Approaches to Teaching Hugo’s *Les Misérables*

Edited by

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and

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Editions, Abridgments, and Translations

According to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF) catalog, more than three hundred French editions of *Les Misérables* have been published. The majority of our survey participants favored the edition by Yves Gohin, in the Folio classique series (reissued in 1999 in two volumes) because of the quality of its notes and its affordable price. This is the edition contributors to this volume cite. It includes, besides extensive notes, an introduction by Gohin in the first volume, and a “dossier” at the end of the second volume, consisting of a parallel chronology of Victor Hugo’s life and of the events told in *Les Misérables*; a short bibliography; and, in an appendix, the text “Les Fleurs” (the first part of which became the four chapters of “Patron-Minette” [pt. 3, bk. 7]).

A good alternative to the Gohin edition is the 1998 Livre de poche edition by Nicole Savy and Guy Rosa, also in two volumes. Published research increasingly tends to reference the 1985 Laffont-Bouquins one-volume edition (part of the project of complete works led by Jacques Seebacher and Guy Rosa in the late 1980s). One of the editions mentioned by respondents is no longer in print: the Classiques Garnier two-volume edition by M.-F. Guyard. The 1993 Garnier-Flammarion three-volume edition and the Pocket one-volume edition (reissued in 2013) have no notes. All the above editions are unabridged; abridged editions (excerpts) include Classiques Larousse, edited by Alexandre Gefen (2007); Classiques Bordas, edited by Florence Naugrette (1995); and the École des Loisirs 2013 edition (designed for French schoolchildren).

The English translation of *Les Misérables* that is used in this volume is Lee Fahnestock and Norman MacAfee’s 1987 revision of the original 1862 Charles E. Wilbour translation, published by Signet Classics. It is far from perfect but was judged to be more accurate (though less lively) than the Norman Denny translation (1976), published by Penguin Classics. The Signet edition has an afterword by Chris Bohjalian, and the Penguin edition has an introduction by Denny; neither one has notes. The Modern Library paperback edition, translated by Julie Rose (2008), is lengthier and more expensive than the Signet or the Penguin edition; on the other hand, it has, besides an introduction by Adam Gopnik, extensive notes by James Madden. Another option mentioned is Isabel F. Hapgood’s translation, dating from 1887 and available online at *Project Gutenberg* (at the same time it is, of course, prudent to discourage students from using any online edition that has not been authenticated by scholars). Penguin Classics has more recently released a new and well-received translation by Christine Donougher (2013), with an introduction by the historian Robert Tombs. An abridged version of the novel in English is published by Barnes and Noble Classics (2003); it is edited by Laurence M. Porter, uses the Wilbour translation, and includes an introduction and notes by Porter.
Select List of Editions and Translations

Editions


Translations


Note on Editions Cited in This Volume

In this volume, contributors cite Gohin’s 1999 French edition of *Les Misérables* and Fahnestock and MacAfee’s 1987 translation, unless otherwise noted. Citations in the text are composed of three parts: the volume and page number(s) in Gohin’s edition; the page number(s) in Fahnestock and MacAfee’s translation; and the corresponding part, book, and chapter number(s) in Hugo’s novel.

Visual, Audiovisual, and Digital Materials

The Web site of the Paris-based Groupe Hugo (groupugo.div.jussieu.fr/) offers an unparalleled resource for readers of Hugo’s work. Founded in 1969, the group brings together specialists, mainly within France. In addition to news relating to publications and conferences about Hugo, the Web site hosts a range of indis-
pensable research tools, the highlights of which are arguably a growing archive of over 260 research presentations from the group’s regular meetings since 1986 and links to nearly 100 downloadable publications, including Guy Rosa’s edition of Les Misères (the manuscript of Les Misérables as it stood on the eve of the 1848 revolution), which can illustrate to students the long-term evolution of Hugo’s novel.

The site provides other useful links: for example, to Gallica, the digital library of the BNF (gallica.bnf.fr), where original editions and illustrated versions of Les Misérables can be consulted alongside press reviews from the 1860s; the BNF’s online exhibition for Hugo’s 2002 bicentenary (victorhugo.bnf.fr/), which opens a rich interactive portal into Hugo’s life and works (including his many paintings and sketches); and the Hugo museums in Paris and Guernsey (maisonsvictorhugo.paris.fr), which provide details on Hugo’s domestic life and his personal library. The French Wikisource site also allows access to a wide range of Hugo’s literary works, essays, and speeches in a mostly standardized format, which can become a particularly useful teaching tool when composing reading lists for students (fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Cat%C3%A9gorie:Victor_Hugo).

Broader historical information can be found at the bilingual Web site of the Fondation Napoléon (www.napoleon.org/en/home.asp), which covers both France’s empires, and at the Web site France in the Age of Les Misérables, which was created by history students at Mount Holyoke College in 2001 (www.mtholyoke.edu/courses/rschwart/hist255-s01/index.html) and provides a range of social and cultural contexts for readers of Hugo’s novel, from the pleasures of the bourgeoisie to the plight of the poor. Online commemorations of the Battle of Waterloo for the 2015 bicentenary offer similar context to explore, especially The Last Stand: Napoleon’s 100 Days in 100 Objects (www.100days.eu/) and Waterloo 200 (www.nam.ac.uk/waterloo200/), a project of the United Kingdom’s National Army Museum. Both sites feature online exhibitions, time lines, and news.

The ongoing success of the stage musical ensures that a healthy interest persists in the different adaptations of Les Misérables. Although no portal exists as a gateway to these versions, many screen and stage recordings are regularly uploaded to video-sharing Web sites such as YouTube. In addition, there is a growing bank of material (including documentaries and panel discussions) at France’s Inathèque Web site (www.inatheque.fr/index.html).

See also the section on adaptations in the works-cited list at the end of this volume.

Biographies and Reception

Hugo’s life and indeed afterlife as a major cultural figure of the nineteenth century can read like something of an epic in itself and has unsurprisingly been the
subject of numerous biographies and critical studies. The most recent undertaking in French is also the most substantial: Jean-Marc Hovasse embarked on a trilogy of volumes with *Victor Hugo: Avant l'exil: 1802–1851*, followed by *Pendant l'exil: 1851–1864*; a third installment is forthcoming. This biography is already greater in length (over 2,600 pages and counting) than Hubert Juin’s triptych, which divides Hugo’s life along slightly different political lines (1802–43, 1844–70, 1870–85), and Max Gallo’s two-volume study entitled *Victor Hugo I: “Je suis une force qui va!”: 1802–43* and *Victor Hugo II: “Je serai celui-là!”: 1844–85*.

Single-volume biographies include works by Jean-Bertrand Barrère, Alain Decaux, and Yves Gohin. More concise and readily accessible introductions have been published by Sophie Grossiord, Marieke Stein, and Sandrine Fillipetti. These would be logical starting points for instructors and students unfamiliar with Hugo. Biographies with a more particular focus are also of interest, especially Michel de Decker’s *Hugo: Victor pour ces dames* as well as Henri Pena-Ruiz and Jean-Paul Scot’s *Un Poète en politique: Les combats de Victor Hugo*, both appearing during Hugo’s 2002 bicentenary, and Henri Pigaillem’s broad history of the Hugo family during and after the writer’s life. Bernard Leuilliot’s *Victor Hugo publie “Les Misérables”* recounts the novel’s sensational publication in 1862, and, like Marc Bressant’s relatively brief reflections on Hugo’s famous state funeral in Paris in 1885, is a reminder of Hugo’s impact on the popular consciousness. Although Hugo never published an autobiography, his wife Adèle Hugo’s *Victor Hugo raconté par un témoin de sa vie* constitutes something of an official self-portrait that can be read alongside his journal entries from *Choses vues*.

In English, Graham Robb’s 1997 biography remains the liveliest and most extensive account; it is still widely available and benefits from meticulous detail and critical impartiality. A. F. Davidson’s informative 1912 study is more candid than might be expected of biographies from the early twentieth century. Elliott M. Grant offers an imaginative portrait of a forward-thinking Hugo whose resonance with the immediate postwar period makes for stimulating reading, while John Porter Houston focuses on poetry as the key thread through Hugo’s life, and Joanna Richardson develops a probing, if at times moralizing, reading. A new short critical biography, by Bradley Stephens, is forthcoming.

Excellent insights into the cultural fashioning of Hugo’s monumentality as a writer can be found in the fourth chapter of Michael D. Garval’s *A Dream of Stone*. General overviews of Hugo’s life and works are available in John Andrew Frey’s *A Victor Hugo Encyclopedia* and in Marva A. Barnett’s *Victor Hugo on Things That Matter*. Claude Millet and David Charles are coediting the *Dictionnaire Victor Hugo* for Classiques Garnier, which will be a major reference work for research on Hugo.
Criticism

To get a sense of the diversity of interpretations of *Les Misérables*, the reader of French can start with any of several volumes of collected essays, including those edited by Guy Rosa and Anne Ubersfeld, by Pierre Brunel, by Gabrielle Chamarat, by José-Luis Diaz, by Guy Rosa (*Victor Hugo*), and by Danielle Molinari. The chapter on *Les Misérables* in Mona Ozouf’s *Les Aveux du roman* is of particular note since, through its investigation of how the French novel in the nineteenth century negotiates the old and the new, it proposes an interesting way for integrating Hugo’s novel into French literary history. Myriam Roman and Marie-Christine Bellosta’s *Les Misérables: Roman pensif* is another helpful tool since, besides a detailed analysis of the novel, it includes a substantial collection of texts and documents, a chronology, and a synopsis. Roman’s *Victor Hugo et le roman philosophique* sets Hugo’s novel within the broader context of his fiction to substantiate the link between literature and philosophy in his writing, while Georges Piroué’s *Victor Hugo romancier* develops a similarly broad but equally astute overview of Hugo’s narratives. In addition, Henri Meschonnic’s *Pour la poétique, IV: Écrire Hugo* rigorously analyzes the shape of Hugo’s “roman poème” ’novel-poem’ (our trans.).

In English, five book-length studies focusing exclusively on *Les Misérables* are to be recommended. Mario Vargas Llosa’s *The Temptation of the Impossible* provides an excellent analysis of the novel’s narrative voice (which Vargas Llosa, half seriously, half ironically, calls “the divine stenographer” [11]) and of its utopian dimension. Kathryn M. Grossman’s *Figuring Transcendence* develops a far-reaching study of how Hugo dramatizes his Romantic sublime through the novel’s depiction of all life as interrelated. Grossman’s *Les Misérables: Conversion, Revolution, Redemption* offers a more introductory consideration of the novel’s formal and thematic concern with revolution. With Bradley Stephens, she has also edited *Les Misérables and Its Afterlives*, which analyzes the novel and its multimedia adaptations and appropriations. Similarly attentive to literary analysis and cultural history, David Bellos’s *The Novel of the Century: The Amazing Adventures of “Les Misérables”* is lively and illuminating.

Works on Hugo’s novelistic enterprise are also of critical value, relating Hugo’s most famous novel to his other narratives. Richard B. Grant’s *The Perilous Quest* gave anglophone readers access to the revisions in Hugolian scholarship, which had been under way in France since the 1950s, by stressing the visionary rather than the mimetic nature of Hugo’s narrative fiction. This concept of Hugo’s novels as visionary works is taken up by Victor Brombert in his influential *Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel*, which includes a chapter on *Les Misérables*, and in *The Hidden Reader*, his comparative reading of Hugo with Stendhal, Balzac, Baudelaire, and Flaubert. J. A. Hiddleston’s bilingual edited volume of essays uses the notion of the abyss as an interpretive strategy toward
Hugo’s fiction, with two essays on Les Misérables and two essays looking at all his novels. Given the memorable nature of characters such as Jean Valjean and their importance to the novel’s cultural appeal, Isabel Roche’s study of character and meaning in these novels is another thought-provoking title to consult because it reads Hugo’s fictive figures through his aesthetic and political ideas.

**Background Materials**

Hugo’s novel occupies a unique and problematic place in the history of the French novel: published when realism had already been established as the dominant aesthetics, it harks back in some of its elements to Romanticism while gesturing toward what would become modernism. We therefore list suggestions for readings on all three literary movements, noting that valuable introductory essays to each are to be found in widely accessible anthologies (e.g., Hollier; Burgwinkle et al.).

**Romanticism**

A major reference work for French Romanticism is now available in Alain Vaillant’s edited volume Le Romantisme. General introductions can be found in Manuel d’histoire littéraire de la France, 1789–1848, edited by Pierre Barbéris and Claude Duchet, and in Max Milner, Le Romantisme, 1820–1843, in addition to David G. Charlton’s two-volume edited collection The French Romantics. Another useful introductory book (although primarily about English Romanticism) is Marilyn Butler’s Romantics, Rebels, and Reactionaries. For an accessible book (which may thus also be assigned to students) that spells out the intellectual stakes of Romanticism, one can turn to Isaiah Berlin’s The Roots of Romanticism. Discussions of Romanticism that are particularly relevant to Hugo’s novel can be found in James Smith Allen’s Popular French Romanticism: Authors, Readers, and Books in the Nineteenth Century and Claude Millet’s commanding panorama Le Romantisme. On melodrama—an important ingredient of Romantic fiction—consult Peter Brooks’s The Melodramatic Imagination. For a study of the French Romantic hero, one can consult Margaret Waller, The Male Malady: Fictions of Impotence in the French Romantic Novel, and Allan H. Pasco, Sick Heroes. For the relation between French Romantic literature and other arts, see David Wakefield, French Romantics: Literature and the Visual Arts, C. W. Thompson, Victor Hugo and the Graphic Arts, and the music critic Charles Rosen’s Romantic Poets, Critics, and Other Madmen. Other discussions of French Romanticism include Jean-Pierre Richard, Études sur le romantisme; Pierre-Georges Castex, Horizons romantiques; Michel Crouzet, Essai sur la genèse du romantisme; Paul Bénichou, Les Mages romantiques; and Frank Paul Bowman,
French Romanticism. For studies of Romanticism across Europe that can help position the French tradition in continental terms, see the following edited volumes: Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich, Romanticism in National Context; Michael Ferber, A Companion to European Romanticism; and Paul Hamilton, The Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism. Ferber’s Romanticism: A Very Short Introduction provides a stellar summary of these European contexts.

Realism

Erich Auerbach’s seminal Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature provides a broad introduction to the question of the representation of everyday life; though it is not confined to the nineteenth-century movement of realism, it includes readings of Stendhal and Balzac. György Lukács’s Studies in European Realism is another classic study of the movement, and Fredric Jameson’s The Antinomies of Realism offers a contemporary perspective on the most influential theories of literary and artistic realism. Roland Barthes’s essay “L’Effet du réel” is an important discussion of the role of objects in realist fiction. Vanessa Schwartz’s Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris helps situate the French realist novel within a broader culture of realist spectacle, while Richard Lehan’s Realism and Naturalism positions the realist text as a site of transition in Western culture. Christopher Prendergast’s The Order of Mimesis, Margaret Cohen’s The Sentimental Education of the Novel, Peter Brooks’s Realist Vision, and Sandy Petrey’s In the Court of the Pear King, as well as Lawrence Schehr’s Rendering French Realism and Subversions of Verisimilitude, are all, in one way or another, critiques or questionings of the assumptions underlying realism.

Modernism

A large number of books can serve as introductions to modernism. These include The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms, edited by Peter Brooker et al.; The Modernism Handbook, compiled by Philip Tew and Alex Murray; Modernism, edited by Astradur Eysteinsson and Vivian Liska; Peter Nicholls, Modernisms: A Literary Guide; and Tim Armstrong, Modernism: A Cultural History. Michael Whitworth’s Modernism discusses, among other things, modernism’s relation to Romanticism, realism, and formalism. Stephen Bronner’s Modernism at the Barricades: Aesthetics, Politics, Utopia deals with modernism in literature, visual arts, and music; Modernism and the European Unconscious, edited by Peter Collier and Judy Davies, emphasizes the link between modernism and psychoanalysis; Stephen Kern’s The Culture of Time and Space, 1880–1918 deals, among other topics, with modernism’s relation to technology and mass culture.
**History: Waterloo to the Second Empire and Beyond**


For the history of Paris, David Harvey’s *Paris: Capital of Modernity*, Johannes Willms’s *Paris: Capital of Europe*, and Colin Jones’s *Paris: Biography of a City* immediately come to mind. For a more literary account, one can consult Christopher Prendergast’s *Paris and the Nineteenth Century*, Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson’s *Paris as Revolution*, as well as Karlheinz Stierle’s *Paris, capitale des signes: Paris et son discours*. On social conditions in nineteenth-century Paris, with a special emphasis on women, see Rachel Fuchs’s *Poor and Pregnant in Paris: Strategies for Survival in the Nineteenth Century*. Martyn Lyons’s *Readers and Society in Nineteenth-Century France* pays particular attention to the reading habits of women, workers, and peasants during the period’s expansion of the reading public. For insights into the health, education, and employment of children, see Colin Heywood’s *Childhood in Nineteenth-Century France*. For a history of the police, see John Merriman, *Police Stories: Building the French State, 1815–1851*. Those interested in the episode of the barricade would benefit from *The Insurgent Barricade*, by Mark Traugott; *Barricades: The War of the Streets in Revolutionary Paris, 1830–1848*, by Jill Harsin; and Robert Sayre’s *L’Insurrection des Misérables*. For the episode of the sewers, one may want to consult Donald Reid’s *Paris Sewers and Sewermen: Realities and Representations*.

**Characters and Character Networks in Les Misérables**

*Les Misérables* has many more characters than readers can remember or even notice while reading. Most of these forgotten, unrecognized characters remain nameless, play a marginal role in the novel’s plot, appear only briefly before disappearing without leaving a trace — and therefore may not be considered “characters” at all. Conversely, one may argue that they stand precisely for “les misérables” of the novel’s title and that our habitual reading practices demonstrate the prob-
lem Hugo sought to bring to our attention: the misérables’ invisibility to the social world that we, the readers, represent.

The Web site Visualizing Les Misérables, created by Michal P. Ginsburg and hosted on MLA Commons (lesmiserables.mla.hcommons.org) provides, first, a sortable matrix that lists 181 characters, indicating the number of times each character appears in the novel and in what chapter or chapters as well as the number and name of the other characters with whom each one of them interacts. It also features graphs based on the data contained in the matrix, showing the characters’ interrelations by grouping them into “communities” or “clusters.” A graph for the entire novel is complemented by a series of five graphs, one for each of the novel’s five parts, showing how the world of the novel and the relations among characters change over time. A brief essay discusses the methodological and technological issues raised by treating characters as “large data” and by graphing and visualizing their relations.

The Paris of Les Misérables: Maps and Commentary
Michal P. Ginsburg

The Representation of Paris in Les Misérables

The plot of Les Misérables moves to Paris rather late — after more than five hundred pages. But once the move occurs (pt. 2, bk. 4, ch. 1) the city is kept in the forefront of the reader’s attention until the very end; there is no question of its being simply the backdrop for the plot or a bit of local color.

So what is the Paris of Les Misérables? As in any other city novel, the parts of the city that are not represented are as important as the ones that are. In the case of Les Misérables, out of the forty-eight quartiers that constituted the city in the 1830s, nineteen quartiers on the Right Bank, Ile de la Cité, and Ile Saint-Louis are of little interest to Hugo. Only once in the novel, in the passage describing Marius’s circuitous walk from the Rue Plumet to the barricade, are a few sites in this part of the city mentioned: the Champs-Elysées, Rue de Rivoli, Palais Royal, Rue Saint-Honoré. Hugo makes clear that in this novel the important parts of the city are the faubourgs — it is there that “la race parisienne apparaît” ‘the Parisian race is found’ (1: 754; 592–93 [pt. 3, bk. 1, ch. 12]).

In discussing the role of the city in Les Misérables, instructors can show how its representation is linked to some of the novel’s main themes and formal aspects. When tracing the city sites mentioned in the novel, one is struck by the frequent, almost obsessive reference to the passage of time, to what has been and
what is no longer. Here, instead of celebrating the passing of time as productive of positive change—progress, the removal of darkness, misery, and injustice—Hugo mourns the passage of time and the passing of all material things. Of course, what time effaces can be preserved by and in writing. This preservation, however, is not simply a matter of meticulous documentation: some of the most important sites mentioned in the novel—ostensibly preserved from the havoc of time through writing—are actually fictive constructions. Thus, the convent in which Valjean and Cosette find refuge is pure fiction. Of the quartier of Petit Picpus where it is situated Hugo writes, “Il y a trente ans, ce quartier disparaissait sous la rature des constructions nouvelles. Aujourd’hui il est biffé tout à fait” ‘Thirty years ago, this neighborhood was disappearing, erased by new construction. It is now completely blotted out’ (1: 585; 453 [pt. 2, bk. 5, ch. 3]). But this quartier never existed. Hugo originally placed the convent in the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève but later on changed its location. As he himself put it, “[J]’ai dû dépayser le couvent, en changer le nom et le transporter imaginairement quartier Saint-Antoine” ‘I had to relocate the convent, change its name, and transport it imaginatively to the quartier Saint-Antoine’ (qtd. in Chenet). Françoise Chenet rightly points out that the name of the convent is not imaginary: there was, and still is, a Picpus convent; it has a garden and a famous cemetery, with which Hugo must have been familiar. The location of the real Picpus convent, however, is not that of the imagined one but farther to the east, in the part of the city that in the map “Paris of Les Misérables” is covered by the legend. (It is situated in the triangular plot of land bordered by the Rue de Picpus, where the entrance to the convent is located, Avenue de Saint-Mandé and the Boulevard de Picpus, formerly the Barrière de Saint-Mandé). In writing “Le Petit Picpus, dont aucun plan actuel n’a gardé la trace, est assez clairement indiqué dans le plan de 1727, publié à Paris chez Denis Thierry” ‘The Petit Picpus of which no present map retains a trace is shown clearly enough on the map of 1727, published in Paris by Denis Thierry’ (1: 585; 453; [pt. 2, bk. 5, ch. 3]), Hugo goes out of his way to affirm both the reality and the facticity of the site. As critics have long ago pointed out, there is no map of Paris dated 1727 and Denis Thierry died in 1712 (Cooley 357). Playing the role of the preserver of the real city through writing, Hugo flaunts the fictionality of his account.

The second important site under the sign of fiction is the barricade. Though the streets where the barricade is erected did exist, and though it is quite likely that at some point in history there was a barricade there, critics agree that the insurrection Hugo describes in the novel took place, in reality, by the convent of Saint-Merry to the northwest of the fictive barricade. With so many real barricades available for representation, Hugo nevertheless feels the need to invent one.

Finally, the Gorbeau house, which gives its name to the first chapter of the novel taking place in Paris, is derealized by the astonishing coincidence—one of the hallmarks of fiction—on which Hugo’s narrator never comments: that the same place Valjean chose for lodging when he and Cosette first arrived in Paris would become the place of lodging for both the Thénardiers and Marius. While placing Marius in close proximity with, but also in utter ignorance of, the Thénardiers is
necessary for the plot, there is no reason why the ambush against Valjean should take place in his old lodging. By stretching the long arm of verisimilitude as far as it can go, Hugo highlights the fictional character of the site. Representing the reality of misery and of the misérables, Hugo suggests repeatedly, can be done only through fiction.

**Mapping the Paris of Les Misérables**

The maps presented in this volume are intended to help instructors discuss the representation of Paris in the novel. The map showing the Paris of *Les Misérables* (pp. 14–15) lists twenty-four sites (out of about 150 mentioned in the novel). Fourteen of them are sites of important episodes or events (the barricade, the convent, the prison of La Force) or sites where important encounters take place (the Champ de Mars, where Éponine delivers her warning to Valjean; St. Sulpice, where Marius's father watches him unobserved; the Barrière du Maine, where Valjean and Cosette see the chain of convicts; etc.). The remaining ten are places where the novel's various characters live. We note that while we are given the address of a minor character such as la Magnon, there is no indication as to where Javert lives — suggesting clearly, though not surprisingly, that he has no home, no life outside his duties as representative of the law.

In looking into the places where characters live, we discover a curious fact: Hugo tells us that la Magnon used to live on the Quai des Célestins, at the corner of the Rue du Petit Musè, before she moved to the Rue Clochepperce (2: 267; 942 [pt. 4, bk. 6, ch. 1]). Hugo further mentions that Mabeuf used to live on the Rue des Méziers, then moved to the Boulevard Montparnasse, before settling in the Village d'Austerlitz (1: 868; 690 [pt. 3, bk. 5, ch. 4]). Unlike the changes in place of residence of Marius or Valjean, which are related to major events in the plot, the former places of residence of la Magnon and Mabeuf are totally irrelevant to the plot (they precede the point in the story where these characters appear). The mention of previous sites of habitation is but one example of Hugo's habit of referring to sites in the city that are not part of story — as when Grantaire, attempting to convince Enjolras of his commitment to the cause of the revolution, traces the rather circuitous itinerary he could take (but doesn't) in order to recruit participants around the Barrière du Maine (2: 164; 855–56 [pt. 4, bk. 1, ch. 6]). Similarly, in a chapter describing the activities on the eve of the insurrection (pt. 4, bk. 10, ch. 4), Hugo mentions the names of streets and sites in the city over eighty times in six short pages. By repeatedly evoking sites in the city that play no role in the plot, Hugo insists that the represented city is not limited to the story he tells, that — as is evident from the various digressions — the novel exceeds the story of a certain number of characters at certain points in time and space.

The other two maps trace the walks, often described in great detail, that some of the novel's characters take through the city (pp. 16–17). A quick comparison with Balzac's *Le père Goriot* can be useful here. In Balzac's novel, the hero,
Paris of Les Misérables

1. Masure Gorbeau
2. Village d’Austerlitz
3. Champ de l’Alouette
4. Barrière du Maine
5. Vaugirard cemetery
6. Champ de Mars
7. Rue Plumet
8. St. Sulpice
9. Jardin du Luxembourg
10. Rue de l’Ouest
11. Rue Pontoise police station
12. Café Musain
13. St. Jacques du Haut-Pas
14. St. Médard
15. Approximate location of fictive convent
16. Elephant of the Bastille
17. St. Paul-St. Louis
18. La Force prison
19. Rue Clocheperce
20. Rue de la Verrerie
21. Rue de l’Homme-Armé
22. Site of Javert’s suicide
23. Barricade
24. Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire
16. ................. Elephant of the Bastille
17. ................. St. Paul-St. Louis
18. ................. La Force prison
19. ................. Rue Clocheperce
20. ................. Rue de la Verrerie
21. ................. Rue de l’Homme-Armé
22. ................. Site of Javert’s suicide
23. ................. Barricade
24. ................. Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire

Legend

Gavroche’s walk to the Elephant
Gavroche’s march to the barricade
Gavroche’s return to the barricade
Valjean walks to Cosette’s house
Javert derailed

Itineraries of Gavroche, Valjean, Javert

Gavroche’s walk to the Elephant
IV, 6, ii
Gavroche’s march to the barricade
IV, 11, i-vi; 12, ii
Gavroche’s return to the barricade
IV, 15, iv-v
Valjean walks to Cosette’s house
V, i-v
Javert derailed
V, iv

Palais du Louvre
Boul. Saint-Martin
Rue Saint-Denis
Boul. des Italiens
Rue Saint-Antoine
Boul. Saint-Antoine
Boul. Saint-Martin
Seine
Île de la Cité
Île Saint Louis
Place Royale
Rue de la Verrerie
Rue des Francs-Bourgeois
Rue Saint-Denis
Rue Saint-Louis
Rue de la Grève
Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire
Rue de l’Homme-Armé
Barricade
Site of Javert’s suicide
Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire
Itineraries of Marius, Valjean and Cosette

Legend

1. Masure Gorbeau
2. Village d'Austerlitz
3. Champ de l'Alouette
4. Barrière du Maine
5. Vaugirard cemetery
6. Champ de Mars (out of bounds)
7. Rue Plumet
8. St. Sulpice
9. Jardin du Luxembourg
10. Rue de l'Ouest
11. Rue Pontoise police station
12. Café Musain
13. St. Jacques du Haut-Pas
14. St. Médard
15. Approximate location of fictive convent
16. Elephant of the Bastille
17. St. Paul-St. Louis
18. La Force prison
19. Rue D'ocheperre
20. Rue de la Verrerie
21. Rue de l'Homme-Armé
22. Site of Javert's suicide
23. Barricade
24. Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire

Marius's walk to the barricade
Valjean's and Cosette's escape to the convent
Rastignac, walks a lot and is linked to many of the sites mentioned in the novel, sites that are in different parts of the city. But when Balzac describes his hero’s movement in the city he usually tells us only his point of departure and point of arrival (the same is true for the movements of other characters in the novel). For example, we read that “Rastignac arriva rue Saint-Lazare,” but there are no details about how he got there (192). Obviously, Balzac is not interested in tracing the route that leads Rastignac from one point to the other. This is because Rastignac’s movement in the city physically expresses his social mobility, and what is important is that he “arrives”; the teleology of the plot of arrival is replicated in the teleology of movement in space; how one gets somewhere is not important as long as one does. Hugo’s characters, on the other hand, walk rather than arrive. This is not simply because *Les Misérables* is anything but a novel of social climbing; it is also because one of the main functions of detailing the itineraries of different characters is to draw attention to the city itself, its existence beyond the characters’ plot. The other function is to suggest the state of mind of the characters: Marius’s long and indirect route to the barricade expresses his ambivalence and distressed state of mind; the back-and-forth movement of Valjean and Cosette during their escape to the convent shows Valjean’s confusion and hesitation (as well as probably Hugo’s lack of certainty, now that he moved the convent from its original site in the area near the Panthéon to an imaginary territory); Valjean’s gradually shortened walks from his apartment to the house Cosette inhabits with Marius (the map represents only the full walk) give physical form to his dwindling hope and life.

It would come as no surprise that women in Hugo’s novel do not walk much. Cosette walks with Valjean to the Luxembourg gardens and other unspecified places but certainly does not walk on her own. Éponine gets around—she gives warning to Valjean in the Champs de Mars, waters Mabeuf’s garden in the Village d’Austerlitz, visits Marius’s apartment in the Rue de la Verrerie, and finally arrives at the barricade, where she dies. We are not given an itinerary for any of her walks (as if she were invisible), and for the last part of her walk she is dressed as a man.

The detailed itineraries of characters as well as the many references to sites that play no role in the novel’s plot explain the large number (over 150) of different sites and streets mentioned in the novel and the even larger number (over 1,500) of references to streets, avenues, boulevards, quais, squares, bridges, and other thoroughfares as well as to specific sites in the city. This frequency of spatial reference keeps us constantly aware of the sheer presence of the city.

**NOTES**

1 The pagination of the 2013 Signet Classics edition of Fahnestock and MacAfee’s translation differs slightly from that of the 1987 edition.

2 For other studies of Paris in *Les Misérables*, see Bellosta; Combes.

3 The 1834 map that underlies the “Paris of *Les Misérables*” map is used with the kind permission of the David Rumsey collection (www.davidorumsey.com). The three maps were produced by Michal P. Ginsburg, Matthew Taylor, and Sergei Kalugin, of Northwestern University.
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