Landscape with Two Saints

How Genovefa of Paris and Brigit of Kildare Built Christianity in Barbarian Europe

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Introduction

The Journey to Brigit's Well

On the road from Galway to the Cliffs of Moher on the west coast of Ireland, you might notice a nun in a telephone booth at Liscannor. If you are heading for the cliffs, one of the most spectacular sites of natural beauty on the island, you might not bother to stop. But if you visit the nun, you will see that she is small, lovely of face, and demurely draped in the black and white of a modern Benedictine. She gazes thoughtfully down the valley toward the ruins of a medieval monastery. This is no chatty sister, dialing up veiled colleagues around the county, but a statue of Saint Brigit of Kildare encased in glass. Just behind her is a low, dark entrance into a cave tucked beneath a hillside. Up the hill are gravestones. Inside the cave is a well. The effigy of Brigit guards her well.

Saint Brigit has many wells in Ireland and a few elsewhere. Her springs have bubbled, flowed, and leaked into streams, pools, and basins for millennia. The saint's waters must be gushing below the ground of Ireland with the volume and force of a geyser, for they burst through the surface from Ulster to Kerry, Mayo to Wexford. In this rain-soaked land surrounded by ocean, where water from the skies gathers in muddy fields and back gardens, pilgrims seek every drip and trickle from the saint. They duck into caves, clamber over fences, and slog through the rain to dip their fingertips in the holy waters. They bathe their eyes, their temples, their limbs. They collect water in bottles and jugs to take home and sprinkle on others. They come from small villages, whence parents and grandparents led

them to Brigit's wells and explained the customs of the waters. They also come on airplanes, boats, and ponderous, road-blocking buses from foreign countries. They are led by nuns and parish priests, tour operators, Neo-Celtic webmasters, writers of guides and coffee-table books featuring dreamy images of the wells and shrines. Pilgrims leave behind photos of lost loved ones, discarded bandages and clooties tied to the trees, broken spectacles, plastic flowers and icons, or the occasional handwritten epistle to the saint.

The last time I visited Brigit's well I was seeking a cure for an obsession. I had become devoted, in my own academic way, to another early medieval holy woman, Saint Genovefa of Paris (ca. 420–509). I had read the earliest story of her life, composed by an anonymous monk about twenty years after she had died, and could not stop imagining its scenes of Genovefa's unlikely deeds: her childhood interview with traveling bishops, her efficient management of Parisian priests, her serenity when battling storms and monsters as she sailed the Seine. Genovefa defies the paradigms that historians of previous generations have constructed for female saints. Neither martyr nor nun, she was a charismatic Gaulish noblewoman who marched around the Parisian basin like a Roman commander, bidding kings, tribunes, bishops, and unruly neighbors to do God's will.

I was hoping that Brigit (ca. 452–524), a slightly more conventional saint, might distract me. I have followed Brigit's cult for twenty years or more. She has a well-argued early history and a much-studied set of medieval biographies, known by their Latin name of *vitae*. She also has a modern career as a nationalist icon. Irish girls are still named for her. Holy cards bearing her image are sold from Dublin to New Delhi. Her wells, her miracles, and her vitae are familiar to ordinary Catholics across the Irish diaspora, as well as to professional students of the fifth century, when she was supposedly born. Genovefa, by comparison, has had nothing like Brigit's publicity. Although she is the patroness of Paris and stands guard over a bridge to the Île Saint-Louis, her origins and early cult are obscure to everyone but specialists in the Gaulish fifth and sixth centuries, or historians of her cult's revival in the later Middle Ages. Few come to her shrines. She has no healing wells. No one has put her statue in a glass booth, although scenes of her life adorn the Panthéon in Paris.

Yet Genovefa and Brigit have much in common. They were born, according to their legends, in northern Europe in the age of barbarian migrations and Mediterranean missions to the pagan north. Both became saints while their countrymen and countrywomen were turning Christian. Both helped to convert others to the faith that was not yet dominant in Europe. They gained reputations for such holiness that learned men wrote their saintly biographies several times over. Both women became the focus of transregional cults that

attracted pilgrims and sponsors from far beyond their local churches. While alive, they swayed bishops and kings. After death, they continued to perform miracles for devotees at shrines named after them. They inspired prayers, rituals, and architecture. Each gained a day in the calendar of saints, signifying recognition by bishops of Rome and other cities of Christendom.

Most intriguingly, as I realized at Brigit's well, they were the same kind of saints: peripatetic, influential women responsible for building prestigious churches. Genovefa raised the first basilica at Saint-Denis and was buried in the new shrine of the Holy Apostles in Paris, along with her king and queen. Brigit founded a monastery at Kildare and was later laid to rest in its new basilica, which also came to house deceased lords and ladies of Leinster, one of the four ancient overkingdoms of Ireland. Both saints' cults and their churches prospered throughout the Christian reforms of the central Middle Ages, although Brigit's Kildare dwindled before the Protestant Reformation. Both returned to popularity in the modern period, although Brigit became a more prominent patroness than Genovefa. Both acquired new profiles more typical of chaste, modest, motherly female saints in the Catholic revivals and nationalist movements of the nineteenth century.

The histories of their cults, rising and falling according to devotional trends and political shifts, are not unusual for medieval saints. However, the early careers of Genovefa and Brigit are unique in Christian history. Although both women gained reputations because of their inherent holiness and the usual repertoire of miracles, they also demonstrated their sanctity by means of travel and architecture. At the time, few women became bona fide saints by building churches. Although Italy, Britain, and Iberia produced some female travelers and some women sponsors of building projects, none of those regions produced traveling, building female saints in this period; nor did the empire that became Byzantium. Martyrdom was still the surest method for achieving sanctity. No convents existed in Genovefa's day, although vowed women may have lived together in private homes; only in Brigit's generation did women begin to earn recognition as abbesses of monasteries. At the same time, plenty of men built shrines and churches in the fifth and sixth centuries, but none won sanctity just for their architecture. Kings and patricians created religious monuments as acts of citizenship and public charity, rich men and women sponsored Christian mausolea for themselves and their families, and bishops built churches to house Christian ritual and saints' bodies.

Holy women rarely had enough resources or authority to sponsor building projects. In both Gaul and Ireland in the very early Middle Ages (roughly 400–800), women acquired wealth through marriage or inheritance but generally did not gain full control over its disposition. Women were rarely independent

sponsors, designers, builders, or owners of public architecture. No woman enjoyed unrestricted use of religious buildings or the public spaces attached to them. By Genovefa's time, bishops had long ago forbidden women to preach or teach Christianity in churches. Local councils as well as major synods of ecclesiastical men had begun to limit women's participation in liturgies. Christian communities did not permit women to enter some areas of churches or to take part at certain times of the day and season. Women could never command the temporary sacral spaces of Christianity, such as the administrative circuits of bishops with their official ceremonies of welcome by the Christian community, or the brief sacred space of religious processions. Men ruled these places. Most women of the very early Middle Ages, even saintly women, simply could not move about as easily, regularly, or publicly as men. Men had as many reasons for such rules as women did for colluding in restrictions on their mobility and access. Nonetheless, in this historical context, the storied mobility of Brigit and Genovefa is even more astonishing. That they actually inspired men to help finance, design, and build religious architecture and were then celebrated for it is nothing short of miraculous.

Alas, the nun in the phone booth did not cure my obsession but intensified it. Brigit imprisoned in glass seems an appropriately ironic symbol for the book she has helped inspire. She is immobile now, but pilgrims continue to travel to her wayside effigy, seeking supernatural solutions to problems of body and soul. Her main shrine at Kildare, on the other side of Ireland, lost most of its properties before 1600. The church there fell into ruin in the eighteenth century; on the site today stands a faux-Gothic Church of Ireland raised from Romanesque ruins, along with a patched-up round tower from the eleventh century. Behind the church is a tumble of stones believed by many visitors to be an ancient Celtic fire-house where pagan priestesses practiced sacrifices to the goddess that Brigit replaced. Brigit's body is gone, although bits of it have turned up in curious places around Europe—a bit of finger in Cologne, a skull fragment in Lisbon.

Nothing is left of Genovefa's building project at Saint-Denis either, except ancient foundation stones buried deep beneath the Gothic cathedral of Abbot Suger. Genovefa's own shrine on Mont-Sainte-Geneviève was built and rebuilt during the Middle Ages. Her monks and canons acquired lands throughout the Parisian basin as well as prime real estate within the city itself. Her abbatial church lasted until the eighteenth century. Louis XV commissioned the architect Soufflot to build a new one, but at the moment of its completion, in 1789, the Parisians reclaimed Genovefa's place. Soufflot's church became a shrine to the Republic, the Panthéon, and secular saints now occupy its crypt: Voltaire, Rousseau, Curie, Zola. Meanwhile, the church next door, Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, claims

to own a fragment of Genovefa's tomb. A single medieval tower of the Abbaye Sainte Geneviève rises above the roofs of the Lycée Henri IV.

Since neither Brigit nor Genovefa produced any writings of their own, religious men commemorated their lives. An anonymous monk composed the first stories of Genovefa about twenty years after her death, probably at the request of the Frankish queen Clothild. Brigit's first biographer, another monk called Cogitosus, wrote from Kildare in southeastern Ireland more than a century after the saint was supposedly buried there. In later decades, other hagiographers updated these early histories, adding new details and eliminating outdated data to suit changes at their shrines. Medieval histories, theology, laws, stories, and poems mentioned Brigit and Genovefa, too. We are left, then, with men's words and ruined churches as evidence for what these women accomplished—and, indeed, for the scanty proof that they even existed as breathing human beings. Medieval devotees, too, remembered them through both the words of their vitae and the stones of their churches. The saints' building projects attested to their inborn holy power, which medieval writers called *virtus*. Their churches provided both principal site and trusty measure of their cults for generations of believers. Through their bodies, Brigit and Genovefa continued to extend miraculous patronage to humble Christians who visited their sepulchers. The liturgies acted out in their shrines and the written descriptions of their miracles reinforced the truth of their histories. Holy women engineered the buildings, ordinary Christians worshiped within their architecture and visited their bodies, literate men explained the women's lives and projects. Brick and syllable, writer and supplicant, builder and architectural audience together created the two saints and their cults.

This book of words and images explains not only how Europeans came to venerate two women as saints but also how and where Europeans built Christianity at the start of the Middle Ages.[1] I use the unique histories of Genovefa and Brigit, set in contrast to other missionaries and saints, to explain the connections between religious change, landscapes, and gender over roughly four centuries. I rely on archaeological evidence to sketch what Parisians and the Irish of Kildare saw around them every day of their lives, and how Brigit and Genovefa shifted their views. I also interpret later stories of the saints' cults to chart the continuing conversion of their churches and territories. During four centuries of romanization and christianization, the people of Gaul and Ireland altered their landscapes, sometimes suddenly and purposefully, and at other times with slow, small negotiations and incidental decisions.[2] Thus they built themselves a new religion. Stories of Genovefa and Brigit inspired them to build, showed them how, and, in the hagiographers' versions of their saintly deeds and virtues, preserved the memory of Europe's conversion.

This history begins in Paris when the Romans invaded and moves, via Britain, to Ireland when it still lacked a Latin name. The story ends in Christian Europe, with its symbolic capital of Rome, at the moment when pagans became history. By then, around 800, the women and men who lived north of Rome had revised what it meant to be Roman and decided what it meant to be Christian.[3]

Grace and Gratitude

My own landscapes host many folks who have contributed to the production of this book, although its errors (material and symbolic) remain my own. I thank Pat Geary, Colum Hourihane, Jason Glenn, Felice Lifshitz, Gingy Scharff, Bill Tronzo, Greg Woolf, Don Worster, Ann Marie Yasin, and anonymous reviewers for *Speculum* and Oxford University Press for reading portions of the manuscript and providing precious criticism and suggestions. Useful tips also came via correspondence and discussion with Dale Kinney, Catherine McKenna, Jo Ann McNamara, Joszí Nagy, Carol Neuman de Vegvar, and Anabel Wharton. Participants in seminars funded by the Center for Religion and Civic Culture and the Center for Interdisciplinary Research, both at the University of Southern California, as well as audiences at Fordham, Princeton, the University of Kansas, and UCLA provided helpful discussion of my work. Sarah Blake assisted with the bibliography. The Center for Interdisciplinary Research (USC) and the Guggenheim Foundation funded research and travel crucial to the book's completion. Most important to the book and to me, Peter Mancall honored his lifelong commitment to love, honor, and edit. He and my children, Nick and Sophie, accompanied me on pilgrimage to the wells of Saint Brigit and the Paris of Saint Genovefa. Despite their complaints ("I've been to more churches than any other Jew in history!"), I thank them.

I

Paris before Genovefa

The Landscape Enters History

Although Genovefa's pious biographers made many claims about her, authorship was not one of them. She never recorded what she saw when she arrived in Paris around 435. She must have found the architecture lacking, though, because her life's passion apparently became to build another church there. Her first hagiographer, drafting his story of Genovefa almost a century later, did not try to guess about her impressions of the city. He had little to say about Paris's places except to recount how Genovefa changed them. He recalled the scenery of the saint's travels but not the city where she spent most of her life, except for a few offhand references to lodgings (*hospitium, cellula*) and churches. One episode in the saint's life featured a bridge across the Seine. Another important event took place in an unidentified plaza on the Île de la Cité. It was 451, and Huns were approaching Paris. Genovefa had just marshaled the city's matrons for prayerful vigils in the baptistery and was urging their husbands not to send property out of the city for safekeeping. The Parisians suspected a trick to defraud them and denounced Genovefa as a false prophet. A crowd had gathered near the river to decide whether to "kill her by stoning or by drowning her in the great eddies" of the Seine when, fortunately, a character witness arrived to save the saint.[1] The episode reveals few details of Genovefa's Paris: the island refuge at the city's center with its small open space for gathering; the baptistery, one of the oldest Christian buildings in any Roman town; the rocks (*lapides*) lying handy for stoning soothsayers.

Every fifth-century resident had his or her own Paris, observed from points of stasis or passage and informed by particular places in the city.[2] Neighbors may have shared vocabularies of culture, history, and politics, which they used to define their town, but they did not take the same view. They just gazed in common directions. The Parisians who opened their gates to Genovefa had inherited conceptual models for working cities and their surrounding landscapes. We can only guess at the ways in which unlettered town dwellers understood Paris by studying what little remains of it. However, the documents of literate men of the time, including Genovefa's own biographer, emphasized four particular geographical discourses, or ways of looking at landscapes, dominant in the fifth century. Some citizens saw Paris in relation to other locations in the same administrative web of imperial territorial units. On this administrative landscape, whose center was in the Mediterranean south, Paris was a hinterland town of middling importance. Others looked upon a second, more mobile landscape stretched between Paris and the farms of its surrounding countryside. Wagons and boats bustled back and forth across this economic region, supplying Paris with all it needed to survive. Still others saw a third, sacral landscape with a foreground of churches set against a background of old temples and holy places. The Seine itself, curling around the town and protecting the islands in its midst, had once been sacred to Parisians.

Underlying and guiding these perspectives was a fourth view of Paris that encompassed all the others: looking back at the visible, legible, and tangible past of the city. Its citizens lived on a landscape of things left behind. Paris was already a pile of architecture when young Genovefa supposedly arrived. Before her, Stone Age settlers, Celtic wanderers, southern European invaders, Gallo-Roman indigenes, Christian missionaries, and Germanic émigrés had come to the place we now call Paris. Each generation had bequeathed to the next its homes, public buildings, gathering places, walls, and streets—whatever was left of them—among other detritus. Just as the Roman emperors had gathered the spoils of war to decorate their monuments of triumph, thrifty Parisians harvested the accrued layers of the past to maintain their city. They used history to bulwark town walls and adorn new churches. Just before Genovefa's arrival, they had begun to rearrange the ancient streets, neighborhoods, crumbling houses and shops, and even the old graveyards of Paris to accommodate new Christian ways of living and looking. At the time of her death, they were reordering the city once again to accommodate their latest ruler, Clovis, king of Franks, with his retinues and armies.

The useful, meaningful leftovers or *spolia* of Celtic, Roman, pagan Paris literally and figuratively provided building blocks for Genovefa's construction projects.[3] Genovefa was only one architect of change in a long history of urban

renewal. Her story may have been unique among Christian saints, but it would have had little effect on her fellow Parisians had they not lived among other, older versions of Paris and its buildings. The story of Genovefa's Paris was really a tale of at least three cities—the Roman administrative center, the bustling cluster of neighborhoods and markets, and the jumble of religious architecture. Each of these Parises occupied a modest position on much larger landscapes of late imperial politics, economic networks, and sacral sites whose histories would converge in the life of Genovefa. But before that, Caesar had to conquer Gaul, and generations of Romans, Celtic Gauls, Gallo-Romans, and other assorted Parisians had to build, rebuild, and build again.

Roman Paris

In the 400s, while writers in southern Gaul were lamenting the end of Roman civilization, the people of Paris could still locate their city in an imperial territory with a Latin name. Modern historians have sympathized with the southerners and sorted the third, fourth, and fifth centuries into a series of invasions and crises for Gaul. There was the putative catastrophe of the 260s and 270s, when several different armies moved out of the Rhineland into imperial territory, and another series of so-called invasions at the dawn of the fifth century. Maps from the 1900s tracked barbarian armies and tribal migrations with complicated, crisscrossing lines that ended in the arrows of conquest and settlement, fixed by specific dates.[4] The threatening influx of non-Romans could hardly have been so obvious to fifth-century Parisians, though. For one thing, Gaul had recently been the stage for several internal wars among contenders for the empire who either came from Gaul or recruited troops there. So many Germanic and Gaulish fighters had joined the many Caesars' armies that, by the fourth century, whole cohorts of them ranged from Iberia to Persia. Even when war came to Paris, it did not include the dramatic confrontations or long-term sieges of written history but seasonal raids, sporadic banditry, and local destruction.[5] Armies never occupied Paris for long. No one expected a ruler and his army to settle down at a smallish island-town in the Seine, so Genovefa's generation could not have predicted that the former refuge of Celtic chieftains would become the capital of a Frankish king by 500.

The history and name of Paris were Roman; if the settlement had a previous designation, we do not know it. In the third century B.C.E., a second-tier Gaulish tribe had set up headquarters on both sides of the Seine. Latin writers called them Parisii. They had arrived over long centuries of the Bronze Age and Iron Age, in one of those many circulations of people, their ways, and

their things that we now call Celtic. They built a fort (*oppidum*, according to the Romans) on an island within the protective marshes of the river. In imitation of communities farther south, they minted coins to proclaim their presence on the landscape, although the river really belonged to a mother goddess (Sequana in the Romans' Latin) whom they worshiped at shrines along its course. In the mid–first century B.C.E., the Parisii joined neighboring tribes in an alliance against Roman intrusion and Latinizing dominion. They burned their *oppidum* rather than surrender it to Julius Caesar. The Romans built a better fort on the south bank of the Seine and renamed the place Lutetia. The Parisii remained.[6]

The conquest that began with Caesar's demolition of the Parisii progressed through several centuries of construction. Government officials quickly organized Gaul into a hierarchy of provinces, each with its own administrative subunits, linked by highways and aqueducts aimed ultimately at Rome. Gauls on the ground saw this tidy configuration take shape as forts, trading posts, ports, and towns at the center of *civitates*, or former tribal regions, all set on strategic sites along logical traffic routes. Paris grew up at a crossroads of roads and rivers that connected Mediterranean harbors with the northern European coast and with the Germanic interior. The city (sometimes called *civitas Parisiorum*, although *civitas* continued to mean a larger territory focused on a particular kind of urban center) spread quickly across a typical Roman grid, with a forum crowning the highest hill. Neighborhoods that collected around the edge of the central hill—sub-*urbes*—had their own public spaces, baths, and temples. The first serious architectural expansion of Paris lasted about 200 years. By the mid–third century, right before the attacks of the 260s, the city of the Parisii had become a complex collection of government buildings, residences, and places of business covering 370 acres and housing around 8,000 souls.[7]

Parisians dwelt in the discipline of the city's neighborhoods, monuments, and—probably after the mid-third-century attacks—walls. Everyone in town was affected by its periodic expansions, reductions, and rebuildings.[8] When wealthy families constructed fine homes adorned with mosaics or sponsored the construction of temples and monuments, local people yielded space and supplied labor, willingly or otherwise. Benefactors planted baths near the forum; two other bath complexes later appeared on the city's edge for neighborhoods growing there. The main complex still stands at the Musée de Cluny, with its remnants of plumbing and original vaults in the huge *frigidarium,* the room for cold baths. Once its great salons had been adorned with mosaics and murals, shrine niches of marble, and capitals carved as navy ships.[9] A theater for religious rituals completed the initial ring of architecture around the city center. An arena sat on the eastern slope of the main hill. Below it to the southeast and southwest, social elites lay their dead in privately constructed

tombs outside the city's boundary, so that burials lined the roads from Paris.[10] Although cemeteries never violated city limits before the fourth century, other paths cut through the limits. An aqueduct drew water from the south along the now lost course of the Bièvre to baths, basins, and fountains at the hilltop imperial city center.[11]

Sometime after 260, during the dire wave of raids, townsmen and townswomen began a custom that has endured until today: they scavenged materials from ruined buildings of the city for use elsewhere. Faced with attack, they used these *spolia* of stone blocks, hewn by slaves in Gaulish quarries a century or more earlier, to fortify a newly defined, smaller city. Although they never completely abandoned the riverbanks, they hauled their blocks downhill and over water to the island in the Seine, where they built a walled refuge.[12] At least seventy other Gaulish cities raised walls of stone in the same period, recycling pavements, public buildings, funerary monuments, and housing materials to defend their communities.[13] Decorated columns and inscribed slabs, once rising vertically in the amphitheater and forum, now became foundations of a stouter, relocated, and condensed Paris.[14] The city then refocused on the island and hid behind its walls for hundreds of years.

Although the walls of almost all Gaulish towns followed directly upon the Germanic raids of the 260s and 270s, they were not the slipshod products of panic but conscientious investments in both durability and good looks. Most of them were at least ten feet thick, with enormous hewn blocks at the base and smaller concrete blocks above, some refaced so as to be smooth on the outside and decorated with triple bands of tiles. Many city walls also featured multiple stout towers.[15] Paris's defenses were so snug that when Flavius Claudius Julianus Augustus came to town a century later in 358, this grandson of Constantine the Great, future emperor, and fearless conqueror of Cologne and Strasbourg put his palace safely inside the walls of the Île de la Cité. His troops occupied Paris for three years while planning a Rhine campaign. They contributed to the enduring architecture of the city by building markets, quays, and government offices on the island.[16] It must have been a terrible disappointment, though, for the aristocratic citizens of the 360s to find that the only emperor to build a house in the city was an ascetic soldier-philosopher who disdained the trappings of Roman luxury.

Julius Caesar had once divided unconquered Gallia in three, but by Julian's time the Gallo-Romans maintained a more elaborate scheme for provincial government that had been in place for two centuries. The territorial hierarchy helped Parisians to learn their place, for when Roman officers had created Lutetia on the ashes of the Celtic *oppidum,* they had also created other cities for Parisians to look at and defer to. The settlement on the Seine was part of

a system of regions, administrative centers, towns and villages of citizens and indigenes (*provinciae, civitates, municipia, vici*), suburbs, camps, and forts, each with its own particular functions. According to the *Notitia Galliarum*, a list of Gaulish cities and forts composed around 400, Julian's adored "little Lutetia" was among the lesser of seven cities in the province of Lugdunensis quarta (fourth Lyonnaise, also called Lugdunensis Senonia, after its capital at Sens).[17] The province stretched from the Marne to the Loire, bordered by the Saône in the east. Senlis, Meaux, and Paris clustered at its northern tip, Chartres and Troyes marked its sides, and Sens sat roughly at its center. All these other towns were also based on earlier Gaulish tribal centers, and all were at least as large as the *civitas* Parisiorum.[18] They spread out from Paris at an average distance of about sixty-six kilometers apart, linked by roads and rivers in a sensible Roman pattern.[19]

Bureaucrats in charge of keeping order and collecting taxes divided each *civitas* or urban region into smaller rural units, *pagi*, sometimes hundreds of them. Each *pagus* contained at least one population center, such as a village, estate, farm, or fort, and each maintined a distinct local identity. The great historian of France, Fernand Braudel, famously—although incorrectly—blamed the Roman parcelization of Gaul into provinces, *civitates*, and tiny *pagi* for the fractured national identity of modern Frenchmen.[20] Gallo-Romans distinguished cities from the other population centers of a *civitas*, though: cities were laid out, like Paris, in quarters and grids with recognizable Latin edifices, walls, and gates. They were not always the largest settlements in terms of acreage, and only a fraction of the Gaulish population lived in them, but they were the most densely settled points on the landscape.[21] Southern cities held up to 30,000 inhabitants, but Paris never grew so large.[22]

The internal order of each Gaulish *civitas* was topped by a fluidly class-based council (*curia*) of taxable men of means, some of whom held bureaucratic offices as *procuratores, defensores civitati*, or (by the fourth century) *episcopi*, that is, bishops.[23] These important men made decisions and rendered legal judgments. They also collected revenues for local and imperial government and sponsored civic life. They were middle-class merchants or landowning aristocrats, depending on the specific period, but always only men. The privilege of government was not cheap for concerned and wealthy citizens, who traditionally were supposed to spend much of the year living in town rather than on their rural estates, and much of their income on building projects, public diversions, and regional defense. They also had to maintain a network of clients—townsmen, managers, middlemen, servants, and, in the case of bishops, entire communities full of believers—who supported them in business and politics.[24] By the fifth century, responsibility for this complex administrative architecture

belonged largely to local men, either of old Gallo-Roman stock or the emerging Germanic elite, rather than administrators sent from Rome or Ravenna.

The scribblers of administrative hierarchy tried to keep up with shifts in political bureaucracy and geography. They compiled and then regularly updated the late fourth-century *Notitia Dignitatum,* a comprehensive list of the offices of provincial government. In the first version, Gallia was one of four praetorian prefectures. It included the dioceses of Britain, Iberia, Aquitaine, and Gaul proper. The prefect of Gallia supposedly oversaw all judicial and financial aspects of its government, assisted by the governor of each diocese. The diocese of Gaul stretched over the two Belgiae, the two Germaniae, Sequania, the two Alpine provinces, and the four Lyonnaise provinces. A veritable army of officials worked for the governor of each diocese, from lowly accountants and messengers to high-ranking special agents of emperors. Yet this peacetime ideal was precarious in the fifth century, for the *Notitia* also included dozens of military officials attached to Paris, including a master of the navy; it seems unlikely that all these soldiers were simultaneously full-time residents, but at very least the document assumed that the city needed them. Whenever an army general or rising politician—usually the same man in the fourth or fifth century—used a town such as Paris for his base, he assumed responsibility for government, whether he came to defend that city or to rest before striking another. Armed commanders must have negotiated and squabbled with civil officials and local aristocrats about who was in charge, who made decisions, who enforced them, and who profited by them. It was hard to know who should supervise which places. One man's rebels were another observer's local gentry trying to reassert romanized order.[25] Ordinary town dwellers had to find the locus of political power so they could pay their taxes, lodge complaints, and secure armed protection.

Whose city was Paris? To a certain extent, the city itself answered when and if important men came to town. Even after Julian's departure and death, places like Paris remained recognizable administrative centers for periodic meetings and assemblies. They were also valuable prizes in struggles both local and imperial. Generals and Caesars fought over Gaulish towns in their battles for thrones elsewhere, while Germanic leaders and Gallo-Roman landed families manipulated cities in their attempts to gain regional prominence. Gratian (375–83) was the last emperor to visit Lutetia on one of his many trips to fight the Alamanni before meeting his end at the hands of the usurper Magnus Maximus at Lyon. Meanwhile, it was Arbogast, a Frankish general of Roman troops, who protected Gaulish cities and negotiated treaties with would-be Germanic invaders in 381.[26] Arbogast was a typical provincial general, fighting to preserve and control the existing political and administrative landscape, but also taking advantage of it for his own advancement.

Anyone with pretensions to empire needed cities. Nowhere else in Gaul could a man effectively advertise his leadership. Politicians and warriors, like bishops and saints, required the crowds, public spaces, defensive settlements, and markets of cities. As a result, purportedly barbarian Germanic leaders also preserved towns, for instance, when they allied with Roman-commanded troops in 451 against Attila. At other times, though, they attacked or destroyed cities in order to keep others from having them. In the first decades of the fifth century, Franks repeatedly sacked the "richest city of Gaul," imperial Trier, on their way west, thus making sure that western emperors did not return—they did not, however, raze the place or even prevent continued settlement.[27] When Aegidius, one of the last Gallo-Roman pretenders to empire in Gaul, wanted to set himself up as king (*rex*) of Gauls and Romans in the 460s, he waited until Childeric, the Germanic king of Soissons, was out of town. Later, when Childeric's son Clovis was ready to take back power, he marched directly to Soissons, chased out Aegidius's son and heir Syagrius, and plundered the town's churches to signal the change of regime.[28] Taking control of town—like raising a battle flag on a contested hill—was a public announcement of regional dominance.

Paris was vulnerable when the struggle was nearby but also when troops were diverted from the northern provinces to more distant theaters of empire. When legions moved elsewhere in the early fifth century, Gaulish cities called upon local military men and rural aristocrats to staff and fund their protection. Yet a single city could never muster enough technological and human resources for sustained defense. Town dwellers were not soldiers even when called upon to act as such. Towns needed professional fighters, weapons, supplies, and good walls for prolonged assaults. When towns in the most northerly province of empire, Britain, were under invasion in 423, their leaders sent pathetic requests for troops to Aetius, consul in Gaul; but Aetius was too busy defending Gaulish cities against troops of Franks, Alamanni, and Huns, all of whom kept switching sides.[29] Fifty years later, Bishop Sidonius wrote a less famous appeal from Clermont at the other end of Gaul, then caught in the Visigoths' expansion. He lamented, "We are not sure that the scorched face of our walls, or the decaying palisade of stakes, or the ramparts worn by the breasts of guards on constant watch will support our courage, so reckless and so dangerous."[30] Too often, citizens had no resort but to beg for defensive miracles from their saints.

When both local leaders and distant generals failed them, citizens turned to the only professionally trained, literate, aristocratic advocates left in cities, and the only universally recognized ambassadors among the factions and subgroups of their communities: Christian bishops.[31] Gaulish bishops redefined *civitates* as church-based communities with walls, offering both material and

spiritual resources to support a concentrated population. They co-opted the administrative structure of the late empire and redirected the duties of its *curiales*, maintaining the system of dependent suburban and rural spaces and locating each town in the widening network of episcopal sees.[32] They maintained as long as they could the boundaries of provinces and the cities within. Although Genovefa's region, then the Fourth Lyonnaise, steadily lost efficacy as an administrative unit in the muddle of late fourth-century and early fifth-century northern politics, the metropolitan diocese of Sens grew within the province's bounds, governed by its bishop to whom the priests and bishop of Paris answered.[33] Within that larger episcopal territory, Paris remained a secondary town just as it had been a lesser city in the imperial province. Parisians could see far enough beyond Sens to know that Paris occupied a modest spot within the larger hierarchy of Gaulish episcopacies. When bishops of Paris, Sens, Orléans, and Troyes traveled to a synod at Arles in the fourth century and again in the fifth, they saw and felt the power of southern bishops from more elegant, ancient cities such as Narbonne and Lyon.[34]

Yet churchmen, too, squabbled over territories and boundaries, and argued about which cities took precedence within each administrative territory. Despite notable hagiographic exceptions—Martin of Tours, Severinus of Noricum—bishops of the period normally came from the same regional aristocracies that governed cities, so local families often took sides in their disputes.[35] In 428, the bishop of Rome complained to Gaulish colleagues because they were electing homegrown politicos with no clerical background to episcopal office. When Bishop Hilary of Arles started summoning councils in 439 and going from town to town to ordain other new bishops, military and civilian leaders supported him against other churchmen because he was one of their own. Likewise, Sidonius Apollinaris held political positions at home and in Rome—including that of prefect in Rome and, for one short year, son-in-law of the emperor—which complicated his later career as bishop of Clermont.[36] Often enough, the outcome of battles among bishops depended upon each man's ability to govern and defend his own community, as well as his reputation in other episcopal cities.

In the midst of such thick politicking, longtime residents of Paris knew that their security depended upon a collegial and efficient alliance of bishop, landowners, military commanders, and any other men of means left inside city walls. Such leaders were responsible for convincing even more powerful men who dwelt in more important places to protect—or, at least, not to damage—their little town. Parisians had only to glance outside the walls to recognize their relative unimportance in the scheme of empire. Except for the occasional army and traders moving on the river, not much traffic passed by. Signposts

and milestones pointed the way to and from Paris, but no remarkable monument marked Caesar's defeat of brave Gallic defenders. Other cities had raised trophies to imperial victories, like the arches depicting chained and conquered Gauls at Glanum and Orange ordered by Augustus.[37] Paris's unadvertised structures were built for the use of Parisians, not the eyes of visitors.

It was hard for Parisians to convince distant rulers to take notice of their city, with the exception of Julian, who stayed only long enough to stabilize the Rhine frontier and gain the imperial crown. When lesser functionaries recorded their journeys through Gaul in the third and fourth centuries, they had hardly mentioned Paris. The *Antonine Itinerary,* a mid-third-century collection of lists of places en route to other places, put Lutetia on the way from Rouen via Petromantalum (near Guiry) and southward to Salioclitum (Saclay), hence to Chartres. Paris was a crossroads and stopping place—no more, no less.[38] Another road guide from the fourth century, now called the *Peutinger Table*, barely put Paris on the map. A sixteenth-century copy of the document spreads across 6.8 meters of parchment inked in black and red with the names of cities, forts, baths, inns, and important sights. Tiny towers and colonnaded courtyards marked buildings and places, signifying the spread of romanized settlement across 200,000 kilometers of empire and beyond, from Wales to China. Scholars and officials around the Mediterranean world read the *Table* and memorized the geographies of Britannia, Gallia, Italia, and Germania. Scribes made additions and copies throughout the fourth and fifth centuries, adding points to the route as they gained importance to travelers. Monks of the Middle Ages copied this guide to an earlier world, commemorating the footsteps of brave messengers from one boundary of lost empire to another.[39] For Paris, the chart has a single symbol: the word *Luteci[a]*. Paris was one point in a series of daylong journeys between more notable places. From Paris, the lines of those journeys passed over a horizon and vanished down the road to Rouen, Trier, or more often southward to Sens or Orléans and beyond.

Urbanites just a few inches closer to the right edge of the *Table*—a hundred miles nearer to the Mediterranean and Rome—barely noticed events so far north, if their written records are truthful. Political dramas in Byzantium or Rome loomed larger in their minds.[40] Southern authors who read and wrote history from the imperial point of view were wretchedly conscious of recent urban decline and the rupture of good government, punctuated by especially violent spells between the third-century crisis and early fifth-century invasions. The anonymous southern Gaulish chronicler of 452 was depressingly consistent in his reports of *civitates* (he meant territories rather than cities) "foully devastated" and "completely humiliated."[41] Even when the literati had personal experience of northern outposts, they preferred polemical tropes to rigorous

analysis. Salvian, a refugee from Trier in the mid–fifth century who spent the rest of his life in and around Marseille, blamed selfish aristocrats and corrupt civil servants in Gallia and Germania for the repeated barbarian onslaughts of his city. For Salvian, as for the Roman historian Tacitus three centuries earlier, rebellious Northmen manifested a kind of fierce moral purity, whereas the decadent Roman bureaucrats of Germania deserved their destruction.[42] Yet, while men of letters lamented, Parisians and other northerners refocused and rebuilt their city centers again and again.

Along with late antique historians who bemoaned imperial decline and the bureaucrats who crafted itineraries, versifiers of the period also tended to ignore or misinterpret Paris. Refined men measured cities by the complexity of their government and the beauty of their civic monuments. As Ausonius of Bordeaux explained in about 390, three decades before Genovefa's birth, few provincial towns were able to transmit the magic of the Eternal City to the hinterland. Those closest to Rome were most successful. Arles earned a place in Ausonius's *Ranking of Cities* as a "little Gallic Rome." Trier, although a former seat of the western imperial court, attracted Ausonius's notice too but only because it was a military supply center, not an urban wonder. A generation before Salvian, Ausonius had enthused, "Long has Gaul, mighty in arms, yearned to be praised," because "[Trier] feeds . . . clothes and arms the forces of the Empire."[43] The "broad walls" of the city protected its people against menacing Germanic tribes (although not in Salvian's day). In Ausonius's eyes, Trier was an outpost in perilous territory. But Ausonius forgot even to mention Paris.

A city's reputation was another measure of its durability and Roman identity, no more mutable than the thickness of its walls, its location on the written itineraries of bureaucrats, or its position in the administrative hierarchies of provincial government. Like the dirt and stone barrier that Emperor Hadrian had built across second-century Britain to keep out northern savages, the physical and ideological ramparts of Gaulish cities held at bay barbarians, invaders, and *pagani* of all sorts. By the fifth century, Britons were desperate for sturdier ramparts that would exclude the violent newcomers who were settling their island. But they also wanted walls to encircle and preserve Latin speakers.[44] Borders, by their nature, kept things in as well as keeping them out; frontiers marked what must be preserved.[45] Once allowed inside, docile outsiders might possibly learn to share this symbolism made so visible in architecture and so urgent in literature. Bishop Sidonius, the fifth-century aesthete who sold his services to Euric the Visigoth, was optimistic about the potential of frontier cities to convert barbarians. He figured that the tenuous high culture of provincial centers such as Trier or Clermont could spruce up a Germanic warrior much like a good soak in a thermal bath. "You will find that people with learning are

as much above simple folk as humans are above beasts," he advised a Frankish friend.[46]

For Sidonius and those who read him, the distance from Rome was mental. People were either cultured humans living in properly built settlements or illiterate animals. He was not referring to the lions and monsters of the desert but to the domesticated beasts roaming just outside of cities, of course: the cows of the farm, the pigs of the forest edge, and the rude immigrants who camped on other people's fields. Even more fearsome creatures such as the Huns would destroy a *civitas* capital, but those with the potential for cultural conversion could be improved if only they moved onto the administrative map. Once Germanic itinerants came through town gates, the city's built environment would cast its christianizing, romanizing spell upon the barbarians and make them human. This was the most lasting legacy of northern colonization by Mediterranean people: the notion of civilization as a process marked visibly by such outward signs as language, dress, and architecture. Christian organizers from Gaul to Galway would embrace this paradigm of cultural conversion.

But as Sidonius also admitted to his friend Syagrius, poet and great-grandson of a consul, conversion could work both ways. He warned Syagrius not to abandon Roman verses for Burgundian speech. Learn enough of the local Germanic dialect, he counseled, "so you will not be laughed at, and practice the other [Latin], so you may do the laughing."[47] In Sidonius's opinion both barbarians and civilized men could choose to improve themselves or lapse into beastliness simply by deciding whether and how to translate. By 435 Parisians capable of seeing beyond the local horizon were probably not chuckling at Germanic vernaculars but practicing Frankish tongues. They were watching the north with Syagrius but also scanning southern routes to Provence and Rome with Sidonius. Everyone was anxiously contemplating the limits of conversion, translation, and imperial administration.

Views of the Countryside

Although barbarism could easily permeate the fluid boundaries of cities, Romanness (*romanitas*) also flowed in the other direction from towns to the Gaulish countryside.[48] The line between urban center and rural territory had its own ideology, also culled from classical literature and architecture, complementary to the hierarchical ideology of cities and administrative territories. The Latin word *civitas* is instructive: it meant a city bound by the bustle of constant traffic to smaller towns, villages, and dispersed farmsteads. Parisians moved back and forth between city and country. Farmers hauled their products to town to

sell or pay as taxes. Merchants traveled roads and rivers. Men of letters and politics divided their time between their rural estates and their business in Paris. Tools and more precious objects went from urban forges and craftshops to the villas of rural folk, although large farms also produced some of their own equipment. When the occasional horde of beastly foreigners arrived at the city walls, they had already passed by cultivated fields and marvelous villas attached to the town. Parisians were more directly invested in this daily landscape of economic and social connections than in the administrative itineraries of imperial government.

After the Franks took Paris, the movement of goods and people still linked town and country in a single landscape, even if some routes became difficult or particular sites of exchange shifted. After the mid–third century, the most successful merchants already had moved out of the old forum stalls to shops near the stone quays of the island. Some set up smaller markets outside the city walls. Production centers grew or diminished as demand fluctuated along with Paris's population, especially in times of war. Consumers changed places, too. No one was building new classically styled villas around Paris, as they were in some spots in the south of Gaul, or making new highways to town, or turning marginal land into fresh arable. But estate owners repaired roofs and raised barns after invaders had burned the crops and outbuildings, just as city dwellers fixed their walls after attack.[49]

It is hard to judge the density of rural population in fifth-century Gaul, since little remains of villas and even less of smaller or more traditional farms.[50] The land itself yields a few clues. Throughout the political and architectural changes of the fourth and fifth centuries, settlement of all kinds remained fairly stable, neither expanding nor dwindling suddenly. The total number of inhabited sites dipped in the third century but revived in the fourth.[51] Farms continued producing regularly. Woodland increased slightly after the fourth century, indicating some decrease in demand for timber but not necessarily a resurgence of wilderness or drastic depopulation.[52] Most of the land continued to be occupied by farmers and tenants who updated their houses with some sort of imported architectural feature—a rough mural, some wooden columns, a steam heating system—when they could afford it. When peaceable but hungry armies came near town, farmers and stock raisers took advantage. When raiders burned the crops and barns, everyone suffered.

In Genovefa's time, the landscapes of city and country were also bound together by shared pretensions to culture. Some farmers lived in more romanized style than others; *romanitas* in the countryside, as in the city, consisted of constant small efforts and daily choices about how to live and work. Not all the lands of Gaul had entered the imperial grids. Villas and estate-based

agriculture were always most dense on the best lands near urban centers and along military routes. There were more of them in southern than in northern Gaul, although approximately one-quarter of rural settlements in the north had once been "villas" of some sort.[53] Rural Gauls also continued to farm and herd on more traditionally organized lands.[54] Yet in poetry—and, as we shall see, in Christian literature—*civitas* and *villa* remained complementary reservoirs of aristocratic power and culture. Late antique writers considered the country estate of a civilized man to be symbolic of his citizenship in empire. The fifth-century provincial Sidonius cherished some version of an ideal villa first celebrated by the poets Horace and Vergil: as a gentleman's island of refuge, a villa provided all the organic and intellectual elements of civilized life for the owner, his family, and his *familia* of tenants, servants, and slaves. His farm should produce olives, vines, apples, bees for honey and fish for supper, stock for meat and iron for tools, as well as an aesthetically pleasing and properly organized set of house, outbuildings, courtyards, well, and private shrines. In late antique Gaul, Sidonius's embattled estate was protected by a natural version of Hadrian's Wall, namely, the Loire; the river formed a frontier zone shielding the civilization of olive trees and grapevines from northern barbarians.[55]

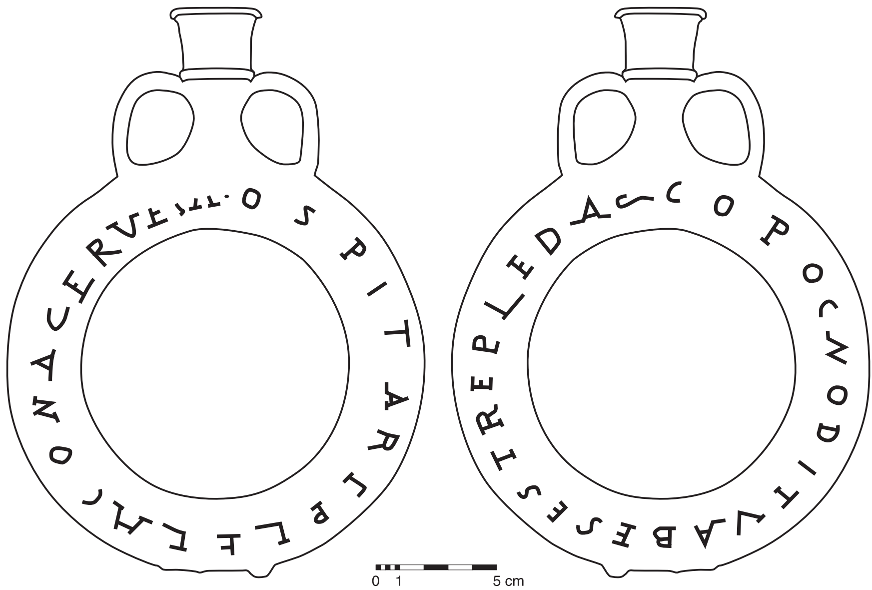
When people had both the money and the desire to advertise themselves as romanized, they invested in objects that would tell this to their neighbors.[56] Ausonius recalled fine villas set along the Mosel at the end of the fourth century, in locations even more remote than Paris. Poetically following fish and noisy boatmen down the river, he rhapsodized about the "country seats" and "lordly halls" along its cliffs. The mansions, with their towers and pillars, their baths and soaring roofs, rose in profoundly provincial territory. Horace would hardly have recognized the towers and other defensive works that Ausonius took for granted, however. Likewise, Sidonius sang the pleasures of his villa near Clermont-Ferrand in the second half of the fifth century. His house had excellent plumbing but lacked nice wall paintings. He also adored the newly fortified villa of his friend Pontius Leontius in Aquitaine and Consentius's place near Narbonne, where they grew olives and grapes. Venantius Fortunatus, a sixth-century bishop and poet, described a few nice houses too, including the villa of Bishop Nicetius outside Trier, flourishing long after Salvian and his prefect had fled southward. Nicetius's estate was protected by turrets, which may explain its continuing prosperity; cautious owners of several other estates in northern Europe added bastions, towers, and ditches in the fourth and fifth centuries.[57]

Although the empire's economy began a slow downward slide in the third century, local trade and industries continued to accommodate the demand for symbolic luxury goods into the fifth century in some parts of Gaul.[58] For some wealthy farmers, it was enough to add a few Roman-style pillars or enhance

their walls with murals on mythological subjects. Others tried to reorganize their traditional homes on villa-style plans as they rebuilt their houses every couple of generations.[59] A large main structure, a courtyard and garden, a shrine to the household divinities and baths to rinse off the dust—any and all of these manifested Latin culture to owners of estates and to those who worked and lived in their proximity.[60] Villa owners of declining wealth had to choose between shoring up walls or repairing paintings, maintaining the plumbing or funding public works in town, and building ditches and fences or fixing hypocausts. Sidonius and the other poets may have ignored the shabbiness of chipped mosaics and unused rooms, but their friends still tried to preserve the aesthetics, ideals, and economy of villa life, and the landscape showed it.[61]

In the fifth century, both Parisians and farmers had good reason to maintain economic connections. Even when enemies surrounded the city and controlled access, aristocratic landowners like Genovefa had to find ways to bring food from country barns to urban mouths. The empire's highways continued to bear transregional trade in the centuries before and after Genovefa sailed the Seine. The garbage of that exchange is today's museum treasure: a typical terracotta flagon, ring-shaped like the ancient vases of Corinth and abandoned beneath the Hôtel Dieu, came from an earlier century and a sunnier place. Before it became an artifact, someone had filled it with liquor, and the maker had inscribed it with a brief dialogue: "Hostess, fill my flagon with barley beer! Barkeep, do you have peppered wine?" "It's here!" "Fill 'er up!"[62] Wine arrived by riverboat in barrels, which were then hauled by wagon to rural tables.[63] Little bronze statues of Mercury and Jupiter, possibly cast in Parisian forges but more likely produced en masse in purpose-built industrial workshops of the larger southern cities, were available for purchase like today's tiny replicas of the Eiffel Tower for sale at tourist kiosks.

The countryside continued to supply building materials to Paris, too, although in smaller quantities than before. In more luxuriant years, Parisians had imported fine marbles for construction or interior decoration, for there were no major quarries around Paris, just local operations for rough-hewn stone and ordinary brick architecture. By the fifth century, when citizens had been reusing dressed blocks for at least a century, apparently no one was quarrying any kind of stone nearby. The ore for smelting must have come from mines outside the region and been forged locally, although Parisian artisans were no longer crafting the ostentatious torcs and shields of Celtic yesteryears.[64] Silver and gold coins recalling one emperor after another, lost or buried in Parisian foundations or tossed into the Seine, were minted in the imperial cities of Rome and Milan (and when provincial generals fancied themselves emperors, in Cologne or Trier).[65] Money came to Paris by the bag only to pay soldiers, victuallers, civil



(H)OSPITA REPLE LAGONA(M) CERVESA

COPO CONDITU(M) (H)ABES
– EST – REPLE, DA!

FIGURE 1.3. Imported ceramic flagon, third or fourth century, found beneath the Hôtel-Dieu in 1807 (John Marston after Duval). One side reads, "Hostess, fill my flagon with barley beer!" while the other reads, "Barkeep, do you have peppered wine?" "It's here!" "Fill 'er up!"

servants, and mercenaries, who then spent their money on the town or went to their graves with it. Parisians returned the coins to Rome as tax surplus; they were paying taxes with currency in the 430s, when Saint Germanus of Auxerre finagled a tax break from the imperial government for his city, and in the 440s when he did the same for the Armoricans.[66]

Like all towns, and even tiny *vici*, Parisians and their country neighbors together produced much of the urban population's clothing, pottery, and iron goods. High-living Parisians imported delicate glass vessels and embroidered textiles when they could, but such fineries were of poorer quality and came less frequently from the major workshops of Gaul after the third century.[67] Most basic supplies arrived in boats from a few miles away. Parisians sent the finished products of their industry only short distances up- and downstream. The *nautae* of Paris, boatmen and overland haulers who commanded the stretch of the river in the territory of the Parisii, carried everything between the town and its adjacent farms and industries.[68] They were local men, not long-distance purveyors of exotic goods. Paris had its merchants (*negotiatores*) organized in

guilds (*collegia*) as in Trier or Lyon. Like traders elsewhere, they thanked the river goddess when she protected them with trinkets tossed into her waters and monuments on her banks. After the Seine had lost its navy in the fifth century and become less important as a conduit between northern and southern seas, rivermen were no less crucial to the provisioning of the city, but they either profited less or forgot to thank their patronesses, because they built no more monuments to Sequana. When they turned Christian, they began to thank Saint Genovefa instead.[69]

When the Franks occupied Paris and its environs in the mid–fifth century, noblemen and noblewomen continued to practice the same ancient commute between country estates and urban seats as had generations of local aristocracies. Peasants trekked their revenues and crops to town, as usual. Traders arrived and left at the quays. In Genovefa's time, merchants came carrying news from as far away as Syria.[70] Bishops went in and out of the city gates. Still, Paris and its environs were looking less and less like Provence or Latium. Although wealthy farmers outside town continued to inhabit and operate ancient villas, they tended to use the larger chambers for barns or stables. They may have dreamed of Roman style, but they constructed newfangled, Germanic post-built houses. They applied principles of classical architecture in religious buildings rather than private homes or halls of government.[71] Parisians were not leaving the landscape of the imperial *civitas*, but simply adapting to economic realities. The walls of Paris had always signified more than they contained.

When Parisians of the fourth and fifth centuries built, destroyed, and rebuilt, they were mindful of at least some of each site's previous uses and older meanings. When they strove to preserve the material environment of urban *romanitas*, Parisians demonstrated their conservative historical view of the political landscape. Meanwhile, common sense and the chance for a little profit gave them good reasons to maintain existing markets, trade networks, and patterns of landownership. The city's political and economic positions helped shape yet another version of Paris—the town of many religions. The cultural conservatism typical of provincial towns, the relative political and economic unimportance of Paris within the empire, and the rural base of its native aristocracy all influenced its residents' religious lives. Parisians who resisted changes to their administrative and economic environments took the same approach to the city's sacral landscapes, always seeking to conserve the existing spiritual resources of their environment, and always claiming that they only changed Paris to preserve it. Against this setting of age-old holy places and venerable religious architecture, the deeds of a very few individual Parisians influenced its religious history and contributed visibly to the shape of the city's religion. Genovefa was one of them.