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Nicholas Papayanis, *Planning Paris Before Haussmann*. Baltimore & London: John Hopkins University Press, 2004. xiii + 336 pp. \$55.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 0-801-87930-2.

Review by Colin Jones, University of Warwick.

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Nicholas Papayanis was the author of two fine books, *The Coachmen of Nineteenth-Century Paris* (1993) and *Horse-Drawn Cabs and Omnibuses in Paris* (1996).<sup>[1]</sup> The present book was published just prior to his death in November 2004. *Planning Paris before Haussmann* is an extremely ambitious book, which draws on the author's expertise derived from a lifetime of study of nineteenth-century Paris. The volume squares up to one of the most embedded myths about modern Paris--namely, that the city's modernity originated in the activities of Napoleon III's faithful lieutenant in the 1850s and 1860s, Baron Georges Haussmann. One day an excellent book will be written about just how much of what we blithely describe as "Haussmannian Paris" post-dated his fall from power in 1870--especially in the period down to the First World War. *Planning Paris* demythologises from the other end of the chronological spectrum; it demonstrates that much of what is seen as original and distinctive about Haussmann's conception of city planning is visible throughout the century or so before he came to power.

Some straws have been already been blowing in the wind in this regard. Fine work by Karen Bowie and Victoria Thompson have focused our attention on what was already changing in pre-Haussmannian Paris, which is too often written off as the kind of horrific mire-encrusted hellhole so gleefully and brilliantly recounted by Louis Chevalier's influential work on the city's "labouring and dangerous classes." In addition, Barrie Ratcliffe's modestly iconoclastic scholarship has chipped away at many of the suppositions which derive from Chevalier's influential work. Pierre Cassell has also highlighted the work of the Siméon commission established by Napoleon III prior to Haussmann's appointment and whose 1853 report prefigured Haussmann's work to a quite remarkable extent.<sup>[2]</sup>

The Haussmannian myth has proved hard to dislodge, however, and inevitably circles back to Haussmann's own memoirs.<sup>[3]</sup> Besides their patently self-serving orientation, these are often all we have on a number of aspects of his decision-making--the Commune fires of 1871 made sure of that. Recent biographies are as panegyric as ever, while the development of neo-Haussmannian architecture and city planning in Paris in recent decades has also tended to reinforce the Haussmann myth.<sup>[4]</sup> Papayanis's book might just be enough to shift the balance. It deserves to.

Papayanis's great achievement is to have brought out of the dusty archives the substantial mountains of documentation--official reports, government memoranda, municipal regulations, police papers, newspaper reports, polemics, utopian musings, books, pamphlets, articles--in which, back to and including the Enlightenment, where reforms were mooted and debated. Many of the things conventionally seen as having originated with Haussmann are seen here in the most elemental black and white. From Voltaire, Mercier, Patte and Laugier onwards, there was a very far-ranging public debate on comprehensive planning, infrastructure, public health, order and security, and trade and industry. For the period after Napoleon, the volume of writing becomes so dense and voluminous that Papayanis chose to isolate particular strands of urban thought (he might perhaps have used the term "discourses", as this is what the strands amount to). The "functionalist planners" (chapter two) sought, pragmatically and without any *parti-pris*, to propose means of meeting the city's infra-structural requirements within the overall framework of comprehensive planning. He establishes that, by the 1840s, these men had

essentially won the conceptual battles which are usually attributed to Haussmann. The other strands which Papayanis locates are Saint-Simonian (chapter three)—a pretty broad church of course—and Fourierist (chapter four). Both highlighted an organicist view of the city, and adumbrated themes that Haussmann and his successors would adopt. In chapter five, Papayanis examines plans for underground transportation, which predate the Métro by half a century. Finally, he goes back to the Siméon report (chapter six). Rather than stress (as Cassell has done) the premonitory and prophetic nature of the text, Papayanis highlights the fact that much of it draws on the debates and polemics which he has carefully mapped for the previous century. Haussmann kept quiet about the Siméon report in his memoirs—he wanted to keep for himself any glory from Paris' transformation. It is then particularly interesting that the report highlighted strategic and social control aspects of redesigning Paris—for this was an aspect of Haussmann's work about which there has been considerable debate.

Given all that he provides us with, there seems no gainsaying Papayanis's conclusion that 'the reforms of Haussmann and Napoleon III rested on a conception of the modern city that was in the making from the eighteenth, and especially throughout the first half of the nineteenth century' (p. 246). Amen to that. But perhaps what he has not been able to do also should be pointed out. His volume is focused on the play of ideas—and he supplies only very sketchy coverage of their reception. So much had been said on urban reform before Haussmann, certainly—but was Haussmann in a position to have access to it all? At least without doing the kind of archival truffle-hunting in which Papayanis has engaged? We could do with more on the diffusion of these disparate and often humble texts. Furthermore, on a number of occasions, Papayanis underestimates efforts to implement reform prior to Haussmann—and how these might have fed back into policy and polemics. There is no record, for example, of the considerable achievements in urban reform during the reigns of Louis XVI and Napoleon I. Haussmann's predecessors as Prefect of the Seine are particularly neglected. Chabrol de Volvic (1815-1830) is viewed largely as an ideas man, while Rambuteau (1833-1848) hardly rates a mention. The interaction of ideas and practices on Parisian planning before Haussmann constitutes a promising pathway for future research. But cavils aside, such criticism should not cloud the achievement of a very fine book which stands as a monument to Nicholas Papayanis's innovative scholarship.

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NOTES [1] Nicholas Papayanis, *The Coachmen of Nineteenth-Century Paris: Service Workers and Class Consciousness* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1993); and idem, *Horse-Drawn Cabs and Omnibuses in Paris: The Idea of Circulation and the Business of Public Transit* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1996).

[2] Papayanis contributed an article entitled "L'Émergence de l'urbanisme moderne à Paris" that appeared in Karen Bowie, *La Modernité avant Haussmann. Formes de l'espace urbain à Paris, 1801-53* (Paris: Recherches, 2001). See also Victoria E. Thompson, *The Virtuous Marketplace: Women and Men, Money and Politics in Paris, 1830-70* (Baltimore, MD.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) and "Telling 'Spatial Stories': Urban Space and Bourgeois Identity in Early Nineteenth-Century Paris", *Journal of Modern History*, 75 (2003):590-633; Louis Chevalier, *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes in Paris during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Frank Jellinek (New York: Howard Fertig, 1973); Barry Ratcliffe, esp. "Classes laborieuses et classes dangereuses à Paris pendant la première moitié du XIXe siècle: The Chevalier Thesis Re-examined", *French Historical Studies*, 17 (1991): 542-574; Pierre Casselle, "Les Travaux de la Commission des Embellissements de Paris en 1853: pouvait-on transformer la capitale sans Haussmann?," *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 155 (1997):645-689; and ed., *Commission des embellissements de Paris: Rapport à l'Empereur Napoléon III rédigé par le comte Henri Siméon* (Paris: Commission du Vieux Paris, 2000).

[3] There is a good recent edition of the *Mémoires*, Françoise Choay, ed. (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2000).

[4] Recent biographical treatments include Michel Carmona, *Hausmann* (Paris: Fayard, 2000); Georges Valance, *Hausmann le Grand* (Paris: Flammarion, 2000); Jean des Cars, *Hausmann: la gloire du Second Empire* (Paris: Perrin, 2000); and Nicolas Chaudun, *Hausmann au crible* (Paris: Syrtex, 2000).

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