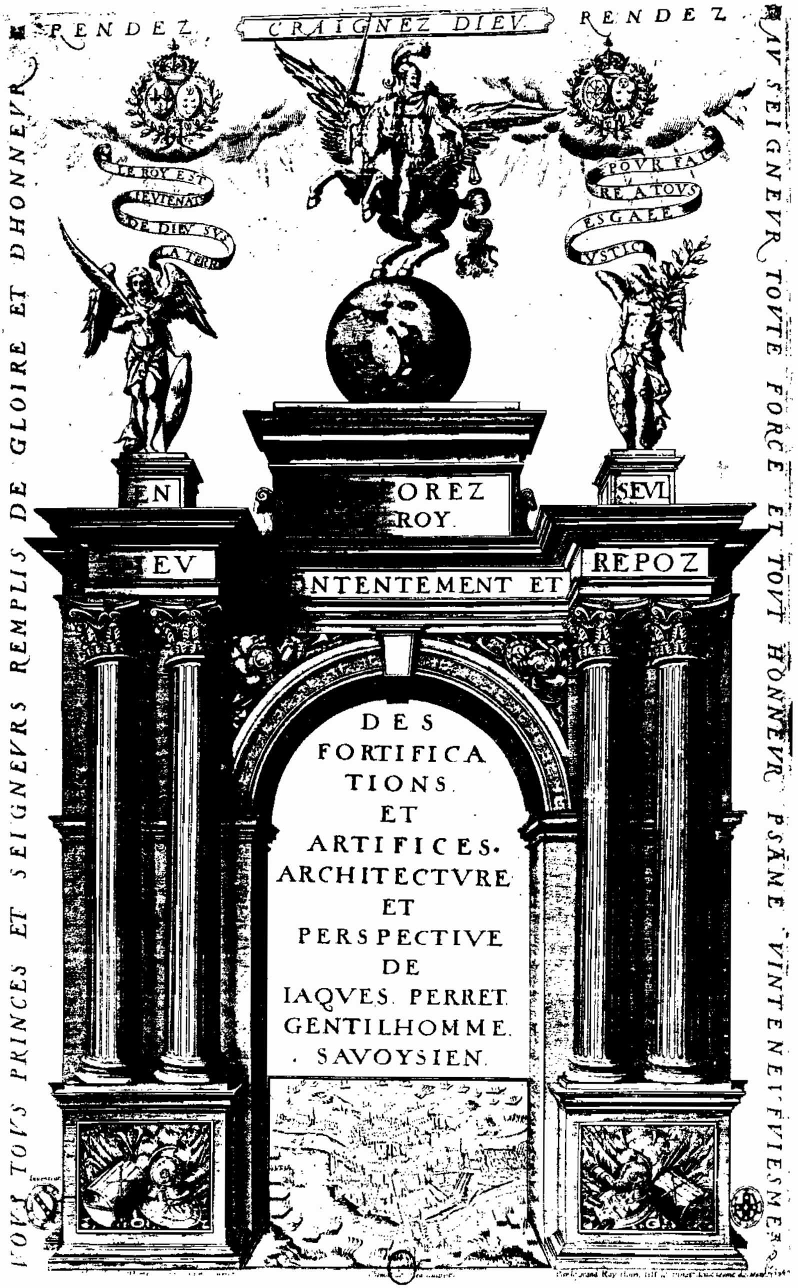
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THE PARIS OF HENRI IV

Architecture and Urbanism

HILARY BALLON

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Frontispiece: Thomas de Leu, frontispiece of Jacques Perret, *Des Fortifications et artifices d'architecture et perspective* (Paris: 1597). Above the triumphal arch, Henri IV rides the winged Pegasus, who is rearing on a globe, an image of the king's supremacy. Henri holds a sword and balance, signs of his valor and his fairness, and is flanked by two angels with branches of palm and laurel, divine guardians of a reign blessed by peace and justice. "Fear God and Honor the King," the inscriptions admonish, encapsulating the Gallican appeal for religious unity to preserve a strong monarchy. The image also represents the importance of Paris to the king's success; at the base of the triumphal arch is a view of Henri IV's siege of Paris in 1594, the crucial victory that enabled the king to gain control of the capital and to consolidate his power. (B.N. Est. rés. Ed 11d)

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FOR MY PARENTS

BOĞAZİÇİ
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The galleys for this book arrived the week that my daughter Sophia was born. I hope that Orin and I can convey to her the pleasure of learning, as my parents did for me. I dedicate this book to Harriet and Charles Ballon, my beloved parents, who taught me the most precious lessons.

INTRODUCTION

The circumstances surrounding Henri IV's ascension to the throne in 1589 were hardly auspicious. Henri IV was a Protestant in a Catholic country torn by religious civil war. His blood relationship to the monarchy, the basis for his claim to the crown, was highly attenuated. And the city of Paris, controlled by radical Catholics, was in open rebellion against the new king. Those bleak conditions in no way foreshadowed a reign that would, within a relatively brief period, end the Wars of Religion that had racked France through most of the late sixteenth century; lay the groundwork for the modern centralized French state; and establish Paris as a true capital city. That latter achievement — Henri IV's role in the urban development of Paris — which is the focus of this book, entailed planning and construction on a scale that would be unmatched in Paris for more than two centuries thereafter. Henri IV had a vision linking Paris as a capital city to the emergence of a centralized national state. In executing that vision, he played an essential role in a process that established Paris as the most powerful single symbol of France itself.

In 1589 Henri III had been assassinated, leaving behind no sons to lay claim to the throne. Since the Salic Law — the venerable standard governing succession in the French hereditary monarchy — restricted the crown to the male line, the death of Henri III brought an end to the Valois dynasty. To identify the new king, it was necessary to go back to the progenitor of the French monarchy, Saint Louis (1226 – 70), and to trace the descendants of his youngest son, Robert de Clermont.[1] That convoluted process eventually led to Henri de Bourbon, King of Navarre. But two factors undermined the legitimacy of his claim to the throne. The hereditary monarchy accustomed Frenchmen to expect a close blood relationship between the newly crowned king and his predecessor, yet Henri IV was twenty-two degrees removed from Henri III. Furthermore, the fact that Henri de Bourbon was a Protestant precluded any possibility that his authority might achieve broad acceptance. The sacrosanct coronation ceremony compelled the king of France to pledge his allegiance to the Catholic Church and receive consecration as the Most Christian King, *Rex Christianissimus.* In the view of many French subjects, a Protestant could not fulfill the time-honored vows and duties of the French king. In the view of militant Catholics, the circumstances warranted the abandonment of the hereditary monarchy and the election of a new king.

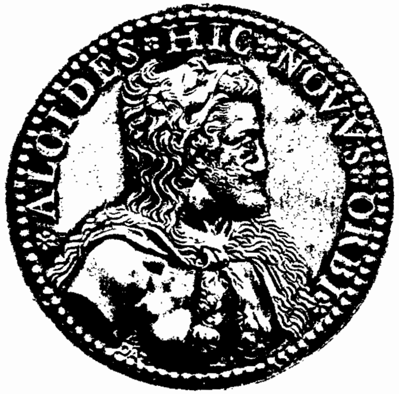

Fig. 1. Philippe II Danfrie, Henri IV as Hercules, obverse, 1602. Legend: ALCIDES HIC NOVVS ORBI. (B.N. Médailles SR Inv. 310)

With the ascension of Henri IV, the issue of monarchical succession moved to the forefront in the ongoing civil conflict. Moderate Catholics joined with Protestants in defending the monarchy and appealing for religious unity. The rebellious Catholic League, its Spanish Hapsburg allies, and noble magnates protecting powerful interests, opposed the Protestant king. Henri IV waged the fight to consolidate his power on military and political fronts. The legend of his military valor sprang from the victories at Arques (1589) and Ivry (1590). With sizable cash payments, he purchased the loyalty of town governors and noble potentates. Ultimately, however, it was his conversion to Catholicism that appeased the popular opposition. The legendary mass that Paris was worth took place on 25 July 1593.

From 1589 until 1594, Paris had been the stronghold of Catholic rebels who refused to recognize the new king. Henri IV had besieged the city in 1589 and again in 1590 with no success, but after the king's conversion, Paris peacefully surrendered. Exhausted by five years of warfare, by blockade and by looting, the city opened its gates to Henri IV on 22 March 1594. Although there were battles still to be fought, the capture of Paris assured the king's victory.

Within the first five years of his reign, Henri IV effectively ended the Wars of Religion that had divided France for nearly thirty years. He restored peace in his country by defeating the insurrectionary Catholic League, expelling Spanish troops, and winning freedom for the Protestants, feats for which Henri IV was acclaimed the Gallic Hercules (Fig. 1).[2] But for all the labors he had successfully performed, still greater challenges lay ahead in healing the wounded state. The image of an omnipotent Gallic king masked Henri IV's political vulnerability, a vulnerability rooted in powerful institutional forces and the king's personal circumstances.[3] Throughout the sixteenth century, despite the nominal authority of the crown, France essentially functioned as a highly decentralized confederacy of semiautonomous local provinces. For example, local authorities exercised significant control over the collection of taxes and raising of troops. Francois I (1515–47) and Henri II (1547–59) had some success in extending the authority of the king, but the incipient trend toward greater centralization suffered a severe setback during the civil wars, as monarchical control disintegrated in the hands of weaker rulers, Charles IX (1560–74) and Henri III (1574–89). When Henri IV (1589–1610) ascended the throne, he found his power substantially limited by this decentralized system. That weakness was only aggravated by his personal circumstances: a Protestant past that continued to provoke residual distrust, and the unusually distant blood relationship to Henri III. Facing a monumental task of economic recovery in a land depleted by thirty years of war, Henri IV could call upon neither the institutional power of a strong monarchical state nor the credibility that would have attached to an undisputed claim to the throne. However, there was a widespread desire for order after the crises of revolt and regicide. Henri IV capitalized on that popular sentiment by asserting strong monarchical control and thus beginning the fitful process of crafting the absolutist state.

The Bourbon king pursued a multifaceted program to centralize the power of the crown. There is a risk of overstating the extent to which his program succeeded, and it must be clear from the outset that neither Henri IV nor his successors on the throne achieved the creation of a fully centralized and absolutist state. The notion of unrestricted royal power was alien to French political theory of the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Theorists claimed that fundamental laws of the French realm limited the power of the king; because France lacked a constitution comparable to the Magna Carta, jurists disagreed on the dictates and limitations imposed by the unwritten laws. Nevertheless they agreed that ultimate authority resided in fundamental laws rather than the king.[4] Furthermore, throughout the seventeenth century, administrative obstacles restricted the perfect implementation of royal policies. Roger Mettam has gone further than most historians in denying that there was any real increase in royal power during the seventeenth century; it was only because of "their greater skill in balancing and manipulating power groups," he has written, "and not through any extension of their own absolute authority that Henri IV and Louis XIV created the reputation which some later historians have described as strong monarchy." Nevertheless, Mettam conceded that the formation of a centralized absolute monarchy was "the direction in which the royal ministers were hoping to proceed."[5]

In referring to Henri IV's centralization of France, I am only describing the aims of his policies: the assertion of greater royal control and the limitation of local and regional authorities. In one domain after another — taxation, defense, political administration — reforms were instituted to facilitate greater intervention by the state. To diminish the political power and bonds of feudal clientage which noble magnates had so recently turned against the crown, the king brought the cities under royal control and promoted an alternative system of patronage attached to officeholding. Towns lost their independence: municipal councils were overrun by royalists, municipal charters rewritten as instruments of royal power. From these urban bases of royal control, the king undercut the influence of seignorial lords whose local power was tied to feudal landholding. Princes of the blood and nobles of the sword were excluded from important positions in Henri IV's administration. Instead, government posts were entrusted to nobles of the robe, empowered not by seignorial privilege but by the king, men often only two generations removed from their bourgeois roots and ennobled by virtue of their administrative rank.[6]

The centralizing policies were assiduously implemented by the king's chief minister Maximilien de Béthune (1559–1641), the Duke of Sully. Sully's administrative talents, exacting fiscal supervision, and prodigious energy equipped him well for his multiple duties as Superintendent of Finances (1598), Superintendent of Fortifications (1599), Captain of the Artillery (1599), *Grand Voyer* of France (1599), and Superintendent of Buildings (1602).[7] Sully's most valuable accomplishment was his success in bringing tax collection under royal control and keeping the coffers sufficiently stocked to finance the expansionist policies of the crown. In his capacity as Superintendent of Fortifications, Sully pursued a costly program of national defense, building citadels along the boundaries of France. In his capacity as *Grand Voyer,* a new office created by Henri IV, Sully pursued a program of economic integration by building canals and bridges and by regulating the roads and rivers (*voirie*) of France.[8] As we shall see, these were programs that had significant implications for Paris. Through urban administration and through royal office, through fiscal reform and through construction, Henri IV and Sully moved the French state toward greater centralization and unity.

It is in the context of this multitiered effort to centralize the power of the crown that Henri IV's building program in Paris must be situated. There were ways in which specific royal policies — for example, mercantilist measures to promote manufacturing — directly impinged on the development of the city, and one concern of this book will be to chart the imprint of those policies on the physical form of Paris. Yet the changes Henri IV wrought in Paris represent far more than the sum of the incremental effects produced by those individual policies. The creation of a unified state brought about a shift in the conception of the capital itself. As the seat of the centralizing monarch, the city was compelled to assume a national role; it came to stand for the entire realm. We now take for granted the centrality of Paris to every aspect of French life, but Paris only acquired that role during the seventeenth century. The emerging conception of Paris as a national capital shaped the physical character of the city. Henri IV understood that constructing a capital city was fundamental to achieving a centralized state. His vision of Paris and its translation into brick and stone, streets and squares — into the very fabric of the city — these are our concerns.

Since the reign of the first Capetian king in 987, Paris had been the capital of France, the residence of the king, and seat of the sovereign courts. But following the battle of Agincourt (1415), the kings withdrew from the city. Without the presence of the court and the prestige and influence that presence implied, Paris ranked little higher than the other *bonnes villes* of France, with no claim to political or cultural dominance among the patchwork of provinces that made up the country. During the sixteenth century, the Valois rulers roamed the countryside, housing their peripatetic court in the Renaissance châteaux of the Loire Valley and the Ile-de-France, never far from forests and hunting grounds. François I had announced his intention to reside in Paris and to make the Louvre his primary residence in 1528, but the occasional instances of lip service to Paris as the proper seat of government went unsupported by concrete action. More indicative of the crown's commitment to the city is that Renaissance Paris lacked a palace worthy of the king. In 1546, when François I commissioned Pierre Lescot to enlarge the Louvre, it was but a medieval *château fort,* a small fortress hardly fit for the expanding Valois court. Henri II began the century-long process of transforming the Louvre into a royal residence, and his efforts signal a growing royal interest in Paris. But the Wars of Religion interrupted this process and chased the court from the city. It was Henri IV who returned the court to Paris after two centuries of itinerancy. He transformed the city from a neglected station on the royal circuit to the locus of the monarchy.

In 1594, the king entered a ravaged city.[9] After five years of neglect and siege warfare, the physical fabric was greatly in need of repair. The gates and fortifications were battered. The Hôtel Dieu, the general hospital on the Ile de la Cité, was near collapse. Numerous buildings in the city had been destroyed by rampaging soldiers, while the faubourgs had suffered greatly at the hands of attacking and retreating armies. The problem of a crippled infrastructure was exacerbated by the demands of a rapidly burgeoning population. The poor came from the countryside seeking employment and alms, and royal officeholders arrived to staff the new administration. The population swelled to roughly 350,000 at the turn of the century.[10] The king responded with demonstrations of Christian charity, exonerating the rebels and endowing a hospice for wounded soldiers, but the physical repair of Paris was not an immediate priority. Henri IV's urbanism developed slowly; only after a decade in Paris did he initiate significant public construction.

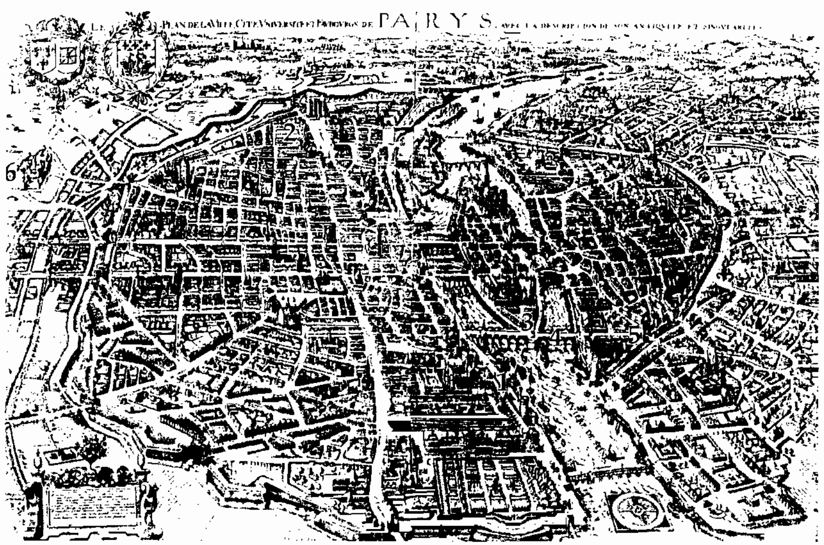

Fig. 2. Mathieu Merian, map of Paris, 1615. (B.N. Est. Va 419j)
Key: 1. Louvre; 2. Place Royale; 3. Place Dauphine; 4. Pont Neuf and Statue of Henri IV; 5. rue Dauphine; 6. Hôpital St. Louis

Once commenced, however, Henri IV's building program was enormous in scale. Not until 250 years later, when Baron Haussmann scored the city with boulevards, was anyone to match the activity of the Bourbon king. Immediately after entering Paris in 1594, Henri IV pursued the enlargement of the Louvre (Fig. 2). In 1598, he began work on the Pont Neuf, innocently named with a claim of perpetual newness that all the more honors its standing as the oldest bridge in modern Paris. Starting in 1605, the seventeenth year of a reign by then secure, the king initiated several projects in quick succession, all of which survive today: the Place Royale (1605), now called the Place des Vosges; the Place Dauphine (1607); the royal equestrian monument on the Pont Neuf, now replaced by a nineteenth-century statue; the rue Dauphine (1607) extending the axis of the Pont Neuf across the Left Bank; and the Hôpital St. Louis (1607), which holds the dubious honor of being the oldest functioning hospital in Paris. The two final projects, the Place de France (1609) and the Collège de France (1610), were abandoned after the king's assassination in 1610.

But the scope of Henri IV's activity was not confined to major buildings and monuments. Quais, ports, and gates were rebuilt with royal funds. In addition to several projects undertaken in conjunction with the monumental buildings, the crown remodeled the eastern entrance to the city from the Seine.

On the Left Bank, only the Porte de la Tournelle was rebuilt, but on the Right Bank, the commercial center of the city, numerous improvements were made.[11] An *allée* 250 *toises* long (495m) was laid out on what had been the sloping shore of the river, so that the Seine was no longer bordered by the bastioned walls of the Arsenal but by a landscaped promenade intended for royal games of pall-mall (Fig. 3).[12] The port St. Paul was enlarged, and the adjoining bank, the quai St. Paul, was extended to the Place de Grève.[13] As *Grand Voyer* of France and *Voyer* of Paris, Sully had largely uncontested control over roads, alignments, and building regulations in the capital. He exercised that power during a period when the crown brought within its jurisdiction areas previously administered by the city. For example, the crown paved and cleaned the streets, previously a responsibility of the municipality. The *Grand Voyer* also enacted a building code that prohibited construction in wood, directed owners of empty lots to rebuild along the street edge, and required builders to comply with the alignments established by the *Grand Voyer.*[14] Since the thirteenth century, property owners had been compelled to maintain their buildings in good condition, but Henri IV's measures went further by controlling the street edge. It was in the context of these regulatory changes that the monumental projects were undertaken, not as isolated ornamental objects but as components of a comprehensive program to renovate and redesign the urban fabric.

The surge of urban development under Henri IV, which was largely confined to the last five years of his reign (1605 – 10), is a deservedly famous example of the power of the absolute monarch to reshape the physical form of the city. But rarely in urban construction is authority unlimited — even the divinely sanctioned dictates of a monarch cannot alone change a city's physical form. Implementation of the royal plans required the participation of many other constituencies and interests: the municipal government, royal officers, merchants, artisans, and building craftsmen. Their visions and interests were not necessarily those of the king. In the course of constructing the king's projects, social conflicts and compromises were played out, the expectations and ambitions of the crown altered, the formal ideas of the architects modified. Though condensed to only five years, Henri IV's urbanism was an evolving enterprise. What was built was the residue of an interactive process, not the reproduction of an unyielding royal

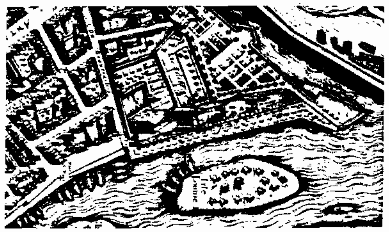

Fig. 3. Vassallieu dit Nicolay, map of Paris, detail of the Arsenal and pall-mall field, 1609. (B.N. Est. rés. Hennin XV 1352)

ideal. From that perspective, the development of Paris in the early seventeenth century is a prism through which we can witness the interaction of the major political, economic, and social forces that shaped Parisian life and culture.

Nevertheless, it was decidedly Henri IV's building program. His passionate enthusiasm and pride about the buildings is amply documented in his letters, such as the one sent to the French ambassador at the papal court, the Cardinal de Joyeuse, in May 1607:

> This is to give you news of my buildings and of my gardens and to assure you that I haven't lost any time since your departure. In Paris you will find my long gallery which goes to the Tuileries completed, the small [gallery] gilded, and paintings placed in the Tuileries; a pond and many beautiful fountains, my plantings and my garden very beautiful; the Place Royale which is near the Porte St. Antoine and the workshops, three of the four parts finished and the fourth will be completed next year; at the end of the Pont Neuf, a beautiful street which goes to the Porte de Buci built, and the houses on both sides, if not finished at least they will be before the end of next year; plus two to three thousand workshops which work here and there for the embellishment of the city, so much that it is unbelievable how much you find changed.[15]

This letter was of course written to publicize the building program at the papal court, but the same unrelenting zeal is demonstrated in countless other letters in which the king asks about his masons, prods his ministers to hasten construction and instructs Sully to procure building funds. Henri IV was the driving force; he established the overarching vision, he propelled the building program at each step of the process, and he set its priorities. He was neither knowledgeable in architectural theory nor experienced in design, but the king probably gave clear instructions about the programmatic aspects of the projects, leaving aesthetic matters to the royal architects.

Who was this man, the populist king of legend, who commanded so many embellishments in the capital? Robert Dallington described Henri IV in 1602 (Fig. 4):

> This King . . . is about 48 yeeres of age, his stature small, his haire almost all white, or rather grisled, his colour fresh and youthfull, his nature stirring and full of life, like a French man. One of his owne people describeth him thus . . . He is of such an extremely lively and active disposition, that to whatsoever he applyes himselfe, to that hee entirely employs all his powers, seldom doing above one thing at once. To joyne a tedious deliberation with an earnest and pressing affayre, he cannot endure: Hee executes and deliberates both together. But in Councels that require tract of time, to say the truth, hee hath neede of

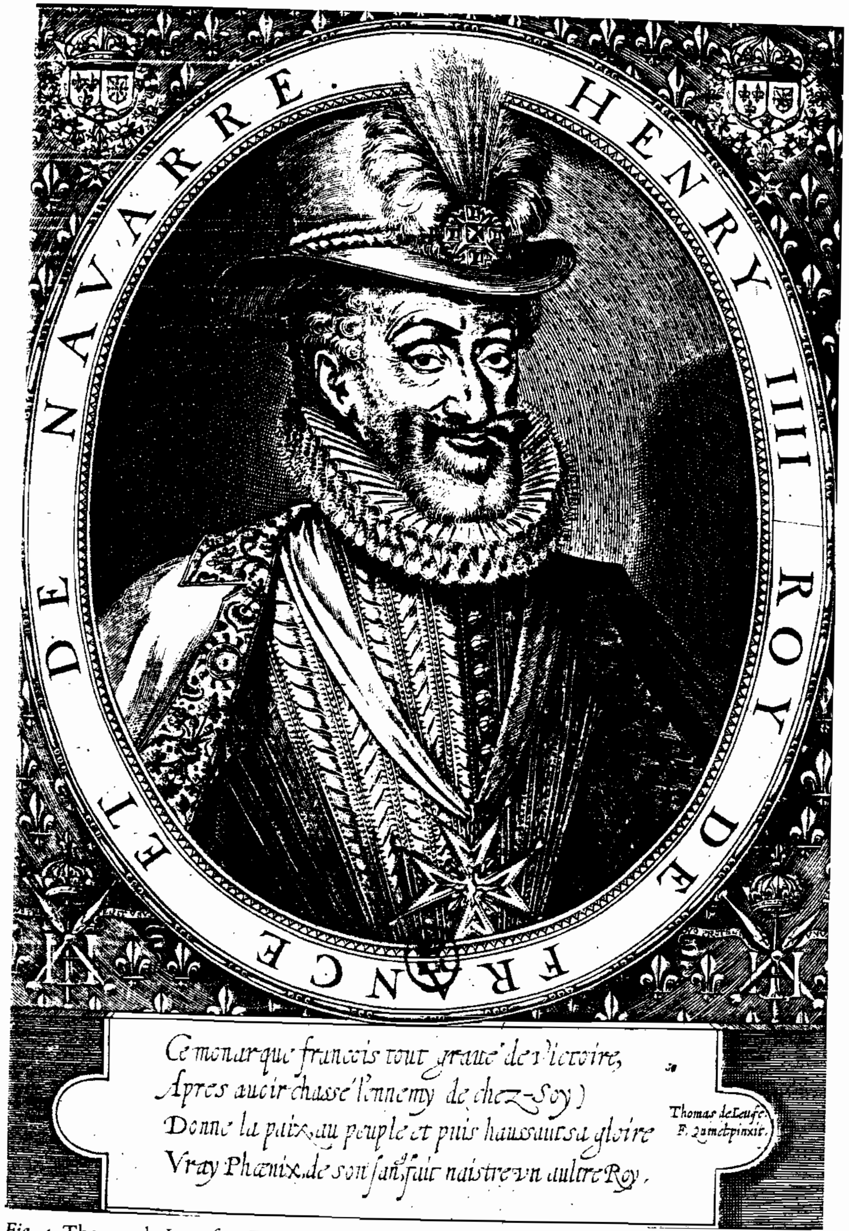
HENRY IIII ROY DE FRANCE ET DE NAVARRE.
Ce monarque francois tout graué de victoire,
Apres auoir chassé l'ennemy de chez-Soy
Donne la paix au peuple et puis haussant sa gloire
Vray Phœnix de son sang fait naistre vn aultre Roy.
Thomas de Leu fe.
F. Quesnel pinxit.

Fig. 4. Thomas de Leu after François Quesnel, portrait of Henri IV, c. 1594–99. (B.N. Est. Ne 15)

> helpe. He hath an admirable sharpnesse of wit. In affayres of Justice, of his Revenues, forrayne Negotiations, Dispatches, and government of the State, hee credites others, and meddles little himselfe. . . . Hee is naturally very affable and familiar, and more (we strangers thinke) then fits the Maiesty of a great King of France.[16]

Architecture was not among the matters that Henri IV delegated; along with war and women, he said, it was his favorite occupation.

To implement the building program, the king relied on Sully, whose ministerial posts gave him jurisdiction over all aspects of building activity in the capital. Sully reviewed the designs, issued alignments, authorized specifications (*devis*), and allocated funds. The duke was also an active architectural patron; he remodeled his residence in the Arsenal where he lived from 1599 to 1610, rebuilt the châteaux of Rosny, Sully-sur-Loire, and Villebon, and founded the new town of Henrichemont (1606).[17] Because of his public responsibilities and private enthusiasms, some scholars have been tempted to see Sully as the strategic intelligence and even the driving force behind the building program. But this view finds no support in the primary sources, with the exception of Sully's unreliable and self-aggrandizing memoirs.[18] Certainly his administrative skills made it possible to execute an ambitious building program in the space of only five years, but the policies were set by the king whom Sully served.

The king's plans for Paris encountered no resistance from the municipal government. Long accustomed to the presence of the crown, the Hôtel de Ville accepted its subordination in the management of Paris. On occasion, municipal leaders contested royal intervention in fiscal matters; when the crown refused to make interest payments to holders of long-term government bonds (*rentes*) issued by the Hôtel de Ville, the city protested strenuously. "It is useless for us to endeavour to amass money for the King if in so doing we lose him the affection of his subjects," municipal leader François Miron complained in 1605.[19] But Miron and the other presiding officers of the Hôtel de Ville were the king's men, chosen by the crown and then nominally elected to their posts. Thus, ultimately, the city's submission to royal policies was assured.

Nevertheless, the crown wanted to preserve the fiction of an independent corporate identity for the municipal government, which was historically identified with the interests of the Parisian merchants. The city council had developed from a medieval merchant organization, as the title of its leader, Provost of the Merchants (*Prévôt des marchands*), indicates; the institutions and ceremonies of civic life were signs of the vitality of the Parisian merchant community which Henri IV wanted to encourage. To project the image of a vigorous Parisian mercantile tradition, the crown instructed the city council in 1605 to

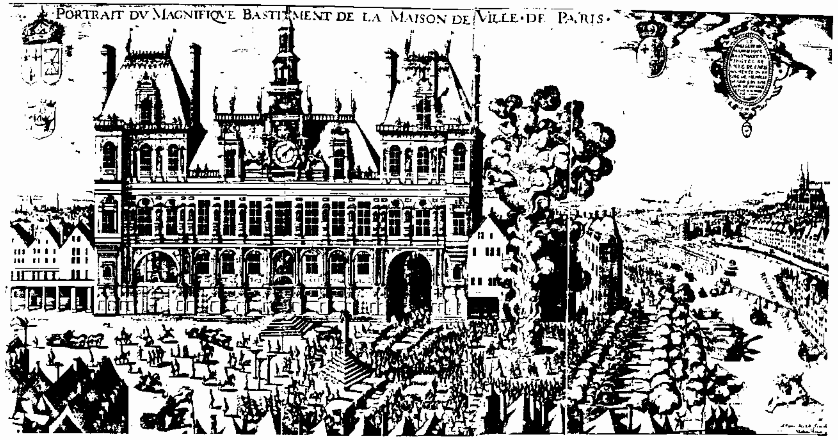
PORTRAIT DV MAGNIFIQVE BASTIMENT DE LA MAISON DE VILLE DE PARIS

Fig. 5. Hôtel de Ville, Paris, 1533–1609. Engraving by Mathieu Merian after Claude Chastillon, c. 1610–15. (B.N. Est. rés. Ve 9)

complete construction of the Hôtel de Ville, begun in 1533 during the reign of François I and left incomplete in 1550.[20] The building was finished in 1609, with an equestrian statue of Henri IV by Pierre Biard placed above the main entrance signifying the city's allegiance to the king (Fig. 5). During François Miron's tenure as *Prévôt* (1604–6), the municipality played a particularly active role in supporting Henri IV's building program by reconstructing gates, repairing fountains, and completing numerous minor works. While Henri IV waged a campaign to control the cities throughout his realm, the rebuilding of Paris offered dazzling evidence of the benefits of royal power.

The royal building program was harnessed to the burgeoning real estate market in Paris. The Place Royale and Place Dauphine were built not by the crown but by private investors, by nobles of the robe, by merchants and artisans. Their development of the squares signaled the growing value of urban property, a trend that accelerated during the first half of the seventeenth century, when rents tripled in value.[21] The housing shortage caused by the postwar migration to Paris may have been an initial catalyst during the first years of Henri IV's reign, but it was the return of the crown to the capital that provided long-term impetus to the real estate market. Officers of the court required appropriate housing in the city, and the lavish hôtels that sprang up throughout the seventeenth century in the quartier Richelieu, the Marais, the Ile-St.-Louis, and the faubourg St.-Germain-des-Prés were built by royal officeholders, tax farmers, and bankers attached to the court. Henri IV's urbanism took advantage of the inflationary effects on real estate values that followed the court's return to the capital. His residence in the city and his building program initiated the trajectory of urban development that transformed Paris into a monumental capital.

This book is about a crucial episode in the transformation of a medieval city into a modern capital. It is about the relation between city planning under the direction of an absolute monarch and the emergence of the centralized state in seventeenth-century France. Historians agree on the importance of that relationship, but the nature of the relationship has not yet been satisfactorily explained. It has generally been assumed that the ideology of monarchy, centered on the deified king, directly translated into programs of city planning devoted to self-glorification. At least with respect to Henri IV, that view misconstrues the interrelated social and architectural concerns that animated Henri IV's urbanism. Furthermore, the traditional view fails to capture the power of architecture or account for the complex transactions between art and society; to describe works of architecture as passive reflections of a social reality in which they play no active role is to ignore the power of urban form to shape and structure experience. Henri IV appreciated that power. He understood that the rebuilding of Paris played an essential role in the creation and representation of the centralized state. His buildings were far more than decorative backdrops; they played a major role in defining the history of the city. The monuments and the squares functioned not as static, reflective objects but as social creations making their own meaning.

Earlier generations of scholars combed the royal archives without discovering how Henri IV's urban projects came to life. In the case of the Place Royale, for example, documents concerning the distribution of royal land were found, but nothing was learned about the actual construction and settlement of the square. On these critical matters, the king's archives were silent because the crown was not involved in any of the construction. The two squares were built by private patrons, with each lot owner commissioning his own building crew and hiring notaries to record the transactions. It was in the notarial archives that the undiscovered building contracts for the royal squares lay buried, and it is on these rich resources, deposited in the *Minutier central* in Paris, that this study is based. The history of the projects was pieced together from a large number of documents: contracts with brickmakers, stonecutters, and woodsellers; building contracts with masons, carpenters, metalworkers, and glaziers; land sales, leases, and loans; and in the end, inventories after death. I have tried to spare the reader a tedious familiarity with those individual pieces by confining the archival apparatus to appendices. Even so, the reader is asked to observe the buildings at an unglamorous proximity. But by witnessing them as they rise, as products of

human aspirations and conflicts, and not as iconic images of urban splendor, we come closer to seeing how architectural form, social forces, and political vision together produced the Paris of Henri IV.

CONCLUSION

"I am a Frenchman only by this great city: great in population, great in the felicity of her situation, but above all great and incomparable in variety and diversity of the good things of life; the glory of France, and one of the noblest ornaments of the world."[1] Provoked by the League's control of Paris, Michel de Montaigne had written these words in the late 1580s. The importance of Paris—its central role in the political order of the French state and in the definition of French national identity—were not inventions of Henri IV. They were long-established premises of French history and culture, the values that moved Montaigne to fear for his country when Paris was attacked. "I warn her [Paris] that of all parties the worst will be the one that throws her into discord."

But Henri IV reached the throne at a time when the allegiance of Paris, the monarchy, and French unity itself were threatened from within as never before. His administration remade the political and cultural order, and Paris was the crucible in which this enterprise was forged. That transformation was a means toward a broader political end: rebuilding and representing the renewed power of the crown, the power of France.

Henri IV was no different from his predecessors in regarding Paris as a domain of royal power. A century earlier, Louis XII had sponsored the Pont Notre-Dame, and François I had built the Hôtel de Ville as homages to the royal affiliation of Paris. But while the Valois kings regarded the city as an important setting of royal ceremony and a deserving recipient of royal beneficence, Paris was only one of many movable locations of the court.

For Henri IV, the court and the city were inextricably linked. He not only made Paris the home of the crown and growing numbers of royal officers; he treated Paris as the testing ground and model for the full range of his policies and patronage. His building program aimed to strengthen the city's economic base, meet the needs of an urban citizenry, and promote the institutions of urban culture. He constructed manufacturing workshops, squares for artisans and merchants, spaces for promenading, a plague hospital for the poor, and a royal college. It was not difficult for royal publicists to represent these accomplishments as signs of the king's genuine concern for his subjects.

The unveiling of Henri IV's equestrian monument on the Pont Neuf in 1614 set off a new round of eulogies to the Bourbon king. One such pamphlet by the doctor and architectural writer Louis Savot reviewed the king's public works.

> [Henri IV] began to build a royal college in Paris, offering larger wages than in any other university to draw the greatest men in the world there. For the ease and prosperity of commerce, he attracted to his realm the finest artisans from foreign countries to establish silk manufacturing and other foreign crafts, because more than 6 million *livres* were annually exported from France; for the same reason, he rebuilt the bridges which the wartime fury had demolished, built several new ones, leveled roads, restored the old streets, and made new ones. Recognizing that buildings were the eternal monuments of a prince's grandeur and the power of his riches, an occupation for various artisans and a livelihood for an infinity of poor laborers and manual workers who, for lack of being occupied, become idlers, vagabonds, and thieves, he spent more than 8 million *livres* on buildings: namely, he built the Pont Neuf in Paris, the canal de Briare, the tower of Cordouan, Montceaux, the Grande Galerie of the Louvre, the Hôpital St. Louis, Place Royale, Place Dauphine, rue Dauphine, as many streets in the marais du Temple as there are provinces in France, the great college of la Flèche, a part of the Arsenal, the Louvre, and the best of the Tuileries, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Verneuil, and Fontainebleau.[2]

Savot mentioned projects outside of Paris and beyond the scope of this book. At St.-Germain-en-Laye, Henri IV completed the Château Neuf, which Philibert Delorme began for Henri II, and created a terraced garden with grottoes and elaborate automata. At Fontainebleau, he added the Cour des Offices and Porte Dauphine, and remodeled the Cour Ovale and the gardens. He also financed the work carried out at the château of Verneuil, a gift to his mistress Henriette d'Entragues, and at the château of Montceaux, a gift to the queen. The Cordouan lighthouse in the mouth of the Gironde river and the Jesuit college in La Flèche, to which he promised his heart, were his only major buildings outside the Ile-de-France, excluding the frontier fortifications which Savot failed to mention. As the châteaux and gardens indicate, Henri IV did not neglect the traditional forms of royal patronage, but Paris was his primary workshop.

No master plan guided the royal building program. Rather, it evolved during seven years of intensive activity, from 1603 to 1610. Nor did the program follow a consistent progression. Rather, varying approaches to urban design were tested by different architects, whose identities have been merged into that of the king and his indispensable minister Sully. For example, planning ideas introduced in the Louvre in 1603 were explored in the Place Royale and further elaborated in the Place Dauphine, while the Place de France followed a different direction. Yet the projects flowed from a coherent strategy, a strategy that can be defined in part by examining what Henri IV chose *not* to do.

First, the royal building program made no attempt to renovate the old city. Indeed, throughout the *ancien régime,* historic Paris remained largely untouched, belying the myth of the monarch's unlimited power to implement urban designs. The refusal to demolish whole blocks of the old city accounted for the crown's persistent failure to clear the courtyard between the Louvre and Tuileries, or to create a monumental forecourt east of the palace. The *grand dessein* was to remain unrealized until Baron Haussmann—guided by modern notions of urban beauty, security, and hygiene—destroyed large parts of central Paris during the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Henri IV's urbanism was confined to empty sites: the Place Royale was built on the abandoned grounds of the Hôtel des Tournelles, the Place Dauphine on a garden, the Place de France on fields, and the Hôpital St. Louis outside the walls. His projects consumed the undeveloped land within the walls, and the city was embellished by knitting the new to the old.

Nor did Henri IV's urbanism restructure the street system. Through the writings of Sigfried Giedion and Lewis Mumford, we have come to see the avenue as the paradigmatic element of Baroque urban planning, as in the Rome of Sixtus V. During his brief reign as pope (1585–90), Sixtus V projected a network of streets that stretched across Rome.[3] His avenues crossed hills and valleys, linking the basilicas through a city-wide system of roads. By this standard, Henri IV's urbanism was deficient, for he failed to pierce avenues across the capital. The Place de France was the only project that treated circulation through the city as a central design priority, and even this project entailed no city-wide streets. The pope was no more willing than Henri IV to demolish the historic city center, but Rome had a unique resource: vast amounts of unsettled land inside the city walls. Sixtus V confined his efforts to undeveloped land at the fringe of the city; his roads tackled the deserted landscape while the medieval and Renaissance fabric remained untouched. Paris, however, was bursting inside its ramparts, and road construction on a scale comparable to that in Sistine Rome would have required the large-scale expropriation and demolition of private property.

Yet the building programs of Sixtus V and Henri IV were determined by underlying social policies, not by conditions of urban density. The pope's program, shaped by the legacy of Rome's Christian topography, was conceived in terms of circulation; it was destined for the pilgrim. Henri IV's program was conceived in terms of functional spaces; it was devoted to the daily activities of Parisian residents. Henri IV's urbanism placed greater importance on the formation of architectural spaces promoting social and economic programs than on movement through the city. He did not meet the standards of Sixtus V, but the king was guided by a different approach to urban planning.

On the other hand, it would be incorrect to conclude that the king's architects were entirely uninterested in problems of circulation, and that the enclosed squares were planned as autonomous ornaments. The squares were structured by axes of circulation that linked them to major roads: the Place Royale to the rue St. Antoine and rue des Franc Bourgeois, the Place Dauphine to the Pont Neuf and quais of the Cité. Rather than pierce wide avenues through the city, Henri IV's architects made minor incisions in the old city to provide access to new buildings. The architects adjusted the squares to the surrounding fabric; the buildings absorbed the contingencies of the urban context through local symmetries and irregular geometries. This malleable process of design represented an alternative to the ideals of Renaissance and Baroque planning, where the order of the city was regulated through axial compositions and perfect geometric forms.

Finally, Henri IV's architects did not perceive Paris as an organic whole; intervention in one part was generally not considered in relation to the functioning of the entire city. Yet as the royal building program developed, it implicitly demonstrated a growing recognition of Paris as a unified entity, both in the design and program of the buildings. In formal terms, the king's architects introduced an urban scale of design; that is, the size and form of buildings were designed to be seen from afar. The *grand dessein* of the Louvre and the Place Royale formed spaces that were scaled in relation to the city. All Parisians were invited to promenade in the first royal square, the largest built space they had ever known. The Grande Galerie, Pont Neuf, and Place Dauphine were designed as parts of a grand panorama, as sights to be viewed from a distant point and as platforms from which to survey the city. The buildings were composed as parts of an urban landscape, and the visual delight arising from this spectacle marked an emerging urban aesthetic, an aesthetic which valued the medley of the city's sights. In programmatic terms, the royal projects were not intended to serve merely the local parish but the city at large: the Place Royale was planned as a recreational space and as a center of the luxury trades for all Parisians; the Hôpital St. Louis had the purpose of protecting the entire city from upheavals caused by the plague. The civic identity of the *bourgeois de Paris* remained tied to his parish, but Henri IV's urbanism inserted a network of monuments and places that reached beyond the neighborhood and belonged to all of Paris.

Measured in terms of stylistic influence, Henri IV's urbanism was of little consequence. It directly influenced only the new towns of Henrichemont

(1606) and Charleville (1608), founded respectively by Sully and by Louis de Gonzague, Duke of Nevers. The Place Ducale at Charleville, designed by Clément Métezeau, closely echoed the Place Royale. Gonzague's project also included a hospital and a hospice, where orphans were taught a trade, components modeled after the royal enterprise. The influence of the Place Royale can also be traced to Covent Garden, which was begun in London in 1630 and designed by Inigo Jones. But the squares in Charleville and London returned to the Renaissance type of town square. Each incorporated a monumental building — a ducal palace in Charleville, a church in London — in the designs, whereas the Bourbon model boldly adopted an unmonumental architecture. With the classicizing taste of the second half of the seventeenth century, Henri IV's buildings found few admirers; the brick-and-stone construction was devalued, the absence of axial planning faulted. The social content of Henri IV's urbanism was all but forgotten, his effort to forge an alliance between court and commerce having failed. The case of the Place Royale was premonitory; the monied classes were unwilling to invest in manufacturing, and the wealth of Paris was instead devoted to royal offices, tax farms, and seignorial estates.

An immediate consequence of Henri IV's urbanism was the rise of Parisian real estate developers: land speculators such as Nicolas Carrel, and developers of rental housing such as Charles Marchant and François Petit. During the reign of Louis XIII (1610 – 43), the crown ceded all initiative to private investors, who were responsible for the development of three neighborhoods: the Ile-St.-Louis, the last tract of empty ground within the walls; the site of Queen Marguerite's palace on the south bank of the Seine, opposite the Grande Galerie; and the quartier Richelieu, north of the cardinal's palace.

Whereas Henri IV regarded Paris not only as the locus of the court but as the primary vehicle for implementing the policies of the crown, his successors displayed far less interest in the capital city. Louis XIII was merely uninterested in Paris; Louis XIV came to loathe it and transferred the court to Versailles. However, his minister, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, who subscribed to an imperial model of kingship, pursued several building projects to immortalize the absent king. As a result of Colbert's efforts, the Cour Carrée and Tuileries were completed, four triumphal arches with reliefs celebrating the virtues and conquests of the king were erected, and the ramparts encircling Paris were destroyed. Henri IV's building program had already deprived the walls of their role in terms of defense, sanitation, and civic identity. By the 1670s, they were manifestly obsolescent, and Colbert had them replaced by a tree-lined boulevard, making Paris the first open city in Europe.

In the course of the century, Paris had shifted from a collection of neighborhoods held together by the circuit of walls to a physical network anchored by its own internal order. Henri IV's urbanism had set this trajectory in motion, but the separation of the court from the capital and the imperial model of urbanism that prevailed during Louis XIV's reign ran against the core of Henri IV's policies. In a famous memo of 1669, Colbert noted his ideas for Paris: "The Louvre to continue everywhere. Arch of Triumph for conquests of land. Observatory for the Heavens. Pyramids, difficulty in executing them. Grandeur and Magnificence."[4] The urban order of the city was of no interest to the crown. Paris served to provide testimony to the monarch's glory.

The crown's transformed vision of the city was embodied in the royal squares of Louis XIV, the Place des Victoires and the Place Louis XIV (Vendôme). The primary purpose of these squares was to frame the effigy of the king in a firmly aristocratic precinct. It was as if the content of Henri IV's squares — their artisanal and mercantile character, their modest architectural profile, their formation of a space for myriad public uses — were extracted, leaving simply uniform facades fronting building lots. Into this empty shell, Louis XIV's architect Hardouin Mansart injected the imperial dream: enduring stone, ennobling orders, a royal statue, a space of deference and of awe. Grandeur and magnificence, the goals set by Colbert, were fulfilled in Louis XIV's *places royales*.

Henri IV had tried to build a different type of city. Where Louis XIV's Paris was aristocratic, honorific, and grandiose, Henri IV's buildings reached across social divisions and advanced the crown's key objectives: promoting domestic manufacturing, linking the court with commerce, and establishing Paris as the focal point of a unified French state.