc de la Villette in 1999. The seemingly paradoxical concept of an exhibition garden plays on such notions of boundaries, as it is highly limited in both time and space yet may juxtapose garden features that it would be impossible to bring together in a traditional garden.  

99 See also Clément’s interview with Anne de Charmont, “Changing the Myth” (35).  

100 Déhiscence, according to Le Robert and the Trésor de la langue française informatisé (http://atilf.atilf.fr/tlf.htm), is the correct spelling of this term.
Therefore, the *sans qualités* results from an authorial presence, even if this presence is minimal, fragmented or embodied by multiple people or non-human phenomena (as we have discussed), and even if one author may not be identified.

For Cauquelin, the tension between determination and chance, between form and “déshiscence” produces an ecstatic inverting of these qualities: “prétendre au vide c’est viser une totalité enfin restituée, voire sublime” (196). Certainly, the idea of “un éphémère durable dans son éphémérité même” is a poetic expression for the constant changes underlying even the most apparently static garden, changes that are the core of the *jardin en mouvement* concept (199). The one reservation that ought to be brought to these statements is that if, in the case of the *jardin en mouvement*, a “totalité enfin restituée” would mean the restoration of a true or authentic wild natural habitat, this “totality” is illusory.

The concept of a work of art “without qualities” as applied to the *jardin en mouvement* allows us to recognize it as a contemporary aesthetic work, without obscuring either Clément’s self-imposed limits to his authorship or the fundamentally unstable qualities of the garden itself.

**Conclusion**

To return to the park as a whole, it does not seem possible to argue that the entire park is a work “without qualities” or a contemporary work of art generally speaking. However, as we have seen in the discussion of historical references, the entire park is self-conscious of its role in the history of garden design and adapts various historical garden forms and techniques, from fountains and water courses to topiary, to create aesthetic, primarily
visual effects. In fact, with the exception of the Jardin blanc, the park contains minimal functional amenities such as recreation areas, playgrounds, kiosks, shelters for spectacles, or sports equipment. Nevertheless, the park is very popular, thronged with people as soon as the weather proves inviting. Although this chapter has primarily been devoted to discussing the various visually and theoretically contrasting elements of the park, which arose from the unusual outcome of the design competition process and were perpetuated through the differences in theoretical framework and design approach of its four creators, the park does in fact have an overarching aesthetic bent. The popularity of the park may be a result of a convergence between this aesthetic focus on the part of the designers and a general interest in an aesthetic park experience on the part of its visitors.

This aesthetic focus of the park as a whole, and its interrogation of and engagement with historical park and garden forms, has resulted in, first, a reaffirmation of the park as a Foucauldian, heterotopic site. With respect to the city, although it is conditioned by its urban context, the park also serves as a counterpoint or a response to it, as we have seen in the discussion of the inhumain. At the same time, within the perimeter of the park itself cohabit several divergent visions of the urban park. Next, the jardin en mouvement in particular seems to redraw the frontiers between the political and social question of the preservation of the environment, and the aesthetic issue of creative expression through garden design, two currents that are sometimes antithetical. Lastly, the jardin en mouvement also seems to blur the boundaries of the “garden,” or a private, smaller space dedicated to an individual’s artistic expression and psychic repose, and the park as a public space open to the leisure needs of all. By inviting a collaborative process of aesthetic creation over time into a “garden” space and by raising environmental
questions that concern not only the citizens of Paris or France but the entire world, the garden engages with public needs, expressions, and wishes, responding thus to the main calling of a “public” urban park.
Figure 2.2: A map showing the Parc André-Citroën and its immediate neighborhood.

Figure 2.3: The *ha-ha (saut-de-loup)* at the boundary of the park along the Rue de la Montagne de l’Espérou.
Figure 2.4: Play equipment in the Jardin blanc.
Figure 2.5: The walled Jardin blanc proper.
Figure 2.6: The wall separating the cemetery from the Jardin blanc.
Figure 2.7: The Jardin blanc proper.
Figure 2.8: The esplanade of the Jardin noir.
Figure 2.9: One of the clos of the Jardin noir.
Figure 2.10: Pines and evergreen shrubs in a clos of the Jardin noir.
Figure 2.11: The sunken center of the Jardin noir.
Figure 2.12: The monumental greenhouses designed by Patrick Berger.
Figure 2.13: The Péristyle végétal, pruned magnolias in a reflecting pool.
Figure 2.14: The Péristyle d’eau.
Figure 2.15: The rectangular lawn, showing the diagonal walkway, the Lisière d'eau, and the opposite bank of the Seine in the background.
Figure 2.16: The passage of the lawn underneath the RER tracks to the riverbank.
Figure 2.17: The *nymphaeum* along the southern boundary of the lawn.
Figure 2.18: The *nymphaeum* from the opposite angle, showing the elevated canal running alongside them.
Figure 2.19: The bust of André Citroën near the southern boundary of the park.
Figure 2.20: The steeply terraced beds of the Jardin des métamorphoses.
Figure 2.21: The *chadar* at the western end of the canal.
Figure 2.22: The pathway leading to the Porte des termes.
Figure 2.23: The Jardin en mouvement in early spring.
Figure 2.24: The Jardin en mouvement in summer.
Figure 2.25: The Jardin en mouvement in fall.
Figure 2.26: The small greenhouses near the Jardins sériels, designed by Patrick Berger.
Figure 2.27: The mixed border and trellises of the Jardin bleu.
Figure 2.28: The Jardin vert.
Figure 2.29: The Jardin orange.
Figure 2.30: The Jardin rouge.
Figure 2.31: The Jardin argenté.
Figure 2.32: The Jardin doré.
Figure 2.33: The hot-air balloon on the central lawn.
Figure 2.35: The “Plan Viollet.” Note that north is oriented to the bottom. Bibliothèque historique de la Ville de Paris. B921 a-b. XVe arrondissement, 59e quartier. Plan du Nouveau Grenelle. Cosnier and Renou. 1859.
Figure 2.36: Gilles Clément and Patrick Berger’s competition project. Source: 
Figure 2.37: Allain Provost and Jean-Paul Viguier’s competition project. Source: *Aménagement du Parc André-Citroën*. Paris: APUR, 1985.
Figure 2.38: A bronze plaque indicating the plants in the Jardin argenté.
### Correspondences in the Jardins sériels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Celestial body</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Sense</th>
<th>Water</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Black]</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>Saturn</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Instinct</td>
<td>Sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Copper</td>
<td>Venus</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Smell</td>
<td>Rain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Tin</td>
<td>Jupiter</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Hearing</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>Mercury</td>
<td>Mercury</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Touch</td>
<td>Stream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Iron</td>
<td>Mars</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Taste</td>
<td>Waterfall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>Moon</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Sight</td>
<td>River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>“Sixth Sense”</td>
<td>Vapor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.39: Correspondences in the Jardins sériels. Similar tables appear in Clément, *Le Jardin en mouvement* (1994), 72–73 and in “Principes d’interprétation,” a document included in the press packet by the Mairie de Paris at the garden’s inauguration in 1992 (*Le Parc André-Citroën*).
Chapter Three: Bercy’s “Jardin de la Mémoire”

The city is the *locus* of the collective memory.


The century of expanding cities has passed. Ours is now the time of deepening territories.

Introduction

In the 1987 competition to create a large park in southeast Paris, the winning design team, led by the architect Bernard Huet, dubbed their project “Jardin de la mémoire.” Thierry Grillet, writing an analysis of the park design competition for *Paris projet*, remarked tantalizingly, “Qu’est-ce donc, au fond, que le projet lauréat […] sinon la manifestation allégorique d’un nouvel *ars memoriae*?” (135). Certainly, the park design assembles traces of the past, both from the site itself and gathered from other Parisian landmarks, and incorporates them with new built, vegetal and furnishing elements that also refer to past garden forms. But these evident features in the Parc de Bercy are not enough to respond satisfactorily to Grillet’s question, a query left unanswered in his own article. Does this garden “manifest” an art of memory? Is it allegorical, and if so, how and why? These inquiries are the departure point of my analysis. I will investigate the formal choices, juxtapositions, and cultural references made in Bercy, with a particular focus on the landscape feature of ruins. I will begin with Alois Riegl's conception of the significance of ruins in his essay “The Modern Cult of Monuments” (1928). Using Walter Benjamin's statement in his *Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1928), “[a]llegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things” (178), I will explore the rhetorical trope of allegory. Lastly, these questions will lead to a consideration of memory as a cultural phenomenon and of the relationship between memory in the park and the historian Pierre Nora’s definition of memory in his introductory and concluding essays to

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101 Marylène Ferrand, Jean-Pierre Feugas, and Bernard Leroy and the landscape architects Philippe Raguin and Ian Le Caisne (or Yann Le Caisne) comprised the design team (Note that *Paris projet* consistently uses “Ian Le Caisne,” but materials from the Département des Parcs, jardins et espaces verts consistently use “Yann Le Caisne.”)
Lieux de Mémoire from 1984 to 1992. Ruins, allegory, memory: the physical object, the poetic trope, the psychological and social phenomenon all address the role of park in its temporal context and its spatial setting. 102

The Parc de Bercy and Its Neighborhood

As with most Parisian parks designed during this time period in the capital, the Parc de Bercy was one in a series of municipally planned and coordinated projects in a neighborhood under redevelopment. From the mid-1970s until the completion of the park in 1998, a series of new constructions appeared along the Seine in this Twelfth Arrondissement neighborhood (see Figure 3.1). These projects include the Ministère des finances (Chemetov and Huidobro, 1988) and the Palais Omnisports du parc de Bercy (Parat, Andrault, Greven et Prouvé, 1983) to the northwest (Martin, H. 109–18). Twelve hundred privately owned and public subsidized apartments to the northeast were constructed by seventeen different architects or firms (including such notables as Franck Hammoutène, Yves Lion, Christian de Portzamparc, and Henri Ciriani), though their designs were coordinated by Jean-Pierre Buffi, charged by the City with the overall urban design of the Bercy sector (Martin, H. 110–13). The Cour Saint Emilion, a group of restored and expanded warehouses to the southeast, became a mini-mall with restaurants and boutiques. A giant (7500 square meters) agribusiness building next to the périphérique, Paris’s outer highway, anchors the southeastern end of the neighborhood.

102 Landscape architect Bernard Lassus’s Jardin des retours at Rochefort-sur-mer (1982) and his project to restore the Tuileries gardens (1990) are further examples of park designs that interrogate memory and history.
The automated Métro Line Fourteen began serving the Bercy and Cour Saint Emilion stations in 1998. The new Cinémathèque française opened in fall 2005 in a building originally designed by Frank Gehry, the renovated former American Center. This blend of residential, commercial, leisure, and cultural spaces around a park is typical of Parisian redevelopment operations since the mid-1970s. The project is often cited as a successful example of such coordinated development (Ingallina 107).  

A visitor approaching the Parc de Bercy from the Palais Omnisports and the Bercy Métro station to the northwest first enters a broad, flat lawn, open twenty-four hours a day (Figure 3.2). Under spreading trees, solitary visitors and parents with very young children sit in small white stone kiosks. Groups of older children, adolescents, and adults playing pickup games of soccer seem to have tacit agreements about how to share the space; there is room enough for everyone. This area is connected to the Bibliothèque François Mitterrand on the opposite bank of the Seine by the Passerelle Simone de Beauvoir, designed by the Franco-Austrian architect Dietmar Feichtinger and inaugurated in July 2006 (Edelmann) (Figure 3.3). This pedestrian bridge alights on the elevated, stepped earthwork that runs the length of the park, isolating it from the Seine but also providing sonic insulation from the Rive Droite expressway and allowing panoramic views of the riverbanks (Figure 3.4). A stepped cascade of water down the slope adds an irresistible attraction for young children and its splashing reduces further the noise from

103 In his monthly “Chronique” in Techniques et architecture, Jean-Pierre Le Dantec praises the Front de Parc sector in the following terms: “Jamais depuis des années un quartier parisien n’a été conçu avec autant d’intelligence, de souci d’hospitalité, de cohérence et néanmoins de variété. Et cette réussite est si éclatante, nonobstant ses limites et ses aspects BCBG, que tout amoureux sincère de Paris—et de la ville en général—ne peut que souhaiter le renouvellement de telles expériences qui ne sont pas la règle, malheureusement” (7).
the highway. Akin to the raised southern boundary of the Jardin des Tuileries, this
earthwork is proportionally larger in height than this historical example. At its apex, a
walkway of stabilized earth (sol stabilisé) shaded by linden trees in quincunx serves as a
pedestrian route from the Palais Omnisports to the Bercy-Village shops and restaurants.
Thanks to the walkway, visitors are given a new angle from which to view the historic
panorama of the Seine, becoming physically and visually connected to the city from a site
that, as we shall see, was long considered isolated.

The earthwork also allows a view from above to the tiny skate park wedged on
the boundary between the Palais Omnisports and the west end of the lawn. The skate
park’s metal ramps are often crowded with skateboarders, BMX bikers, and rollerbladers
of varying skill levels, though no signs or directional arrows call attention to it. This
structure, built after the rest of the park, is a miniature enclave of contemporary urban
youth culture in a very traditional park (Figure 3.5).

Although most of the single-storey wine warehouses formerly occupying the site
have been demolished, the granite cobblestone walkways that ran between them have
been left in place, traversing the width of the flat, grassy quadrangle between the
pedestrian bridge, Palais Omnisports, the Cinémathèque, and the iron gates leading to the
rest of the park. These walkways, and the mature maple and plane trees planted during or
prior to the Second Empire to shade the warehouses, are all that is left to suggest these
buildings’ former alignment and dimensions.

104 The skate park is a recent creation, opened for the rentrée in 2006 and covered in Winter 2007–2008. The wide concrete steps around the Palais Omnisports are a popular spot for skateboarders. Skater websites report that the Bercy skate park has some interesting “modules,” but that it is crowded and the metal gets very hot in the summer (“Le Skate Park”).
The iron grilles and gates mentioned above lead to the southeastern two-thirds of the park, allowing entry only during daylight hours. Just past this boundary, discreetly camouflaged by shrubbery, a series of eight gardens surrounding a Maison du jardinage forms a symbolically and semiotically complex square, the center of the park, between the lawns and the Rue Joseph-Kessel (formerly the Rue du Dijon; the street nomenclature will be discussed further below). These parterres display a variety of garden forms and functions through history, from decorative to productive: they include an herb garden, a children’s jardin pédagogique, and a minuscule orchard. These gardens also represent the four classical elements of earth, fire, air, and water, and the four seasons. The Jardin de l’air to the north (winter) includes a metal meteorological device among its white plants (Figure 3.6). The vineyard to the west, the autumnal garden, is a metonymic reminder of the wine warehouses and also evokes fire through a red-brick cone resembling a factory chimney (Figure 3.7). The “earth” labyrinth of dark-leaved evergreens to the south somewhat less convincingly embodies summer (Figure 3.8). The undulating blue parterres of bulbs to the east bloom, as they ought, in spring (Martin, E. 34) (Figure 3.9).

These layered meanings also suggest the ars memorativa techniques of Classical rhetoric and Medieval Scholasticism. Frances Yates’s *Art of Memory* (1966) traces evidence of these techniques developed by rhetoricians for ordering knowledge in an imagined space, typically a building, from Classical times through Medieval Scholasticism. These strategies were perpetuated in the Renaissance through the design of spaces to represent all-encompassing symbolic orders. The philosopher Sébastian

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105 One might also be tempted to find links to the four classical humors, but no literature on the park has addressed this possibility.
Marot deftly synthesizes Yates’s demonstration that the techniques of memory were transformed, in the transition from Antiquity to Medieval Christianity, from “a technique used by the orator [of Antiquity] to recall that which he wished to remember into a didactics designed to impress upon the soul of the [Medieval] faithful that which they ought to remember” (Sub-urbanism 16). Memory spaces thus “[took] on the status of shared symbolism,” creating the conditions for them to become externalized and represented through architecture, literature, and painting (16–18). The cultural connotations of seasons, cardinal directions, colors and elements allow them to be combined in symbolic ways, reinforcing associations among each of the garden’s components and allowing for a rich sensory environment within which to embed other memory content.

Between the parterres and the Rue Joseph-Kessel, a small canal lined with a stone pergola provides an enigmatic space of quiet meditation. The Jardin romantique begins beyond the Rue Kessel, which runs above the ground level of the park and which may be traversed either via arched, stepped foot bridges or through underground tunnels along the canal. This garden, built around the Maison de Bercy, includes a tiny grove of beech trees in a miniature hill landscape, a children’s playground, a hemispherical “mountain” with a spiral path leading to its summit, and various smaller nooks with benches and low stone walls (Figure 3.10). Compressing these traditionally picturesque features into such a reduced area, the garden is almost a parody of the English picturesque garden style.
Pertinent Moments in the Site’s History

The mélange of programmed activities, garden styles, and historical references found in the new park are to a certain degree related to the local history of the site, while other aspects refer to Paris’s history more generally. Bercy's past adds many puzzle pieces to the political, social, and cultural history of the city, though the site witnessed few momentous events. During construction in 1991, prehistoric wooden canoes were unearthed on the site, indicating human presence in 4000 B.C.E. (“Le Paris d'avant Lutèce”). Written records using the place name Bercy first appear in the Middle Ages and by the Early Modern era the southeastern end of the site was consolidated into the manor and park of the Malon de Bercy family (Mouraux 52–53). The Château de Bercy was constructed in 1658 by François Le Vau, brother of Louis Le Vau, architect of Versailles, while Le Nôtre supposedly designed the original “Parc de Bercy,” the grounds of the château, which extended from the present-day Pont de Tolbiac upriver to the village of Charenton (Fierro, Paris disparu 56; Hazan 278). To the northwest, nobles’ maisons de plaisance with gardens stretching to the riverbank, including one belonging to the brother of Madame de Pompadour, were constructed between the city limits and the château grounds (Mouraux 55, Blin 65) (Figure 3.11). The riverbank was also employed as a port for wood and as a site for guinguettes, open-air cafés serving a popular clientele. These properties were considered part of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine until 1790, when they became part of the Commune de Bercy (Fierro, Paris disparu 56). Once the Farmers General tax barrier was erected just downstream of the present park (1784–1787), wine merchants, predominantly Burgundians, avoided the city’s octroi tax by storing their
wares just outside Paris’s city limits (Fierro, *Dictionnaire historique* 453). The grounds of the Château de Bercy were repeatedly divided and gradually diminished by the construction of fortifications around Paris and its inner suburbs (“les fortifications de Thiers,” 1841–1844), the railroad tracks to Lyon in 1847, and the expansion of the Parc de Vincennes (Fierro, *Dictionnaire historique* 276; Hazan 279; Fierro, *Paris disparu* 57). Along the riverbank, wine warehouses were first constructed in 1809 on the terrains of a certain Baron Louis (Fierro, *Paris disparu* 56). The City of Paris annexed part of the commune in 1860, the château was destroyed in 1861, and in 1863, the 74 remaining hectares of the Bercy domain (then known as the “Parc de Bercy”) were purchased so that official warehouses, designed by Viollet-le-Duc and surrounded by a metal fence, could be constructed in 1895 (APUR, “Perspectives” 98–99) (Figure 3.12). The City also built a road, cellars, and flood-resistant quays along the riverbank. Though a small residential area stood to the northern side of the present park, *guinguettes* near the warehouses failed due to the enclosure and isolation of the site (Mouraux 60). The identity of the Bercy estate and the surrounding area changed from a pleasant, beautiful site on the threshold between city and country to a merely peripheral space, through the industrial and political transformations brought by the nineteenth century.

**The Redevelopment Process: Policies and Projects**

Despite this long, well-documented past, the earliest official redevelopment strategies for Bercy made no reference to the historical interest of the site. A development plan for

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106 According to Bayle, these warehouses were never actually constructed (77).
commercial areas and infrastructure around the Gare d’Austerlitz and the Gare de Lyon, authored in 1974 by the city’s architectural and urban planning bureau, the Atelier parisien d’urbanisme (APUR), described the Bercy warehouses as “un immense secteur à peu près vide” (“Schéma de secteur” 14). Empty, that is, since the warehouses began closing and relocating in the mid-1960s due to changes in the wine industry. In a reference to the Seine riverbank areas of southeast Paris, this same text continued, “devant ces entrepôts, [...] ces emprises portuaires, [...] il est difficile de ne pas éprouver le sentiment d’un formidable gaspillage d’espace” (14). This text is an example of the functionalist approach prevalent in urban planning at the time that tended to overlook historical depth and evocative landscape in its focus on quantifiable metrics of efficiency and usable space created (Figure 3.13). The city’s urban planners considered a sports complex, the Olympic Village for the 1992 Summer Games bid, or grounds for the 1989 Exposition Universelle to efficiently use this so-called “wasted” space (Bayle 68).

The “Plan programme de l’Est de Paris,” also published in 1987 by the APUR, reveals that municipal planners were moving away from purely functionalist theories of the 1960s and early 1970s. This document claimed that the redevelopment of Paris's east side, a crescent from Montparnasse to the Butte aux Cailles and Vincennes, was necessary due to the imbalance of two factors there, jobs and social services, as compared to the West. These social problems were compounded by “un tissu urbain déstructuré” that tended to undermine local urban and architectural features of quality (APUR, “Plan” 107).

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107 Once the renovation was underway, the remaining négociants were offered space on the ground floor of the agribusiness building mentioned above. In the end, few merchants relocated to this building or to other sites within the renovation perimeter (Marvillet 62).
14). Therefore, the coming series of renovations would include attention to social cohesion within neighborhoods and to the historical continuity of the built environment, uniting “[d]es modes d’intervention diverses et simultanés,” including “des actions sur l’environnement, l’équipement, l’emploi,” and other actions “de caractère plus ‘structurant’” (16). Though this document was not legally binding, it did broaden the perceived scope of urban interventions from the purely physical and infrastructural to include the development of social services and community services as well. The resulting vision of the city implied in this document was not entirely quantitative and was far more sensitive than previous plans to the visual continuity and identity of the urban environment.

The “Plan Programme” placed less emphasis on infrastructure and large projects, such as the newly planned Palais Omnisports and Finance Ministry, than the 1974 Schéma de secteur had done. Instead, the APUR announced the creation of a new social space, “un nouveau quartier autour d’un parc” (“Perspectives” 114). This vision of the neighborhood as the appropriate scale for urban design, adopted by the APUR through the end of the twentieth century, is exemplified by a series of sketches made by Pierre Micheloni before the Palais Omnisport project began and published in the issue of Paris projet devoted to the finished park (Figure 3.14). These sketches show possible outlines of the park based on different combinations of old and new structuring elements, including streets, squares, and apartment blocks (Micheloni 127). The outline and program of the Parc de Bercy were developed once the general layout of the
neighborhood’s housing, commercial zones, and other activities had been decided, and its urban features had been arranged.

The Competition Brief

Though the competition brief indicated that the City felt the park should “venir s’inscrire parmi les espaces publics majeurs” of the capital, the park was envisioned foremost as a leisure space to serve this new neighborhood (APUR, Consultation 31). Discreet, “plus proche du quotidien que du spectaculaire,” allowing space for “la rêverie, la flânerie,” it would attract the traditional Parisian park demographic (APUR, “Perspectives” 114). According to a study conducted in 1978 by the Service du Plan of the APUR, this traditional population was found to be children of all ages and their mothers, the elderly and retired, arriving primarily on foot, from housing within one kilometer of the park boundary (Schéma directeur des espaces verts 5).108 These groups were most likely to use the park on weekdays, during frequent short visits, while the demographic of park visitors was likely to be more diverse in age and more balanced in gender on the weekend (Schéma directeur des espaces verts 16, 23). The park was certainly intended to overcome some of the problems noted in the study, such as the lack of diverse play areas for young children or adequate space for adolescents (Schéma directeur des espaces verts 8). In addition, the scale of the anticipated park would also respond to the observation that “la promenade et le contact avec la nature, les fonctions les plus traditionnelles des

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108 Today, the APUR considers an address to be adequately “served” in green space if it is within five hundred meters of the boundary of a large park, while the area served by smaller parks and promenades may be within as few as fifty meters from the green space (APUR, Une Trame verte 12).
espaces verts, ne viennent qu’au second plan des motivations [actuelles de fréquentation des parcs], ce qui semble correspondre à un jugement souvent sévère porté sur les insuffisances du traitement paysager ou de l’isolation par rapport aux nuisances urbaines” (Schéma directeur des espaces verts 8). This statement suggests that the City may have favored a relatively “intimate” park, one that was, to some degree, closed in upon itself, or at least that the City preferred a park that would be insular to one that would be open and porous.

The APUR included a summary history and site map in the competition brief sent to one hundred six competitors for the 1987 landscape design commission (Nebout 66). Based on the neighborhood plan developed by APUR architect Jean-Pierre Buffi, these texts highlight the “ancienne trame parcellaire perpendiculaire au fleuve” created by the parallel streets, warehouses, and rows of venerable trees. While the Cour Saint Emilion to the immediate southeast of the park perimeter was the subject of a retail development and the Entrepôts Lheureux behind it were classified as historical monuments, the competition instructions do not include recommendations or directives to preserve specific buildings within the park. Instead, the competition brief suggests that the “charme,” “esprit” or “caractère” of the existing architecture and streets could inspire picturesque elements of the park, without requiring that the park be designed solely to highlight the site’s historic traces (APUR, Consultation 31). In addition, the public consultation revealed that inhabitants wished for some of the buildings to be preserved (Bayle 75).
On the other hand, the design competition did include a map of the positions of trees on the park site. The recognized importance of trees in the Parisian landscape resulted, in 1988, in the creation of a Politique de l’arbre by the Direction des parcs, jardins et espaces verts (DPJEV), intended to preserve Parisian trees generally, increase the sophistication of tree planting and maintenance strategies throughout the city, and harmonize street alignment cultivation with that of parks. Since 1978, the builder (le maître d'ouvrage) is required to submit an environmental impact study with the building permit application, taking more broadly into account the environmental state of the site prior to construction and the effects of the planned construction on the environment (Witwicky 12–16). Through this process, the City aims to increase the amount of green space in the capital, whether on public or private land. These policies undoubtedly influenced the position and perimeter of the park as well as the footprint of the surrounding buildings in order to save as many trees as possible.

The importance of trees in Paris is such that this Politique de l’arbre is not just intended to improve the health of Paris’s trees but also to guard against the unintentional mistreatment of trees that may be caused by excessive reverence—for example, neglecting to thin or prune groves of trees in parks (DPJEV 14–16). Both the regulations and the reverence suggest that trees are now thoroughly incorporated into the patrimoine.

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109 Witwicky is quite critical of this process. He notes that (as of his writing, in 1990), the impact study was performed for individual buildings but was not required for larger-scale plans such as a Schéma directeur or a Plan d'occupation des sols (14). In addition, because it included “les raisons pour lesquelles, notamment du point de vue des préoccupations d’environnement, le projet présenté a été retenu parmi les partis envisagés,” and “les mesures envisagées par le maître d’ouvrage ou le pétitionnaire pour supprimer, réduire et, si possible, compenser les conséquences dommageables du projet sur l’environnement,” the study often ended up being, “paradoxalement, un plaidoyer pour le projet” rather than an impartial evaluation of environmental impact (15, 16).
of the city, as does the recognition of Paris’s oldest tree, a black locust planted in the seventeenth century whose shoots grow in the churchyard of Eglise Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre and the Jardin des Plantes. The trees in Bercy are indeed impressive. Having been planted in *pleine terre* rather than in small containers of earth surrounded by concrete, with plenty of sunlight and porous ground, their growth conditions were much more favorable than those of the typical Parisian tree. Their presence has given the park an atmosphere of perennity and maturity beyond its years. The competing design teams had a rich vegetal and mineral historical context with which to grapple when designing the new park.

**The Competition Finalists**

The ten finalists in the Bercy design competition responded to the programmatic, environmental, and aesthetic requirements of the competition brief in different ways. Jacqueline Nebout, then adjoint au maire chargé de l’environnement et des parcs, jardins et espaces verts, categorized the finalists as “parcs ordonnancés,” “parcs paysagers” built around “des promenades et des points de vue pittoresques,” and “parcs conceptuels” that present “une représentation plus abstraite de la nature” (66). Beyond this purely stylistic categorization, Thierry Grillet divided the competitors into “des arpenteurs,” who analyzed the site in terms of structure and network, and “des chamans” who elaborated “une épaisse croûte symbolique” around their projects (139). The illustrations of their projects published along with the winning design in *Paris projet* reveal varying methods
of adherence to or interpretation of the programmatic criteria, and use of historic or new elements among the competitors.

The responses to the competition brief and the site reveal a certain tension between the designers’ ideas and the requirements of the brief. While Guido Ferraro and Giancarlo Mezzanti’s design was almost entirely “green” with no built structures in the park, Patrick Higson and Michael Pearson integrated many small gardens and parterres with numerous restored warehouse buildings. Higson and Pearson were the team whose design came closest to the concept of a “parc d’attraction” or “jardin à themes” with kiosks, cafés, restaurants, and other activities—a park style that was popular at the time but rejected by Paris’s city council (Bayle 73).\(^{110}\)

The park designers occasionally resisted the limits of the competition. Alain Sarfati imposed an arc shape in place of the park’s projected rectangular footprint and distorted Buffi’s urban plan to wrap around it. Similarly, Jacques Coulon and Bertrand Damangez imagined a passage underneath the Voie Georges Pompidou, akin to the Parc André Citroën’s access under the RER tracks to the riverbanks, though this option had been ruled out already due to technical and budgetary constraints.\(^{111}\)

The competing designs revealed varying historical references and responses to the past. Thierry Grillet describes Somorjay’s design as “pittoresque,” employing “une

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\(^{110}\) At the time, this type of park was becoming extraordinarily popular in France. The Poitiers Futuroscope opened in 1987, Parc Astérix in 1989, and Disneyland Paris in 1991 (Kremer). However, the City made its wish for “un parc urbain” rather than “un parc d’attractions” clear during the competition (Ferrand, Interview).

\(^{111}\) The competition for the Parc André Citroën design had been held in 1985. Although landscape architects were called upon to develop a design for the Bercy park site after its perimeters were set, the infrastructure had been laid out, and the general urban plan had been established, landscape architects currently tend to be invited to collaborate with urbanists and architects from the beginning of a project.
imagerie villageoise” that evoked a ruralized, nostalgic view of the past (144–45).

Philippe Nordemann’s design referenced the Verger du Roi in Versailles in his design, alluding to a more canonical, elite past (Bayle 72). Another team, Vacherot and Charpentier, overtly dismissed the possibility of an authentic memory or adequate history in the park, stating, “La réalité de Bercy n’est pas reconstructible sauf à tomber dans la restitution ethnologique des expositions universelles du début du siècle” (Grillet 146–47). These designers rejected an aesthetic that, to them, could only be kitsch and simplistic, one that would imply the exoticization of the other—in this case, Paris’s working class, not colonial subjects—and reveal an underlying blindness to power relations between the authoritarian planners and powerless inhabitants. Pierre Colboc took another tack in stating, “la fragmentation du lieu, la présence presque physique du temps, sont autant de signes qui ancrent ce terrain dans notre expérience et permettent de développer un projet moderne” (Grillet 137). Clearly, these competitors were struggling to cope with the historical dimension of the site, its relevance to the present, and the appropriate methods by which to integrate this past into a contemporary park design.

**Sub-Urbanism and the Winning Design**

These questions of representation and of the relation between past and present in landscape are addressed by Sébastien Marot via his concept of “sub-urbanism,” from which he developed both a set of principles to guide design and steps toward a critical analysis of built environments. Originating in the contemporary landscape architect’s condemnation of the modernist tabula rasa, Marot’s sub-urbanism explores interventions
in previously occupied, marked sites, inverting the traditional operative sequence and hierarchy in architecture and landscape architecture. “The methods and routines of urban design have traditionally mimicked those of architecture,” states Marot, “thereby perpetuating the dominance of programme (and of an approach that goes from programme to site)” (*Sub-Urbanism* 1). The architects and landscape architects who competed for the Parc de Bercy commission seemed to grapple with precisely these questions of the relationship between program and site in their designs: How can the program be other than forced onto the site, or the site distorted around the program (Sarfati, Coulon and Damangez)? How can the site “speak” without denaturing the program (Colboc) or becoming kitsch (Higson and Pearson)? How can a place contain time, becoming a representation of itself, while still remaining authentic (Somerjay, Nordemann, Vacherot, Carpentier)?

Sub-urbanism “redirect[s] emphasis from programme to site—site as the matrix of design, and programme as a tool to explore, read, reveal, invent and ultimately represent the site” (Marot, *Sub-Urbanism* 4). This inversion is hinted at by the competition brief for the Parc de Bercy, as well as Huet, Ferrand, Feugas and Leroy's design and essays.\(^{112}\) Huet’s team’s winning design stood out visually from the others, due primarily to its

\(^{112}\) Although Marot’s “sub-urbanism” is a useful framework for analysis of the park, I am not arguing that Huet abided by all its principles. Though Huet and FFL Architectes (the firm of Marylène Ferrand, Jean-Pierre Feugas, and Bernard Leroy) display “active regard for the memory of the site” and approach site and design as “fields of relation rather than arrangements of objects,” their approach does not question the concept of urbanism or the “centered city” while “recogniz[ing] suburbia [the “third territorial estate”] as the historical hotbed of garden design” (Marot, *Sub-Urbanism* 2). Huet states, “Pour moi, la question des périphéries passe par les solutions apportées au problème de la centralité … il est donc urgent de relancer une politique de reconquête des périphéries par les centres,” that is to say, “curing” the suburbs by giving them the attributes of the center, which are “la continuité et la densité” (Huet, Edelmann, and de Roux ). Critics recognize Huet’s tendency to use the center as a model, among them Christophe Bayle, stating that the Huet/FFL design, “touchant […] les quartiers de l’est parisien […] achevait ‘spatialement’ l’annexion de 1860” (“Une certaine idée” 77).
chromatic and textural simplicity.\textsuperscript{113} The harmonious, pastel tones of blue, green, and buff tend to flatten and unify the site, whereas other designs used vivid color to create effects of depth, underline structure and hierarchy, divide, and compartmentalize the space (Figure 3.15). The understated design leaves out features that appear in the final park, differing notably from the \textit{horror vacui} of many of the competing designs.\textsuperscript{114} This design was the only one to make extensive use of the new neighborhood’s layout, using a geometrical grid of walkways and the central axis of the Palais Omnisports within the park to unite the Palais Omnisports to the west and the apartments to the north. Lastly, the walkways within the park appear as figures on the ground of the lawn, rather than as lines marking the boundaries of different areas or gardens.\textsuperscript{115}

Bayle describes the Huet project as “rassurant, reprenant les codes et les références traditionnelles de l’espace parisien” (79). Grillet notices, as Bayle does not seem to do, the layering of historical street layouts in the design. The overlapping cobblestone and granite walkways suggest to this critic that “Huet choisit […] de ‘sanctuariser’ le territoire” through “une lecture scrupuleuse” and “des interventions minimales” (146–48). Noting that “le visiteur parcourt ces jardins comme un champ de fouilles,” Grillet seems to interpret this design as a slice of frozen time, a site preserved in amber. He paints a picture of a city whose layers go on forever, rejecting the idea that the

\textsuperscript{113} The FFL Architectes team had included Huet for the Parc de la Villette competition, but did not include him for the Parc André-Citroën competition. The same team of FFL Architectes plus Huet had also developed a mass plan for the eastern end of the site, the “Fond de Bercy” (Ferrand, Interview).

\textsuperscript{114} A greenhouse, a marionette theater, and a flower market were proposed for the entrance to the lawn at the northeast, but these elements were left out of the park as realized, as were some sculptures that were to have been placed around the park and buildings at the end of the raised terrace (Ferrand, Interview).

\textsuperscript{115} Huet and the FFL Architectes was the only team who gave their competition project a title, “Jardin de la mémoire” (Grillet 146).
park could be an enclave of virgin nature within the city, stating that the park appeared “[c]omme si la seule nature de la ville, c’était la trace archéologique de la ville” (147). This conclusion that the “nature”—that is to say, the “ground” or original condition on which the city is built, is, in the contemporary era, simply previous traces of the city, is an approximation of Marot’s definition of the “sub-urban condition.” However, unlike Marot, who approaches this sub-urban condition as the setting for new approaches to landscape architecture and new means of critiquing space, Grillet’s language, including the nouns “trame fossile,” “trace archéologique,” and the verb “sanctuariser” suggest a mausolean setting, perhaps with undertones of nostalgia.

**Memory and Presence**

Does the visitor really wander through the park as if stepping through an archaeological dig? Despite the presence of Bercy's image in popular culture, very few people would likely have personal memories of the site due to its isolation and its commercial purpose, and its slow decline in the latter half of the twentieth century. Perhaps, then, the visitor’s experience is more scientific and distant. Despite the evocations of memory and continuity in the park development discourse, little effort has been made to encourage memory through such elements as street nomenclature and historical markers, while physical traces of the past have been modified to serve the park design. The remaining cobblestone streets mentioned previously have been narrowed to become walkways (Blin 74). The street names in the Bercy neighborhood prior to the renovation evoked terroirs, regions, or the names of the négociants but only one new street, Rue Baron-le Roy
(named for the creator of the French *appellation d’origine* system), refers to grapes and viticulture. Renamed existing streets and new streets in the neighborhood include Rue Joseph-Kessel (formerly Rue du Dijon, as mentioned above), Passage Dubuffet, Rue Jean-Renoir, and Rue Paul-Belmondo, a nomenclature that contributes to the cultural memory of the Republic. Since the park’s opening, the renaming of the lawns as the Jardin Yitzhak Rabin has added another layer of international memory to the park (“Hôtel de Ville- Communiqués- Inauguration Jardin Yitzhak RABIN”).

Within the park, the warehouses were demolished, while buildings that were exceptions to the local warehouse typology were preserved. In the central garden the former tax and guard house has become the Maison du jardinage (Figure 3.16). This whitewashed, two-storey building with attached greenhouses hosts Saturday classes on the cultivation of houseplants and balcony gardens, and contains information and resources for the home gardener (Maison du Jardinage). Next to the Maison du jardinage stands the brick Chai de Bercy, formerly a wine aging facility that now hosts exhibitions and activities, such as plant barter days, that spill over from the Maison du jardinage (Figure 3.17). In addition to these two structures, the newly constructed Orangerie is an exhibition space for contemporary art. In the Jardin romantique, the Maison du lac, once the home of a négociant, now seems to float in the middle of a circular lake and houses the park administration (Martin, E. 34, Blin 74) (Figure 3.18).

Though memory is considered a value in itself both for Huet and for French architecture critics, and though these critics agreed that the completed park used trace reminders of the site’s past as memory markers, the critical discussion of the Parc de
Bercy’s memory discourse lacks depth and theoretical complexity. Pierre Micheloni remarked, for example, “[c]es 'parterres' représentent la mémoire des jardins ordonnés des anciennes résidences aristocratiques de la plaine de Bercy; ils reprennent des thèmes traditionnels des jardins français [. . . ] ou rappellent encore le passé plus récent du site” (128). However, it is difficult to discern what Micheloni means by “represent” (représenter), “take up” (reprennent) or “recall” (rappeler). Micheloni seems to imply that the relationship between park form and past phenomena is one of signifier to signified: a signifier, the parterre, a signified, eighteenth-century gardens, and a sign, nobles’ lifestyle of leisure at the end of the Ancien regime. This correspondence, however, seems quite loose. The visitors’ ability to decipher the signs depends on their historical knowledge of garden styles and of the site’s past, knowledge that is not disseminated—in written form, at least—in the park.

The Design Team’s Concept of Memory

The design group’s leader, Bernard Huet, had already become known for urban rehabilitation projects that emphasized coherent public spaces and highlighted existing points of interest as nods to collective memory. In Paris, Huet was in charge of the 1988 renovation of the Place Stalingrad around Ledoux’s restored eighteenth-century Farmer’s General tax office, the Rotonde de la Villette116 and the 1994 restoration of the Champs-

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116 Under the current city administration, this area is undergoing a second restoration that will transform the Rotonde de la Villette into a “un véritable lieu de vie culturel et festif” once the Commission du Vieux Paris moves to new quarters. An MK2 movie theater, restaurants, a hotel, student housing, and artists’ ateliers are being constructed along the quays and in the Magasins Généraux warehouses at the opposite end of the basin. According to the nineteenth arrondissement’s mairie, the Huet redesign was “un lieu d’insécurité”
Elysées sidewalks and urban furniture layout (Obalk). Huet’s work on these two sites tends to aim at restoration and reintegration of historical traces into the activity of the city, giving historic monuments a more coherent, formal site, rather than displaying an excess of reverence for ruin or for the “natural” passage of time.¹¹⁷

Two articles published by the design team elucidate, to some degree, what was intended by the concept of memory. First, an article in *Paysage + Aménagement* lists three types of memory: “Mémoire de l’organisation ancienne et encore actuelle du site par la reprise de l’idée de trame existante,” “Mémoire du site par tout ce que nous pouvons conserver des éléments existants associés à cette trame: bâtiments, voirie, arbres,” and “Mémoire du futur pour tout ce que cette trame va permettre d’évolution ultérieure du jardin” (1089). The first two types of “memory” involve the preservation of both physical and intangible traces of the past—both the actual buildings and roads and the intellectual model, the grid, that dictated their arrangement. The last memory, “of the future,” suggests an awareness of the site’s ongoing evolution, rather than an expectation that the park as designed will be maintained forever.

An essay published in the APUR’s journal *Paris projet* in 1997, titled “Remémoration,” foregrounded the role of existing traces and formal constraints in the park design. The park supposedly followed “à l’évidence” the Haussmannian street layout taken up by the new neighborhood plan (Ferrand, Feugas, Huet, Le Caisne, and Leroy 150–51). A brief remark about the central, gridded *parterre* of the park as a “jardin and was “dégradé” because of its “manque de liaisons évidentes avec les espaces environnants et d'une conception trop sophistiquée pour une bonne gestion” (Mairie du Dix-neuvième Arrondissement n. pag.). ¹¹⁷ The architects of FFL, having studied under Bernard Huet at the Unité Pédagogique 8 (now the Ecole nationale supérieure d’architecture de Belleville) and having later worked with him on this and other projects, consider Huet to be their most significant professional influence (Ferrand, Interview).
archéologique” was the only reference in this essay to the past as something other than a tool kit of models, as neither the park’s name nor the article’s title were discussed.

However, the very choice of *remémoration* rather than *mémoire* as the substantive of the title is already telling. The primary definition of *remémoration* in the *Trésor de la langue française informatisé* is the “réactivation d'un souvenir, action de se remettre quelque chose en mémoire.” First, this article title suggests, in a way that the name of the park does not, that the park designers are somehow confronting the act of memory, not memory’s content.118

The park does not show us external reflections of the memories contained in the mind. While it does include signifiers whose signified content is the idea of the past, the primary effect of the park is, rather, to be an external, aesthetic translation of memory’s activity. Second, *remémoration* adds another degree of temporal complexity to the concept of memory. If, between the initial experience and the present, there is a layer of memory, and if, when we “remember” something on multiple occasions, we are indulging in “remémoration,” then every memory experience carries encapsulated within it a series of earlier memory experiences. 119

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118 The use of the term *mémoire* connotes primarily memory activity, whereas *le souvenir* connotes memory content. *Le souvenir* often refers to the commemoration of victims of war (both fallen soldiers and civilian deaths), deportation, exile, or slavery; the Holocaust; and in France, the Resistance in World War II (e.g., the Commémoration du souvenir de Guy Môquet of October 22, 2007). The expression *Jardin du souvenir* is used for an area of a cemetery where the ashes of a deceased person can be scattered.

119 Further definitions in the TLFi cite usage of the term in psychology and psychoanalysis. According to the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, while psychoanalysis originally aimed to help the patient recover memories of formative or traumatic experiences, Freud ultimately concluded that subconscious phenomena are never fully recoverable, and efforts to remember as part of therapy simply lead to repetition of the original trauma. Therefore, productive psychoanalytic work—and the term is not fortuitous—includes anamnesis, an active re-examination of the events of the past. Lyotard’s aim is to transpose this psychoanalytic work into the sphere of cultural activity as a model for philosophical reflection on history and artistic production (see Chapter 2, “Rewriting Modernity,” of *L’Inhumain: Reflections on Time*). Lyotard’s approach to memory and anamnesis ties into other theoretical evaluations of the potential of landscape and garden design to go beyond reconstruction toward reworking the past.
Ruins and the Picturesque

The search to understand the broader implications of an evocation of memory activity rather than memory content as the basis for the park’s design and to interrogate this design for evidence of an aesthetic exploration of memory activity will begin with the ruins found in the park in addition to the restored buildings described previously. Though several critics remarked on the restored buildings, few addressed these ruins. A ruined corner of the eighteenth-century “Petit Château de Bercy,” incorporated into the walls of a warehouse and only revealed upon construction of the park, now stands exposed in the central section of the park, just to the south of the grid of parterres (Mouraux 61) (Figure 3.19). Stones from the Saint-Germain market in the Sixth Arrondissement, discarded during the market’s renovation, were incorporated into the design of the Jardin romantique as a half-buried arcade but also as retaining walls and seating areas. This re-use blurred the distinction between historical traces and picturesque modifications (Figure 3.20).¹²⁰

As Pierre Micheloni remarks, the built structures in the park, old and new, become “assimilables à des ‘fabriques’” (128). The fabriques, or follies, of late eighteenth-century French picturesque gardens, were intended to “function as the focal point of a composed vista, whose literary and historical allusions were meant to move the viewer to salutary states of awe, melancholy, joy, or terror” (Ketcham 3). These private gardens,

¹²⁰ The Marché Saint Germain, a Napoleonic-era covered market in the Seventh Arrondissement (Jones 252), was under renovation from 1976 to 1996. The decision to move these stones probably dates to around 1989 when the architects Olivier-Clément Cacoub and Yves Roa took over the renovation (Boccara). Since both the Marché Saint-Germain and the wine warehouses were under the administration of the Direction des Finances de la Ville de Paris, the stones were likely moved to Bercy out of pure pragmatism, where the FFL team “discovered” them in a shed (Ferrand, Interview).
which were constructed by nobles as retreats from court life or as a romantic setting for
rendez-vous galants, juxtaposed pastiches of exotic and Classical architecture and
picturesque pavilions. They often included Classical temples, Gothic churches, Egyptian
pyramids or obelisks, and rustic bridges, cottages, or mills (Ketcham 3–5). Some
fabriques were constructed to appear ruined; others appeared temporary though they were
permanent structures, and many were designed do play with the viewer's sense of scale
and proportion. The Parc de Bercy’s ruins, particularly in the Jardin romantique, do no
more than allude to this garden style, since they do not serve as focal points for vistas,
seeming instead to create “rooms” or private pockets within the park. It would be best, in
fact, not to take the allusion too far since the ruins in the Parc de Bercy were once
inhabited buildings rather than fabricated imitations, though it will be necessary to further
discuss their authenticity below.

The Saint-Germain market stones form a U-shaped seating area in the Jardin
romantique, creating small vertical planting beds to define the space, while the arcades
form a retaining wall that blocks the view into the park from the outside. The ruins of the
Petit Château are in a quiet corner of the park, in the angle of the Rue Joseph-Kessel and
the earthwork, away from the most frequented, lively areas near the Maison du lac, the
Maison du jardinage, and the lawns. Rather than making the visitor feel like a giant or a

121 One such example is the Désert de Retz, constructed by François Nicolas Henri Racine de Monville
from 1774 to 1789 near Saint-Germain en Laye in Île de France. It includes a four-story house designed on
a circular plan and modeled on the outside to appear to be an enormous ruined Corinthian column and a
“Tartar tent” made of tin painted to look like fabric (Ketcham).
122 Other elements of the Jardin romantique allude to picturesque parks in Paris, particularly the ivy-
covered conical “mountain” with a spiral path leading to its top, whose homologues (on a larger scale) can
be found in Bagatelle, the Jardin des Plantes, or even in the Jardins Albert Kahn.
dwarf, rather than transforming the garden into a microcosm of the world by stylistically imitating architecture from different continents and eras, these ruins seem to reinforce the domestic scale of the central and southeastern sections of the park. All the same, the fabriques and ruins do share some thematic aims with the eighteenth-century nobles’ pleasure gardens, as we shall see.

I shall begin with a discussion of the ruins of the Petit Château and of the Marché Saint-Germain, in order to investigate questions of the modern perception of time and of authenticity thanks to art historian Alois Riegl’s concept of ruin. Next, I will look to the philosopher Walter Benjamin for a discussion of ruins and allegory, proceeding from an allegorical reading of ruins only, to a consideration of the entire park (as well as, potentially, other work by Bernard Huet) as an allegory. Thanks to Craig Owens’s vision of allegory as a postmodern trope and Sébastien Marot’s work on “sub-urbanism,” these

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123 The device of altered scale is often used in garden design. The renaissance Gardens of Bomarzo near Viterbo in Central Italy, for example, include giant statues while the “Column House” of the Désert de Retz was meant to resemble the base of a giant column. Gardens can be designed as miniature worlds, or as miniatures of the world, for picturesque purposes (England’s Kew Gardens), for scientific purposes (the botanical gardens of Lyon’s Parc de la Tête d’or) or purely for entertainment (Tobu World Square, Japan, opened in 1993).

124 Although several rows of warehouses at the southeast edge of the park are now restored and expanded to house the Cour Saint-Emilion open-air shopping mall, a Musée des arts forains, a “Salon de Venise” (a museum of carnival masks and related arts), and the municipal school of bakery and pastry, these preserved traces of the past are not currently organized, labeled, or used in a manner as to allow a visitor to gain coherent knowledge of the site’s history. The goals of this redevelopment were modernization, mixed-use commercialization, and privatization. To retain the atmosphere of the original warehouses, the “human scale” was maintained and “traditional” materials, such as stone and zinc, were used (Desmoulins 34–35). The shops of “Bercy-Village” today, envisioned as the “anti-Forum des Halles” according to the developer, focus on the themes of culture, leisure, nature/adventure, and food (Desmoulins 35).

125 The very categorization of these structures as ruins that transmit aesthetic, historical, and cultural messages betrays the park’s (and my own) situated-ness in the modern era. The Encyclopédie states, “Ruine ne se dit que des palais, des tombeaux somptueux ou des monumens publics. On ne dirait point ruine en parlant d’une maison particulière de paysans ou bourgeois; on dirait alors bâtiments ruinés.” (“Ruine,” Encyclopédie.)
questions of allegory, nostalgia, and memory tie into the broader consideration of lieux de mémoire as a phenomenon in contemporary French society, as discussed by Pierre Nora.

**Alois Riegl’s Definition of the Modern Monument**

In his essay of 1903 on “The Modern Cult of Monuments,” Alois Riegl aimed to develop principles for art historical preservation and restoration. The general argument of this essay aims to categorize monuments first according to whether they are “voluntary”—created specifically to commemorate or transmit memory to the future—or “involuntary”—considered as monuments in the present, though they were not meant to be so when they were created construction, and second, by the different ways in which these monuments are valuable. After “art value” and “historical value,” the “third category” of monuments, those that have “age-value,” and within this group, the sub-category of involuntary monuments with age-value, is most pertinent to my argument. Describing a hypothetical ruined castle, an example of an “involuntary monument,” Riegl writes:

[The ruins] betray little of the original form, structure, internal disposition of rooms, and so forth [...]. The castle's historical value alone fails to account for the obvious interest which it excites in the modern observer. When we look at an old belfry, we must make a similar distinction between our perception of the localized historical memories it contains and our more general awareness of the passage of time, the belfry’s survival over time, and the visible traces of its age. [...]

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126 The term *monument* comes from the Latin verb *monere*, recalling the monument’s role, to remind the living of the dead, obliging them to “se reconnaître en ce qui n’est plus” (Debray 11).
modern interest in such an instance is undoubtedly rooted purely in its value as memory, that is, we consider the document an involuntary monument; however, its value as memory does not interfere with the work as such, but springs from our appreciation of the time which has elapsed since it was made and which has burdened it with traces of age. (23–24)

Riegl’s concept of age-value relies on the modern perception of time, modern subjectivity, an opposition between nature and culture, and on an ethic of authenticity.\(^{127}\)

The modern notion of time is linear, progressive, and irreversible. As Riegl states, “[t]he essence of every modern perception of history is the idea of development,” that is, the idea that “what has been can never be again and … everything that has been constitutes an irreplaceable and irremovable link in a chain of development” (21). The modern perception of time emphasizes the uniqueness of the present and the irrecoverable nature of the past.\(^{128}\) While historical value, “though it could not exist without recognizing time’s message, nevertheless wishes to suspend time,” age-value is “based solely on the passage of time” (Riegl 38, 24). Monuments of age-value are “indispensable catalysts which trigger in the beholder a sense of the life cycle, of the emergence of the particular from the general and its gradual but inevitable dissolution

\(^{127}\) The philosopher Régis Debray’s category of “le monument trace” is in some ways similar to Riegl’s monument of age-value. The monument trace is “modest” and “prosaic,” in its original form or purpose “sans motivation éthique ou esthétique”; yet, it has acquired “une valeur métaphorique ou métonymique,” “d’évocation, d’émotion ou de restitution,” recalling “un milieu, un savoir-faire, ou un style.” The monument trace “murmurs” or “whispers” rather than “singing,” “praying,” or “declaiming” (Debray 16–17). As Debray states, “Nous vivons l’ère des traces, des fragments, des lambeaux” (26).

\(^{128}\) The modern perception of time, according to Calinescu, is oriented around the novelty of the present, whether this novelty is understood primarily in terms of progress (if we think of modernity as a stage in Western history) or in terms of aesthetic innovation—an innovation that was often virulently opposed to the philistine values that the avant-gardes presumed historical modernity fostered (41–42).
back into the general” (24). Or as the cultural theorist Andreas Huyssen put it, the perception of age-value depends on the perceived presence of absence (Huyssen 12).

By defining a type of value inherent solely in perception of time, Riegl also addresses the “much broader emancipation of the individual in modern times” and opens the door to an individual, subjective appreciation of monuments that could complement, and perhaps supplant, an appreciation that relies on cultural or historical knowledge (29). “Thus,” Riegl states, “modern man sees a bit of himself in a monument, and he will react to every intervention as he would to one on himself” (32). This attribution of value to a ruin based on a response that is independent of the subject’s historical knowledge seems especially pertinent to the park context. The response to ruins that Reigl claims to describe “manifests itself immediately through visual perception and appeals directly to our emotions,” producing a sensation that “touches the masses independent of their education” (24, 33). Given the lack of explicative signs or displays in Bercy, one wonders to what extent the park visitors appreciate the ruins around them. Riegl suggests that a modern experience of ruins does not need such external guidance.

Thirdly, Riegl takes pains to argue that the “age-value” is based on an opposition between nature and culture, stating: “from man we expect accomplished artifacts as symbols of a necessary process of human production; on the other hand, from nature acting over time, we expect their disintegration as the symbol of an equally necessary passing” (32). Despite having argued for the modern perception of time as a linear progression, Riegl argues that monuments, once abandoned to nature, seem to enter into a natural life cycle: “Every artifact is thereby perceived as a natural entity whose
development should not be disturbed, but should be allowed to live itself out with no more interference than necessary to prevent its premature demise” (32). There is even a “pure and redeeming impact of natural decay” (32). The difference between natural time, which operates in recurring cycles of birth, growth, decline, and death, and subjective human time partakes of a larger modern opposition between nature and culture. Riegl firmly opposes preservation or restoration, at least in the case of monuments that have no redeeming historic- or art-value, so that this opposition between natural and human forces may be felt by viewers through their perception of a struggle between natural and human forces.

Gardens are sometimes interpreted as sites of harmony between human and natural forces and sometimes as demonstrations of man’s dominion over nature. In Bercy, though the lawns are not putting-green smooth, they are manicured. Though the flowerbeds are not laid out like the *parterres de broderie* of Versailles, they are carefully weeded and mulched. And though trees spread their branches in all directions rather than being trained against walls, they are pruned. The plants and natural elements of the park are constantly shaped by human activity, even as this activity is often overlooked by the casual visitor. The plants’ own genetic growth patterns, the weather, and other natural conditions only dictate part of their appearance. Rather than allowing the hedges to grow ever higher and leaving weeds to compete with the roses, a lush, colorful, yet organized

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129 Georg Simmel similarly posits an opposition between nature and culture, one that is rather more antagonistic. Art and architecture are created from “mechanical, inert matter” through an “informing spirituality,” while a ruin represents a “[shift] in favor of nature.” And, “This shift becomes a cosmic tragedy which, so we feel, makes every ruin an object infused with our nostalgia; for now the decay appears as nature’s revenge for the spirit’s having violated it by making a form in its own image” (259). “Where the work of art is dying, other forces and forms, those of nature, have grown,” and a “new whole, a characteristic unity” emerges (260).
landscape, appealing according to human ideas of beauty and nature, is maintained year after year. In the same vein, we may presume that, for safety and uniformity’s sake, the trees will be cut down and replaced rather than being allowed to decline in their old age (Département des parcs, jardins et espaces verts). If Riegl is correct and the spectator does indeed respond to the ruins’ representation of the competing forces of human effort and natural processes, then these ruins are much more clearly stamped with this universally perceptible, compelling duality than is the rest of the park. Nevertheless, the ruins will not likely be allowed to crumble either; instead, they will be subject to the same maintenance and upkeep as the plants, retaining their present aspect indefinitely.

Lastly, we may discern an ethic of authenticity underpinning not only Riegl’s views on restoration but also the more general argument for age-value. According to this ethic, ruins should be true witnesses to the activity of nature. If a monument appeared falsely “young” due to restoration or “aged” beyond its years due to human destruction, the universally felt “sense of the life cycle” would be betrayed (24). This ethic of authenticity also requires that the monument remain in its original context: “Age-value must be even more adamantly opposed to the separation of a monument from its traditional, virtually organic context and its imprisonment in a museum, even though it is true that it could be best preserved there without need for restoration” (42). We may induce from these arguments that the fabriques of eighteenth-century French picturesque gardens, such as those of Monceau, the Désert de Retz, Ermenonville or Méréville in the Paris region, would have met with Riegl’s condemnation.
By Riegl’s standards, then, the Petit Château de Bercy’s ruins, left in their original site as an involuntary monument, a banal corner of a building that has become a witness to the changing occupations of the site, on the strength of an anonymous mason’s construction in the face of natural and human wear, would be considered acceptably authentic. However, the arcades from the Marché Saint-Germain, half-buried in the Jardin romantique, would be judged out of place. When this market (formerly known as the Blondel market after its architect) was restored and remodeled to become a mini-shopping mall, with clothing stores and gourmet food boutiques, some of the old building’s stones were used to create what appears to be a covered and then partially excavated ruin. The series of rounded arches forming an arcade look as if they could have come from any among many different periods of history or regions of the world. Unlike the ruin that Riegl describes as a positive example, these stones have not been allowed to ruin unmolested but were instead moved from their original site and placed in such a way that they appear to have been abandoned and slowly buried by soil.¹³⁰

Ruins, Authenticity and Nostalgia

Riegl does not use the term *nostalgia*, though the value attributed to ruins through the perception of time’s passage, the sense of loss to the monument due to its destruction by the forces of nature, the sense of distance produced by changes in society and culture, and the value bestowed upon the monument despite its lack of interest (or value) in the past,¹³⁰

¹³⁰To address the question of whether these ruins might be disqualified from consideration because they were neither authentic to the site nor originally included in the winning design, I aim to understand the park as it exists now, weighing equally all its different elements, intentional or unintentional, regardless of their author and of the circumstances that caused them to end up in the park.
all suggest nostalgia. Do these factors label the Saint-Germain market ruins as
“inauthentic,” appealing to an anti-modern aesthetic of nostalgia and the picturesque?

As Andreas Huyssen points out, “both the ruin in its emphatic sense and the
notion of the authentic are central topoi of modernity itself,” since the concept of
authenticity Riegl unquestioningly deploys originated “in literature and art [due] to
eighteenth-century notions of authorship, genius, originality, selfhood, uniqueness, and
subjectivity” (8). The desire for authenticity reached “its heyday in the second half of the
twentieth century together with the boom in nostalgias of all kinds,” that is to say, during
the postmodern era (Huyssen 9). However, this postmodern nostalgia has been opposed
to memory as “kitsch is to art” (Maier, quoted in Huyssen, 8). The craving for
authenticity to which this nostalgia is harnessed has likewise “fallen on hard times” due
to invocations of authenticity in the marketing of inauthentic goods in late-capitalist
service economies (9). Despite the critical dismissal suffered by the concept of
authenticity, Huyssen attempts in the course of his essay to recover both authenticity and
nostalgia within a postmodernism that is a critical revision but also continuation of
modernism. He quotes Svetlana Boym’s remarks on reflective nostalgia: “Reflective
nostalgia cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalizes space …[it] reveals
that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another, as affective memories
do not absolve one from compassion, judgment or critical reflection” (8). The very
attitude that reflective contemplation and emotion (a declaration of subjectivity) can
coexist fruitfully is representative of the postmodern condition thus understood. From this
point of view, a broader recognition of the historical situated-ness of the terms
“authenticity” and “nostalgia” might serve to legitimize the Saint-Germain market arcades in ways that Riegl is unwilling to allow. Despite these shortcomings, Riegl’s observations on modern time and subjectivity are nevertheless revelatory of certain important aspects of these ruins.

The Benjaminian Ruin

Walter Benjamin, though also a theorist of the modern perception of time, addresses the significance of the ruin in quite different ways that tend to contradict, or even collapse, Riegl’s approach to questions of subjectivity, nature and culture, and authenticity. By investigating Benjamin’s theoretical connection between ruins and allegory, we may gain a broader understanding of the ruins as only the most visible or typical markers of a generalized way of allegorical thinking displayed in the park.

Benjamin’s approach to historical time, as exemplified in the “Theses on the philosophy of history,” depends on our situated-ness in the present. Within a Marxist framework of historical materialism, Benjamin insists that historians should not consider time as a set of intervals to be progressively “filled up” in a redemptive, teleological progress akin to Lyotard’s notion of the grands récits.\textsuperscript{131} Instead, while the passage of time itself is only perceptible relative to our current position, progress is “a storm” that accumulates “wreckage” and brings about “a catastrophe” (257). In a clear divergence from Riegl’s acceptance of the modern view of time as progress, Benjamin states:

\textsuperscript{131} See Chapter 3, “Missive sur l’histoire universelle,” of Lyotard’s Le Postmoderne expliqué aux enfants.
[T]he concept of the historical progress of mankind cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through a homogeneous, empty time [, a] critique of the concept of such a progression must be the basis of any criticism of the concept of progress itself. (261)\(^{132}\)

Because time is not progress, time should not be considered as an orderly movement toward the good. The present-day historian may instead revisit certain moments of a process that both builds up and destroys simultaneously, in order to find the present mingled with the past: “[h]istory is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now” (261). Benjamin cautions against a supposedly panoptic or omniscient look to the past, devoid of awareness of one's own subjectivity and situated-ness within time—and, by extension, within a social, political, and cultural context.

This general perception of time is evident in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, in which Benjamin discusses the relation of allegory to tragic drama (*trauerspiel*). As we will see, Benjamin’s links between ruin and allegory will prove illuminating for an analysis of the park as a whole. Benjamin claims that the elapsed time from the construction of the building to its ruin should be seen as part of the ongoing process of creation of the building, rather than a process of destruction or degradation. The ruin is the “exuberant subjection of antique elements in a structure which, without

\(^{132}\) Perhaps Huet’s use of ruin in the Parc de Bercy’s design is an acknowledgement of this other possible interpretation of progress. Certainly an architect’s decision to place architectural ruins in his park could be interpreted both as a testament to the interrelations between the two disciplines of architecture and landscape architecture and as the humbling of architecture—particularly in its individualist, heroic modernist ambitions.
uniting them in a single whole would, in destruction, still be superior to the harmonies of antiquity” (178). The originally “completed” state should, according to Benjamin, be understood as situated in the middle of history, as a precursor of what comes later. The building becomes more *itself* as it ruins, destruction being nothing more than the final stage of the work.

Because of this vision of time, Benjamin does not perceive a work (of art, or a monument) as going through a life cycle that would lead it from “maturity” to decay and eventual disappearance. Instead, every moment in the work’s life is equally important and is an equally authentic actualization of it. In addition, rather than establishing a dichotomy between Nature’s forces of wear and destruction, perceived as positive, and human destruction, considered to be detrimental, Nature is reconciled with human efforts.

**Allegory**

Having addressed the question of time, one that dominates Benjamin's analysis of representation and subsumes the question of nature and culture as well as that of subjective experience, I would like to now address allegory. Benjamin’s understanding of ruins also provokes his assertion that “[a]llegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things” (178). The trope of allegory temporalizes poetic meaning and the relationship between signifier and signified. This temporalization is a negative quality, one that is a symptom of less poetically sophisticated images, according to the literary theorists against whom Benjamin argues, who include Goethe and Creuzer.
Allegorical works such as Baroque emblem books, allegorical writing, and aspects of the Baroque tragedies were subject to adaptation, reuse, accumulation of meaning, and change. These works were therefore not perceived as instantaneous, natural, and a-temporal as were “symbols” (quoting Creuzer) but for Benjamin this did not mean that they should be considered as less artistically relevant or as debased (165–66). Rather than asserting the image’s authenticity through its timelessness or its immediacy, Benjamin argues that “allegory is dialectical like history is dialectical” (166).

One result of the continuous invention and transformation associated with allegory is that slippage is introduced both in the “signifier” and the “signified” terms of the sign. In allegory, “[a]ny person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else,” and “the profane world is both elevated and devalued” (Benjamin, Origin 175).

Most philosophers emphasize the “devaluation” of “the natural world” or the devaluation of meaning through allegory. For the philosopher Jean Lauxerois, this slippage in meaning produced by allegory as understood by Benjamin ultimately fails to create sense or knowledge, to be an image or a representation. In the end, allegory’s only

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133 Goethe defined allegory as the “particular as an expression of the general,” while a symbol was “an expression of the particular without reference to the general that still leads to an understanding of the general” (qtd. in Benjamin 161). For Creuzer, the symbol was “momentary,” “necessary,” and “total,” emerging from an “inscrutable origin” and producing a “flash” of meaning in its “fruitful brevity” (qtd. in Benjamin, Origin, 163–65). Croce and Borges likewise condemned allegory for similar reasons (Owens 52).

134 According to Michèle Hannoosh, Benjamin came to employ the dialectic, rather than allegory, as the model for the transformation of history (40).

135 Benjamin alleges that critics of allegory tended to confuse this dialectic transformation with ambiguity (174–75). Benjamin cites Görres: “[allegory is] a successively progressing, dramatically mobile, dynamic representation of ideas which has acquired the very fluidity of time” (165).
function is that “elle est là pour être remarquée, contemplée” (“Le Jardin” 90). The modern allegory is associated with melancholy due to this disruption of signification (for Lauxerox, Dürer, de la Tour, and Poussin are considered to be modern artists due to the allegorical underpinnings of their memento mori paintings) (93).

This lapse from representation into mere presence in Benjamin’s theory of allegory is parallel to a “fall” from history into nature. Or as Benjamin puts it, “history does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay” (185). In his construction of his theory of allegory, Benjamin speaks of “history” as both the lapsed time through which humans have lived and the accumulation of cultural activity and meaning through this time. Nature—though not explicitly defined—seems to represent everything outside the realm of this cultural activity and meaning. By stating that allegory was “born” through “a strange combination of nature and history,” Benjamin suggests a synthesis of nature and history in which nature is not in opposition to history but in some ways under its influence (Origin 167). In fact, Benjamin suggests that history is mapped onto or read through nature via allegory: “in allegory, the observer is confronted with the facies hippocratica of history as a petrified, primordial landscape” (166).136 Benjamin later refers, more succinctly, to “the movement from history to nature which is the basis of allegory,” a movement quite different from the one suggested by Riegl and discussed above (Origin 182). Ultimately (at least for the Trauerspiel), “the word ‘history’ stands written on the countenance of nature in the characters of transience.

136 The remainder of the quote reads as follows: “this is the form in which man’s subjection to nature is most obvious and it significantly gives rise not only to the enigmatic question of the nature of human existence as such, but also of the biographical historicity of the individual. This is the heart of the allegorical way of seeing, of the baroque, secular explanation of history as the Passion of the world; its importance resides solely in the stations of its decline.”
The allegorical physiognomy of the nature-history, which is put on stage in the
Trauerspiel, is present in reality in the form of the ruin. In the ruin, history has physically
merged into the setting” (177–78). Humans project history onto nature via ruins, which
serve as a memento mori and as an alibi for modern subjects’ irremediable forgetfulness
of their own mortality, and therefore of history (Lauxerois 92–94). Ruins are both a
catalyst for memory and witnesses to the impossibility of truly reliving the past through
memory because of this projected allegorical function, not because of their inherent
qualities.

On the other hand, states Benjamin, “the allegorical must constantly unfold in
new and surprising ways” (183). The postmodern literary critic Craig Owens emphasizes
this potential of allegory to construct meaning in the creative realm. If, as he states,
“[a]llegory concerns itself […] with the projection—spatial or temporal—of structure as
sequence,” then adding something to the “sequence,” the elaboration of the work in time
and space, changes the structure of the work, the relationships between the parts and the
whole, and therefore the work’s potential interpretations (Owens 57). This accumulation
of meaning in allegory may be the result of unmotivated or arbitrary associations between
images and concepts, as Benjamin states, or for Owens it may be motivated as well.
Owens cites Robert Smithson’s land art, photography, “the appropriation of images that
occurs in the works of Troy Brauntich, Sherrie Levine, Robert Longo …” as examples of
“the allegorical impulse” in postmodern art. These artists work with accumulations of

137 For Hannoosh, this quality of allegory made it the “antithesis of and antidote to myth” since allegory
“problematises the mythic experience of the world, nature and history, exposing it as a lie,” “speaking] and
revealing] the fragmentation behind the alleged order and causal evolution of history” (39).
detail and meaning to sites or images, accumulations that often, paradoxically, appear to be fragmentary or incomplete through the artist’s intervention (54–56). In addition, one could argue, aesthetically postmodernist works and artists such as the ones mentioned above derive the power of their works from a series of allusions to, pastiches, or quotations of history or the Western artistic tradition. Their works reactivate a chain of formal and thematic references that ultimately cause the viewer to experience the “canon” in a different light.

One of the three types of memory evoked by Huet and FFL architects in the competition text discussed previously seems to relate to the allegorical perception of time: “Mémoire du futur pour tout ce que cette trame va permettre d’évolution ultérieure du jardin” (38). The designers of the park reveal through this remark that they are open to future changes to the park’s design. The trame to which they refer, the grid figure that they designed to lend structure to the park and bring out the historical variations in the site, is not the ultimate or most important state of the site but one step in a series of formal transformations and poetic reinterpretations.

If we see the ruins in the Parc de Bercy, but also the other landforms, flowerbeds, and design elements as, literally, elements of an allegorical emblem, then perhaps this would open a path to interpreting them in relation to the park, and the park in relation to the disparate architectural elements around it. These interpretations would not be devalued because they lacked a historical or aesthetic antecedent. Rather, the search for unexpected associations between a detail of the Palais Omnisports and one of the
architecturally postmodern housing units or another detail in the park would be part of the collective process of creating meaning within this new neighborhood.

More specifically, based on Benjamin’s philosophy of time and history, and his conception of ruins as allegory, the Saint-Germain market arcades should not be judged for their inauthenticity. First, the additional meanings and associations that have accreted to them due to their placement in the Parc de Bercy are legitimated. Their “first life” as a market building was a precursor of their new life as decorative elements in the park, rather than an “authentic” period to be followed by an “inauthentic” decadence. This accretion of associations common to allegory and to ruins tends to simultaneously exaggerate and diminish details, while “the profane world is both elevated and devalued” (Benjamin 175). This richness and ambiguity may be applied to the ruined arcade: it is still preserved and has acquired allegorical eloquence in its new setting. Secondly, the empirical circumstances of this preservation are lost to the average visitor to the park, since no commemorative plaque has been placed to explain these stones’ history. Rather than serving as symbols or signs of some larger meaning, for example, the movements of Paris’s history, perhaps they are simply there to be contemplated. We may expand our discussion of allegory from the ruins to the entire park in order to consider it as an allegory of memory, an operation to create collective memory through a collection of memory catalysts (rather than a collection of memory content).
Owens’s Postmodern Allegory

As Craig Owens put it in his application of Benjamin’s concept to postmodernism,

“Allegory occurs whenever one text is doubled by another: the old becomes the
allegorical prefiguration of the new” (53). In allegory, “one text is read through another,
however fragmentary, intermittent, or chaotic their relation may be; the paradigm for the
allegorical work is therefore the palimpsest” (54). The critic Thierry Grillet, cited above,
had described Huet’s design as “[un p]rojet à l’encre sympathique où le dessin
palimpseste de la ville antérieure transparaît, à terme, le long de trames fossiles, sur cette
pellicule verte” (147).

According to Owens, the artist who creates an allegory “appropriate[s]”or
“confiscate[s]” imagery rather than inventing it; he “lays claim to the culturally
significant, poses as its interpreter” and the image becomes something different not
because the artist “restores an original meaning but […] adds another meaning to the
image” (54). Postmodern artists are often described as appropriating elements from the
past, whether this process is seen as a resuscitation of neglected genres and styles or an
adoption of pastiche as a poor substitute for the historical avant-gardes’ demand for the
new. Owens’s perception of allegory’s role in artistic creation situates the artist in the
middle of time, an act that serves to reduce the anxiety of working in the site. The artist’s
role is to contribute to a larger tradition, even if this contribution is not necessarily an
improvement of or “last word” on a certain domain of art. Grillet quotes Huet as asking
rhetorically (probably in a text accompanying the competition entry): “Comment ajouter
une nouvelle strate sans détruire la mémoire du lieu,” evoking an anxiety about artistic
creation in a period of hyper-awareness of history (146). If the garden is, in fact, allegorical in the sense just discussed, then the past is not sacrosanct but rather an accumulation of meaning that becomes both more and more fragmented through the “catastrophe” of time and paradoxically more complete and profound through this same progression.

In the park, tracings from the past are not just literally but figuratively inscribed in the ground, as in a palimpsest, such as in the two systems of walkways (Figure 3.21). In addition to the historic granite cobblestone streets mentioned previously, new paths of polished creamy-yellow and purplish-red granite bricks were added to the site. The two sets of walkways intersect at a slight angle in such a way that the newer walkways appear to overlap the older ones. The older walkways follow the vernacular pre-Haussmannization property division patterns, perpendicular to the old serpentine curve of the riverbank (Figure 3.22). The new walkways follow the street orientation imposed during the Second Empire, which is particularly visible in the southeast corner of the site. The Palais Omnisports and new housing in the Bercy renovation also follow this alignment. The park thus appears to be interpolated from the surrounding architectural and urban context.

An overly personal psychoanalytic interpretation of Huet’s and FFL’s inclusion of ruins in the park might follow Karsten Harries’s observations that “The built ruin is the most obvious counterimage to an architecture that seeks to defeat the terror of time with comforting images of permanence” and “[t]he decision to build a ruin or to give to buildings a ruinous look betrays a crisis of confidence in the architect’s ability to provide shelter [. . . ] Human construction here appears to surrender itself to space and time” (68).

The winning design was the only one of the ten competition finalists to incorporate both alignments throughout the park.
It would appear that Bernard Huet strives to recognize these tracings from the past in all of his work, not just in the Parc de Bercy. When discussing le projet urbain (translated as “urban design”) in an interview with Le Monde, Huet distinguished it from urban planning by stating that, “[l]a véritable fonction du projet urbain, c’est de produire du temps, de la continuité, de la régularité.” This production of time means identifying the spatial and historical context and the process by which the new public spaces and buildings will become knitted into this context. Huet continued, “J’ai l’habitude de dire qu’un projet urbain est déjà potentiellement inscrit sur le territoire avant même qu’il apparaisse. Le rôle du concepteur se limite à lire attentivement le contexte existant, à l’interpréter assez finement pour ‘révéler’ le projet caché” (Huet, Edelmann and De Roux). This statement suggests an allegorical interpretation of Huet’s design process. Whether this process is truly as straightforward as the description Huet gave or, as I suspect, is much more informed by the architect’s own cultural references and imagination, such an account of the process positions it in harmony with Owens’s statement that, “the old becomes the allegorical prefiguration of the new.”

Marot’s Concept of Memory and Phenomenal Transparency

This understanding of the co-presence of the past and the present in the city may be better understood thanks to Sébastien Marot’s discussion of Freud’s memory theory. In an essay on Rome in Civilization and its Discontents, Freud describes a vision of Rome as a city whose successive historical states would somehow be simultaneously visible, and considers the impact of this vision on our conception of human memory. As Marot puts it,
“memory would no longer be considered as a four-dimensional reservoir where events and feelings would be stored, in perspectival order, as complete pictures, to be recalled at will. Instead it would be seen as a process of transformation that, like the city, develops by the rearticulation, layering, and reuse of fragments—in short, by reconstruction” (Suburbanism 32). The “spatiotemporal depth” of memory would be paralleled by this rearticulation and reuse of elements in the built environment.

Marot describes an architecture or landscape that is more available to be read through memory activity as one with “phenomenal transparency,” transparency that is not due to the physical qualities of the materials used or clarity and legibility of form but instead “relies on the mental activity of the subject” (83–86), appropriating this term from the architectural historian Colin Rowe and the artist Robert Slutzky. Through analyses of the contrasting examples of Walter Gröpius’s Bauhaus in Dessau, Germany, and Le Corbusier's Garches Villa, Rowe and Slutzky contrast the visual or “literal transparency” of the former with “an inherent quality of organization” that produces perceptions of “a contradiction of spatial dimensions” and “equivocal sensations” in viewers/visitors of the latter (Rowe and Slutzky 46, 51). These sensations result in a “dialectic between fact and implication,” resulting in a tension in which “reading after reading is enforced,” leading to a “continuous fluctuation of interpretation” (51–52). Rowe and Slutzky thus argue that in addition to the “physical,” “critical,” and “moral” connotations of transparency, the visual effect they identify is an aesthetic form of transparency, one in which “the transparent ceases to be that which is perfectly clear and becomes instead that which is clearly ambiguous” (45).
For landscape, the key feature that could display this transparency, according to Marot, would be the “territorial substrate”: “the first step would be to take this concept of phenomenal transparency and shift it to the ground,” so that “the surface of the territory may thus be compared to the picture plane in painting […] It may be used as an active matrix endowed with a ‘capacity to stimulate’ at least equal to that of these new constructions and inscriptions” (*Sub-urbanism* 83–86). By applying the term to landscape and exploring the potential of “the same elements or portions of space” to “be incorporated into different and even virtually dissonant readings or spatial organizations,” Marot enlarges its meaning beyond the original, strictly aesthetic definition (83–86). For Marot, the interest of these “dissonant readings” is their potential subtlety and delicacy when employed “where the effects of literal memory are very fragile.” While for Slutzky and Rowe, “space becomes constructed, substantial, and articulate” (emphasis mine) through phenomenal transparency (*Rowe and Slutzky* 54), for Marot, this phenomenon “ceaselessly opens up depth”—that is, temporal depth or depth of memory and meaning—in the territory (*Sub-urbanism* 83–86). This appreciation of the ground plane stakes a claim for landscape architecture as a signifying practice whose object is a specific aspect of space, on the same order as architecture or other disciplines.

Huet has demonstrated an appreciation for such layering phenomena in the ground plane in his other projects, such as those for the Champs-Elysées and the Place Stalingrad. In his essay “L’Architecture contre la ville,” Huet observed that the “sol de la ville” was “constitué d'une superposition de traces où s’inscrit le jeu subtil des statuts juridiques, des orientations symboliques et des mémoires historiques” (12). It is clear that
Huet’s use of the two sets of walkways within the park was not purely out of formal interest or functional necessity but also out of an interest in the history of the site and a desire to incorporate these prior “symbolic orientations” into the site. The ground plane of the park embodies the phenomenal transparency theorized by Marot that allows for the (allegorical) juxtaposition of several time periods.

**Phenomenal Transparency and the Grid**

The suggestion by Marot that the ground plane of landscape may be compared to the picture plane in painting only reinforces the relevance to the park of an essay on “Grids” by the art historian Rosalind Krauss. Working from a Structuralist understanding of myth as a way of resolving contradictory beliefs, Krauss posits that the formal element of the grid in modern painting, while typically understood to express art’s reduction to a material surface, simultaneously expresses the contrary, pre-modern concept of art, which is that the work is a window onto another spiritual or symbolic world. Krauss gives special attention to the relationship between the frame or boundary of a work of art and the grid represented on its surface. In what she calls a “centrifugal” work, the frame of the work tends to suggest an arbitrary boundary imposed on an infinite surface (13). The slight angle between the nineteenth-century cobblestone alleys and the new granite walkways, discussed previously, seems to be an example of this effect (Figure 3.21). Because the Haussmannian, modern park grid appears to overlay the old one, because the cobblestone pathways, even when disrupted by other sidewalks and park features such as the stream, are continuous through the entire length or width of the park space, and due to
the placement of features at the park’s boundaries such as shrubs, retaining walls, and walkways, the older grid seems to extend beyond the park’s perimeter rather than remaining the site-specific arrangement that it once was.

The use of these two superimposed and disjunctive systems of alignment, the cobblestone “trame mineure” and the newer alignment borrowed from Haussmannization, suggests that the park symbolically unites the fragments and layers of history (Micheloni 128). This symbolic unity occurs not only physically within the park but also—virtually—beyond its boundaries as well. While the new alignment does, in fact, govern the neighborhood and resemble Haussmann-era alignments elsewhere in Paris, the park design suggests the older alignment’s imaginary continuity beyond the park’s boundaries. However, in the park, as in memory, the past per se becomes less important than the relation between past and present. One stated goal of the rehabilitation process was to reintegrate Bercy into the rest of the city, despite the presence into the foreseeable future of heavy infrastructure on all sides of the park: the Gare de Lyon train tracks, the riverbank freeway, the Finance Ministry, and the périphérique. The two street alignments in the park allow the traces of several eras of history, from the social life of the nobility in the eighteenth century, to the Revolution, the industrialization and rationalization of the nineteenth century, to coexist with the present and become recognized and incorporated into the contemporary urban landscape rather than being occluded.

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140 I therefore disagree with Didier Rebois’s assertion in Architecture d’aujourd’hui that the Parc de Bercy’s local, idiosyncratic street pattern resists an effort by the APUR to unify and cohere all of Paris’s east side.
Is the Parc de Bercy a *Lieu de Mémoire*?

These discussions of form and memory—from the classical, ordered *ars memorativa* and its imaginary palaces, to the memory and nostalgia potential inherent in allegory, and to the construction and destruction of meaning through ruin—may be complemented by the contemporary concept of *lieu de mémoire*. The Parc de Bercy may be interpreted, as seen so far, as a masterful aesthetic meditation on memory, allegory, nostalgia, and the postmodern vision of time. However, as a public park, the effectiveness of this type of aesthetic process can only be fully understood by measuring the extent to which it may be brought in relation to concerns within French society as a whole. I hope to bridge this divide between individual aesthetic experience and the cultural preoccupations of a social group through some insights gleaned from the historian Pierre Nora’s concept of *lieu de mémoire*. While I do not intend to argue that the Parc de Bercy is such a site, Nora’s assessment of the state of contemporary collective memory that leads him to a definition of *lieu de mémoire* is in and of itself quite illuminating.

In his essays “Entre mémoire et histoire” and “L’Ere de la commémoration,” Nora defined the *lieu de mémoire* as a signifying framework that blends elements of memory and of history. “L’Ere de la commémoration,” Nora’s concluding essay to the multi-volume *Lieux de Mémoire* project he had edited, points out the impression of rupture with the past felt in contemporary French culture. This sensation was brought on by the expansion of urban centers and decline in rural worlds; the exhaustion, in the mid-1970s, of Marxism and post-Gaullist politics and their attendant *grands récits*; and a desire to look back on France’s history at the two hundredth anniversary of the Revolution of
1789. As a result of this context, the events of the past could no longer be marshaled as steps in a progression toward universal enlightenment, the end of class oppression, or any other master narrative. Nor did all French citizens continue to feel bound by their citizenship itself to such a universalizing account of national history. This fracture between the past and the present had also been expressed in the academic sphere by the rise of the Annales historiographical school.

For Nora, today’s collective memory is different from the memory of pre-industrialized, rural life as well as from earlier French historical narratives. What we call memory today is already history, according to Nora, “volontaire et délibérée, vécue comme un devoir et non plus spontanée; psychologique, individuelle et subjective, et non plus sociale, collective, englobante” (Nora, “Entre Mémoire” 30). Nora pursues this difference through three factors in the practice or experience of memory: the “archival impulse,” memory obligation (la mémoire devoir), and memory distance (la mémoire distance).

The urge to preserve every scrap of the past, no matter how small, results in an “obsession” with archives, as “moins la mémoire est vécue de l’intérieur, plus elle a besoin de supports extérieurs et de repères tangibles d’une existence qui ne vit plus qu’à travers eux” (Nora, “Entre Mémoire” 30). Before the advent of this impulse to archive, who would have found vernacular warehouses and markets, hardly more than one hundred years old, to be worth preserving? Who would have attributed value to the scale and street layout of an industrial zone? Who would have considered trees to be so precious, whether as “witnesses” or as an amenity to the site, that any one tree’s removal
had to be justified? To return to the previous discussion of Riegl’s notion of the involuntary monument or the philosopher Régis Debray’s concept of the “monument-trace,” nothing in the original design, appearance, or usage of this site recalls anything of value to the citizen, to the believer, to the art lover. The construction of a park, a negative or open space in the built thickness of the city, suggests such an archival impulse—by allowing the site to remain open, even in the absence of total conservation, it is allowed to breathe. What traces of memory remain are exhaled into the site rather than being suffocated by new constructions.

For Nora, this urge to archive, to save, to keep, derives from a sensation that memory is the personal affair or responsibility of each individual. Nora states, “[l]a fin de l’histoire-mémoire a multiplié les mémoires particulières qui réclament leur propre histoire.” This multiplication of memories has affected identity groups—“ethnies et minorités sociales,” professions and academic disciplines of which the members write their own histories (32–33). More profoundly, the mémoire devoir has become enracined in individual psychology and identity. As Nora states, there has been a “transfer” of memory from “repetition” to “remémoration”:

[Ce transfert] inaugure un nouveau régime de mémoire, affaire désormais privée.

La psychologisation intégrale de la mémoire contemporaine a entraîné une économie singulièrement nouvelle de l’identité du moi, des mécanismes de la mémoire et du rapport au passé. (33)

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141 Further discussion of this impulse in the context of historical preservation and the concept of *patrimoine*, can be found in Régis Debray’s “Le Monument ou la transmission comme tragédie.”
Memory, then, is not something that is perceived as coming from an “outside,” from “the earth” or from a group to whom one belongs, but from the “inside,” causing the individual to feel a “contrainte de mémoire,” an “intense puissance de coercition intérieure.” “Mémoire de quoi?” asks Nora. “A la limite, mémoire de la mémoire” (34).

This new encounter with the term “remémoration,” or “mémoire de la mémoire,” juxtaposed with the notion of an individual “constraint” or obligation to remember as part of one’s psychology, illuminates one aspect of the park: a public and therefore collective space, it seems to invite introspection, an individual relationship with its various elements, rather than a mass, socially oriented experience that would make park visitors feel united as a group. Perhaps this is due to the fragmentation of the space, the divisions that are created both by its general topography—the Rue Joseph-Kessel, the canals, the terrace—but also the built elements—the fence that divides the lawn from the parterres together with the various retaining walls, shrubs, hedges, bouquets of trees, slight modifications of the ground level, that separate most of the park into a series of “rooms.” Many of the walkways are just wide enough for two people abreast, while on some, one must walk single file. One can easily feel alone in the park even in the presence of dozens, possibly hundreds of other people. Some aspects of the park invite contemplation— the Jardin des philosophes, the benches in pergolas next to the rose garden— while others, such as the labyrinth, play on the Western tradition of the garden as a place of individual self-discovery.

Lastly, “la mémoire distance” describes the sensation of distance from the past, rather than familiarity with it, “une mise en lumière de la discontinuité” rather than “le
présent devenant [...] un passé reconduit, actualisé, conjuré en tant que présent” (34). For most Parisians, as discussed above, the wine warehouse sector was a place that was known of or seen from afar rather than lived and experienced firsthand. More importantly for the park, however, is the average city-dweller’s lack of familiarity with the natural environment and lack of plant and gardening savoir-faire. Park planners in the 1980s began to be preoccupied by the fact that among the park-going public, two, three, and sometimes four generations distant from the “exodus” out of rural France, “la connaissance innée de la nature s’atténue de génération en génération pour laisser place à une ignorance totale des phénomènes naturels les plus élémentaires” (Bazin, J.-F. and M. C. Pascal, 16). The participatory elements of the park, such as the Maison du jardinage with its classes on re-potting, grafting, and pruning; the Jardin pédagogique where schoolchildren plant sunflowers and peppers; and the vineyard from which grapes are harvested every Fall all respond to this unfamiliarity. City-dwellers seek advice and techniques that in a suburban or rural, pre-industrial environment would have formed the fabric of everyday life, the basis of labor, one’s very survival. The overt transmission of these practices through classes, centers, and clubs, where according to Nora the contemporary French citizen seeks a “representation” of the past rather than its “resurrection” (35), has come to replace transmission via “la chaleur de la tradition […], le mutisme de la coutume […], la répétition de l’ancéstral” (23). Rather than considering the past as our “origins,” with which we seek to establish and maintain a filiation, “Le passé nous est donné comme radicalement autre, il est ce monde dont nous sommes à jamais coupés” (34–35).
Thus, Nora’s concepts of “mémoire archive,” “mémoire-devoir,” and “mémoire-distance” reveal some of the broader social conditions, the zeitgeist that may have guided decisions, both by the city administration and by the park’s designers, related to the overall status of the site and the activities within it; these notions also help us understand the public’s response to the park.  

As mentioned previously, the actual site of Bercy does not function effectively as a locus of collective memory in the sense of the sites analyzed in Lieux de Mémoire, such as the Mur des Fédérés, the Panthéon, Victor Hugo's funeral, or the Eiffel Tower. As an industrial enclave, it was not a site of sociability for the majority of Parisians. Nor was it

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142 The concept of lieux de mémoire faced an evolution within the discipline of history during the process of editing and publishing the volumes themselves, but also in popular circles (Nora, “L’Ère” 991). Scholars who were not involved in the Lieux project also took up the question of French national memory, as for example the geographer David Harvey (see “The Building of the Basilica of Sacré-Coeur”). In the field of garden history, Michel Baridon argues that eighteenth-century picturesque gardens such as Méreville, Monceau, and Ermenonville, site of Rousseau’s remains until they were placed in the Panthéon, were all lieux de mémoire because they were designed to evoke the memory of a lost loved one or ancestor. Baridon’s initial definition of a lieu de mémoire is somewhat reductive: “un monument, un décor, parfois un simple lieu marqué par une plaque qui incarne un fait ou un état d’esprit demeuré vivant dans la mémoire collective” (183–84). However, Baridon also states that “le jardin de la sensibilité” is a lieu de mémoire because the design of these gardens implied a relation to time and proclaimed an awareness of their difference to past gardens (202–03). Nora’s definition of a lieu de mémoire has as its central tenet the notion of a dispositif: the lieu is foremost a spatial or temporal ordering structure, and an evolving one at that, rather than simply a site.

Nora cites the restaurant Fouquet’s and the Hôtel du Nord in his discussion of the popular appropriation of the lieu de mémoire concept and the evolving meanings of the lieux themselves. The evocation of the Hotel du Nord is particularly telling in that it was not the site of a historical event but the real location, on Paris’s Canal Saint Martin, of a fictional place in a “cult” film, a place that was emblematic of the working-class east side of Paris in the interwar years. The movement in the 1980s to preserve the quays and typical apartment buildings of the Canal Saint-Martin demonstrated cinema’s power to mediate self-image in postmodern society but also the nostalgic desire for authenticity discussed above. This site, not too far from the Rotonde de la Villette, was saved from destruction in extremis when Valéry Giscard d’Estaing’s administration halted (in 1977) the construction of a planned highway that would have covered the Canal Saint-Martin. The area was later rehabilitated by the City, in a project directed by the architect Antoine Grumbach. The expanding drive for conservation and commemoration that Nora describes through the example of the constantly expanding scope and number of additions to the French list of historic monuments and sites has touched the capital through citizens’ demands for more historical preservation (though this was not the case in Bercy) (“L’Ère” 1002–006). This drive has also permeated architectural theory (the ville sédimentaire, a phrase coined by architect Antoine Grumbach, being but one example) resulting in an official policy of increased, nuanced attention to the past but also the accretion of symbolism and meaning to every remaining trace of various pasts.
the site of key collectively experienced events in French history. Lastly, the site has not up to now served as a dispositif that brought historical content into a symbolic structure. Nevertheless, the site had an image in the collective memory, as a mysterious “monde à part” within Paris in films (such as Louis Feuillade’s Juve contre Fantômas, 1913) and as the working-class East Side in pulp detective novels (Simenon’s 1970 Maigret et le marchand de vin or Léo Malet’s Casse-pipe à la Nation of 1974).\textsuperscript{143} In the 1970s and 1980s, when sites of this urban working-class identity such as the Canal Saint Martin or the Belleville neighborhood were seen as at risk or under pressure on all sides—from the economic pressure of a booming Parisian real estate market, the national employment crisis, and the transition to a service economy—the Bercy neighborhood serves as a stand-in for a collective identity that extended far beyond its own boundaries.

When the Bercy redevelopment was announced, articles in Le Monde and in architecture journals blossomed with the argot (slang) of the pinardiers (wine dealers) among their chais, the wine and liquor warehouses (see Champenois; Pousse, “Vitalité”).\textsuperscript{144} These mildly nostalgic articles participate in the dilation and transformation throughout the twentieth century of the concept of patrimoine, a transformation from historical value to age-value observed not just by Alois Riegl, as discussed above, but also by Pierre Nora. Nora states that there has been an “explosion” of the notion of patrimoine, “de la valeur historique à la valeur d’ancienneté,” “de l’âge historique à l’âge

\textsuperscript{143} Previously, Bercy had been one of the industrial Seine riverbank sites that attracted the Impressionists, and was painted by Paul Cézanne, Armand Guillaumin, and Antoine Guillaumet. My thanks to Derek Knight for alerting me to this pictorial documentation.

\textsuperscript{144} Several works on the history of the neighborhood and several on the history of the wine trade were also published during the years of the renovation. See for example, Mouraux, “Château, maisons de plaisance, et entrepôts de Bercy,” and Mouraux and Champeix, Bercy: Les entrepôts, le village de Bercy, l’aventure humaine . . .
mémoriel” (Nora, “L’Ere” 1001). Sites and phenomena that may not have seemed worth commemorating or preserving in previous eras become valued as witnesses to the past.

Conclusion

Parisian urban design since 1977 has aimed to maintain each neighborhood’s varying historic “urban fabrics” even in areas not previously considered to be historic (Pousse, “Nouveaux horizons” 85). The existing building volumes, land plots, streetscapes, architectural styles—however modest and vernacular—and the distribution and dimensions of public spaces have come to be recognized as the memory elements constitutive of Paris’s identity (APUR, “Plan” 15). The city has become amenable to “l'expression [des] différentes périodes historiques d'évolution; leurs traces [... ] superposées, chacune reprenant des données de l'occupation précédente, sans jamais l'effacer complètement” in the Bercy area as in other redevelopment projects (Micheloni 122). Though this urban fabric may not have the collective significance or the density of meaning of a monument, the awareness of the past and of “age-value” lends it worth and allows its more subtle qualities to be recognized.

Nora's statement regarding national commemoration, that the memory impulse has “investi l'espace tout entier du soupçon de son identité virtuelle, doublé toutes les

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145 Didier Rebois, writing for Architecture d'aujourd'hui in 1994, describes the APUR’s plan for the east side of Paris as a “reconquest,” claiming that the APUR’s strategy was to re-affirm a traditional urban design, one in which the periphery was subservient to the center for its identity and its symbolism. According to Rebois, underneath the rhetoric of local diversity in the Plan Programme was an aim to transform all of Paris intra-muros, even the outer eastern arrondissements, which had in the past been considered “peripheral,” into a symbolic core, “un lieu de consommation de signes, une mémoire reconstituée de la ville,” proportioned to hold its own against the accelerating and relatively unregulated growth of the suburbs. Rebois accuses the APUR of being willing to inflict a rigid neo-Haussmannian urbanism on these previously peripheral areas, a charge that I find exaggerated.
chose présentes d’une dimension de l’antérieur” seems applicable to the Bercy site (“L’ère” 1011). Bercy, while not in itself a lieu de mémoire according to Nora’s definition, participates in the larger (com)memorative impulse of contemporary society through its historical traces, but more importantly, through design elements—in particular the ruins and the walkway patterns—that allude to the activity system of memory more than to specific past events or a vanishing collective memory. Though the park’s designers mingled the memory elements of the design with a picturesque aesthetic, a “phenomenal transparence” operates to create harmony between the picturesque, nostalgic, and critical memory aspects of the park, between traces of its past and of the present. Thanks to the cultural processes that were concurrent with the park’s development, small acts such as invoking the term “memory” in the park's name and leaving in or bringing to the site these few, tantalizingly mysterious traces from the past immediately situate the visitor’s experience in the (com)memorative mode. Despite most visitors' lack of personal memory of the site’s past, the park succeeds in suggesting that it preserves places where such a memory trace might emerge, should this trace exist, and that an exploration of the park could be experienced as an imaginary ramble through the past. In a way that coexists with official urban design discourse in Paris at the time, the park designers allow the past and its legibility within the present, but also its discontinuity, to be suggested by the fragments, ruin, and double street alignment. As Pierre Nora states, “la mémoire en effet est un cadre plus qu'un contenu, un enjeu toujours disponible, un ensemble de stratégies... qui vaut moins par ce qu'il est que par ce qu'on en fait” (Nora, “Présentation” 16). By developing a meta-discourse on memory
that was coherent with official urban design discourse in Paris at the time, this
idiosyncratic, peripheral space becomes a threshold anew. Today, it is a threshold that
bridges the pre-Haussmann-era past to the present, overlaying the disruptive—now de-
legitimized—modernist renovation practices of the 1950s and 1960s. Present-day
Parisian urban design finds a symbolic boost in recovering this continuity, while the
newly coherent local features of the site contribute to central Paris’s historic identity.

As Marot states in his commentary on Freud’s Rome of Civilization and its
Discontents, the city is like an “organism” whose “spatiotemporal depth, now
transparent, now opaque, is more or less available to the voyage of memory.” Marot
continues:

It could even be that certain places were expressly conceived and designed, at a
specific period in our history, to satisfy this free play of consciousness and
retrospective imagination. Here again it is of the garden in particular that we are
thinking: first, of course, in the staging of ruin and fragment […] but above all
because of the garden’s potential capacity to carve out a space amidst the
contemporary urban theatre, a hollow where all the epochs of the city are virtually
and simultaneously present, because no single one imposes itself in its built
opacity. (Sub-urbanism 32)

Marot’s claim that gardens are highly apt sites of memory is powerful and
resonates with the features of the Parc de Bercy described above. Though the park is
neither a memory framework as were the imaginary (and then real) sites of the ars
memorativa nor a lieu de mémoire in Nora’s sense, an analysis of what memory means in
Bercy brings forth a number of key points about the role of gardens in the contemporary context. As Marot claims, gardens (like most urban development) are no longer constructed on virgin territory and cannot simply ignore what has occurred prior to their creation. Rather than being places outside of time, gardens may illustrate a certain perception of time. In addition, gardens must confront the question of how the relationship between nature and culture should be framed in the postmodern context.

Gardens also demand a meditation on questions of authenticity. In the Parc de Bercy, we see an attempt to introduce elements from the past into the present, while encouraging a reflection on our own relationship with this past, without imposing one time period as dominant. The park plays with the question of its own age because of the historical references, the trees, and ruins, which also suggest an ongoing confrontation between humans and nature. The trope of allegory binds these themes of time, authenticity, nostalgia, nature and culture together, and it may be said that the park should be considered aesthetically postmodern on the basis of its use of this rhetorical trope and of memory as understood here. Perhaps the most important conclusion from this analysis is that the garden is, indeed, an important type of city space: a space where people are invited to behave, feel, and think differently from the way they do in other areas of urban space, but nevertheless a space that may reinforce the signification of the urban landscape around it and contribute to the collective experience of the city.

To return to the quote at the beginning of this chapter: “The century of expanding cities has passed. Ours is now the time of deepening territories.” The landscape architect Pierre Donadieu adopts the notion of territoires from anthropology, as “lieux de vie des
individus et des sociétés” (37). Faced with modern mobility, humans need identification with territorial spaces as a collective project. Donadieu continues: “Devenu enjeu de société, le territoire ne se réduit plus à un support commode et neutre d’activités, il est organisé en fonction d’un centre, l’homme sensible, à la recherche du sens de son milieu de vie. A ce titre, il est profondément politique” (38). Landscape thought and practice transform material spaces into territoires; a “landscape society” performs this activity “de manière citoyenne” (139, 140).

The era of modern development is under question: development is no longer about increasing the amount of space occupied by humans (or European post-industrial nations) but about reworking, “deepening,” and enriching the relationship between humans and the territory they occupy. Second, this reworking or deepening is not city-building, traditionally imagined as replacing natural environments with human technological creations, but a process that involves both the technological and the natural intertwined.
Figure 3.2: The lawn of the Parc de Bercy, as seen from the top of the earthwork, above the fountain.
Figure 3.3: The Passerelle Simone de Beauvoir.
Figure 3.4: The terrace at the top of the earthwork.
Figure 3.5: The Bercy skate park.
Figure 3.6: The Jardin Blanc (Winter).
Figure 3.7: The Jardin Rouge (Autumn).
Figure 3.8: The Jardin Noir (Summer).
Figure 3.9: The Jardin Bleu (Spring).
Figure 3.10: An element of the Jardin romantique.
Figure 3.11: A hand-drawn eighteenth-century map of the Bercy neighborhood. Source: Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris (BHVP) B1072. “Plan des maisons de plaisance situées à Bercy, entre le clos de la Rapée et la rue Grange aux Merciers, d’après un terrier de 1724–1726.”
Figure 3.12: A map of the Bercy area, showing the warehouses in 1859. Source: BHVP B1078 “Bercy Plan de l’ancienne commune en 1859, d’après l’atlas de Lefevre.” Le Wuhrer SC, 1860.
Figure 3.13: An early version of the renovation plans for the area around the Gare de Lyon and Gare d’Austerlitz. Source: Atelier parisien d’urbanisme (APUR). “‘Le schéma de secteur Seine Sud-Est.’” Paris projet: Aménagement urbanisme avenir 12 (1974): 80–81.
Figure 3.16: La Maison du jardinage.
Figure 3.17: The Chai de Bercy.
Figure 3.18: The Maison du Lac.
Figure 3.19: Remnants of the Petit Château de Bercy.
Figure 3.20: Remnants of the Marché Saint-Germain.
Figure 3.21: Old and new walkways “overlap.”
Figure 3.22: Map showing the original riverbank and streets of the warehouse sector. The original riverbank and streets are in light gray, and the stabilized riverbank and new street pattern in dark gray. Source: “La Trame de voirie (1975) avant la construction du Palais Omnisports.” APUR. N.d.
Chapter Four: La Promenade Plantée
Introduction

In 2005, the Promenade plantée\textsuperscript{146} was selected as one of five routes during the Nuit Blanche of 1–2 October for which its coordinator, Jean Blaise, had chosen the theme “Drôles d’endroits.” The Nuit Blanche festivities opened up an unusual perspective on this linear park, running between buildings and through city blocks from directly behind the Bastille Opera house to the périphérique in the Twelfth Arrondissement (see Figure 4.1). In addition to the portion of the park built atop a former railway viaduct, nearby public spaces such as the Reuilly garden and swimming pool, tunnels, the Mairie d’arrondissement and various squares were also illuminated by artists’ installations and performances.

The installation by artist Virginie Barré on the Promenade plantée itself, called “Les Naufrageurs,” was an evocation of film. As the official Nuit Blanche website put it, “[o]n est à la fois chez Hitchcock, Kubrick, et Lynch” (“Drôles d’endroits”).\textsuperscript{147} On a walkway between vines, shrubs, and ornamental trees, eight meters above street level on the north side of the avenue, marking the southern boundary of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, “le promeneur, décollé de l’asphalte, se retrouve ‘suspendu’ entre fiction et réalité. Dans ce travelling ‘naturel’, s’immiscent autour de lui des personnages, des fragments de décors, des accessoires . . . Il surprend alors ce qu’il n’était peut-être pas censé voir . . .” (Mairie du Douzième Arrondissement de Paris). Fantasy, the imaginary, and the unexpected drew upon the unusual point of view from the promenade on, and

\textsuperscript{146} Although “Promenade plantée,” “Viaduc des arts,” and “Coulée verte” seem to be used interchangeably to describe this project, “Viaduc des arts” specifically refers to the viaduct, not the rest of the promenade. The City prefers the term “Promenade plantée” to avoid confusion with the “Coulée verte” that runs south from Porte de Vanves along the TGV Atlantique line into the département of Hauts-de-Seine, to the RER station Massy-Verrières (Evangelista, “Guided Visit”).

\textsuperscript{147} Barré’s other works include sculptures and installations, one of which was based on the Stanley Kubrick film \textit{The Shining}, in which the viewer was invited to “pénétrer à l’intérieur du schéma narratif de base du récit fantastique” (“Martin Walde” 70).
sometimes into, neighboring buildings—the rambling workshops of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine and the bourgeois apartments of the Avenue Daumesnil. As Blaise stated, the installation “a été conçue comme une sorte de travelling dans la ville, en position de voyeur un peu à la manière d’un thriller” (Gignoux). For the artists of the Nuit blanche, the Promenade plantée’s most singular features were the movement offered to walkers and the views one could have onto the surrounding city. Through the installation, the viewer unexpectedly discovered hidden corners of the cityscape and of private spaces, transformed into scenes from an imaginary thriller, feeling the sensation of physically moving through a filmic traveling shot.

This chapter will attempt to clarify these initial impressions, beginning with an examination of traditional notions of “promenade,” particularly within the city of Paris. While the Promenade plantée reflects the tradition of Parisian public parks inherited from Haussmann and Alphand in the use of certain plants and urban furniture, it also looks back at this tradition from a century and a quarter’s remove. The contemporary urban context as well as changing perceptions of nature and the cityscape influence visitors’ perceptions of the park in ways that are quite different from Second Empire Parisians. Next, I will examine the interplay between modern technologies and visual perception while moving through space, first, isolated in the architectural effect of parallax, but then integrated into new experiences brought about in the modern era, train travel and early film. We will see that not only does the Promenade plantée refer literally to its past state, a train track, but such experiences may still be found due to the design of the garden. Lastly, in a similar vein, we shall examine the experience of early film and accounts of this new medium by art historians. Elements of poststructuralist theory as applied to
contemporary sculpture will allow a transition from an account of the experience of the Promenade plantée based primarily on visibility and sight, to one that focuses on the body and a more integrated, multi-sensory perception. These types of experiences, when framed by theory from art history, architecture, and landscape architecture, converge in the notions of the “sublime picturesque,” a phrase coined by art historian Yve-Alain Bois, and “phenomenological picturesque,” a notion put forth by landscape architect Holly Getch Clarke. Grounded in the body and the experience of perception situated within time and space, these ideas allow us to better grasp the interest of the Promenade plantée not only as a new type of park (within the Parisian park tradition) but also a dispositif that blurs the boundary between city context and park content, and renders the city around it more artistic, more attractive, and more interesting.

Description

The Promenade plantée, called “l’un des plus ambitieux projets que Paris ait connu depuis Alphand,” was opened progressively from 1989 to 1992 along 4.7 kilometers of disused railway track from just behind the Bastille Opera house (by architect Carlo Ott, completed 1989) to the Parc de Vincennes (Marot, “Bastille-Vincennes” 6–7).\(^\text{148}\) This linear park traverses the entire Twelfth Arrondissement, revealing a cross-section of the diverse urban fabrics of this faubourg neighborhood (10). A stroll along this elevated vantage point allows multiple views, from an unusual height and perspective, on the

\(^{148}\) The railway line belonged to the private Paris-Strasbourg company. It was inaugurated in 1859 and used to bring workers and theater-goers from the suburbs, as well as roses to Les Halles (Baudoin 24). It was closed in Paris in 1969, upon the development of the RER (Mathieux and Cougouliègne, 104; Marot, “Bastille-Vincennes” 10). By 1983, the Conseil de Paris had voted to transform the entire railway line into a promenade and in 1987 voted to launch the project (“La Promenade Plantée Bastille-Bois de Vincennes”) (see Figure 4.2).
heterogeneous constructions of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine as well as the nineteenth- and twentieth-century apartment buildings fronting the Avenue Daumesnil. It was designed by the architect Philippe Mathieux and the landscape architect Jacques Vergely, under contract to the city of Paris.149

The entire length of the Promenade plantée has certain constant built and vegetal elements, many of which will be discussed in more detail below: ornamental trees with small, colored leaves and flowers, especially cherry trees; evergreen shrubs and hedges; low growing and spreading ground covers used instead of lawns; simple, all-weather hard surfaces, such as asphalt, stabilized earth, and some cobblestones; and a specific line of furniture (La Promenade plantée, un jardin en continu 7–8). However, the design of the Promenade plantée is not uniform along its entire length, and is often described as divided into “sequences.”

From west to east, the first sequence is between the Bastille opera and the Rue de Rambouillet. This first sector of the promenade runs on the north side of the Avenue de Lyon and the Avenue Daumesnil atop the newly restored railway viaduct, eight meters high by ten across, constructed of stone and faced in red brick (Bédarida 99, 97, 101) (see Figure 4.3). Visitors ascend stairways and elevators at the Bastille end and at intersections where the viaduct passes over cross streets, to discover a centered walkway with planting beds to each side. Simple green metal benches placed with their backs to the Faubourg Saint-Antoine allow for people-watching and provide a view of the upper halves of the

149 Mathieux and Vergely also worked together on the Jardin du Bassin de l’Arsenal. Mathieux’s other projects include renovations to the quays of the Seine, the Place Félix-Eboué, and other public spaces as well as private buildings (Mathieux, Interview). Vergely taught at the Ecole du Breuïl, which trains gardeners for the city of Paris, and has been involved in a number of park projects for the City, including the Les Halles renovation of 1967–1985 and a cancelled renovation to the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont (Vergely).
apartment buildings across the Avenue Daumesnil. The many large shrubs, some evergreen, some flowering, with varied foliage, serve to establish the basic profile of the garden around the central path, punctuated by small beds of annual flowers, bulbs, and rosebushes. Once the pattern of benches, shrubs, and ornamental trees has been established, the visitor discovers a series of “jardins clos” reached “en franchissant une porte végétale:” “le jardin de haies taillées, le jardin blanc, le jardin de treillage, les colonnes de roses” (Mathieux, “La Promenade plantée” 221). These “gardens” are a series of pergolas and trellises that alternately constrict, and then expand, the space around the path. The elegantly twined roses, ivy, and honeysuckle provide a perfect habitat for twittering sparrows.

The park’s designers struggled with this idiosyncratic space and employed several techniques to make it appear varied and less linear, and to make the most of the shallow soil atop the masonry structure. The shrubs in particular seem to be chosen to serve both as structure and decoration, displaying flowers, colored stems, or seasonally varying leaves. According to Vergely, in a small space, a high proportion of evergreens may be used “pour que le parti d’aménagement reste lisible” (Interview). Hardy vines rapidly grow over the trellises and can provide an opaque, lush screen of greenery much faster than other types of plants, while requiring less water and soil.

The Avenue Daumesnil and the viaduct (constructed 1855–1859, Baudoin 23–24) had previously been seen not merely as a boundary between two neighborhoods, but in fact as a barrier between the Faubourg Saint-Antoine to the north and the area around the Gare de Lyon, rebuilt under Haussmann (1847). Before the Avenue Daumesnil was

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150 According to Vergely, these jardins clos contained “grimpantes,” “rosiers,” “plantes grises,” and “vivaces” (Interview).
pierced in 1858 (Baudoin 21), the major east-west thoroughfare for this area of Paris had been the Rue de Charenton to the north (Maréchal 28) (see Figure 4.4). Françoise Gerard-Hirne, an architecture student whose diploma project (1978) was a study of the railway line, asserted that the viaduct had been built without any attention to the lot divisions (parcellaire) of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. Nor had this parcellaire been consolidated or redesigned to create a transition between the viaduct and the street tissue of the neighborhood. Passages in the center of îlots, which used to lead to the Rue de Charenton, had simply been blocked or made their way “tant bien que mal” through the nearest vault (Gerard-Hirne 30). Continuing the railway line to the west of the viaduct, a long, blind embankment and retaining wall ran from the Rue de Rambouillet to the Reuilly train yard, a distance of 1.7 kilometers, pierced by only two tunnels. Even these had been closed by 1978 (Gerard-Hirne 36).151 Sebastian Marot, on the other hand, in a critique of the recently opened Promenade plantée, read the original railway line as already “urbanogène, génératrice de situations,” since its own infrastructure created sites and the neighborhoods springing up around it were influenced by it (“Bastille-Vincennes” 12). One could argue that the arcades of the viaduct had been occupied by various businesses, and that the Reuilly train station, near the Mairie d’arrondissement at the east end of the embankment, created a point of attraction, counterbalancing to some degree the physical obstacle of the embankment.

151 Gerard-Hirne pursues this idea using a slightly overwrought metaphor of the city as living flesh: “Le tissu du Faubourg Saint-Antoine, […] reste tel, taillé à vif. Les arrières des parcelles se ressoudent tant bien que mal au viaduc. Aucune restructuration [de l’interface viaduc-Faubourg] n’est envisagée […] créant ainsi une plaie sans la cautérer” (24). Gerard-Hirne proposed to open up passages from the Faubourg Saint-Antoine to Avenue Daumesnil in the courtyards, a modification that was only accomplished in a couple of places (40).
In 1987, the city of Paris’s dispositions for rehabilitation of the viaduct were, first, to preserve the visual aspect of the work, but also to adapt it to support not only a garden on top but also workshops and stores within its arches. The Conseil de Paris stipulated, for example, that new entrances to the promenade would be created on the viaduct “sans toucher à sa structure générale” and “dans le respect du caractère de l’ouvrage,” while the façades of the viaduct would be restored (Conseil de Paris 17). By 1991, the architect Patrick Berger had been selected by competition to renovate sixty-seven arcades of the viaduct, including the seven bays at its western end that were on property belonging to the State, the Hôpital des Quinze-Vingts (Perrin 1991).

According to Berger, the goal of the renovation was to “faire lire la tectonique du viaduc, c’est-à-dire, les voûtes” (Berger, “Questions” 39). Berger developed elements of the “façade” on Avenue Daumesnil to emphasize the dimensionality of the work. The rich materiality of the fronts that he designed for the shops to occupy the arches, careful compositions of wood, glass, and metal, play off of the vaults’ new red brick facings and white stone cornices. These fronts are set slightly into the intrados of the arch, calling attention to its depth. Translucent glass at the rear of the arches floods the interior spaces with a diffuse, even light (see Figures 4.5 and 4.6)

152 Patrick Berger’s works and ideas are discussed further in Chapter 2 on the Parc André-Citroën, for which he worked with Gilles Clément to develop the Serial Gardens and their greenhouses as well as the Grandes Serres. He is the architect of an apartment building in Paris’s First Arrondissement (rue Quincampoix, 1983); the Ecole d’architecture de Bretagne-Rennes (1990); the Maison de l’Université de Bourgogne in Dijon (1993); the headquarters of UEFA, the European soccer commission in Nyon, Switzerland (1994); and a French–Japanese Monument to Communication on an island near Osaka (1989–1998) among other projects (“Parcours, Réalisations, Projets”). His projects, described as “a process of reduction” by Jacques Lucan, are known for their attention to materials, for as Berger states, “it is the material as such that contains the ultimate reality of architecture” (58, 59).
Berger was also attentive to the potential of the viaduct as a large-scale structure. According to Xavier Duroux, Berger is concerned with “une continuité de l’espace public … qui se réinvente” (Davidts et al. 29). Of the structure as a whole, Berger remarked:

Les caractéristiques du viaduc produisent une singularité d’espace public surélevé et linéaire en suivant un réseau. Sa continuité, en deçà des discontinuités urbaines du douzième arrondissement, laisse entrevoir le potentiel d’espaces publics qui seraient associés aux grands réseaux, qu’ils soient ferroviaires, hydrographiques ou routiers. L’espace public, condition démocratique de la ville, doit adapter ses formes et ses localisations à la ville contemporaine et non l’inverse. (Lucan 61)

The viaduct, when considered with its surroundings, is thus a prime example of the “sedimentary city” theorized by Antoine Grumbach, a notion that calls our attention to the formation of an urban landscape over time, during which disparate elements created for different purposes, at different periods of history, develop relations with each other to form a characteristic or typical overall pattern. These elements are affected by economic, social, and technological change, sometimes resulting in their devaluation and obsolescence, but also creating opportunities for transformation and re-use.

The promenade is not isolated from the rest of the city atop the viaduct. Instead the whole structure is used to create the links and transitions that this neighborhood lacked, from the top of the Promenade to the street level, but also transversally through the Faubourg Saint-Antoine and vertically. Stairs to the Promenade have been added to the structure at each cross street, allowing access from many different points along its length, while alleys perpendicular to the Rue du Charenton now lead to passages under the viaduct (see Figure 4.7).
Berger’s restoration of the arches to become usable space resulted in the “Viaduc des Arts.” These modern spaces, where artisans could both work and display their wares for sale, were meant to perpetuate the tradition of fine craftsmanship and artisan trades of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. As noted in the “Plan Programme de l’Est de Paris” (see Bercy chapter for a more extensive description of the Plan Programme) the image of the East Side, especially of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, was linked to an economy centered on artisan production. However, by the early 1980s, the sector was in reality threatened, handicapped by an outdated and dilapidated built stock, lacking capital for investment, and generally going out of fashion (“Le Plan programme,” 13–14). The Viaduc des Arts, in addition to the “centre des métiers de l’art” (see below) and a sector of rehabilitation centered on the Place d’Aligre and bordering the center of the Viaduc des Arts to the north, were elements in a strategy to combat these factors (Perrin; “Le Plan programme,” 17). Artisans began moving into 55 of the arcades in January, 1994 (Ambroise-Rendu). Today, one can find weavers, luthiers, glass-blowers, contemporary designers, upholsterers, framers, gilders, and leatherworkers, among other artisans, housed in the arcades. These shops, and the cafés that now cluster around the streets closest to the Gare de Lyon, have attracted an upscale crowd of window-shoppers, particularly on weekends.  

153 In June 1988 and April 1989 the City and SEMAEST (the public/private consortium that was charged with various renovation projects on Paris’s East side) held consultations with promoters, selecting the SFIII (Société française d’ingénierie et d’investissements immobiliers) and the SORIF (Société de réalisations immobilières et financières), to work with the “Groupement pour l’animation du viaduc Daumesnil,” uniting organizations such as the Chambre des métiers, l’Ecole Boulle (the design school that perpetuated the Faubourg’s craft traditions of fine furniture and interior design), and the Union nationale des industries de l’ameublement. The vaults were made available to artisans and galleries upon application, with a rent-subsidy scheme (Pierrat n. pag.).

154 The City also began other measures to protect the unusual architecture, urbanism, and economy of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine around this time. A new Plan d’occupation des sols enacted between 1994 and 1998 not only regulated such architectural elements as façade height, material, color, and roof profile, but
Another attempt to transform infrastructure into congenial public space along the Viaduct is the Jardin Hector Malot, contiguous to it on the north side (see Figure 4.8). Designed by the architect Andreas Christo-Foroux, who proudly called it “une opération phare d’écologie,” the garden is located on a series of stepped platforms atop a multistory parking garage (Maréchal 109). Christo-Foroux stated that his aim was to “prendre en considération les contraintes urbaines et faire des infrastructures un élément du paysage. Il ne s’agit plus d’embellir la ville, on n’en a plus les moyens, mais de la positiviser [sic] à partir de ses éléments techniques pour faire du paysage” (Maréchal 109). While it was praised by Jean-Pierre Le Dantec when it was first opened, this park seems scruffy and ill-maintained as of January 2008. Its worn dirt, jumble of plants and shrubs, and overgrown bamboo lend it an unkempt air, and it is one of the areas along the Promenade in which homeless people loiter, a sign that it has been abandoned by other users.

Past the Rue Rambouillet begins the “Rambouillet-Charenton” sector on the former embankment, which has been replaced by a building at the same elevation as the viaduct. (see Figure 4.9) Vladimir Mitrofanoff won the design competition (1987) for a Centre des Métiers de l’Art of 23,000 square meters (Perrin 1991). However, neither this center, nor the exhibit halls or restaurant that were planned alongside it, ever opened (Maréchal 67). Today the building houses an electronics store and a sporting goods store.

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also measures meant to encourage small businesses and workshops, such as a minimum height for the ground floor, the preservation of courtyards and alleys at the interior of parcels, and limited density (“Un POS sur mesure” 120–23). Other municipal programs combined subsidies, rent controls, and other measures to encourage private rehabilitation projects and to support low-income tenants. An economic study of the neighborhood completed in 1997 proposed measures, including “la mise en valeur de liaisons entre le faubourg et le Viaduc des Arts,” to protect and encourage artisanal and artistic activities (116–19). 155 “Que démontre [. . .] le jeune architecte Andréas Christo-Foroux? Premièrement, qu’il est possible, pour peu qu’on y investisse une énergie mentale peu courante, de créer sept niveaux de parkings où il est agréable de garer sa voiture, et ce pour un coût inférieur à celui des coupe-gorges habituels. Deuxièmement que, dans la mesure où cette assise a été (aussi) pensée comme devant porter un jardin, celui-ci peut être tout autre chose qu’un maquillage végétal de trémies et de bouches d’aération. Pas mal, non?” (Le Dantec, “Demain les chiens” 9).
Two dramatically vertical apartment buildings, one at each end of this low building, serve as monumental portals for pedestrians along the Promenade, who pass through the buildings’ centers (see Figures 4.10 and 4.11). Otherwise, this section is almost indistinguishable from the Bastille-Rambouillet section in style, though a subtle widening of the garden area allows for slight deviations on the paved path. Its last section is a “Mediterranean” garden, a longitudinal reflecting pool surrounded by lavender.156

According to Philippe Mathieux, the Promenade plantée and the renovations that accompanied it have changed the neighborhood for the better. There are more boutiques and stores, of “better quality,” and several cafés have been renovated or opened. Despite the fact that the electronics store was initially a second choice to the Centre des métiers de l’art, it has anchored an entire street, the Rue Montgallet, of shops selling and repairing computers, cell phones, video game consoles, stereos, and other technology. The sidewalk in front of the Viaduc was improved and new bus stops were added to the Avenue Daumesnil. These renovations have led to some gentrification of the neighborhood, resulting in higher rent prices, but for the most part, the changes brought by the creation of the Promenade plantée and its attendant renovations are perceived as positive (Interview).

Once the Promenade’s visitors cross the intersection of the Rue de Charenton and the Rue Montgallet on a metal catwalk, they enter the new neighborhood of Reuilly, a development constructed between 1985 and 1991 on a former SNCF terrain (Petermuller 224).157 The promenade becomes a graceful bridge arcing over a lush circular lawn, the

156 According to tour guide Fadia Evangelista, the layering of lavender, shrubs, and trees moving out from the viewer’s center of vision creates the optical illusion of a broader space (Evangelista).
157 The Gare de Reuilly (12.5 hectares) opened in 1877 and, though closed to commuter traffic, remained open for switching and freight until the mid-1980s. The City purchased the Reuilly yard in 1985, when it
Jardin de Reuilly’s most dramatic feature. This public garden, which serves as the first
direct link between the green space of the Promenade and the urban environment, also
includes children’s playgrounds, thematic gardens, and a more traditional garden forming
a series of terraces leading down to the Avenue Daumesnil and the Mairie of the Twelfth
Arrondissement.\(^{158}\) The promenade touches ground level for the first time on the eastern
end of the garden, running between a new municipal gymnasium and pool and crossing
the Rue Eugène-Hénard at street level.

Proceeding to the east, past the Jardin de Reuilly, the promenade becomes the
Allée Vivaldi. Though nothing more than a simple composition of sidewalks, lawns, a
few ornamental trees, and trimmed hedges, this esplanade is the harmonious,
proportioned centerpiece of the Reuilly development.\(^{159}\) A new series of buildings along
this esplanade punctuate the space between the Allée and the SNCF’s monolithic housing
block along the Avenue Daumesnil (Marot, “Bastille-Vincennes” 28). Among these
contemporary buildings, the Gare de Reuilly has now been renovated as a meeting space
for various associations and clubs, within an enclosed garden of decorative and fruit-
bearing trees, flowers, and ornamental shrubs. A tunnel under the Rue de Reuilly,
ornamented with artificial grottos and fountains, forms an unusual transition to the
eastern half of the Promenade plantée.

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\(^{158}\) A series of thematic gardens include an aquatic garden; a garden of tropical succulents; a fern garden; an
azalea, rhododendron, and camellia garden; and a vine garden (Louf 2).

\(^{159}\) The Allée Vivaldi is enclosed by four apartment buildings designed by Olivier Brenac and Xavier
Gonzales. The geometrical composition of their façades is meant to be an homage to Mondrian (Maréchal
69).
From this point to the eastern boundary of Paris, the Promenade plantée changes dramatically. Rather than being elevated, running alongside a major street, and offering views of the surrounding cityscape, it runs through a trench in the middle of large city blocks, where trees and vegetation on the slopes camouflage the surrounding buildings. And rather than plants carefully selected for their contrasting foliage, their well-timed blooming patterns, and their predictable shapes, most of the greenery is composed of volunteer plants that sprang up alongside the railway. Ground covers include ivy, Virginia creeper, or a tangle of annuals that might be labeled “weeds” in other Parisian parks. The abundant trees are almost all hardy colonizers of poor, disturbed soil such as Tree of Heaven (*ailanthus*). Asphalt and stabilized earth form the pathways, framed by evergreen shrubs which are only lightly pruned. Other “rustic” species, including elder, lilac, European filbert, Oriental hornbeam, and rose bushes, supplement this existing vegetation (Burie 45) (see Figure 4.12).

After passing under the Rue de Picpus and Boulevard de Picpus, this isolated, quiet portion of the Promenade eventually emerges at street level along the Rue du Sahel, the first portion of the Promenade plantée to be constructed (Vergely, Interview). This area is complicated because the main Promenade (including a bicycle path) runs in part directly alongside a street, while a branch forks off and gains elevation to cross a bridge into the Sahel-Montempoivre housing development and reach the Jardin Charles Péguy. This re-emergence into the Parisian streetscape allows for views on surrounding

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160 The Jardin Charles Péguy, designed by Alain Gilot and Liliane Grunig-Tribel (1988–1989), accompanies a housing development on the wedge-shaped tract where the Bastille-Vincennes railway merged into the Petite Ceinture. This park does not live up to its potential: the effort to create a major axis with a canal and basin seems pretentious in such a small place, and takes up space that people could occupy. The materials, such as marble paving for the park’s main axis, brick or stabilisé for other paths, and concrete retaining walls, seem incoherent. Perhaps their usage was meant to create a hierarchy of spaces but the effect is not
apartment typologies dating from a late nineteenth-century corner building to 1930’s brick, to modern buildings. The promenade responds to this structured context with an Alphandian alignment of benches and trees, plus boxwoods and ornamentals. The pedestrian area has, in addition to slower-growing shrubs such as boxwood, a wider variety of flowering trees (redbud, linden, and catalpa), shrubs (boxleaf honeysuckle) and ground covers than in the trench areas. (Burie 45). The one piece of sculpture on the route of the Promenade plantée is also here (see Figure 4.13).

Past the Montempoivre neighborhood, the Promenade plantée passes under the Petite ceinture railway and once again enters a trench until it reaches the Périphérique. Like the areas between Reuilly and Avenue Bizot, the walkways, in asphalt and stabilisé between concrete curbs, are framed by dark-leaved, perennial shrubs pruned in a loose box shape. Small trees that have colonized the trench populate the slopes. Although features such as benches and fences generally belong to the less-fussy end of the Parisian park typology spectrum, some touches connote the rustic—logs creating steps and borders along a sloped dirt path, for example, or paving stones set directly into the earth (see Figure 4.14). The borders of the park are marked either by park services metal convincing. The lamps, which appear to be modeled on gas lamps from London rather than a Parisian type, are surreal among the vegetation—an appealing touch.

Worse, the square has been poorly maintained. The marble paving is coming loose or broken and plants have grown too big for their sites (this is a problem from the start, but is made worse by lack of upkeep). Graffiti and paths worn into the vegetation indicate a lack of regard; it may be that skateboarding has contributed to the degradation of the pavers and borders. The more natural-looking part of the garden is more successful, as beech trees planted on a slope covered in ivy shelter a sinuous path and a scenic bridge. The garden is being expanded to include a part of the Petite Ceinture as a natural area (a “friche jardinée”) and a community garden.

Overall this garden is less adapted to the needs and usages of the nearby inhabitants and less well-maintained than other spaces along the Promenade plantée. I do approve of the interconnection between the Promenade plantée and the Petite Ceinture; renovating the garden to emphasize the continuity among these spaces might be a nice way forward. Even keeping the overall current structure, a renovation that would simplify the vegetal palette and the hard materials, reducing the area accorded to decorative elements and reining in the invasive vegetal subjects (committing to pruning or moving/replacing) would make the garden more user-friendly and potentially reduce the abuse of which it has been the object.
fencing or by traces of earlier barriers—some picturesque walls in rusticated limestone, overhung with ivy and vines, surmounted in a few spots by metal fencing. Occasionally it is possible to catch glimpses of the surrounding large apartment complexes, hospitals and schools that abut the Promenade, especially near the Boulevard Soult where the promenade is just a few feet below ground level.

A green metal belvedere, supporting a spiral staircase and surmounted by a mushroom-shaped decorative element, marks the intersection with the Périphérique and provides the transition from the trench level to ground level (see Figure 4.15). While a ramp leads to the Rue Edouard Lartet, which passes under the périph’, this is where the Promenade plantée ends. The Commission des opérations immobilières, which approves the cost of renovations to city property, did not approve the budget to extend the promenade to the Bois de Boulogne along the Boulevard de la Guyane (which, though outside the périph’, is within the limits of Paris) (Prinet 21). A bike path, protected from traffic by a curb, leads to the Bois de Vincennes but pedestrians have simply worn a path in the dirt along a tree alignment.

As a connecting thread between the Parc de Vincennes, the waterway of the Canal Saint-Martin and the Bassin de l'Arsenal, and beyond, the Promenade plantée is a major addition to Paris's system of green spaces. It has generally been acclaimed as a success. A former directeur de l’aménagement urbain for the city of Paris, Jacques Marvillet, called the Promenade “une réussite urbaine à l’échelle non seulement de Paris, mais au niveau international” (Marvillet 61). It has since been cited as a reference for a number of other parks, the most notable of which is the High Line in Manhattan, a 1.5-mile elevated railway running from Gansevoort Street to 34th Street on the West Side. Its
transformation into a park is being designed by the architects Diller, Scofidio + Renfro and the landscape architects Field Operations (Ulam 68). Other projects include Philadelphia’s Reading Viaduct Project to transform the 4.7 acre, 1-mile-long Reading Viaduct, built in 1890 with stone embankments and metal train trestles, running through “an industrial neighborhood being gentrified,” and Chicago’s “Bloomingdale Trail” in the Logan Square neighborhood (Ulam 68). These projects, all of which involve the transformation of a rail line in an urban environment into a public space, point to the Promenade plantée as a successful example of this type of renovation.

Interestingly, although the Promenade plantée is today considered the first and most prominent example of this type of redevelopment, the architect and landscape architect who designed it do not seem to have been concerned with the innovation or the experimental nature of the project and only realized its novel quality once it was finished and began to attract international attention (Vergely, Interview). An internal APUR study of previous projects of this type in France, commissioned prior to the Promenade plantée’s development, revealed only one similar, but much smaller, project in the Île-de-France town of Colombes (Mathieux, Interview). Other projects, such as “Vélorail,” use disaffected train tracks as recreation sites but the designers were unaware of any similar projects on the scale of what they were planning in an urban environment (Mathieux, Interview).  

Vélorail is a system of human-pedaled cars that run on a railroad track. In the United States, we have rails-to-trails projects in rural areas but I do not know if this type of park exists in France.
Defining the Parisian Promenade

Certainly it was a novel idea to create a park atop a disused piece of industrial infrastructure. Does this novelty extend to the design, layout, functionality, botanical composition, or any other aspects of this park? The next concern of this chapter is to more closely evaluate the Parisian park tradition, in order to define more precisely the ways in which the Promenade plantée conforms to, or diverges from, this tradition. In particular, we shall examine the notion of a “promenade.”

For a number of reasons, Alphand’s system of parks and squares has recently drawn increased attention. The burgeoning field of landscape architecture historiography, as discussed in Chapter One, has encouraged interest in all periods of garden history. Architectural history and theory, influenced by postmodern thought, has recently focused on nineteenth-century architecture for its own sake, rather than relegating it to secondary status as inferior to the modern movement. In the more pragmatic mode of urban planning, the legacy of Haussmann has emerged as a source of possible solutions for the present day, as emphasis has shifted from renovation via the modernist tabula rasa to less destructive strategies that would be more harmonious with the existing city. Lastly, the Les Halles scandal of the 1960s and 1970s spurred citizens and planners to recognize and save the heretofore undervalued architecture of that period. These movements have been accompanied by not only the rehabilitation of Haussmann’s legacy but also the recognition of Alphand’s importance. Far more than a mere executor of Haussmann’s and Louis-Napoléon’s plans, Alphand is now recognized for his personal intellectual stamp on these projects. 162 Though this “rehabilitation” of Alphand may not have directly

162 On the renewed interest in Alphand in French urban design circles, and in Paris more specifically, see Chapter 1.
influenced Mathieux and Vergely’s design for the Promenade plantée, we may observe many similarities between the design and aims of their promenade and those of the Second Empire.

Jean-Charles Adolphe Alphand was brought from Bordeaux to Paris by Haussmann, for whom he had worked during the latter’s tenure as préfet of that city, in 1854, first to repair Louis-Sulpice Varé’s failed renovation of the Bois de Boulogne, then as head of the Service des promenades et plantations de la Ville de Paris (Vernes, “Au Jardin comme à la ville” 15). Alphand continued to occupy a series of key roles in the city administration after Haussmann’s dismissal in 1870, the Franco-Prussian War, and the establishment of the Third Republic. From 1871 to his death in 1891, he was directeur des travaux publics de Paris (named by Thiers); head of the road system from 1876, and of underground networks from 1878 onward (Moncan 59, Vernes, “Cities and Parks” 8). His conception of public green spaces is expressed in his work Les Promenades de Paris (published 1867–1873), describing the creation of the forests, parks, squares, and street alignments. This text adopts the tone of a practical treatise, meticulously exposing and illustrating a series of urban design problems and their landscape solutions. Haussmann’s Mémoires (1890–1893) likewise describes Alphand’s work and its effect on Paris parks.

Form, Shape, Style

Most sources define promenade purely by its function: “open spaces made accessible to the public, usually by royal or aristocratic grace and favour, as public promenades,” according to the Oxford Companion to Gardens (456), or “lieu aménagé pour que l’on s’y promène,” according to the Dictionnaire historique de l’art des jardins (Conan, 192). A
source cited by the *Dictionnaire historique*, Boitard’s *Manuel de l’architecte des jardins* (1834), stipulates that a promenade is “ouverte à tout le monde et à toute heure” (193). These definitions suggest that the primary quality of a promenade is its provision of public open space, one that is not simultaneously used for other purposes, in contrast to spaces such as market squares. In this space of social leisure, natural elements (such as “des quinconces touffus, des allées sablées bien entretenues”) and park furniture provide amenity, such as shade, rather than being visually attractive centerpieces (Boitard, qted in *Dictionnaire historique*, 193). Boitard recommended that “un grand monument servant à consacrer un souvenir historique” or statues representing historical figures, rather than “ces fades allégories tant à la mode sous le règne de Louis XIV,” would be appropriate in a promenade. This statement suggests that the promenade has adopted a public and civic, rather than private and aesthetic, identity.

For both Alphand and Haussmann, the term *promenade* needs no definition or explanation. Both use the heading “promenades intérieures” to encompass all green spaces, including parks, gardens, squares, and alignments of trees, within the city of Paris, as opposed to the Bois de Boulogne and the Bois de Vincennes. Indicating that promenades may be open, rather than enclosed, Haussmann defines “parcs” as “des promenades entourées de clôtures, mais de clôtures uniquement composées de grilles” (928). Alphand, for his part, seems at times to use the expressions “jardin public,” “promenade,” and “parc” interchangeably, as in the following quotation:

*Les jardins publics diffèrent un peu des jardins particuliers. Ils contiennent plus d’allées; celles-ci sont plus larges afin de suffire à la circulation, en sens inverse, d’un grand nombre de personnes; enfin leur tracé est plus divergent, parce que*
l’accès d’une promenade a presque toujours lieu par plusieurs issues. Il est également utile de ménager entre les plantations des espaces plus étendus pour que la vue soit peu masquée; car il faut compter, parmi les agréments d’un parc, l’animation que produisent les groupes de promeneurs. (LVIII)

As in Boitard’s description, Alphand emphasizes the social role of the space. Although Alphand mentions the use of “plantations” of trees or shrubs to frame views, these views are not purely landscape views, but rather the framed spectacle of other people enjoying the same social space. In contrast to Boitard, Alphand never commented on appropriate subjects for park statuary in Les Promenades de Paris, a fact that suggests a retreat from the commemorative civic role suggested by the former for promenades.

Despite variations according to each park’s size and sumptuousness, the use of vegetation and furniture in parks was very uniform under Alphand’s direction. This systematization of various furniture and design elements of the parks was one of the hallmarks of Alphand’s administration. The plates of Les Promenades de Paris represent green-painted cast-iron elements, such as benches, kiosks, and lampposts in what became known as the “style municipal.” These elements served as a design vocabulary for Parisian public space until the postwar era (Amar 57, Vernes, “Au Jardin,” 16). The design identity of Parisian parks was used to create a sense of coherence, both geographical and historical, throughout the parks system rather than distinguishing the different parks.

This overall design identity, as well as the functional principles it served, is present in many aspects of the Promenade plantée. Although the present-day parks administration still uses the “style municipal” in many parks and squares, all the case
study parks for this dissertation have included a special line of furniture, so that each individual park has its own design identity. The style of the furniture on the Promenade is much more similar to the traditional Paris park style than that used for the other three parks discussed (see Figure 4.16). This is likely due to the goal of continuity and uniformity for the Promenade plantée. As discussed previously, the Conseil de Paris outlined a strategy to maintain the visual coherence of the promenade through plantings, materials, “benches, shelters, pergolas, lighting, [and] gates” despite the changes in its infrastructure and context (*Paris Construit à l’Est* 60; Conseil de Paris 7). Given the unusual site of the project, this concern with unity within the promenade as well as with identifiably Parisian park-service furniture was perhaps meant to reassure the visitor. The visual affinity of the park’s furniture with traditional styles establishes, in my view, an ideological affinity with an established tradition.

As a complement to the systematized “municipal style” of furniture, the palette of trees, shrubs, and plants served as an ahistorical, inoffensive mask that could be applied over the city’s imperfections. Similarly, in an interview, the landscape architect of the Promenade plantée, Jacques Vergely, first referred to the choices of plants as “de la grosse cavalerie,” then remarked that the same plants were found in nineteenth-century Parisian parks, “des jardins haussmanniens.” Vergely based these choices on the constraints of the viaduct: the shallow planting beds, designed to drain quickly after rain, meant that plantations had to tolerate dry, sparse soil; the narrow beds and close proximity to humans meant that plants had to tolerate constant touching, brushing or pulling. (In fact Vergeley wished to take advantage of this proximity and choose inviting plants that would reward visitors for approaching with interesting textures and odors). The end result
was a selection of the same palette of highly resistant plants that appear in most Parisian parks. Attention was then given to the arrangement of plants to create a variety of effects. Most of these plant selections were used both in the viaduct and in the trench areas, although in different groupings and to different effect. The exception to this general traditional use of plants is found in the trench areas: the landscaping goal for these sections of the Promenade was to “restore” the typical landscape of a railway cut (Vergely, Interview). Overall, plants were not treated as individual specimens but instead as contributors to an effect that relied as much on grouping and placement as on selection of different species. Like the park’s furniture, its plants have, today, acquired a connotation of being typically Parisian and, while they also fulfill decorative and functional purposes, also serve to reassure the walker that despite its unusual setting, the Promenade plantée fits well within the tradition of Parisian parks.

On the other hand, one difference between historic promenades and the Promenade plantée is the latter’s enclosure, for most of its length, by a system of gates and fences, allowing it to be closed from the public at night, like all Parisian municipal parks. According to Jacques Vergely, there had been some hope, during the design phase, of keeping the Promenade open at night, which he felt was inspired by a movement, since the 1960s, toward more open parks, particularly in the Netherlands. However, this would have required additional security measures and lighting, measures that were seen as too

163 According to Vergely, the city park services were initially against this project, and would have preferred removing the trees and planting flowers and grasses in spots. However, a presentation by a gardener during the 2007 Festival des parcs et jardins suggested that gardeners now enjoy working in this unusual setting and have some autonomy to seek out plants and naturalistic elements (such as tree stumps and stones to form retaining walls or small pools) that they feel will complement it. Vergely later remarked that Parisian parks of the nineteenth century often contained a number of rare or exotic plants, for example the palm trees at the Buttes Chaumont. There was an apparent diminution through the twentieth century of the range of plants, and of the ability of gardeners to care for them. Vergely interpreted the vogue of thematic gardens as an effort, since the 1980s, to increase the variety of plants in public parks while easing care of these plants to some degree (Interview).
expensive and complicated to carry out (Vergely, Interview). For these reasons, the Promenade is opened and closed according to the schedule for all city parks, except for the two street-level sections, the Allée Vivaldi and the Rue du Sahel. Gardens within Paris open well after sunrise and close before sunset in the summer, making this lack of accessibility quite noticeable for users.\textsuperscript{164}

**Social Role**

The kinship between Alphandian parks and the Promenade plantée goes beyond design elements and also relates to the Promenade’s social role. As suggested by Alphand’s remark, above, one pleasure available in parks was “l’animation que produisent les groupes de promeneurs.” While the Second Empire parks played a key role in urbanism and urban design, they were also the sites of a particular social experience. Each type of park in Haussmann’s system corresponded to a specific blend of visitors and tenor of activities, based on its location, size, and the socioeconomic status of its projected visitors. The two Bois were open to all, but Haussmann acknowledged that they were occupied primarily by the rich on weekdays, and only on weekends did “les masses populaires […] s’y répandre de toutes parts, et […] s’y divertir avec le sentiment qu’elles sont bien là chez elles” (926). Squares were meant to offer “des lieux de délassement et de récréation à toutes les familles, […] riches ou pauvres,” but they were especially intended for “[des] travailleurs,” providing “des emplacements salubres et sûrs” for childrens’ games (Haussmann 896, 926, 934). For the playwright Alphonse Karr,

\textsuperscript{164} While the Parc de la Villette, the Bois de Boulogne, and the Bois de Vincennes are open 24 hours a day, City-administered gardens within Paris open between 8:00 and 9:30 a.m., and close as early as 5:00 p.m. in the winter and as late as 9:30 p.m. in the summer (“Les Horaires des jardins”). Around the summer solstice, the sun rises in Paris at 5:45 a.m. and sets at 9:57 p.m. (Edwards n. pag.).
describing Paris in 1867 in a guide to the Exposition universelle of that year, the square “peut reconstituer le quartier que les omnibus et l’étendue toujours croissante de la ville ont supprimé.” That is, they remedy the hurry and fragmentation of modern city life; “on y fera connaissance et, qui est plus, on s’y connaîtra” (Karr, qtd. in Choay, 16). The squares, to this observer, maintained the traditional feel of Parisian neighborhoods as close-knit “villages.”

According to Françoise Choay, for Haussmann, “les parcs et squares concernent, plus particulièrement, les Parisiens, tandis que les promenades ouvertes s’adressent, au même titre, aux provinciaux et aux étrangers et appellent un nouveau type de sociabilité” (36). We may thus infer, by contrast with the squares, that promenades, such as the Champs-Elysées, were more cosmopolitan, more anonymous, and less socially fixed. In contrast to squares, to which nearby city-dwellers would return frequently in order to meet the same people or reinforce their local social network, perhaps promenades were visited in search of amusement, possibly spectacle, perhaps while maintaining the detached air of the flâneur. Supporting this argument, in the architect Antoine Grumbach’s estimation, “[t]he [historic] promenade, originally a rural walk conceived as an alternative to the motion of city life, was built by Alphand into the city fabric itself as the domain of its citizens’ pleasures” (Grumbach 52).

The representation of the Promenade plantée in publicity materials disseminated by the City was quite different. The Promenade was portrayed as not just an “alternative”

165 These remarks can be compared with the discussion of social roles in Elizabeth Kugler’s dissertation, an analysis of three seventeenth-century texts whose settings are public or private but publicly accessible promenades, including the Tuileries Garden, the Luxembourg Garden, and the Cours La Reine. Kugler identifies the ways that literary scenes set in promenades demonstrate awareness of “the theatrical potential of [the] city” and, for ambitious, wealthy bourgeois citizens, allow for performance of a “new version [sic] of their social identity”(6, 11). More research is necessary to secure evidence, but it would appear that public or open promenades, having originated in private, monastic, or royal gardens, initially were sites of hierarchization and performance of social roles to the almost total exclusion of nature or exercise (13).
from the city, but a retreat into nature, due to descriptive phrases such as, “un chemin verdoyant pour sortir de la ville” or the suggestion that the Promenade offers the “sensation de se trouver en dehors de la ville” (La Promenade plantée, un jardin en continu 15; “Paris construit à l’Est” 9). These descriptions also imply that green space must be carefully protected from the intrusions of the modern city, a sentiment exemplified by phrases such as, “un itinéraire préservé des voies environnantes,” or “un parcours bucolique à l’abri des voitures” (La Promenade plantée, un jardin en continu 2, Paris construit à l’Est 9). Similarly, the promenade’s designers suggest that they wished to maintain an air of secrecy or of discovery, stating, for example, that they aimed to create an “intimate” or “confidential” space (Mathieux, Interview). While this description does apply to the eastern half of the promenade, the Viaduc seems to offer the same sort of social pleasures as nineteenth-century promenades. Such features as the benches, and even the bridge over the Jardin de Reuilly, afford ample people-watching opportunities. The narrow path means that people are always aware of the presence of others on the Promenade. Even on cold weekday mornings when most parks are relatively deserted, one is never entirely alone on the Promenade plantée. Today, the care of plants along the Promenade also suggests that present-day gardeners also aim to maintain visual continuity between the surrounding urban setting and the Promenade, allowing walkers to both see and be seen from above. This is evidenced by the intensive pruning of bushes in some areas, to prevent them from growing higher than the parapet (see Figure 4.17).

While many regular users of the Promenade are in fact from the neighborhoods it traverses, the usual park features and amenities that invite sociability, such as clusters of benches, playgrounds or boules terrains, or (a recent addition to Paris parks) community
gardens, are absent from the Promenade. Other amenities might be familiar to Second Empire promenade habitués. In the promenades of the nineteenth century, such as the contre-allées of the interior boulevards, one could combine the pleasures of greenery and “la flânerie devant les étalages des magasins et boutiques” (Haussmann 895). Similarly, the Promenade plantée offers, albeit diachronically rather than synchronically, the additional pleasure of window-shopping along the Viaduc des arts. On the other hand, the Promenade plantée offers an ideal setting for behaviors that are both sociable and display-oriented, but that until recently have been practically nonexistent in interior Parisian parks: jogging and fitness walking. Overall, it seems that the Promenade plantée’s social role, though not contrary to that of Alphandian promenades, is less central to its identity and is handicapped by its unusual dimensions.

Urban Design Role

As alluded to previously, one major concern for Alphand (and for Haussmann) was the remedy provided by a square or promenade to the incongruities of the built city, that is, sites where buildings and streets did not line up in precisely the symmetry and geometrical regularity desired by Napoléon III and Haussmann. Additionally, greenery could allow for the seamless incorporation of various elements of the city’s infrastructure, including flood control, potable water and sewage lines, and vehicle and foot traffic paths, into the park system (Vernes, “Au Jardin” 15). Grumbach calls this utilization of green space and plants the “profound originality of the promenades.” The design of

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166 Both Mathieux and Vergely discussed the push by some politicians to have a bike path along the top of the viaduct, an unconventional use of park space. Their opposition was grounded purely in functional terms: given the norms for pedestrian paths, bike lanes, and planting beds, there simply would not be enough room atop the viaduct for bicycles and people, much less bicycles, people, and plants. Instead, a bike lane was added on Ave Daumesnil.
In the twentieth century, the decision to create a park out of the railway line was another effort to remedy an incongruity. Though this choice was certainly influenced by internal studies showing that the southern portion of the Twelfth Arrondissement was one of the areas in Paris least well-served quantitatively in green space, the project is commonly considered to have been primarily a response to questions of urban design. The city council had contemplated the possibility of simply destroying the entire railway line to open up communication between the Faubourg Saint-Antoine and the neighborhood of the Gare de Lyon. But as Marc Bédarida put it, “what to do with all those buildings backing on to the railroad, those blank walls and houses with illicit windows opening onto the former track? Destroying the railway meant revealing the city’s scars, its areas of neglect, lapses and defects” (97). The look of the buildings closest to the railway seems to have been a preoccupation for the municipality for, as the Conseil de Paris’s 1987 resolution on the project notes, the railway line was surrounded by “un paysage véritablement peu engageant,” including “precarious and disorganized,” “mediocre and dilapidated” constructions (Conseil de Paris 15). At the completion of the project, many of these buildings were scheduled to be renovated (Bédarida 102).

167 Or, as Michel Vernes put it, “[Alphand] comprend qu’elle [l’embellissent et l’amélioration de la voirie] est le principal instrument de reconquête des quartiers abandonnés à eux-mêmes depuis des siècles” (“Au Jardin” 15). I am not sure if this statement means “abandonné” in terms of public works and services or in terms of social and political concerns.

168 At the time, very little information was offered to the public during the design process for new parks. An exhibit, “Aménagement du XIIe arrondissement,” was hung for less than a month at the Mairie.
Today, the middle portion of the Promenade plantée integrates various urban structures. This area is now a seam, rather than a dividing wall, between the Faubourg Saint-Antoine and the Gare de Lyon, thanks to its connection with a number of renovation projects: the former embankment, the ZAC Reuilly, the Sahel-Montempoivre district. On the contrary, the ends of the promenade do not live up to their original intentions or provide transition, either from the city to the promenade, or among converging neighborhoods. To the west, Carlo Ott’s Opera house turns its back to the promenade, though the City’s original intent was to incorporate the promenade into the south side of this presidential grand projet. In fact, the brief for the Opera’s international design competition included a stipulation “que soit intégrée dans le projet la continuité d’une promenade jusqu’à la place” (Mathieux, “La Promenade plantée” 220). A balcony runs along the south side of the opera building on the Rue de Lyon at the height of the promenade, but this balcony is gated off from its main stairs at the Place de la Bastille, and ongoing construction means that it is also blocked off at its east end. Construction work in the Hôpital des Quinze-Vingts is a further obstacle to a continuous elevated promenade along the Rue de Lyon (see Figure 4.18).

On its eastern end, though a bicycle path crosses under the Périphérique and leads along the Avenue de Guyane to the Parc de Vincennes, the promenade as an identifiable space stops abruptly at the city limit. In the absence of signage, in a narrow pathway along these busy streets, the final stretch of the Promenade loses all of its grace and
d’arrondissement with photos and maps of diverse rehabilitation and renovation operations that were planned or already underway. The exhibit included municipal and national projects, from renovations of apartment blocks to the Ministry of Finances. A laundry list of “équipements publics” includes the only mention of green spaces: “Jardins de quartier, des écoles, des ensembles sportifs, etc.” The priority given to parks or gardens does not seem very strong.
conviviality and discourages the first-time visitor on foot (see Figure 4.19). Despite these problematic areas, like the Alphandian parks and squares, the creation of the Promenade plantée began with a feature of the urban landscape that was considered disruptive, disproportional, and unattractive. Its transformation to be more harmonious and attractive through various design elements and allusions relates not only to its own neighborhood but to a larger tradition of Parisian green space development.

The designers of the park seem to have focused on the challenges posed by the site itself and on the creation of continuity, first within the promenade; and second, in a sense, with other Parisian parks, using materials and plants that obviously resembled materials and plants in other Parisian parks, even if it is impossible to say to what degree this recognizability was explicitly thought out as historical or typically “Parisian.” The decision to create a garden on a railroad track was a novelty, with the constraints, both technical and aesthetic, of the viaduct and the trench. To cope with this novelty and these constraints, the designers seem to have adapted a fairly unquestioned idea of “square,” or “promenade” to an unusual, challenging site. We have now seen how the Promenade plantée measures up to the Alphandian definition of a promenade. The Promenade plantée hews to this definition in its uniformity of vegetation and furniture, which, I hypothesize, is an effort to assert its identity and its legitimacy within this tradition despite its unusual situation. It has a similar, but muted, social function, though

169 The original plan was to continue the promenade by following the rail line through a tunnel under the city of Saint-Mandé, to arrive at the Lac de Saint-Mandé in the Bois de Vincennes. However, the tunnel is very long and curved; therefore, making it secure and attractive was difficult. Also, the railway at that point is well below ground level, so handicap/bike ramps from the tunnel to ground level would have been major construction project. This and alternative projects (for example, renovating the Boulevard de Guyane to match the promenade) supposedly faced opposition from both Saint-Mandé politicians (who feared unsavory characters from the capital crossing the Periph) and Parisian politicians (who did not want to allocate money for a project that would benefit Saint-Mandé more than Paris) and ultimately were not funded (Mathieux, Interview).
for activities that are relatively unusual in Parisian parks. Lastly, it is a force of harmony
and structure in its urban environment, in a manner similar to the Second Empire square
designs.

However, while the parks, gardens, and squares designed by Alphand were
developed as part of a network, in relation to the city as a whole, they tended to be insular
and centrally oriented, employing an historical or attractive element placed at or near the
center of the square and dense shrubs at the park’s perimeter to draw the visitor’s gaze
and movement into the park. The Promenade plantée, of course, has no center and in
fact, tends to turn the visitor’s gaze outward, on to the city around it.

This aspect of the Promenade plantée calls upon the visitor to appreciate not only
the park itself, but also details of architecture around it and the Parisian street scale. One
may appreciate architectural features on the nearby buildings from the Promenade that
would be invisible (or less noticeable) from street level. In particular, the cornice of the
Hôtel de Police at 76 Avenue Daumesnil, the work of architect Manolo Nuñez-Yanowski,
is decorated with fourteen oversize copies, to the torso, of Michelangelo’s Dying Slave.
This series of figures represents, according to Nuñez-Yanowski, “la souffrance humaine
générée par ses sentiments et sa raison” (see Figure 4.20) (quoted in Maréchal 134). The

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170 Grumbach also notes the “fervor for centralizing the remains of buildings” in parks and squares (“The
Promenades of Paris” 56).

171 However, it may be argued that this aspect of the park is in fact an exacerbation of one element of
Alphandian parks, their paths, to the detriment of all other features. The landscape architect John Merivale
discusses the “tautness” of path patterns in Parisian parks, their traces meant to connect viewpoints,
entrances to the park, and landmarks while departing from the straight lines of what was known as the style
régulier (what is often called the “jardin à la française”) and the “unquestionable confusion” of serpentine
paths. These curving paths have the advantage that, according to Alphand, “the line of vision is always at a
tangent to the curve of the walk” (qtd. in Merivale 34). Mentally unspooling an Alphandian path into a
straight line gives us the Promenade plantée, in which the feet are guided forward while the gaze is
constantly attracted to the right and to the left, at an acute angle to the path, by the various city landmarks
passing by. Bois discusses this tangential gaze as part of the picturesque, quoting Henry Kames: “The foot
should never travel to [the object] by the same path which the eye has travelled over. Lose the object, and
draw nigh obliquely” (“A Picturesque Stroll” 43).
views into the cityscape of the Twelfth Arrondissement are part of the attraction of walking on the Promenade, and although the park itself is only a narrow strip of land, it seems to assimilate to itself a much wider visual field.

Despite the central role of urban renewal in the project, City publicity materials tend neither to mention this aspect of the Promenade plantée, nor propose views of an urban landscape as an attractive factor. Architectural critics, in contrast, do tend to point out the promenade’s urban aspect. For example, Marc Bédarida focuses on the views of Parisian architecture that one may see from the Promenade. “Historic elements as remarkable as they are picturesque, can be found all along the Planted Promenade” (95), whether through the “archeological” experience of the trench, which “makes it possible to see the strata on which the city has been built” and recalls “the most important” of the city’s “legends,” its foundation (98) or on the viaduct, from which the viewer is presented with “the bourgeois city with its opulent-fronted apartment buildings” and “the more or less spontaneous urban fabric” of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine” (99). Sebastian Marot seems to concur:

En rendant [la voie ferrée] intégralement à la promenade et aux pratiques de la ville, il s’agissait […] de révéler la variété des paysages urbains qui se sont appuyés sur elle et de rendre perceptible ce rôle urbanogène du chemin de fer et de ses ouvrages. En somme, l’enjeu du projet était, en héritant du puissant patrimoine de l’infrastructure dans son corps à corps avec la ville, d’offrir aux promeneurs une aventure passionnante à travers les décors variés de la “fabrique” parisienne. (“Bastille-Vincennes” 12)
How is it that what was described as “precarious and disorganized,” and “mediocre” before the construction of the Promenade plantée has become interesting and attractive? How have these buildings become a “paysage,” whose discovery is “une aventure,” the rereading of a “legend?” I would propose that the notion of articialisation, taken within the context of contemporary cultural values in architecture, urban design, and landscape, are what allow visitors to the Promenade plantée to see it as a rich environment.

The novelist, literary scholar, and landscape theorist Alain Roger coined the term articialisation to define the process through which, primed by artistic cultivation, we come to recognize a scene as a “landscape” rather than simply “land.” This process may be accomplished either in visu, as a viewer recognizes in a real landscape qualities to which he had previously been exposed in works of art, such as landscape paintings or descriptive literary passages; or in situ, as a site is physically modified to reflect an aesthetic order (as in gardens). Though I do not employ Roger’s theory of articialisation unreservedly, it does aid in our understanding of the appeal of the Promenade plantée. I would like to expand on this concept in two ways: First, in the extension of the notion from not only rural or semi-rural landscapes to a predominantly built landscape; and second, to extend the notion to represent the general infusion of meaning and value into a view, rather than only aesthetic value.

The use of the term “pittoresque” in publicity materials (La Promenade plantée, un jardin en continu 2, Paris construit à l’est 60) serves to illustrate the first point. Even before the railway became a promenade, it was known for its views of the streets and buildings around it, according to an article in Le Monde illustré: “Pendant le trajet du tunnel de Reuilly à la gare de la Bastille, on jouit d’une vue superbe” (quoted in Baudoin
An advantage to this concept is that it may bring together the appeal of both the eastern and western halves of the Promenade plantée. The film Chacun cherche son chat (1996), filmed in the working-class, partially renovated faubourg neighborhood around the Rue de Lappe, is an example of an aesthetic appreciation of the type of urban scenery visible from the western portion of the viaduct. On the other hand, the setting of the eastern half of the promenade may be described as “une nature semi-sauvage” (La Promenade plantée, un jardin en continu 12). However, the landscape architect Vergely recognized the interest of the successional vegetation found in the railway cut, and worked to preserve it as well as to integrate new plantations to it. Vergely argued for this design against the original wishes of the city of Paris (Interview). Perhaps the ecological movements of the past thirty years, or Vergely’s own experience with and love of German parks, which tend to be more naturalistic, are what influenced, first the artisation in visu, or Vergely’s (and others’) recognition of the aesthetic value of the railway trench landscape, and then the acts of gardening that led to its artisation in situ (Vergely, Interview).

Second, the transformation of the Promenade plantée from a “leftover” of the nineteenth-century train network to an interesting, meaningful site goes beyond the assignment of aesthetic qualities. The site is also deployed, rhetorically, as the rediscovery of the natural geography of the Parisian basin that has been obscured, if not destroyed, by urbanism. The promenade literally reveals geography thanks to the railway line’s flat grade as opposed to the relief of the terrain (Marot, “Bastille-Vincennes” 10). Since the railway took the abscissa of the curve formed by the hill of Picpus and the valley near the Bastille, it became an index or a reference through which the visitor is
able to take the measure of this geographical change (Bédarida 97). Like an appreciation for a heterogeneous (if not jumbled) urban landscape or for the plant series engendered by human disruption of the soil in a railway trench, an interest in and, especially, public valorization of this exposure of natural forms within the city is not “natural” or universal but engendered by the specific cultural milieu of the postmodern era.

As we have seen, the Promenade plantée shares many characteristics with the promenades of the Second Empire, in particular, urban design principles, an aim for uniformity and systematization of the park features, and the fostering of a social environment distinct from that of both smaller neighborhood parks and the larger Bois. Indeed, the Promenade plantée explicitly recalls the promenades in some details. Where the Promenade falls short, in its connections to the urban environment at each end, it also seems not to live up to the ideal of a Promenade of the nineteenth century. On the other hand, displaying rather than camouflaging older, disparate constructions; and, through the mechanisms of articialisation within contemporary culture, providing landscape views and clues to the city’s past, distinguish the Promenade from its antecedents and provide keys to its present-day appeal.

While these differences between the contemporary promenade and its historical model have resulted in a different sort of experience available for its visitors, both eras share the fundamental aspect of the definition of a promenade, which is centered on the activity of walking. The experience of walking through a landscape has been implied in many of the points that have been discussed above: the discovery of the counterpoint of plant arrangements and settings as opposed to the uniformity of the plants themselves; the repeated furniture motifs, or the ability to view the surrounding landscape from varying
angles. I will examine this activity of walking in parks more closely in the section that follows. This closer examination will lead to a broader consideration of movement and perception in general.

A Taxonomy of Walks in Parks

Walking in gardens has been considered not only a social activity, as in Haussmannian parks, but also a key element of the creation of poetic meaning. Throughout history, gardens have been designed in which guided movement was meant to result in a narrative or an accumulation of meaning. In particular, these designs are associated with the picturesque. Michael Charlesworth’s analysis of the garden of Stourhead (England, 1741–1780) demonstrates how, incorporating movement, sequence, and (Charlesworth argues) the linguistic construction of intersubjectivity, the garden develops not only a narrative based on Classical mythology but also an allegorical journey of self-discovery in which the visitor is placed in the position of the garden’s designer, Henry Hoare II.

In his essay “Lordship of the Feet,” John Dixon Hunt proposes three categories of garden walks: the “procession,” the “stroll,” and the “ramble” (188). This taxonomy is meant to encompass both the social and the poetic aspects of walking, by distinguishing the type of path the visitor adopts, whether the walk is accomplished alone or in a group, and the social and cultural significance of the walk.

The procession and stroll both incorporate a route and a sequence of stops, though the procession, which takes place at a ritual time, more strictly adheres to a codified route and sequence than a stroll. Processions are undertaken in a group, creating “collective” meaning or a “socially constructed and endorsed purpose” for the walk, while strolls,
though still involving a performance element, may be accomplished alone (188). The *sacro monti* (197) or (secular) promenades around the gardens of Versailles, whether they took place during the *fêtes* of 1664, 1668, and 1674 or were codified in Louis XIV’s *Manière de montrer les jardins de Versailles*, are all examples of processions, while sculpture gardens and nature walks may be considered strolls (201–02).

The third type of walk, the ramble, is defined as solitary “movement with no external prompt,” along a route that is only taken once, for “the pleasure of movement itself” (189). Hunt proposes that the ramble “requires or seeks a natural or naturalistic” topography within a defined, limited space (194–95). It is not motivated by sights or by views, and in fact the “feet do not follow sight” (194). While this taxonomy is an interesting foundation for a discussion of the role of walking in parks and gardens, many garden creators, as well as architects and artists, particularly those in the historical avant-garde and their heritors, have been interested in disrupting the traditional notion of walking in a garden (or other aesthetic setting). For example, the Situationist *dérive* or the work of the group Stalker could represent rambles in a non-natural, non-contained site.

How may we apply these ideas of promenade and walking to the Promenade plantée? The Promenade is composed of one linear route, but this route has no intrinsic meaning; it is simply the recuperation of a railroad line. While there are sights along the Promenade plantée, including the Reuilly garden, the Nuñez-Yanowski slaves, and the abstract sculpture, these sights are seen in a certain order out of simple necessity and they do not come together to create the “meaning” of the garden. The pleasure of walking along the Promenade plantée is not gained from the piecing together of a series of sights or landmarks. Instead, it is pleasurable insofar as it provides an uninterrupted sensory
experience. That is, the pleasure of walking along the viaduct comes from the experience, over several hundred yards, of a continuous landscape unfolding around the walker. This landscape consists of the plantations of the promenade itself as well as the urban setting around it. The attraction of the trench section is not that it leads us to the labyrinth, the sculpture, or the belvedere at the end, as these “fabriques” are too minor to constitute a meaningful goal or culmination to a walk, but again, its offering of an uninterrupted landscape. It is the duration of the experience in and of itself that forms the pleasure of the Promenade plantée, rather than the magnitude of the view or the sight at the end of the walk.

This insight reveals a limitation in Hunt’s definition of the visual pleasure of walking in gardens, which seems linked to the concepts of “sights” or “views,” particularly through the lack thereof in the definition of the ramble. Hunt seems to leave out the immersion in stimuli, often visual, but also aural or olfactory, that accompanies not only the “ramble” but any type of walk. A similar criticism may be leveled at an essay discussing the French artist and landscape architect Bernard Lassus’s work, by the landscape architect Stephen Bann. The essay states, “The experience of motion is linked to the progressive recognition and negotiation of obstacles” such that “the eye is denied its regime of mastery” and “the body must take over” (Bann 61). Bann seems here to establish a firm dichotomy between the body’s own sense of trajectory and the gaze, whereas my thesis proposes a harmony between the body and eye.

172 One might argue that in general these discussions of movement and garden meaning posit movement as a medium for “semiotic” meaning—that is, movement is presumed to juxtapose a series of discrete signs, whereas what I’m attempting to describe from here on down presumes that the experience is continuous and may not be broken down into these signs. The advantage of this argument is that, in the Parc de Bercy, I discuss allegory as a process of slippage between signifier and signified, suggesting a poststructuralist common thread to this dissertation.
This moving gaze has been isolated and described not only in architecture as in landscape architecture, but also in the experiences of traveling on a train and watching a film. For a visitor to the Promenade plantée, I would like to propose that the experience of viewing while in movement is a form of garden (and architectural) pleasure that is complemented and intensified, in the contemporary world, by these other experiences brought about by modern technology.¹⁷³

**An Experience in Motion: From Parallax to an Integrated Vision**

As mentioned previously, the interaction between plantings on the Viaduc and the surrounding urban scenery is an important part of the promenade experience. The promenade encompasses not only the immediate scenery of the Viaduc but also the urban landscape around it. One of the most noticeable aspects of this experience is the interplay between the rhythm of the trees planted on viaduct, the trees planted in alignment on the sidewalk of the Avenue Daumesnil, and the continuous façade of buildings on the opposite side of the avenue. These parallel lines of greenery and architecture create a series of parallel planes that continuously shift in relation to each other as a walker follows the path of the Viaduct. On the Faubourg Saint-Antoine side of the viaduct, the more broken, random pattern of construction means that this relation among planes of vision is not as continuous or evident, but does become remarkable from time to time.

¹⁷³ The drawback of this emphasis on viewing while moving might relate to Marot’s remark that the Promenade plantée comes to resemble “une autoroute pour piétons” (“Bastille-Vincennes” 19). Certainly, this criticism is more of a judgment based on the design features of the Promenade, but perhaps it was informed by an intuitive sense of the visual experience. When the promenade is crowded, the sights along the way do not serve to “hold” people or attract them. The result seems to be an accelerative effect: the goal of the walk is simply to get to “the end.”
These planes are interrupted by the streets intersecting the Avenue Daumesnil, down which the visitor observes perspectives receding into the distance. As the walker approaches an intersection, crosses over on a bridge, and moves away from it, these street perspectives, and in some cases landmarks, appear and then disappear at different points in relation to the closer planes of trees. This effect may be observed at the Eglise Saint Antoine on Avenue Ledru-Rollin, or the tall apartment building at the angle of Avenue Daumesnil and Rue Michel Chasles going toward Gare de Lyon. The Mitrofanoff buildings at the two ends of the reconstructed embankment appear to contract dramatically and lose their dimensions upon approach, then lengthen as the walker arrives underneath them and starts to pass.

Where two streets converge on Avenue Daumesnil, this experience of slow rotation is especially strong as the perspective of each street slowly expands, then contracts. The view of Nuñez-Yanowski’s “slaves” on the police building is another dramatic instance of this rotational effect. The building is rounded at its corners, so as one is walking by, the rotational effect is amplified by the repeated copies of the sculpture seen at slightly different, ever-changing angles.

Other views show off the city’s architecture in ways that highlight styles from different periods. On the north side, a view to the Place du Colonel Bourgoin reveals older (apparently nineteenth-century) buildings in the foreground, while tall modernist housing blocks set off from each other the background. The walker’s moving viewpoint creates a sliding effect as these two planes of buildings appear to move in relation to each other. On the Allée Vivaldi, a massive apartment block belonging to the SNCF along Avenue Daumesnil, whose tall façade develops a rhythm of windows and vertical stripes,
is separated from the Promenade by four nearly identical buildings. The space separating the older and newer structures and the proximity of the four smaller, newer buildings to the Promenade results in a strong visual effect, creating an interesting interplay between contemporary and earlier twentieth-century style.  

These perceptual phenomena are all examples of parallax, or “the apparent displacement of objects caused by an actual change in the point of observation” (Collins 27). Parallax is a well-known effect in architecture, and may be observed in open spaces punctuated by repeated series of freestanding elements, such as columns or pillars, at varying distances from the observer. Such spaces include hypostyle halls, Gothic churches, or modernist buildings using pilotis (27–28). One example of an architect who employs parallax effects in his designs is Le Corbusier. This quality is perceptible in one of his most famous projects, the Villa Savoie (58). In the following passage, from Le Corbusier’s *Oeuvres complètes*, the reader rides along with the narrator in a car approaching the Villa Savoie, then walks through the house while taking in the ever-changing view of the surrounding landscape.

On va donc à la porte de la maison en auto, et c’est l’arc de courbure minimum d’une auto qui fournit la dimension même de la maison. L’auto s’engage sous les pilotis, tourne autour des services communs, arrive au milieu, à la porte du vestibule, entre dans le garage, ou poursuit sa route pour le retour […] Mais on continue la promenade. Depuis le jardin à l’étage, on monte par la rampe sur le

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174 Traditional gardens, especially *jardins à la française*, often create optical illusions related to perspective. At least two examples of this type of optical illusion may also be found along the promenade. The ramp leading from the bridge over the Jardin de Reuilly to the Rue Hénard has a slight trapezoidal shape, wider at the top than at the bottom, creating the illusion of a longer perspective. As one passes from the Allée Vivaldi through the Reuilly tunnel, one can see that the pedestrian path veers left, away from the bike path to its right, making it appear that the park expands quite a lot in width after this tunnel. Only once one emerges from the tunnel can one see that this curve ends, the paths turn to converge at the center of the field of view, and the promenade remains narrow.
toit de la maison où est le solarium. […] Il s’agit d’une véritable promenade architecturale, offrant des aspects constamment variés, inattendus, parfois étonnants. (24)

This description places movement at the heart of the architectural experience. The “promenade architecturale” is the means by which the viewer/visitor takes in the architecture of the house and understands the relationships between house, body, and landscape.

Not only are architects aware of the potential to create visual effects of parallax in the design of the building, but some cite effects of parallax in the experience of urban space. Camillo Sitte’s work *L’Art de bâtir les villes* (1889) includes a passage on visual effects related to monuments and squares in traditional Italian cities. Sitte describes the experience of an observer walking through the city from one square to another: “À chaque instant le tableau varie, en même temps que les impressions ressenties […] Pour chacune [de ces positions de cet observateur] il existe plus d’une douzaine de vues différents prises de points divers et offrant à chaque fois un autre tableau” (68). While Sitte does not use the term “parallax,” this description of varying views “at each instant” suggest just such an effect. Implied in the description is the interest and pleasure that may be derived not only from the architecture itself but from the constant variations in the “tableau” or passage from one “tableau” to the next.175 While parallax effects are

175 A similar case is Auguste Choisy, whose work *Histoire de l’architecture* (1899) includes a section called “Le Pittoresque dans l’art grec,” which is often cited as an example of consciousness of motion or movement in architecture. Choisy’s analysis of the Acropolis discusses the manipulation of perspectival effects to create optical symmetry within a series of views along a codified route. Since no account is taken of the visitor’s gradually shifting point of view or the transition from one “tableau” to the next that would have occurred while traveling along the path between the indicated points, this work is more closely related to the traditional definition of the picturesque, whose importance along the Promenade plantée I seek to question, than to questions of parallax or perception in motion. Le Corbusier builds on the work of Choisy, reproducing Choisy’s plan of the Acropolis in the chapter “Troisième Rappel: Le Plan,” of *Vers une*
detectable in many architectural and urban settings by a forewarned observer, the continuity and regularity of the Promenade, as well as the position of the Viaduct and the height at which the walker stands above the streetscape, eliminating some of the visual “clutter” at the ground level, make it particularly propitious for appreciating these effects.

Next we shall discuss another situation in which parallax effects may be experienced: train travel. Literal references to train travel, the original function of the Promenade plantée, are found along its length. More importantly, not only decorative elements referring to trains but actual functioning trains have been incorporated into other Parisian parks, suggesting that this aspect of modern technology has visual interest, symbolic meaning, and lastly, an experiential contribution to make to Parisian parks.

**Railways as Allusions and Analogies**

Trains have appeared as attractive visual elements in parks and gardens in Paris from the Second Empire to the present day. In the Parc Montsouris and the Parc André-Citroën, RER trains are visible as they pass through the garden on an elevated track. According to one geographer who studied the Parc Montsouris, “Dans cette fausse nature, le ‘métro’ (sic) devient pittoresque, et prend presque figure de symbole, les enfants d’ailleurs se précipitant pour voir passer ‘le train’ dès qu’ils en aperçoivent le bruit” (Amar 135). Trains traveling along the RER line along the Left Bank of the Seine are visible in the central lawn of the Parc André-Citroën, where their passage lends animation to the view of the riverbank. While trains are not visible in the Jardin Atlantique, built atop the Montparnasse train station, sounds from the train station, such as announcements of

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*architecture* (1923), in order to critique the type of plan taught by the Beaux-Arts system and to address the question of perception and movement from several angles.
arrivals and departures, are audible. Although their coexistence with parks seems to have occurred not for aesthetic reasons but out of a necessary crowding of various functions in a dense city, the contrast between the metal and mechanical power of trains and the greenery of parks seems to be an evocative and fruitful one.\footnote{See Freytag’s “When the Railway Conquered the Garden: Velocity in Parisian and Viennese Parks,” which discusses the “neopastoral,” the aesthetic movement integrating modern or industrial elements into a pastoral landscape. In the US, the work of mid-nineteenth-century landscape painter George Innes exemplifies this tradition.}

The Promenade plantée is not just constructed on a former rail line; there are multiple uses of the railway experience as a literal reference or as an analogy in the park. The Reuilly area, the renovated district on a former train yard, contains a number of these references. As mentioned previously, the restored Reuilly station is set back in a garden, and at an angle to the current line of the Promenade, an index of the otherwise-effaced original path of the railway, from which the Promenade deviates slightly at this point. The late-nineteenth-century stone façade of the station no longer connotes technocratic mastery of space, but rather the slightly \textit{pompiers} style of Third Republic public buildings. The children’s playground in Reuilly includes jungle gyms modeled like miniature locomotives. These two evocations of train travel seem to place it in the realm of nostalgia.

Other references to trains are more abstract. The benches between the bridge over the garden and the Rue Hénard are arranged face-to-face on each side of the walkway as if they were compartments in a train, delimited by hedges. The benches on the Allée Vivaldi are also arranged face to face as if on two platforms of a train station (Evangelista, guided tour). Lastly, an abstract sculpture just to the east of the Bel-Air Metro stop by the sculptor Antoine Zuber, suggests a locomotive with volutes of steam
rising from its smokestack (see Figure 4.13). Each of these references to trains, train travel, and the Bastille line makes its connection in a different way, whether through miniaturization, abstraction, nostalgic reference, or literal citation. However, I would like to posit that these references converge and point toward other signs that there is a deeper connection with train travel developed by the Promenade plantée through, again, experience in motion.

**Cultural Historians of Technology: Trains and Perception**

The reminders of Viaduc’s previous life as train tracks discussed above are not the only ways that the Promenade plantée alludes to the experience of train travel. The experience of riding on a train is also suggested in a more abstract way, through similarities between the way that human perception is affected by train travel and the way the city is experienced from the Viaduc.

Train travel is recognized as one of the new experiences provided by modern technology, one that is now practically universal and banal within France. In order to discuss this experience, I will rely on two cultural historians of technology: Wolfgang Schivelbusch and Marc Desportes. These two historians examine accounts of train travel in the nineteenth century to better understand how travelers perceived the landscape before and after the development of this new technology. The problematic of both Desportes’s and Schivelbusch’s work is “l’incidence des transports sur la perception de l’espace” (Desportes 6), stemming from “l’interaction entre innovation technique et

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177. This sculpture was originally placed on a round plate that swiveled as the sculpture was turned. One can easily imagine children pushing it by its vertical poles, as if it were a merry-go-round. Round elements imbricated within one another on the top would also turn. However, it was anchored to the ground after nearby residents complained about the noise it made (Vergely).
contexte culturel” (12). From the point of view of a cultural historian of technology, “le paysage lié à un mode de transport [ . . . ] apparaît non pas comme une conséquence, un fait non essentiel, mais comme l’un des multiples aspects de l’innovation” (11). Here we understand *paysage*, or landscape, as a perceptual rather than a physical phenomenon. Human perception is linked to the technologies available, not only those that directly impact (or extend) the senses, but also technologies that change the way bodies interact with the world. The two historians suggest that while train travel was generally perceived by its earliest users as reducing perceptual quality, this new form of technology also made new perceptual experiences available.

Annette Freytag further discusses Schivelbusch’s analysis of social and industrial modernity, which introduced speed (or velocity) and “the experience of motion engendered by speed” to human experience (Freytag 215). Freytag states that, “[t]hrough [speed and the experience of it] everything was rearranged” including landscape, naming the act of seeing landscape while moving “dynamics of sight” (215). Freytag further argues that train travel even affected perception once travelers had finished their journeys, and further, that these perceptual changes influenced the design of parks (Freytag 232). Freytag claims that Parisians’ habituation to vision while moving resulted in the park pathway designs of the late nineteenth century that involved more twists and turns, providing more “staccato” of fresh views and scenery (233). Modernity also led to attention to traffic flow in parks (234). It remains to be seen whether other aspects of Alphandian park design, such as the form or placement of flower beds, *massifs* of shrubbery or groves of trees, or even park furniture, reflect this notion as well. It seems
that some visual effects along the Promenade plantée refer to train travel, although these
effects were not due to the conscious intentions of the Promenade’s designers.\textsuperscript{178}

Today, as train travel is a nearly universal experience in Europe, and more
particularly in France, travelers are still primed to associate certain perceptions with this
particular setting. A visitor to the Promenade plantée occupies a similar viewer position
as would a train traveler, that of a subject moving along in a flat straight line, although
not at a high rate of speed. Certain visual effects generated from the design of the
promenade plantée resemble the distortions or “losses” to “natural” perception produced
by speed, or seem to suggest changes or novel ways of perceiving brought on by train
travel.\textsuperscript{179}

The sensation of loss of perceptive capacity in train travel is due to the rupture
between the world of the traveler, inside the train, and the setting outside. The traveler
moves without feeling physical effort or the mechanical effort of the locomotive. The
train track eliminates the “accidents” of the landscape, and there is an overall separation
between the interior of the train, the immediate environment of the traveler, and the
surroundings (Schivelbusch 30, Desportes 152, 159). The train’s speed allows for an
increase in the quantity of things seen, but also for a loss of quality of perception

\textsuperscript{178} When asked, neither Mathieux nor Vergely claimed to have been inspired by the past of the site as a
railway in their design of the park (Mathieux, Interview, Vergely). Vergely seemed to dismiss the idea of
using a railway as an inspiration for a park and seemed surprised to be asked about the train-based
interpretation given on the guided tour of some of the park’s features. Mathieux noted that the SNCF had
removed its entire infrastructure, such as rails and small buildings, except for the Reuilly train station, so
(unlike the situation in the Parc de Bercy) there were no historical reminders on the site that might have
served as inspiring details.

\textsuperscript{179} Another interpretation, furnished by Marc Bédarida, was that the creation of the Promenade plantée “has
turned the symbol of efficiency and performance, the technical device of the train, into an object of poetic
regeneration. The speed of exchanges and flows, and therefore profit, has given way to relaxation and
whim, order to disorder. The glaring incongruity between the subject (a work from the realm of civil
engineering) and the use of its content (a place for strolling around) results in a strangeness that is full of
charm” (“Walking through the Psychogeography of Paris” 95).
(Schivelbusch 62). Spatial relations between objects are disrupted, while time and even memory also seem disrupted (Desportes 154, Schivelbusch 42).

Desportes and Schivelbusch conclude that this decrease in perceptual capability, and of sensations perceived, results in an overall loss of the real. For Desportes, this experience is paradoxical. The train “fait traverser, rend visible mais sur un mode qui éloigne, repousse au loin,” a process he calls “dépossession” or “distanciation déréalisante” (152). This conclusion that travel by train results in a reduction in the richness of perceptual stimuli, seems to parallel other critiques of modernity, and of modern technology’s dehumanizing effect.

Train travel was accused of diminishing depth perception as well (Schivelbusch 67). The speed of the train highlights the continuity of simple visual elements, such as a horizon or the silhouette of mountains (Desportes 147). The landscape would seem flattened or two-dimensional rather than three-dimensional, since the foreground is reduced to a blurry band streaming by (Desportes 154). In the sectors to the east of Reuilly, before and after the Rue du Sahel section, there are sequences of hedges pruned at hip height that fill up a large proportion of the flat area at the bottom of the trench. One wonders why the space is “filled” by these bushes, rather than by a wider, branching, or zigzagging walkable surface. The use of low, dense, uniformly pruned evergreen shrubs around the paths in the trench areas to the east of Reuilly results in a visually monotonous foreground, recalling the blurring of the foreground that one perceives from a train (see

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180 Schivelbusch notes the rise in nostalgic, anachronistic leisure activities, part of the appeal of which is to re-forge the connection with nature present in these older technologies, especially carriage riding for pleasure (20). We could potentially draw a parallel between this phenomenon in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century society and the popularity of camping and hiking, but also such attractions as steam trains or the tours offered in the old Sprague cars of the Paris Métro, as leisure activities in the present day. However, I do not feel that this nostalgic revival of anachronistic leisure activities explains the appeal of the Promenade plantée.
Figure 4.21. Perhaps this de-emphasis of the foreground is also meant to guide the visitor’s eye up (or to the side) in order to create a sensation that the park is broader, and to call attention to the scenery farther in the distance.\footnote{Some design choices may be a result of practical concerns, such as delineating pedestrian and bicycle areas. Other choices may simply have been the usual practices within the city parks department at the time. Mathieux stated that, were the park to be redone today, it would be left “much more natural” and there would be fewer hard-surfaced walkways. This would be due in part to environmental concerns, such as eliminating runoff water (Interview).}

After discussing the loss of perceptual richness experienced by the earliest train travelers, both writers go on to suggest that trains soon became accepted and that some travelers felt they allowed for a new and different type of perception, mostly due to speed. According to Schivelbusch, “Tout ce qui apparaissait comme une perte à la conscience liée au voyage traditionnel devient un enrichissement pour ce regard.” The speed and linearity of the train trajectory “permettent enfin le déploiement de cette nouvelle vision” (Schivelbusch 64). Desportes concurs that the train offers, rather than “un paysage déformé par la vitesse,” a “nouvelle réalité” (Desportes 149).

This “new reality” brought about new, pleasant visual sensations. “Ce n’est pas un paysage pittoresque détruit par le chemin de fer mais c’est inversement un paysage intrinsèquement monotone que le train place dans une perspective esthétiquement intéressante […] C’est seulement par la vitesse que les objets du monde visible prennent de l’éclat” (Schivelbusch 65). For Desportes, the “voyage ferroviaire apporte un supplément d’intérêt à tout ce qu’il fait découvrir” and “anime les paysages monotones” (149). Speed “animates” the landscape, and may create the sensation that the landscape is moving or dancing: “le vif plaisir qu’éprouve à certaines occasions le voyageur: l’espace s’élargit, s’amenuise, se réduit, s’élargit à nouveau, toujours changeant, toujours ondoyant, toujours animé de mouvements” (Desportes 188). In this manner, a landscape
that might have appeared monotonous when viewed on foot suddenly becomes interesting.

Particularly interesting is Desportes’ contention that certain details “n’ont leur existence que par et dans le mouvement,” for example, how one perceives a trench or an embankment from a train. From a train, changes in the scenery that are in fact gradual, for example, the increase in elevation of a hill or of an embankment running alongside a track, are perceived as rapid, flashing transitions. (Desportes 149). While walking on the Promenade plantée is not actually an experience of speed, this effect of rapid transitions is one of the effects of the train travel experience that seems to be suggested by segments of the Promenade. The two apartment buildings at each end of the section of the Promenade built on the former embankment are viewed quite dramatically from the Promenade. Bédarida describes the passage through each of these buildings as “a deceptively dizzy fault” (98). Perhaps this “dizziness,” brought on by the angle at which the walker views the building and the narrow “fault” through which the Promenade runs, is similar to the experience of passing through a cut or a tunnel at high speed on a train.

These hints at “dynamics of sight” on the Promenade plantée prime us to recall the railway, but not just our individual experiences on this railway (although some people do have memories of this specific route), but the experience of trains in general. However, while railway references spark this perception, and “panoramic perception” is one aspect of the overall experience we are attempting to define, the landscape effects are deeper and more all-encompassing than the occasional parallax effect or a suggestion of train travel.
The Promenade plantée may also be considered an inversion or *retournement* of its former “self,” since it accommodates leisure activity and voluntary movement through the city where the infrastructure of modern industrial city used to be. As part of its transformation, the experience of train travel is turned “inside out,” produced, albeit incompletely, by the spectator’s own actions and the garden design rather than technology. Speed is removed and with it, threats of danger or accidents, the anxieties that accompany modern technology. Another leisure setting within which the human eye is exposed to the views and types of sight available through speed and motion, but within which these effects are isolated from the dangers or utilitarian necessities of actual travel, an experience that emerged soon after the development of train travel as a form of mass transportation, is film.

**Early Film**

I would like to discuss early film since, before the development of editing techniques mastered by such innovators as Eisenstein or D. W. Griffiths, movement was one of the most important elements of the spectacle. In particular, the movement of the camera was used to place it in the subject position, that is, to align the spectator’s eye with the camera’s lens, and the spectator’s subjectivity with the camera’s point of view. This moving point of view allowed for effects similar to the “dynamics of sight” brought about by train travel.

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182 Various sources describe the division of the Promenade plantée into “sequences,” including the Conseil de Paris’s “Réalisation” de la Promenade plantée (10), Mathieu and Cougouliègne, who describe a “Script en sept séquences” (109–13); Prinet; and Marot, who titles a list of statistics for each “séquence,” “Générique” (“Bastille-Vincennes” 12, 48). Gerard-Hirne refers to the Viaduc and the Avenue Daumesnil, not to a future promenade on top: “Or, l’Avenue Daumesnil ne se pratique que par séquence, dans des modes de déplacements journaliers, en bordure d’un tissu ou de pôle à pôle” (32).
By 1898, the Lumière brothers, the inventors of motion pictures in France, included around thirty films in their catalogue that had been filmed “à partir d’un support en mouvement, train ou bateau” (Desportes 244). One example of this type of film was the one-minute “Leaving Jerusalem by Railway” (1897), a landscape panorama filmed from the back of a moving train. Other early film-makers, such as Thomas Edison (Panoramic View from the Moving Boardwalk, filmed from the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900), G.A. Smith (A Kiss in the Tunnel 1899), or D.W. Griffiths (The Girl and Her Trust, 1912), also incorporated cameras mounted on trains, boats, and other machines to capture movement through a landscape. In 1912, the Italian director Pastrone invented the “carrello,” a dolly that supported a camera, the first piece of machinery developed specifically for smooth tracking (Desportes 262).

One of the most evocative uses of train movement in cinematography is Henri Chomette’s Jeux de reflets et de la vitesse (1926).\footnote{Jeux is a fragment of the film A Quoi rêvent les jeunes films? made in collaboration with Man Ray, whose portion of the collaboration was later released as Emak-Bakia.} This four-minute-long fragment appears to have been filmed on the above-ground Métro lines 2 and 6. The rhythm of railway trestles and bridge elements, reflections on the rails, and brief glimpses of scenery create a hypnotic composition in black and white. The film seems speeded up at times, and is partially in negative, accentuating the purely formal aspects obtained by the camera’s moving point of view. The quality of motion and time in early film was not only fascinating to filmmakers and to the public, but also caught the attention of early critics as well as two art historians, Elie Faure and Erwin Panofsky.

Elie Faure, an autodidact who is known for his Histoire de l’art (first published in 1909), enunciated a theory of the specificity of motion pictures in his essay, “De la
Cinéplastique” (1920). His argument was that film should not imitate theater’s focus on plot, dialogue, and characters, calling this imitation “cinémime”. Instead, film should focus on “la plastique,” or “[l]’art d’exprimer la forme au repos ou en mouvement, par tous les moyens au pouvoir de l’homme” (20). This position was justified because, “Le cinéma est plastique d’abord [emphasis Faure]: il représente, en quelque sorte, une architecture en mouvement qui doit être en accord constant, en équilibre dynamiquement poursuivi avec le milieu et les paysages où elle s’élève et s’écroule” (20). Stating that “un art cinéplastique épanoui” would in effect represent “une architecture idéale,” Faure shifts the emphasis from the narrative and representational possibilities of cinema to the purely visual and abstract ones (34).

Erwin Panofsky’s essay, “Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures” (1937), likewise addresses the “dynamization of space” and “spatialization of time” through film. Panofsky states: “[a]esthetically, [the spectator] is in permanent motion as his eye identifies itself with the lens of a camera, which permanently shifts in distance and directions. And as movable as the spectator is, as movable is […] the space presented to him” (96). Panofsky here recognizes the effect of “panoramic perception” as a spectator moves through space. “Not only bodies move in space, but space itself does, approaching, receding, turning, dissolving and recrystallizing as it appears through the controlled locomotion and focusing of the camera and through the cutting and editing of the various shots” (96–98).

The contemporary film theorist Giuliana Bruno suggests that vision and space in movement, placed at the center of film by both Faure and Panofsky, is not linked only to the medium of film itself, but also to the historic context of early film. Bruno’s overall
argument aims to re-inscribe the body and spatial experience in the critical account of the experience of film viewing, in contrast to film theories that posit the viewer as a static, disembodied, voyeuristic eye (9–10). Bruno states: “An international genre of panorama films made traveling through sites an extensive practice in the very early days of film,” a practice that responded to “modernity’s desire for site seeing” (Bruno 16). Bruno draws a parallel between “an architectural ensemble” and the “cinematic spectacle” which are both “read as [they are] traversed” and are therefore “readable insofar as [they are] traversable” (Bruno 15). Therefore, film study should take into account the “multiple viewpoints of the ‘picturesque’ route” (Bruno 15). However, Bruno’s analysis does not refer to an “ideal” architecture as does Faure’s, but instead, a very real architecture, insisting on the relation between early film and industrial, urban modernity. For Bruno, “the language of cinema was born not out of static theatrical views but out of urban motions” (16–17). In cinema, as in a walk through the city, a “spectatorial body” “moves across an imaginary path,” taking up “changing position[s]” and embarking on “unexpected paths of exploration” (Bruno 15).

The experience of train travel had already made this type of perception widely available and accessible, while film (but also other more marginal experiences associated with modernity such as the panorama), highlighted this type of experience and transformed it into spectacle. People were then more apt to notice this type of experience in everyday life. The interest of these technologies for my argument, that is, their potential to isolate and illuminate this experience of vision in motion, of which parallax is only one element, is also where they fall short when trying to offer an analysis that truly accounts for the interest and strength of the Promenade plantée. By isolating vision as
one sense, they fail to account for the total bodily experience of walking through this urban park, in which the experience of vision in motion is only part of a larger set of stimuli that focus the walker’s attention on objects near at hand as well as far away. In order to grapple with these issues of the relationship between the viewer/visitor of the Promenade and the surrounding setting, I would now like to introduce yet another potential medium for understanding the Promenade plantée, sculpture.

**Sculpture**

The medium of sculpture has begun, in the second half of the twentieth century, to engage not only with questions of perception and the movement of the viewing subject through space, but also with issues of the relationship between the viewer and the work of art. In particular, sculptors whose work, through its scale, abstraction, and relation to viewer and site, is on a spectrum with land art, provide interesting insights into the way the Promenade plantée is experienced. The art historian Yve-Alain Bois’s analysis of Richard Serra’s sculpture takes this insight into the experience of complex structures even farther.

Robert Morris’s essays, “Notes on Sculpture, Part Two” (1966) and “The Present Tense of Space” (1978), explore the notion that “[t]he experience of the work necessarily exists in time” (“Notes” 23). Morris posits an experience of “presentness” that is “the intimate inseparability of the experience of physical space and that of an ongoing immediate present. Real space is not experienced except in real time […] Location and point of view are constantly shifting at the apex of time’s flow” (Morris, “The Present Tense” 71). The Romantic sculptor Rodin, but also contemporary sculptors such as Mary
Miss, Richard Long, and Robert Irwin, explore this “temporal span,” as “the work in question extends presentness as conscious experience” (75, 80).

Extending his observations to architecture, Morris reminds us that “[i]n perceiving architectural space, one’s own space is not separate but coexistent with what is perceived” (72). Morris states that some architecture, especially “Middle and Far Eastern building types” requires time and movement by the visitor in order to fully understand its form. 184

The physical acts of seeing and experiencing these eccentric structures are more fully a function of the time, and sometimes effort, needed for moving through them. Knowledge of their spaces is less visual and more temporal-kinesthetic than for buildings which have clear gestalts as exterior and interior shapes. Anything that is known behaviorally rather than imagistically is more time-bound, more a function of duration than what can be grasped as a static whole. (76)

By focusing on the “time” and “effort” necessary to explore certain building types, Morris transforms parallax, and related experiences of perception in motion and time, from optional or subsidiary qualities of architecture to central characteristics of the architectural experience. While effects of parallax may be felt in spaces such as Classical colonnades, Gothic churches, or modernist structures on pilotis (as previously discussed), these spaces share an immediately graspable, ordered structure. That is, they may have “structural transparency” (the term coined by Slutzky and Rowe and discussed in Chapter

184 This proposition by Morris may be related to Le Corbusier’s discussion of the Villa Savoie, in which, possibly referring to experiences during his 1911 travels from Germany to Turkey via Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria, Le Corbusier states that “[l]’architecture arabe nous donne un enseignement précieux. Elle s’apprécie à la marche, [emphasis Le Corbusier] avec le pied; c’est en marchant, en se déplaçant que l’on voit se développer les ordonnances de l’architecture. C’est un principe contraire à l’architecture baroque [. . .]. Je préfère l’enseignement de l’architecture arabe” (Œuvres complètes 24). My thanks to Lynn Palermo for the information about Le Corbusier’s travels.
Three on the Parc de Bercy). However, the sculptures and spaces that Morris discusses do not necessarily have this quality. One’s capacity to understand these spaces is entirely bound up with the experience of moving through or around their features, and therefore, the constantly changing experience of movement.

While the Promenade plantée seems simple when its path is examined on a map, when visited, it reveals itself as a complex space that lacks “structural transparency.” The sheer length of the Promenade means that it is impossible to view in its entirety. More importantly, the way it nestles into the geology of the city and occupies a thread of space within the diverse land parcels render its contours far more complicated. If the visual field as perceptible from the Promenade plantée is included in its boundaries, as has been the premise of this discussion, then the Promenade develops shoots and tentacles, its contours becoming fractal-like as they encompass ever-smaller spaces around it. The Promenade plantée surrenders structural transparency as it gains richness of visual experience. 185

**Phenomenology, the Sublime, and the Picturesque**

Yve-Alain Bois’s essay on *Clara-Clara*, a sculpture by Richard Serra displayed in the Tuileries Garden in 1983 and again in 2008, addresses a conception of viewer experience

185 This notion of assimilating a visual field to the Promenade, creating its “horizon” or its “field of influence” might be interesting in light of Michel Corajoud’s notion of horizon as an “interface” between the site and both its larger geographical context and a larger ensemble of related cultural phenomena (Corajoud 38–40). Moreover, Schivelbusch mentions, in his *Histoire des voyages en train*, the way in which the train and railway system, originally the medium of travel from one place to another, become an integral part of these places, in the minds of travelers: “La région qu’on atteint de Paris par le train se réalise pour les Parisiens par l’intermédiaire du train.” The train station becomes “le hall d’entrée de ces régions,” regions “qu’on achète avec un billet” (45). This is an interesting reversal in point of view: the region does not create the rail route, but rather the rail route creates the region. One could argue that, again, the Bastille-Vincennes route having no present practical purpose, it creates the Twelfth Arrondissement as a landscape rather than the Twelfth Arrondissement’s geography, history, and geology creating the train route. Again, we are back to the notion of *artialisation.*
of sculpture similar to Morris's of “presentness,” which Bois calls “deambulatory space and peripatetic vision” (34). Bois takes a more historical and theoretical approach than Morris, linking this experience to eighteenth-century theories of the picturesque garden. This analysis also converges with those of contemporary landscape architecture historians and theorists, notably Holly Getch Clarke, building a tie between the Promenade plantée and modern gardens. It is my aim in the following section to explain the characteristics of the picturesque as seen by Bois and Getch Clarke (but also to explore the differences between these two approaches), in order to show how these characteristics apply to the Promenade plantée. This link between garden history and the Promenade plantée is mediated by the experiences engendered by modern technology as discussed above, train travel and film. This digression may seem odd, as it will oblige the reader to consider an American sculptor who, though he spent a year as a student in Paris and later exhibited his work there, has no connection to the site or to the designers of the Promenade plantée. Nevertheless, this discussion will further our consideration of the Promenade plantée not only as a transformation of a limited stretch of land, the railway, but as a structure that influences and is influenced by a large swath of the city.

Bois identifies several important qualities of the picturesque. First, what he names one of the “commonplaces” of the picturesque: “not to force nature, but to reveal the ‘capacities’ of the site, while magnifying their variety and singularity” (34). Bois suggests that Serra’s sculpture (but also the picturesque in general) takes a stronger role than might be suggested by the term “revealing”: using sculptural elements to draw attention to even a “formless terrain” and provide a “barometer” through which it may be read. This

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186 The picturesque was originally defined as scenes that were neither beautiful, nor sublime, but rather irregular, disproportionate, or asymmetrical, yet still “interesting” or “worthy” of being painted (Le Dantec, personal communication).
observation certainly applies to the Promenade plantée, as evidenced by the remarks cited previously, by Bédarida and Marot, on the Promenade’s capacity to “reveal” its surrounding site. The strong linear direction of the viaduct and trench, their constant proportions, consistent urban furniture, and repeated vegetation elements, when juxtaposed with the varying geography and architecture of the city around them, lend the park its “revealing” capacities. These capacities seem to exist primarily through the bold gesture of creating a park that is placed in such unusual contact with the city, and secondarily through this consistency created within the park.

Second, Bois posits that the picturesque made a “fundamental break from pictorialism,” “most often unbeknownst to its theoreticians” (36). The origin of the picturesque is generally considered to be the construction of a garden view from a house, or “as a sequence of small views—pauses—arranged along the path where one strolls” (36). Evidence for a break with pictorialism comes, for example, from René Louis de Girardin’s treatise De la composition des paysages (1777). Though Bois acknowledges Girardin’s interest in pictorial views, he suggests that Girardin’s concern with life-size models of garden designs and scale in general suggest an underlying consideration for the site as something more than simply an image (37–38). Bois also points to the importance of parallax for picturesque gardens as another break from pictorialism (40). Parallax was not only an important aspect of Baroque architecture (as mentioned previously), but architects looked to garden design to better understand its effects (Bois 42). Thus Bois is able to argue that “what is picturesque is the importance accorded to the movement of the spectator” which “corresponds to the fundamental rule of Uvedale Price,” that is,

187 Bois quotes Julien David Leroy, Histoire de la disposition et des formes différentes que les chrétiens ont données à leurs temples, depuis le règne de Constantin le Grand, jusqu’à nous, 1764, in support of this connection (Bois 42).
“intricacy,” or “the disposition of objects which, by a partial and uncertain concealment, excites and nourishes curiosity” (42–43). Here we are able to see how parallax and, more generally, “intricacy” according to Price’s definition not only link the Promenade plantée to the experiences of train travel or film viewing, but also to one of the dominant styles of modern landscape architecture, the picturesque garden.

What binds these elements of the “break from pictorialism” together is their presupposition of a moving, viewing subject that is not only a moving eye, but a moving body. Due to the living subject’s moment-by-moment experiencing of the work of art, the temporal quality of this work becomes important as well. These two aspects lead to a contemporary redefinition of the “picturesque,” although each theorist chooses to take this redefinition in a different direction. While Bois takes an approach that focuses on the aesthetic judgment of this experience, naming this new category the “sublime picturesque,” Getch Clarke emphasizes the role of experience grounded in the body, positing a “phenomenological picturesque.”

Bois’s “sublime picturesque” is formulated as a response to modernist critics’ neo-Kantian criticism of Serra and the Minimalist artists of his time. While these critics seem to adhere to the philosopher Immanuel Kant’s definition of the beautiful—a timeless, instantly intelligible phenomenon—as the standard by which art should be measured, Bois focuses on Kant’s use of temporal language to describe the experience of the sublime (59). Kant states in *The Critique of Judgment* that the sublime “is to be found in a formless object, so far as in it or by occasion of it boundlessness is represented, and yet its totality is also present to thought” (102, emphasis Kant). The “pleasure” of the sublime is similar to that of the beautiful, except that it “arises only indirectly; viz. it is
produced by the feeling of a momentary checking of the vital powers and a consequent stronger outflow of them” (102). In fact, “the mind is not merely attracted by the object but is ever being alternately repelled.” Kant continues, “For the feeling of the Sublime brings with it as its characteristic feature a movement of the mind bound up with the judging of the object” whereas the Beautiful engages the mind in “restful contemplation” (105–06, emphasis Kant’s). These statements imply an element of time to allow for the “alternating” sensations of attractions or repulsions, or “movement of the mind” in the perception of the sublime.

Bois argues that Serra’s sculpture is not sublime, but rather picturesque, suggesting that some exemplars of the picturesque tend toward either the sublime or the beautiful (61). “There is thus a beautiful picturesque and a sublime picturesque: it is to this second category […] that Serra’s art belongs” (62). Bois does not, however, suggest what a general definition of the “sublime picturesque” would be in this essay, which focused primarily on Serra’s work. How, then, might the “sublime picturesque” be defined? This aesthetic category would be a hybrid of the sublime’s agitated, dual state of mind and tension between a concept that the mind may understand but that is impossible to represent, and the picturesque’s combination of nature and artifice in its “revealing” of the site, its “intricacy,” and its emphasis on viewing subjects’ potential movement. These qualities would tend to disrupt narrative as a means of creating wholeness or structure. They would result in a suspension or oscillation of aesthetic judgment. The most salient qualities of the work would therefore be the presentness of the experience of the visitor, rather than abstract contemplation.
We may argue that the Promenade plantée displays these characteristics. The Promenade includes symbolic elements that do not produce a coherent allegory or narrative statement, seemingly disrupting its own potential poetic meaning. As mentioned previously, its length, the importance of views of the city and a sense of the expansion of the Promenade beyond its physical boundaries and into a much larger visual field, alternating with more enclosed, sheltered spaces such as the “rooms” on the viaduct or the railway trench, all might contribute to a “sublime picturesque”.

Another direction suggested by Bois’ essay on Serra, in particular passages on the experience of “strolling” around Clara-Clara, is echoed in an essay on the same artist by Rosalind Krauss. While Krauss does not engage with theories of the picturesque, her analysis complements Bois’s notion of the sublime picturesque. Krauss discusses how Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* serves as a “thematic ground and a means of orientation” for Serra’s work (38). She identifies thematic interests such as a “critique of composition” (17) and of pictoriality (19), an “erotics of process” or a “continuous remaking” of the work (in Serra’s prop pieces, 1969) (21), and a focus on the “phenomenological fissure” in the subject (in the video *Boomerang*, 1974) (22). These factors, which tended not only to dismiss traditional media and processes, but also to disrupt the relationship between viewer, site, and work, all resurface in Serra’s monumental works from the 1970s on, and link these works with phenomenological thought. For Krauss, the feature that causes Serra’s large steel or concrete sculptures, such as *Shift* (1970–1972), to be identified with Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy was “its construction as a network of perspectives that would establish an internal ‘horizon’ for

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188 Krauss published an earlier essay on Serra in the same exhibition catalogue in which Bois’s essay on Clara-Clara originally appeared (‘Abaisser’).
the work […] which in turn would continually define one’s vision of the object through one’s physical relation to it; to its transitive relationship to the viewer, marking the activity of his connection to the world” (Krauss 30).

As part of the design process for Shift, Serra and a friend walked through and around the planned site to track this “network of perspectives” and the possibilities afforded by topography in relation to their two shifting positions:

We discovered that two people walking the distance of the field opposite one another, attempting to keep each other in view despite the curvature of the land, would mutually determine a topological definition of the space. The boundaries of the work became the maximum distance two people could occupy and still keep each other in view. The horizon of the work was established by the possibilities of maintaining this mutual viewpoint. (Serra, quoted in Krauss, 30)

A similar effect may be experienced around the Promenade plantée; just as an extended virtual boundary of the park might be traced around the visual perspectives from the Promenade to the city beyond, another boundary could be defined by the points from which the Promenade is visible. While the Viaduc seems to be straightforward in its visibility from the Avenue Daumesnil and the streets around the Gare du Lyon to the south, its visibility is more complex from the north as well as around the Reuilly sector where it begins to pass through the center of city blocks. Add to this the three-dimensionality of the Promenade, the ability to pass under the Viaduct or to view it from the cross streets that pass over it, and the virtual three-dimensional boundaries of the Promenade, its “horizon,” becomes very complex indeed.
This feature of the Promenade plantée makes it unique among the Parisian parks analyzed in this dissertation, and perhaps among all Parisian parks. There has been a general effort to make parks more physically and socially open, and to integrate them seamlessly into their neighborhoods, as epitomized by the “urban” Parc de la Villette. This trend is also evidenced by the ha-has or sauts-de-loup at the boundaries of the Parc Citroën. Yet no park has the visual and virtual porosity of the Promenade plantée, or its intimate embrace of its surroundings. No park is as turned toward its surroundings, woven through or projected out upon them as is the Promenade plantée.

The contributions of phenomenology to landscape thought are explored by Holly Getch-Clarke, who seeks both to represent through drawing and to theoretically account for “phenomena peculiar to landscape that resist representation in perspective.” These phenomena include “its large enveloping scale and continuity of ground plane,” its “temporality, which because of its duration and flux, cannot be reduced to a single point of view or time; and its fluid materiality and tactility” (50). Thus the dominance of the “Baroque,” “descriptive,” or “Cartesian” “scopic regimes” (as theorized by Martin Jay) is questioned and perspectival representation, the “shifting mediation of phenomenal relations,” is assigned a place alongside these other, purely visual regimes (54). The body becomes “interimplicated in spatio-temporal, material and real relations,” and perception of landscape “directly implicates our bodily relation to the fleshliness of the world.”

Phenomenology as a philosophical project is defined by Merleau-Ponty as focused around the “real” and the “natural attitude,” or “notre expérience telle qu’elle est” (ii). This respect for “l’irréductibilité du vécu” results, for Merleau-Ponty, in, first, the aim to describe (rather than to analyze) perceptions and the relation between body,
world, and mind in which they are grounded (iv, 7). Merleau-Ponty confronts the cogito of Descartes, arguing that perceptions, and therefore thought, can never truly be separated from the body and from the outside world; and that the basis of our ability to perceive is grounded in a preexisting world of phenomena, “un ensemble déjà pregnant d’un sens irreductible” (29). This pre-existing, outside world that exists unto itself means that perception or awareness of sensations is first global, then analytic (rather than being first a series of isolated phenomena from which one may deduce the world). As humans enter into contact with this world and seek to understand it, “les perceptions portent sur des relations et non sur des termes absolus” and “il n’y a pas de donnée perceptive isolée” (7, 10). Our perceptions are completely bound up with our body, which functions not (only) as a machine receiving these perceptions from the outside, but rather as a complete interface with the world: “Le corps est notre moyen général d’avoir un monde” (171). It is foremost a whole through which we contact the outside, and only secondarily a series of parts or elements. This phenomenological body is the “schéma corporel” (116). This body is oriented as much by the outside world and its tasks as it is toward the interior (116–17). This basic orientation of the body means that all of the senses, experiences, and perceptions are fundamentally spatial (252). However, “c’est dans l’action que la spatialité du corps s’accomplit” (119). This action can be physical or mental, real or imagined; Merleau-Ponty defines a “projet” as “un système abstrait de perception et de mouvement,” not only a “système de signification mais aussi un milieu de comportement.” Projects “polarize” the world, that is to say that experience gains meaning through the orientation of the body in the world and its preparation to interact with this outside world (128–29). This is not to say that experience is simply a
transcription of the world. Perception is “un processus d’intégration où le texte du monde extérieur est non pas recopié mais constitué” (16). Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology is therefore grounded in our fundamental relation to the world through a holistic sense of our body’s role in it. Our “five senses,” and by extension, what we normally consider to be our perceptive and—beyond—intellectual capabilities, are subordinate to this original global awareness of position, orientation and embodied-ness.

Like Bois, Getch Clarke participates in the recent re-evaluation of the picturesque, which emphasizes (seemingly paradoxically) its non-pictorial elements, though as mentioned previously, this re-evaluation focuses on the notion of a “phenomenological picturesque” (59). For Getch Clarke, the reduction of the picturesque to its visual elements ignores the extent and intensity of sensory activation in the landscape, whereas an appreciation for this global sensory environment would lead to “an immersion in phenomenal experience itself” where “bodily experience supersedes viewing” (59). This “hybridized” experience “relies […] on direct experience of moving through multiplicities of relational, spatial phenomena” (59). The phenomenal picturesque therefore has a “structure of fluctuating relations conditioned by the moving body and changing processes” (59). Getch Clarke’s original drawings, which accompany her article, suggest the shifting light, color, and depth of dense vegetal growth.

While seemingly the antithesis of Parisian municipal gardening practices, the trench segment of the Promenade plantée does offer instances if this type of organic profusion (see Figure 4.22). Nowhere does Getch Clarke suggest that this is the only setting in which an “immersion in phenomenal experience” might be possible. The notion

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189 In addition to Bois and Getch Clarke, see Elizabeth Meyer, “Situating Modern Landscape Architecture,” (especially 28–30) and Robert Smithson, “Frederick Law Olmsted and the Dialectical Landscape” and “Sedimentation” in The Writings of Robert Smithson.
of “phenomenological picturesque” is an invitation to engage all of the senses in a visit to the Promenade, despite the temptation, both in an actual visit and in an analysis, to limit one’s attention to the rich, evident visual effects. Sound, odors, textures, temperature, humidity, wind and air pressure are all sensations that the human body may detect, and the Promenade includes varied environments, even microclimates, along its path. Moreover, the phenomenological picturesque underscores the essentiality of bodily movement to the Promenade, as in fact its fundamental, defining characteristic in an aesthetic way, just as it is from a social and a functional approach.

Getch Clarke suggests that the consequences of this new picturesque include a “revised definition of the picturesque spatio-visual structure” to include not just “Cartesian perspectivism” but as “conditioned, potential relations of becoming, mutuality, mutability, and contingency.” This is due to the fact that “picturesque spatiality and its representation primarily underscore the relational and thus potentially engage the in-between,” “the vestigial, interstitial space between highlighted moments,” or “the awkward passages between the more significant moments of framed architectural or other phenomena” (59). Ultimately, Getch Clarke favors a “redefinition of picturesque structure as a non-pictorial or phenomenological picturesque”—a seemingly paradoxical concept, but one that “proposes to re instituted a robust identity and experience of the in-between introduced by art and architectural discourses of modernity as the place of process, of movement, of richness” (59).

**Conclusion**

As Sebastien Marot put it, “en permettant cette traversée, [la Promenade plantée] a
considérablement rénové l’expérience de ce paysage, ses pratiques, ses usages, ainsi que les conditions de son évolution ou de sa fabrication” (“Bastille-Vincennes” 7). This “renewed experience” is provided, first, by integrating traditional Parisian promenade features into a new and unusual type of site. While the material and design choices of the Promenade provide a reassuring, traditional framework within a novel location, it is the contemporary perception of aesthetic interest in the Promenade setting and the surrounding landscape, or artification, which is the Promenade’s real experiential interest. This transformation of the Promenade plantée’s setting into an aesthetically appreciated landscape occurs through the visitor’s continuous walking along the Promenade, producing effects that are not visible through static observation or representations such as photography or maps. The fundamental experience of the Promenade plantée, which allows the visitor to experience its other elements, is walking, producing an uninterrupted sensory experience.

For the contemporary Parisian resident or visitor, many of the sensations felt when walking on the Promenade are most likely associated with such modern and contemporary experiences as riding in a train, or watching a traveling shot in a film, experiences that are now seamlessly integrated into everyday life. These experiences isolate such phenomena as parallax, making them more evident, but the Promenade plantée, being both physically isolated and visually connected to its surroundings, brings these phenomena to the fore of lived experience. Perception in motion is of interest for architects, landscape architects, and sculptors not only due to the interesting visual effects it creates, but also because of the way movement can integrate aesthetic judgment and bodily experience. This integration, in which the viewer/visitor, the site, and its
surrounding contextual field are united, is what is theoretically elaborated by the notions of “phenomenological perception” or “the sublime picturesque.” The element of time in the experience of the Promenade plantée is placed at the fore through the sublime, while the importance of the body as mediator of experience and the relationships between self and other, and self and world, is emphasized when addressing the Promenade plantée as phenomenological. The Promenade plantée thus acquires aesthetic signification through this non-narrative, non-semiotic, corporeally embodied experience.

The Promenade plantée is picturesque if we consider the picturesque to be an aesthetic mode, rather than a style. As in my analysis of the Parc de Bercy, my aim is to discuss park design in a way that places style among other criteria for categorizing and analyzing parks, rather than developing a stylistic discourse. Like the Parc de Bercy, the Promenade plantée suggests, through numerous subtle cues, a different sort of experience, one that springs from the park’s situation in the specific cultural context of contemporary Paris.
Figure 4.2: A postcard depicting the Place de la Bastille, including the Vincennes train station. No date. Source: Archives de Paris 8fiA5P3C
Figure 4.3: The viaduct along the Avenue Daumesnil, restored by the architect Patrick Berger.
Figure 4.4: Map of the planned route of the Bastille-Vincennes railway, 1855. Source: Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris G 672. Plan du Chemin de fer de Vincennes dans son parcours de la Place de la Bastille à Saint-Mandé. Map. Paris, 1855.
Figure 4.5: The viaduct along the Avenue Daumesnil before restoration. Source: Archives de Paris UPF 9650 AD075PH_UPF0444.
Figure 4.6: The viaduct along Avenue Daumesnil, after restoration.
Figure 4.7: Passage Hennel, leading from the Rue de Charenton to the Viaduc des arts.
Figure 4.8: The Jardin Hector-Malot, designed by the architect Andreas Christo-Foroux. The viaduct is visible in the background.
Figure 4.9: Designed by Vladimir Mitrofanoff, this new building replaces the embankment that formed the continuation of the viaduct.
Figure 4.10: Mitrofanoff’s apartment building at the west end of the former embankment.
Figure 4.11: Mitrofanoff’s apartment building at the east end of the former embankment.
Figure 4.12: The sector to the east of the Rue de Reuilly, in which existing plants were paired with shrubs and “rustic” vegetation.
Figure 4.13: Sculpture by A. Zuber near the Rue du Sahel.
Figure 4.14: Logs set into a slope to create a staircase, a more rustic detail.
Figure 4.15: The staircase and belvedere marking the end of the Promenade plantée at the Périphérique.
Figure 4.16: Some of the furniture along the Promenade plantée. Due to the use of metal, stone and glass, the style, and the green paint, it recalls traditional Parisian park furniture.
Figure 4.17: Pruned bushes on the viaduct. Drastic pruning prevents them from taking over the planting bed and growing so high as to obscure the view.
Figure 4.18: The gated access to a balcony along the south side of the Opéra Bastille. This balcony, currently inaccessible to the public, is at the same elevation as the Promenade plantée.
Figure 4.19: The eastern end of the Promenade plantée at the Rue Edouard-Lartet. The Périphérique is just out of the right side of the photo.
Figure 4.20: Manolo Nuñez-Yanowski’s Hôtel de police. The cornice features oversize copies of Michelangelo’s *Dying Slave*. 
Figure 4.21: A view near Boulevard Soult. Pruned bushes fill the space between walking and bicycle paths.
Figure 4.22: Profusion of vegetation near the Rue de Reuilly.
Conclusion
Let us return to 1985, at the beginning of the series of design competitions that would soon put into place a new generation of parks for Paris. Over the following years, Parisians will see emerging from these competitions a broad variety of proposals arising from landscape architects and architects with diverse theoretical backgrounds. These competitions and the parks they engendered will result in a complete renewal of Parisian park design, in which the traditional *style municipal*, subsumed to a hierarchized network of parks, will largely be displaced.

My analysis of these parks has led in each case in a particular direction, dictated by the specificity of the respective object. I have drawn on a range of theorists, and these contributions from philosophy, history, and art theory have allowed me to account for each park’s unique re-framing of the issues emergent in its site and in the context of the city of Paris. First, the Parc André-Citroën uses the form of thematic gardens to subtly present scientific ideas to an erudite public and to juxtapose these ideas with aesthetics. The Parc de Bercy activates the traditional garden feature of allegorical ruin to address questions of commemoration and to bring out the layers of history found on the site. And the Promenade plantée employs tension, borrowed from the picturesque tradition, between narrativity and non-narrative experiences of movement to refer to contemporary transportation technology and to draw attention to the mode of urban experience provided along its route. Each park’s traditional garden design techniques and discrete garden references specific to French cultural history serve to interrogate, elucidate, and reframe a phenomenon from the wider contemporary world.

The aims of this conclusion are to highlight some common threads among the three case studies and to explore how these parks mesh with larger concerns in Paris,
broader issues in contemporary French culture and society, and theories of urban design emergent within the same time frame. I will start by addressing here, under the umbrella of the parks’ modernity, several issues raised in the Introduction, namely, the parks’ relation to modernism and postmodernism, the applicability of Foucault’s concept of heterotopia, and the relevance of these parks in the context of both the national capital and broader social issues. Next, I will discuss the concept of an “Age III” urban design and its relation to the concept of “landscape urbanism.” Finally, this conclusion will also highlight continuity and change within the development of Parisian green space since 1995 and will look to the Ile-de-France region for a larger picture of contemporary French park design.

**Modernity and Postmodernity**

Several common threads may be identified that pull together these divergent analyses. First, they all address the position of contemporary garden design in relation to modernity and its aftermath, understood as a post- or an après-. As we have seen in Chapter 1, landscape architecture in France, unlike architecture, did not experience a triumphant modern moment during the Trente Glorieuses. Landscape architects, who at the time were few in number, struggled for professional validity and acceptance. They also had difficulty adapting their design methods and vocabulary to the postwar building boom of grands ensembles. Finally, landscape architects entertained an uneasy relationship with the profession’s traditions and history. That being said, while the specific conditions of modernist architecture and urban planning in France tended to minimize or even exclude landscape architecture, the broader climate of aesthetic modernity in the realm of the
visual was embraced by landscape architecture. Consequently, aesthetic modernity’s rejection of traditional forms and methods in favor of new forms, new techniques, and new ways of defining innovation is evident in the work of Jacques Sgard, Jacques Simon, and Michel Corajoud. Nevertheless, public park design of the modern era in France seems distant from international modernist garden design in the postwar era as practiced by the Japanese-American sculptor Isamu Noguchi, the Brazilian landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx, or the American landscape architect Garrett Eckbo, all of whom were more directly inspired by modernist painting and sculpture.

Many elements of the postmodern (as it was theorized by Jean-François Lyotard and as inflected by the French national context) are found in both the general urban environment and the specific object I study. Clearly, landscape architects today are faced with the task of designing within an urban context marked by the excesses, “unfulfilled promises” (Yaari, xxv), and negative aspects of modernism. Their attention to public spaces; to specific, local, and often limited solutions; and to the city itself marks their approach as postmodern. Landscape architects’ own self-representation is also strongly postmodern: they see themselves as interdisciplinary actors working in a variety of sites and situations, developing ad hoc and often modest solutions to the problems posed while respecting context, history, and the existing site. Thus they belong to a critical postmodern, not to be confused with postmodernism as an oft-maligned design style. Indeed, the parks I study do at times take up historical garden styles, which were marginalized by modernity. The choices to adopt these styles, far from being sheer formal virtuosity, are, I argue, made according to where and when these styles serve contemporary needs. These choices mean that the parks that I study are critically

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190 See Yaari for a discussion of both Lyotard’s postmodern and the French national context.
postmodern in their reworkings of style and formal traditions, their interrogations of nostalgia and monumentality, and their sensitive action upon city space as they mend and stitch together disparate parts.

In order to highlight the importance of these key aspects of postmodernity, as opposed to the postmodern style, for the parks studied, and to recognize the blending of some of modernity’s characteristics with other characteristics germane to postmodernity, perhaps it is best to consider these parks to be *après-moderne*. According to Monique Yaari, the *après-moderne* in architecture and urban design is marked by “heterogenous, even contradictory responses” to the contemporary urban situation (xxvi), responses that “selectively retain, but with a twist, some of the traits of architectural modernism and postmodernism, while at the same time developing perspectives neglected by these two currents” (51). Such neglected perspectives include, in the case of these parks, nascent ecological and environmental concerns. Thus, the *après-moderne* treats “philosophical, political, and architectural modernity” as “reservoirs of ideas and ideals” that may be “continually rework[ed], reformulate[d], and readjust[ed] to evolving conditions” (61). These “ideas and ideals” include the “high moral exigencies” of modernism, but these exigencies are expressed on the ground through “local, modest” interventions (65). The unique blend of theoretical principles and design approaches that landscape architects place in the service of local solutions for each park’s social, cultural, geographical, and (occasionally) ecological situation marks them as *après-moderne* phenomena.
Heterotopian elements

These parks take up Foucault’s notion of gardens as heterotopia in diverging ways. Let us recall that according to Foucault’s coinage, heterotopias “represent, contest, and invert” other sites (755). The Parc André-Citroën exemplifies the capacity of the garden to become a microcosm of the world, a role that Gilles Clément explicitly embraces through his work on individual gardens as avatars of the jardin planétaire. Through the transformation of the marginal, forgotten space of the friche into an aesthetically and formally complex garden showpiece in the Jardin en mouvement, the ordinary relations among human-created spaces are inverted and the value of so-called “useless” land is reasserted. The Parc de Bercy takes up another aspect of heterotopia: its link to “hétérochronie,” an exceptional temporality. Foucault lists cemeteries—by virtue of their association with the most fundamental of all human temporal ruptures; libraries, museums and archives, sites of infinite accumulation of time; and ephemeral, festival spaces as examples of heterochronia (757–58). Similarly, the Parc de Bercy’s complex layering of historical and memory devices corresponds to this element of both spatial and temporal exceptionality. The Promenade plantée’s adaptation, inversion, perhaps even perversion of numerous aesthetic tropes from the picturesque and the sublime, as interpreted through the lenses of spatial phenomena ranging from sculpture to railway travel, exemplify the role of the heterotopia as a representation of its surrounding environment. Heterotopias are also a site of contemporary juxtapositions, and we have seen that each of these parks, but especially the Parc André-Citroën, harbors such juxtapositions ranging from minor to major tensions among their conceptual or constitutive elements.
Relevance to the City and Beyond

All of these parks suggest a potential definition of a contemporary French aesthetic in garden and landscape design based on a taste for aesthetically challenging and pleasing designs as well as for recognizable style and authorship. These parks are embraced as sites that are intensely meaningful and symbolic. Rather than serving as a frame or a complement to a monument or public building (as was the historical role of gardens), urban parks respond to built environments around them with their own complementary symbolism and allusions, matching these environments in intensity. Urban parks reflect an image of the city as composed of a dense network of signs—a density that is compounded on all levels and taken to saturation by various media. In Paris, an additional layer of symbolism and importance arises through efforts to revive and renovate the city, particularly its East side. According to landscape architect Michel Péna, this context of urban saturation and heightened signification, as well as the various infrastructural constraints of the urban milieu, results in a redefinition of the terms “natural” and “artificial.” Péna states, “il ne faut pas chercher à faire ‘naturel’ dans un site aussi artificiel […]. Pour être naturel il faut être artificiel” (Interview). These parks embrace the artificiality that lends them continuity and coherence with the surrounding urban environment.

An additional element of competition between Paris and other world and European capitals has emerged due to the combined effects of decentralization, the creation of the European Union, and the general development of local economies primarily oriented around services: the need for each city to develop an image that will
set it apart from others in terms of culture and quality of life. Parisian parks are increasingly treated and discussed as part of the patrimoine that contributes to the capital’s identity within this context of European and worldwide competition. Therefore, parks are sometimes treated as monuments to be revered and preserved. However, as the city of Paris seeks to foreground its historical culture and monuments, it must also work against the impression that the city has become nothing more than these relics from the past. It seeks to avoid the image of a ville-musée, a stagnant city in which there is no space for novelty or for authentic lives, only for prestigious sites preserved as tourist attractions. Public parks are occasionally represented as part of la création contemporaine, and the city’s role in their creation is portrayed in the same manner as its sponsorship of art exhibits and cultural festivals.

Beyond their contributions to the city of Paris, let us also return to the question of how these parks, as elements of the urban environment, engage with and express broader themes in French society and culture. First, as stated in the chapter dedicated to it, the Parc André-Citroën is not environmentally conscious or ecologically designed to the degree that we might expect in the early 21st century, but it still suggests a sensitivity to and awareness of nature and natural processes as well as a desire to understand these processes and to enter into contact with them. As ecological and sustainable design has become not only a political imperative but a public demand to which landscape architects must respond, we see aspects of the Parc André-Citroën writ large. To begin with, this park suggests a budding new aesthetic for urban park design. Concordant with the desire to “return to nature” emerging since the 1960s is a more naturalistic aesthetic borne out by such touches as un-pruned shrubs and trees, the use of ornamental grasses, and the
acceptance of less formal plantings. This aesthetic, as it may be observed in the Jardin en
mouvement, which suggests the countryside or wild nature, would have been considered
unacceptable in an urban park thirty years ago. Next, the question of how to be
ecologically sound, protect the environment, and use fewer resources without
surrendering aesthetic quality resonates throughout this park. This sense that
attractiveness and formal sophistication ought not to be sacrificed for ecological
responsibility has become of utmost importance for French architects and landscape
architects and is a key aspect of the French version of sustainable design. There remain,
however, open questions: How will designers adapt to new ecological constraints without
sacrificing the identity of the profession, long based on design sophistication? Through
what new forms and techniques will they be able to display or represent “elegance” or
“sophistication” in environmental solutions?

Second, the question of commemoration, that is, of the relation between memory
and history, between individual identity and a wider French one has been a major theme
permeating French society and cultural production from the mid-1980s onward. Memory
is often evoked in relation to difficult, embarrassing, or controversial periods of the past,
such as resistance versus collaboration under the Occupation and attitudes toward the
Algerian War, or as the generational working-through of significance, as in the case of
May 1968. As French identity is no longer assumed to be a monolithic block based on a
shared historical narrative of the emergence of an enlightened Republic and the
propagation of universal values, memories of a more local, provisional, and marginal
kind become more important. Although the Bercy neighborhood did not partake in the
type of nationally consuming, historically memorable events evoked above, the park
nevertheless addresses this past in a way that resonates with approaches to these larger historical questions. The incomplete traces of multiple past eras—each with its own message about the site’s identity, its potential for sentimental nostalgia, and its status at the city’s limit, which can be construed as a margin or a threshold, lend strength to this parallel between the local and the general.

Similarly, as in the Jardin en mouvement, recent changes in the aesthetic appreciation of nature and of the urban environment allow for a different vision of the vernacular landscape and spontaneous vegetation growing along the Promenade plantée. Even as the east side of Paris is restored, rehabilitated, and generally spruced up, there is a sense that the “authentic” traces of these working-class neighborhoods deserve to be recognized and placed in a better light rather than replaced by more modern, more prestigious, or more harmonious new construction. The Promenade plantée not only contributes to this revalorization, it does so through means that represent a new way of consuming the city. The Promenade plantée also materializes another value in urban design: mobility. As an easily navigable route through a swath of Paris’s east side, this park encourages circulation among neighborhoods. This physical movement in turn suggests the possibility of discovery and encounter. Playing on mobility and exploration of the city on the mode of leisure activity, the Promenade’s invitation to movement, even in its physical presence, is also a very serious invitation for appropriation of public space, a key component of citizenship and participation in the public sphere. These concerns—ecology, commemoration, and mobility—all concern the issues of public space and the construction of collective local and national identity in the past, present, and future.
Garden Design and Theories of the City

Although landscape and garden design theory does not entirely conform to the trajectory of architectural and urban theory, we still find many points of correspondence among the two. Moreover, landscape is acquiring a central role in philosophies of the city in the early twenty-first century.

1. The City’s Age III

First, we shall examine the theory of the three “ages of the city” postulated by Olivier Mongin, editor-in-chief of the journal *L’Esprit*, in his essay *Vers la troisième ville?* (1995), and by the architect Christian de Portzamparc in a series of texts, including the introduction to Mongin’s work. According to Portzamparc, the “Age I” of the city lasted from antiquity to roughly the beginning of the twentieth century. Mongin more clearly enunciates that this is a particularly European phenomenon (29). During this era, buildings were constructed around a pre-existing street or square in such a way that public, signifying space was “hollowed out” from private, closed, or non-signifying space (Portzamparc, “La Ville” 14). The city, site of civilization and known, delimited territory, stood in opposition to nature, and unknown vastness (Portzamparc, “Préface” 12). In French, *la ville* conveys this idea via the etymology of *villa* (Mongin 21).

The city’s Age II corresponds roughly to the rise of modernist urbanism, and especially to Le Corbusier’s theories of the city. During this period, instead of being considered in relation to public spaces such as streets and piazzas, and secondarily in relation to adjacent buildings, the architectural object was placed in relation only to other isolated architectural objects arranged on a neutral, abstract site. Nature was no longer a
dominating, uncontrollable force and the urbanization of the entire planet became conceivable (Portzamparc, “Préface” 12). Portzamparc criticizes the Age II since city design ought not to be extrapolated from architecture to urbanism and, in his view, modernist urbanism was a secondary effect of changes in architectural thought (for example, through Le Corbusier’s writings), rather than a direct product of new meditations on urbanism itself (Portzamparc, “La Ville” 17). Portzamparc states that modernism was so concerned with the object that it had “no rhetoric or topology of the void” (Portzamparc, “La Ville” 21). Both Mongin and Portzamparc accuse the architects of Age II of being “agoraphobic” in the literal sense of the term, in that the emphasis on function and zoning led to public space being completely ignored and unaccounted for. However, this critique may be more merited by practitioners than by theorists of modernist urbanism.

Age III, beginning sometime around the late 1960s and early 1970s and continuing to the present day, is posited as a dialectical synthesis and transcending of Ages I and II. The overall vision of Age III is that of a city free from ideological rigidity, in which a variety of architectural forms and where, rather than imposing a universal solution, actors in the realm of urban planning seek multiple design approaches to respond to punctual, site-specific problems. These forms may be drawn from a number of historical periods, and they do not destroy the pre-existing city but integrate themselves within it. As Portzamparc states about his own work, “les situations dans lesquelles nous construisons sont toujours spécifiques, déjà saturées, construites” (Portzamparc, “La Ville” 23). For Portzamparc, these sites include the amorphous spaces that are “lost” between the modernist grid and streets—that is, in many cases, landscape spaces.
Therefore, the task at hand for the architect in the Age III city is not just to renovate buildings, but also to restore these “dead zones” (Portzamparc, “La Ville” 32). It is for this reason that, he stated, the new city is found “within” the old (“Entretien” 20). To illustrate the emergence of new urban possibilities from existing sites, Mongin cites a remark about Age III that Portzamparc made in an interview with Paris-Match: “Ce sera une époque de modulation, de réaction aux situations, de ruse: on donnera de l'intimité ici, on densifiera là, on ouvrira, on calmera, on rasera, on plantera ailleurs et, à tel endroit, on frappera l'imagination pour attirer, concentrer” (qtd. in Mongin 95). Hence, Mongin describes the type of architectural activity of the Age III as “un travail de couture au sein d'un espace urbain rassemblant l'héritage des deux premières villes” (Mongin 96). Thus the Age III of the city is one of more modest ambitions and more sensitivity to the existing cityscape.

Landscape and garden design has followed its own theoretical path through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Perhaps it ought not to be considered a subsidiary of this progression through the three ages of the city but rather a parallel progression that occasionally meshes with and complements it. As discussed in Chapter One, the urban park equivalent of Age I urban space could be the enclosed, royal or religious gardens of the early modern city that were eventually opened up for public use. These spaces contrasted with both the built urban environment around them and the rural environment outside the city walls. At the transition between Age I and Age II, these spaces were incorporated into a municipal parks network. This transition period saw urbanists and planners considering a parks network in the same manner as other types of modern hierarchized networks, although landscape design was increasingly neglected during the
city’s Age II and devalued by modernist theories of city design. Landscape design suffered from its “agoraphobic” vision even as “functional” spaces were set aside for an ill-defined “recreation.” With the advent of Age III, a more supple vision of the city made way for a broader variety of interventions. As it is clear from the quotes above, “residual” spaces within the city are recognized for their potential value as sites of modulation, mending, and “healing” within the city. However, landscape architects, having largely been excluded from the urbanism theory of the Age II, seem to have experienced the Age III less as a “transcendence” or “synthesis” of the two previous ages and more as the development of a hospitable climate toward their discipline, one in which they would have the freedom to seek out new park design solutions.

2. Landscape Urbanism

The presently emerging theoretical framework of “landscape urbanism” goes one step beyond the notions of the city’s Age III in that it takes as its starting point “the relative inadequacy of the traditional disciplinary, professional, and critical categories to account for the renewed interest in landscape found in the work of many architects, landscape architects, and urbanists over the past several years” (Waldheim 15). For Charles Waldheim and the other authors who contributed to The Landscape Urbanism Reader, “landscape replaces architecture as the basic building block of contemporary urbanism. For many, across a range of disciplines, landscape has become both the lens through which the contemporary city is represented and the medium through which it is constructed” (11). The aim of placing landscape in this position is to better cope with a number of phenomena, including environmental concerns, the growth of tourism and the
“needs of regions to retain a sense of unique identity,” and “impacts on rural areas [caused] by massive urban growth” (Corner 23). These needs and concerns are addressed by tapping into landscape’s “imaginative and metaphorical associations,” “[its] conceptual scope [and] its capacity to theorize sites, territories, ecosystems, networks, and infrastructures, and to organize large urban fields.” Its “thematics of organization, dynamic interaction, ecology, and technique” are seen as permitting the deployment of a “looser, emergent urbanism, more akin to the real complexity of cities” as an “alternative to the rigid mechanisms of centralist planning” (23). That the scope of these issues goes far beyond the garden designs studied in this dissertation reveals landscape’s expanding influence over the built environment.

Despite the fact that the scale of design to which Corner is referring here is a city or a region as a whole, the vision of landscape urbanism does seem applicable to the smaller scale, including gardens and parks. Moreover, within its interdisciplinary approach, landscape urbanism makes room for urban parks, such as those we have examined in this dissertation, as intensely symbolic, meaningful spaces. Corner states, “[p]ublic spaces are firstly the containers of collective memory and desire, and secondly they are the places for geographical and social images to extend to new relations and sets of possibility” (32). He continues by stating that landscape urbanism is “an imaginative project, a speculative thickening of the world of possibilities” (32). Corner’s embrace of urban design’s qualitative aspects, without allegiance to a particular style or aesthetic, is highly coherent with the direction of park design in Paris during the time period studied.
Even though no French landscape architects are featured in the *Landscape Urbanism Reader*, a similar spirit seems to emerge from some French landscape writing. Perhaps the most poetic statement in this vein comes from Gilles Clément:

La ville, regardée comme manifestation singulière du jardin, devient interdépendante du territoire plus grand dans lequel elle prend place. Elle ne lui tourne pas le dos, elle ne s’épanouit pas sur la terre brûlée mais sur la terre féconde, non pas à côté des arbres mais avec eux. (Blazy and Clément 88)

This portrait of the city as a “singular manifestation of the garden” recalls the permeable boundary, discussed in Chapter 1, between the city and the garden, and suggests that more and more, osmosis across this boundary occurs in favor of the garden.

**Further developments in Paris**

While this new vision of urbanism and of landscape has been coalescing in the past two decades, the city of Paris has continued to pursue a distinctive parks policy. Following Chirac’s election to the French presidency, his successor, Jean Tiberi, continued the policies set in place over Chirac’s three terms (*La Politique* 13). Among the new green spaces inaugurated during Tiberi’s mayoral term (1995–2001), at least two are by notable landscape architects, the Jardin Damia designed by Bernard Lassus, and the ZAC Réunion garden by Alain Marguerit. The Tiberi administration emphasized the creation of “jardins de proximité,” the restoration of nineteenth-century gardens, and the reforestation of the Bois de Boulogne and Bois de Vincennes. The City also focused on pedagogy and communication by expanding the Paris Nature program, launching numerous exhibitions of plants and flowers in various parks, and creating an annual
Journée des jardins beginning in 1996 (“Discours” 3–4). Finally, the City began to move toward “la gestion écologique” in parks and gardens by reducing applications of chemicals and by conserving water (5). The city parks service under Tiberi was less ambitious than Chirac’s in creating new green space area, focusing its efforts instead on improving the quality of both existing parks as physical sites and the park visit experience.

Bertrand Delanoë, elected in 2001 at the head of a Socialist-Green coalition, is presently in his second mayoral term after having won re-election in 2008. The trend toward ecological management of gardens has only accelerated, in part due to Delanoë’s political position but also through the emergence of frameworks for sustainability policies in France and Europe, such as the Agenda 21, and certification procedures such as the HQE (haute qualité environnementale) and Ecocert labels. Ecological management in parks is now known as “la gestion différenciée,” an umbrella term that includes, in addition to reducing chemical treatments and water use, selecting hardy, local species, using techniques such as occasional scything rather than mowing, and reusing waste through composting and mulching on site (Bertrand 18). The most significant new parks to be opened since 2001 are the Jardins d’Eole in the Eighteenth Arrondissement, designed by Michel Corajoud and Georges Descombes, and the new Square Clichy-Batignolles near the Haussmannian Square des Batignolles, designed by Jacqueline Osty. In addition to creating other, smaller squares, the City has pursued a policy of inserting green space and vegetation into residual and interstitial spaces, including creating vegetal walls and adding large planters along boulevards (Bertrand 19). Moreover, the City has been studying the possibility of opening parts of the Petite Ceinture, the circular railway
line running through Paris’s outer arrondissements, to the public (*Parcs et jardins* 2003). Lastly, the City has created a community gardening program that has expanded to presently include nearly sixty community gardens, most of which are located in the outer arrondissements of Paris’s north, east, and south sides (“Jardins partagés”). These initiatives have modulated Paris’s parks and gardens policy in the direction of greater ecological awareness and active citizen participation.

These changes herald a new direction in Parisian landscape policy but some elements of continuity remain. Design competitions incite the involvement of internationally known landscape architects in the transformation of neglected and devalued land. In the case of the Jardins d’Eole and Clichy-Batignolles, attention has shifted from Paris’s waterways to parcels along the city’s outer edges. The Jardins d’Eole is part of an effort to revive a particularly disadvantaged neighborhood, in tandem with the 104 Rue d’Aubervilliers cultural complex. These parks have a significantly different “look” from the case study parks, and design styles continue to evolve, yet a vision of public parks as aesthetic sites that present symbolic and allegorical clues, often borrowed from the garden tradition, remains dominant.

**Looking toward Ile-de-France**

Outside of Paris’s city limits, the Ile-de-France region has also seen a great increase in park creation. Here, the range of park typologies is extensive, from small urban parks in town centers to large parks, including historic domains, natural parks, and new urban parks. Among new parks created in the same time frame as the parks of this dissertation, the Parc du Sausset near Aulnay-Sous-Bois in Seine-Saint-Denis north of Paris, designed
by Michel and Claire Corajoud (1979–present) is perhaps the most well-known. This park combines a strong graphic composition and naturalistic plantations, including forested areas and areas that take up rural imagery such as orchards and a network of small fields surrounded by hedges known as bocage. Other recent parks are coulées vertes, borrowing manmade or natural routes through the landscape. The routes of the coulées vertes include a segment of the Bièvre river Southeast of Paris (in Val-de-Marne), the TGV Atlantique railway line from the Paris Montparnasse train station to the town of Massy Verrières running south from Paris, and the nineteenth-century Dhuis aqueduct to the Northeast of Paris from Le Raincy to Dampmart (Seine-Saint-Denis and Seine-et-Marne).

Most parks created recently tend to adopt a more naturalistic image, with an emphasis placed on maintaining or restoring local ecological conditions, watersheds, flora, and fauna. Other newly-created parks adopt a more aesthetic perspective. This is the case for the Axe Majeur of the town of Cergy Pontoise northwest of Paris, under construction since 1990, a park that functions as a monumental sculpture designed by the artist Dani Karavan. The Axe Majeur, aligned on the axis between the ville nouvelle and Paris to take advantage of Cergy-Pontoise’s situation on a bluff overlooking the Oise river and a panoramic view of the capital, is composed of a series of symbolic sites including the “Jardin des impressionnistes,” the “Ile astronomique,” and the Tour belvedère. These sites recall the history of Cergy-Pontoise and suggest its connection to the ideals of the Republic.

Overall, the trends observed in the case study parks examined in this study have only accelerated and deepened since the mid-1990s. The public, the government, and
landscape architects themselves place more and more faith in the capacity of parks to unite urban (and peri-urban) ensembles and create legible landscapes out of previously fragmented territory. They rely on parks as a community amenity, one that creates a sense of belonging and invites social contact. They call upon parks to express contemporary aesthetics, values, and identities. Parks, perceived as providers of numerous aesthetic, psychological, and social benefits that the built environment and economic development alone cannot provide, have assumed an essential role within the changing landscape of contemporary France.
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