Additional Note to the Eighth (“Final”) Edition of *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1832). By Victor Hugo

Note: The italics are Hugo’s.

This edition was advertised in error as including several *new* chapters. The correct term would be *unpublished*. In point of fact, if we understand *new* to mean *newly created,* the chapters added to this edition are not new. They were written at the same time as the rest of the work, they date from the same period and arise from the same manner of thought, and they have always been part of the manuscript of *Notre-Dame de Paris*. Moreover, the author would not accept the notion of adding new developments to a work of this type after the fact. That is not something that can be done at will. A novel, in his view, is born, in what might be called an inevitable manner, with all its chapters present; a play is born with all its scenes included. Do not think that there is anything arbitrary in the number of parts that make up such a whole, that mysterious microcosm that you call a play or a novel. Grafts or attachments rarely succeed where works of this kind are concerned; these ought to spring up in a single leap and remain as they are. Once the thing is done, do not revise, do not retouch. Once the book has been published, once the sex of the work, virile or not, has been recognized and proclaimed, once the child has given its first shout, it is born, there it is, it is what it is, neither father nor mother can do anything more, it belongs to the air and the sun, let it live or die as it is. Your book is a failure? Too bad. Don't add chapters to a failure. It is incomplete? It should have been completed when first begotten. Your tree is bent? You will not straighten it. Your novel is tubercular? Your novel is not viable? You will not give it the breath it lacks. Your play is lame? Take my advice: don't give it a wooden leg.

The author therefore thinks it especially important that the public know for certain that the chapters added here were not made for this reprint in particular. If they were not published in the preceding editions of the book, it is for a quite simple reason. At the time when *Notre-Dame de Paris* was being printed for the first time, the file containing these three chapters was mislaid. They had to be rewritten or done without. The author considered that the only two of these chapters that might have had any importance where length was concerned were on topics in art and history that in no way affected the story itself, that the public would not notice their disappearance, and that he, the author, would alone know the secret of this omission. He decided to do without them. And besides, to be perfectly frank, his laziness made him shrink before the task of rewriting three lost chapters. He could have written a new novel in a shorter time.

Today, the chapters have been found, and he is taking the first opportunity to put them where they belong.

Here, then, is the work as a whole, as he dreamed of it, as he made it, good or bad, durable or fragile, but the way he wants it.

Doubtless the newly rediscovered chapters will have but little value in the eyes of those quite judicious persons who sought in *Notre-Dame de Paris* only the drama, only the novel. But there may be other readers who found it worthwhile to study the esthetic and philosophical thought hidden in the book, who in fact desired, as they read it, to have the pleasure of untangling, behind the novel, something besides the novel, and to trace, if we may be pardoned these somewhat ambitious expressions, the system of the historian and the goal of the artist in the creation as it stands.

It is for those persons above all that the chapters now part of this edition will make *Notre-Dame de Paris* complete, if we admit that *Notre-Dame de Paris* deserves to be completed.

In one of these chapters, the author expresses and expounds a stance concerning the present decadence of architecture and the death of this king among arts, which he considers almost inevitable today. His opinion is unfortunately well-rooted in his mind and well thought through. But he feels the need to state here that he greatly desires that the future will one day prove him wrong. He knows that art, in all its forms, may derive boundless hope from the new generations whose still-budding genius can be heard sprouting [sic] in our workshops. The seed is in the furrow, the harvest will certainly be a fine one. His only fear, for reasons that will be seen in the second volume of this edition, is that the sap may have dried up in the old soil of architecture, for so many centuries the best field for art.

Yet there is today in young artists so much life, power, and what might be called predestination, that, in our architecture schools in particular, at the present moment, the professors, who are miserable ones, are creating not only without realizing it but even in spite of themselves, pupils who are excellent—exactly the opposite of the potter of whom Horace speaks, who planned to make amphorae and produced cooking pots. *The wheel runs on, and out comes a pot.*

But in any case, whatever may be the future of architecture, in whatever way our young architects resolve the question of the nature of their art one day, while waiting for those new monuments, let us preserve the old monuments. Let us inspire in the nation, if at all possible, the love of the national architecture. That, declares the author, is one of the principal goals of this book; it is one of the principal goals of his life.

*Notre-Dame de Paris* opened up, perhaps, a few true perspectives on the art of the Middle Ages, on that marvelous art heretofore unknown to some, or, worse yet, misunderstood by others. But the author is far indeed from considering the task he took on voluntarily as having been accomplished. He has already pleaded, on more than one occasion, the cause of our old architecture, he has already pointed out loudly many profanations, many demolitions, many impieties. He will not tire. He has committed himself to returning to the subject, and he will. He will be as tireless in defending our historical edifices as our iconoclasts in the schools and academies are eager to attack them. For it is painful to see into what hands medieval architecture has fallen, and how the plaster-slingers of today are treating the ruins of this great art. It’s even shameful for us, intelligent men, who see them at work and settle for merely booing them. And this is not just about what is going on in the provinces, but about what is being done in Paris, at our doors, under our windows, in the great city, in the city of letters, in the city of the press, of the word, of thought. We cannot resist the urge to point out, in conclusion, some of the acts of vandalism that are planned daily, debated, begun, continued, and concluded calmly under our very eyes, under the eyes of the artistic population of Paris, face to face with the critic taken aback by such audacity. A building in poor taste, an archbishop’s palace, has just been demolished; the harm is slight; but in a single bound, so was the bishop’s palace, a rare fragment from the fourteenth century that the demolition man/architect was not capable of distinguishing from the rest. He yanked out the bloom with the weeds; it’s all the same. There is talk of razing the admirable chapel of Vincennes, to use its stones in making some fortification or other, which, however, Daumesnil[[1]](#endnote-1) had no need of. As they repair and restore at great expense the Bourbon Palace, that shack, they allow the wind-gusts of the equinox to undermine the magnificent stained-glass windows of the Sainte-Chapelle. Within the last few days, a scaffolding has appeared on the tower of Saint-Jacques-de-la-Boucherie, and one of these mornings the pickaxe will get involved. A mason showed up who was willing to build a little white cottage between the venerable towers of the Palais de Justice. Another one came along and castrated Saint-Germain-des-Prés, the feudal abbey of the three towers. Another will be found, doubtless, to throw down Saint-Germain-l’Auxerrois. All those masons claim to be architects, are paid by the prefecture or out of the incidentals budget, and they have green suits.[[2]](#endnote-2) Every sort of damage that bad taste can do to good taste, they do. As we write these lines, oh the deplorable spectacle! one of them holds the Tuileries, one slashes Philibert Delorme[[3]](#endnote-3) right across the face, and it is surely not one of the minor scandals of our times to see with what effrontery the ponderous architecture of that man is spread all over one of the most delicate façades of the Renaissance!

Paris, October 20, 1832

Translated by Robert F. Cook, Professor Emeritus, University of Virginia

In French at [https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Notre-Dame\_de\_Paris/Note\_ajout%C3%A9e\_%C3%A0\_l%E2%80%99%C3%A9dition\_d%C3%A9finitive\_(1832)](https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Notre-Dame_de_Paris/Note_ajout%C3%A9e_%C3%A0_l%E2%80%99%C3%A9dition_d%C3%A9finitive_%281832%29).

1. In 1814, after Napoleon's defeat in Russia, as the allied armies of the Sixth Coalition approached Paris, the chateau was commanded by General Pierre Yrieix Daumesnil. Daumesnil had a wooden leg, replacing a limb he lost at the Battle of Wagram (5–6 July 1809). When the allies demanded his surrender, Daumesnil responded, "I shall surrender Vincennes when I get my leg back". He finally agreed to give up the fortress only when ordered to do by the newly restored King, Louis XVIII. (Wikipedia) [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. “Habits verts” is a reference to the green suits worn by members of the French Academy (Académie Française). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Philibert de l'Orme (1514-70), a French architect, writer, and one of the great masters of French Renaissance architecture, worked on the original plan for the Tuileries Palace at the behest of Catherine de Medici in 1564. (Wikipedia) [↑](#endnote-ref-3)