

# *The Paris Architect*

by Ar. Charles Belfoure  
*Reviewed by Ar. John Mclean*

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In the Author's Own Words and About the Author

The publisher's book-trailer video <sup>i</sup> to *The Paris Architect* is an excellent introduction to the book and the author, Charles Belfoure. It can be seen before or after your reading the book. The introduction is informative and does give us a few insights into why the author wrote the book. The voice of the author in the video, if you have read the book, is what you hear in his book.

In addition, a more detailed introduction to the novel is found in Belfoure's TV interview.<sup>ii</sup>

*The Paris Architect* is Ar. Belfoure's first novel. He is a practicing architect in Baltimore, Maryland, specializing in historic building preservation.<sup>iii</sup>

A few questions

There are a few questions I have put together and shall attempt to discuss and answer in this book review. The questions are:

- Why an architect as the principal character?
- Is *The Paris Architect* a historical novel?
- What is the structure of the story?
- Why is the story about 1942 Paris?
- What is the role of modern architecture in the story?

Why is the main character an architect?

Architecture is what Mr. Belfoure knows best. John Grisham, an attorney is the author of suspenseful attorney stories. *The Paris Architect* is about a gentile architect who creates clever hiding places for Jewish Frenchmen during Germany's occupation of Paris in 1942. The novel, I believe, goes deeper than the obvious fact that the hiding places are created in buildings as this review will reveal.

My late friend, Yar, an architect, a classmate in architecture school and who came to the USA from Poland as a boy after the World War II, returned from a vacation trip to

Poland and told me about his visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau, and the realization he came to. His revelation was that the death camps were only possible because of architects. He was right.

I can report to you as an Architect, that it would have taken an extremely large number of professional hours of intellectual activity to have designed and planned, to have drawn up the 100s of plan sheets for one site, to have generated the 1000s of details, and produced the numerous volumes of type written construction and product specifications, to have retained local construction companies, and to have mobilized an army of soldiers, construction and slave-prisoner workers to build one death camp.<sup>iv</sup>

Belfoure is contrasting the knowledge of an architect designing hiding places against those who are designing and building for the Nazis factories, detention and death camps. Building the death camps in Belfoure's story includes the collaborators, Gestapo agents and those who reported Jewish men, women and children to the Gestapo. Belfoure does give us limited information about the death camps in *The Paris Architect* only to the extent that they exist.

The Paris Architect

*The Paris Architect* is the exploration of Lucien as a human being and **how he did not become** an architect of death. Rather he becomes a better human being.

The story is plot intensive. Contrast and tension is the architecture or structure that the author has designed to hold the story together. The story is about Architect Lucien Bernard, a Modernist, and it is at the same time a story where the people, buildings and places of 1942 Paris are not always what they appear to be. The City of Light in 1942, the author writes, had become the City of cruelty and death, and in contrast Lucien becomes a spot of light for goodness. Lucien, the name derives from the Latin for light. In addition, his name has another related association to light, Lucifer.

Belfoure in the book-trailer calls his book a historical novel. I do not agree. Historical background is rarely explored by the author. The setting of the book is a short time span within a specific historic period. The history of occupied France is mostly implied by reference or implied by association, in order to set the scenes in the book, which works and permits the story to unfold. Giving us more historical background would take away from the drama, the contrasts and the tensions designed into the story. Consider the following examples:

- The story tells us factually where one of the Gestapo headquarters is located by address. It does not reference by address others such as 84 avenue Foch, which does not appear on the Map in the beginning of the book.
- Belfoure does not tell us or by implication about the 45 or more detention camps in France. He does tell us that one exists in Drancy, to serve the story, without any detail, such as, that it was the largest one in France and about five miles northeast of Paris. Drancy is mentioned, however, fourteen times.

- He does not tell us, as a history, about the mass roundup of Jews by the French officials who worked with the Nazis in 1942 on July 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup>. Rather we are given, for example, Auguste Manet's reference on page 13, "almost thirteen thousand Jews were rounded up in Paris and sent to Drancy, and nine thousand were women and children."

*The Paris Architect* is a novel that takes place in Paris in the year 1942, during the German occupation of France. Occupied Paris is the book's general background. The timeline in the plot is implied and not specified by dates. I estimate (based on the time needed to design and for the construction of the new factory for the use of the Nazis) that the story starts in the summer of 1942 through to spring in 1943. The sense of time in the story is compacted.

The book is about humanity and the tension of being human during World War II in occupied Paris. It explores humanity's cruelty as well as its kindness.

The City of Paris is the general location of the novel. The author uses his personal knowledge of the City or describes the actual locations where scenes or action takes place. The front of the book opens to a Map of Paris, which highlights the street locations mentioned in the book.<sup>v</sup> For example, the opening scene of Chapter 1 is the murder of a fleeing Jewish man. The buildings exist. Although not mentioned by the author, they have rounded corners at the intersection with rue la Boétie, which makes sense for the scene and explains why Lucien is not also shot. It also establishes that the author knows Paris. Belfoure embellishes the background with architectural descriptions of the buildings that anchor our minds to the physicality of Paris.



View of the opening scene looking down the rue de Courcelles on the rue la Boétie. (Image: Google.)

The story is developed and carried by its principle character, Architect Lucien Bernard. He is "the Paris Architect".

The story begins with Lucien rushing to be on time for his appointment with Manet, the aristocratic and non-Jewish industrialist. Lucien is anticipating to ask to design a major project. However, Manet has two commissions for Lucien. He packages the factory project with the creation of a hiding place for his Jewish friend. The fee for the hiding

place is highly profitable compared to that for the factory. Unknown to Lucien, Manet has need for other hiding places to be built.

Chapter 1 immediately, in the first two paragraphs, tells us much about Lucien's character:

We realize that Lucian is a self-absorbed modernist architect struggling to survive in wartime Paris, and more importantly, that he is indifferent to the plight and death of French Jews and those who hide Jews.

The book opens on page 1 with the “black” scene at the corner of rue la Boétie,

Just as Lucien Bernard rounded the corner at the rue la Boétie, a man running from the opposite direction almost collided with him. He came so close that Lucien could smell his cologne as he raced by.

In the very second that Lucien realized he and the man wore the same scent, L'Eau d'Aunay, he heard a loud crack. He turned around. Just two meters away, the man lay face down on the sidewalk, blood streaming from the back of his bald head

...

Lucien is approached by the German soldier who has just killed this Jewish man with a bullet in the back of the head, and then the author tells us about the humanity on the street:

- The German matter-of-factly and politely requests the name of Lucien's tailor and apologizes for the blood on his suit as if it is the murdered Jewish man's fault;
- The French people look-on from the shops along rue la Boétie; and
- Lucien is worried about the blood on his suit, rushes off to have it cleaned, and keeps his appointment with Manet, an important potential client.

Turning to the last page and contrasting the opening of the novel with the closing scene of Chapter 66, the story ends with a “white” or serene scene on the country road to Switzerland. Lucien is a different man, and the German soldier of the book's opening is contrasted by Colonel Dieter Herzog, who saves their lives with paperwork, a plan of escape and who kills the pursuing soldiers. It is Major Herzog who had told Colonel Bruckner, and thereby protecting himself, that Lucien was escaping to Switzerland. The Chapter ends,

It had all been an illusion, Lucien knew. The buildings, the arches, the sweeping, graceful lines. All this time he had been worshipping a façade of concrete and glass.

Lucien could tell from her soft breathing that Bette had fallen asleep. Turning, he looked at the three sleeping children huddled under a blue woolen blanket on the backseat. Curled in a ball in the folds of the blanket was Misha. He smiled at the family. His family.

Belfoure does not deal with the fact that the Swiss border is about 230 miles southeast of Paris, and that the driving time was sizable in 1942, since there were no straight superhighways. He first must rendezvous with Herzog in Saint-Dizer about 120 miles due east (although the text reads erroneously to the “west” on page 360) of Paris and then

about 125 miles southeast to the nearest Swiss border. Belfoure tells us the escape will be dangerous and that Lucien must follow Major Herzog's precise instructions exactly.

Belfoure's story is not about the inner workings and feelings of the characters he writes about. The author introduces many characters for the purpose of contrasting and exploring how they face challenges of survival, their view of humanity as well as their own view of themselves, and their pragmatic relationship with one another.

The exception is Lucien. The author takes us into the mind and world view of Lucien the Architect, so we can feel and believe the growth of his humanity and sensitivity as the book ends with Lucien the "mensch" and family man.

It is Lucien's architectural egoism that allows for his transformation when he realizes (on page 123) with his ironic question regarding the hiding places, "Someone actually used them?" He realizes real lives are being saved by the hiding places he designed. We read toward the end of the page that this business with Manet is not only his game against the Nazis, but he is reminding himself how very dangerous a game it is for everyone involved:

His mind was starting to race with ideas on how to detail the false wall when Manet yanked him out of his reverie.

"Lucien. Your Citroën is awaiting you."

As he drove off, Lucien was irritated that he wasn't enjoying the ride in his beautiful new car. No, he wasn't enjoying it because he began thinking of the two people he'd saved. That wasn't what this was supposed to be about.

He almost wished Manet had said nothing about the actual people involved. He didn't want to think of them. (page 124, the last sentence of Chapter 21.)

He had saved lives. At first he does not want to hear this to the point of being "irritated" while he is driving in the new car given to him by Manet.

Lucien wrestles with why he is risking his life. He realizes, after much internal debate and puzzlement about the humanity of the Germans and the French (page 189), and in contrast to his own, that "He was risking his life because it was the right thing to do."

It does not take long for Major Dieter Herzog to develop as Lucien Bernard's alter ego. Herzog appreciates modernist architecture and art. Herzog supports the design for the factory designed by Lucien. Lucien is at first leery of Herzog. We read on page 105,

It bothered Lucien that a German could value such beautiful things—like an ape appreciating a string of rare pearls or an ancient Grecian red and black vase. They were monsters without a shred of decency, yet they could hold the same things in high esteem as a Frenchman could. It didn't seem right.

"I brought some things from my time at the Bauhaus, but I purchased most of it over the years. It wasn't that expensive, either. Most Germans think this stuff is decadent trash, and few people want it in their homes."

In contrast, Herzog is a family man and is looking forward to his leave to Germany in a few weeks. Herzog knows not to bore Lucien with family details. Lucien's wife Celeste does not want children and he does.

Belfoure develops moral contrast against the tensions between:

- the Germans and the French,
- the French and French Jews,
- the Collaborators and the Resistance,
- those who do good deeds for people without compensation and those who need something in return,
- the cruel and awful torturers and the informants.

Aubert, the master woodworker, is being tortured and then horrifically with his fingers being cut off one-by-one (pages 301 through 303 at 11 rue des Saussaies) by Voss, Lischka and Schlegel in order to force him to give up the location of Mendel Janusky, but he does not.

We learn late in the story, page 225, that Bette Tullard takes in the Jewish kids of her neighbor, Mrs. Kaminsky, who had been informed that the French police are coming to arrest her family. The kids are protected by and live with Bette.

The roundup of Cambon was caused by Aubier's non-regular visit. Aubier was getting food to him (page 95) where Cambon was hiding. Cambon was killed resisting arrest by shooting his gun at the Gestapo soldiers. Cambon was "[o]nce one of France's biggest clothing manufacturers, with palatial houses ...", and now he is starving. Aubier was his servant in his Rue Copernic home. Aubier turned Cambon in for a bag of food. In occupied Paris, the French were starving.

Belfoure writes, "Bruckner was always amazed at how easily the French would betray each other."

Page 97 gives us a picture of the plight of Frenchmen in occupied France. He writes that French turned non-Jewish Frenchmen in, especially the ones who ate well, because of the rationing and the starvation.

Bruckner orders, page 97, "Duisberg, bring up the French police and have them round up the neighbors on this floor, ... , "If they aren't in, get some from the floor below. Bring them downstairs to me." Captain Bruckner shoots the old "woman who was tongued-tied."

Consider Albert and Sophie Serrault and Juliette Ternet. They are native born and bred French, except that Albert Serrault is a French Jew whose family goes back many centuries and Juliette is deemed a French Jew. We read, on page 135, when Lucien accidentally discovers Serrault in the apartment he is surveying for a hiding place, he questions him sarcastically about why he stayed in France,

"You ask me why I stayed, and I'll tell you. I feel I should offer an explanation considering what you're risking. My family's been here since the Revolution. All my ancestors have fought for France—the war against the Prussians and myself in the Great War. True, I'm a Jew. But I'm a Jew of French ancestry and very proud to be French. I believed in the glory of France and always will. After the Armistice in

'40, I stayed in Paris out of loyalty to my country because it needed me to stand by her.”

Serrault is about to leave the apartment, he stops and asks Lucien about the Englishman Nicholas Owen who designed and built hiding places for Jesuit priests to hide during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Owen was caught and “racked to death”. Lucien knew this would have a happy ending for a righteous man. Serrault calls Lucien a righteous man, which Lucien is reluctant to hear.

The collaborators of Vichy create another tension in their determination of who is a Jew. We read the introductory dialogue of Chapter 32 (page 179).

Gaspard said nothing, gazing at the oriental rug in the vestibule of their apartment.

“Professor Pinard called you into his office, didn’t he?”

“No, that’s not...”

“And he gave you a choice—me...or your job.”

“Juliette, please...”

“And you chose your professorship in medieval literature.”

Gaspard, a short, handsome man with light brown hair, stepped back from Juliette.

“All because Vichy and the Nazis decreed that because my grandmother—whom I never even met—was Jewish...I’m now officially Jewish.”

Juliette went over to the coat rack and held up her forest-green flannel blazer, which had a yellow felt star on its front breast pocket. “Even though I’ve never set foot in a synagogue or know a single word of Hebrew.”

“The way they decide who’s a Jew is ridiculous.” Gaspard shook his head. “A priest at a parish in Ménilmontant was classified a Jew.”

Belfoure uses both Celeste’s leaving Lucien, when she found out that Lucien was helping Jews, and the tactics of the Resistance, to develop Lucien’s transformation into a “*mensch*”. Page 274, Chapter 49, reads, as Lucien argues with Resistance leaders,

“You kill one goddamn German and a dozen innocent Frenchmen are murdered. You do some meaningless act of sabotage like cutting some telephone lines or diverting freight cars in the wrong direction and get more of our people killed in reprisals. What about those poor bastards you got killed the other day? What you do, monsieur, doesn’t add up to much. Certainly not worth the life of one Frenchman.”

“Let me take care of him,” shouted a short bearded man sitting in the corner of the room. “One bullet for one collaborator, and we can go home.”

“Emile, please don’t interrupt. Let me handle this,” said the old man. “Monsieur Bernard, the Resistance does its best under extremely difficult conditions. But we must fight back. To live defeated is to die every day.”

“Says who? I heard de Gaulle on the BBC say that killing Germans makes it too easy for them to massacre unarmed citizens. He said you do more harm than good. Anyway, it’ll be the British and the Americans who save our asses and you know it, not fools like you.”

Lucien hates the Germans, and is disgusted by the communist of the Resistance who are watching him as a collaborator, since he appears to be working for the Nazis.

The introduction of characters by the author continues. Alain Girardet, French and Lucien’s assistant, is a German Officer’s nephew who grows suspicious about what Lucien is doing (as a result of the cryptic fireplace sketch). He begins to follow him and

cannot make-out what the mysterious routes are about that Lucien walks. The young Pierre, who is Jewish and protected by Lucien, knows Alain is a bigger problem than Lucien realizes.

Pierre feels compelled to protect Lucien, since Lucien is his family now. Pierre secretly follows Alain who is following Lucien.

Pierre's character is brought forward after his protector, Madame Charpointier is shot dead in the street (Chapter 22, page 125). Pierre saw his siblings, Jean-Claude, Isabelle, and Phillippe taken away by the Gestapo. He witnessed Madame Charpointier's murder from his hiding place in the attic.

Pierre's character is presented by the author on page 126 through his memories of what Madame Charpointier had given and done for him and yet he could not cry. His witnessing, from his own hiding place, the body of Madame being hoisted onto a truck by French laborers was too much for him (page 127). He recalled his own father's "what-to-do" in order to survive. Pierre escaped the apartment building where the Madame Charpointier lived by going from roof to roof to find a safe place. He is cared for by Father Jacques who had an effect on Lucien's growth as a human being. Father Jacques is a contrasting character to Lucien's own father.

In Chapter 34, Lucien is introduced to Pierre by Father Jacques, who was referred to him by Manet. Pierre, a month after the Madame Charpointier murder, is presented to Lucien as not looking Jewish and that he is twelve. Twelve, without explanation in the story, is not consistent with the fact Pierre had had his bar mitzvah, meaning he is at least thirteen. (This fact the editor did not catch.)

Lucien takes Pierre to his home after his separation from Celeste in Chapter 31. Father Jacques is arrested by the Gestapo and assumed dead by this time in the story.

We read in the second part of Chapter 50, page 281, about Pierre's maturity and love for Lucien,

On his way back home, Pierre took a detour to look at Madame Charpointier's old house. He had visited it twice before, always hiding in a doorway down the street so none of the neighbors would see him and betray him to the Germans. He never figured out who betrayed them. Staring at the attic window where he'd watched Madame Charpointier get shot on the sidewalk that terrible day made him sick to his stomach. The image of her dropping to the ground would never go away. She had been his protector, and Pierre had been powerless to save her. The shame of sitting there and letting it happen haunted him every day. Pierre vowed that would never be repeated. He had to be a man now; that's what his father had told him at his bar mitzvah.

Modern Architecture & Design

Why is Belfoure focused on modern architecture and design in his story?

Modern architecture and design <sup>vi</sup> had a social agenda, principally to make good design affordable for everyone, not just for the well-to-do. The modern designers saw machines doing the fine work of craftsmen and that fine homes and furniture could be affordable. This notion liberates high design from historical references to the classical Greek, Roman and Gothic design allusions. The modern design solution is executed by adhering to the law that form and function are a unity, a more realistic and socially moral approach to design.

The attribution of “form follows function” to Architect Louis H. Sullivan is not quite accurately quoted. Sullivan’s wrote, “form ever follows function”. Rather it is derived from Sullivan’s article “The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered” (March 1896, *Lippincott Magazine*, 403-409):

Whether it be the sweeping eagle in his flight, or the open apple-blossom, the toiling work-horse, the blithe swan, the branching oak, the winding stream at its base, the drifting clouds, over all the coursing sun, **form ever follows function**, and this is the law. Where function does not change, form does not change. The granite rocks, the ever-brooding hills, remain for ages; the lightning lives, comes into shape, and dies, in a twinkling.

It is the pervading law of all things organic and inorganic, of all things physical and metaphysical, of all things human and all things superhuman, of all true manifestations of the head, of the heart, of the soul, that the life is recognizable in its expression, **that form ever follows function**. This is the law."

How is this accomplished? Mies van der Rohe, the master reductionist, stated his esthetics as “less is more”, which means removing what is not needed in order to strengthen the idea of the design. Whether you are a writer, an editor, painter, sculptor, architect, clarity is the objective.

Belfoure presents architecture, through Lucien’s eyes, as the places for the good, the bad and indifferent to exist, habituate and survive. Lucien sees modern design and architecture fighting for its existence as a matter of esthetics, and realizes as the story develops, its social and humanistic importance. Lucien sees architecture at first as his reason for existence. The author introduces Lucien’s motives for designing the hiding places as the means to important commissions. When Lucien realizes he has saved lives, he also realizes that the modern movement has provided him with the intellectual and esthetic tool to also design his hiding places and in doing so he discovers his social morality and humanity.

Lucien Bernard’s design for the factory building is based on the principles of the modern movement. Belfoure writes that the factory for Auguste Manet, designed for the manufacture of engines, is likened to Walter Gropius’ Fagus shoe factory of 1911. Walter Gropius is the principle founder and head of the Bauhaus. Reference is made to the Barcelona Chair from the Barcelona Pavilion by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. (After Gropius leaves Germany in the 1930s, Mies becomes the director of the Bauhaus. Mies later leaves Germany.)

Mies' elegant Barcelona Pavilion of the 1929 World Exposition launched Germany as a leader in the global modern movement for architecture and design. The Pavilion employed glass walls, stone slabs as wall, travertine stone for the plaza, chrome plated cruciform section steel columns, which lifted the flat roof. The horizontality of the design was comparable to that of the houses designed by Wright in the USA.

The modern movement, by the 1930s, is opposed by and eventually classified by Hitler as degenerate art and the European art world (German or not, is at odds with the Reich). Albert Speer, a German architect known for his traditional monuments, becomes Hitler's chief architect and Reich Minister of armaments for the war effort.

Modern architecture and design in Belfoure's story is also another historical fact not delved into, except by mentioning specific projects by Walter Gropius, the Bauhaus and the Fagus factory building, and Le Corbusier by name. Modern architecture serves as a source of contrast and tension between the characters, Lucien, Herzog, Adele, and members of the Resistance.

### The Hiding Places

The author, as he stated in the book-trailer and the television interview, researched the "priest holes" created during the reign of Elizabeth I, and the designs for the concealed spaces he wrote about. He drew sketches of the apartments and schematic drawings of the hiding places. His sketches were derived from his travels in Paris.

It is Serrault who tells Lucien about the "priest holes" designed by Owen during the reign of Elizabeth I. Lucien as an architect and a human being knows and fears that something will go wrong.

Since the plot of the story has a compacted sense of time we find ourselves accepting Belfoure's reality that the hiding places were built by extraordinary craftsmen very quickly. However, the reality is that construction work is rarely not noticed, that there are just too many people to deal with, and then there are those who arrive at the wrong moment. Belfoure carries this throughout the story until its ending with Janusky's flashy large ring in the window across from Gestapo headquarters at 11 rue de Saussaies.

The hiding places designed by Lucien are as follows:

1. The standing space in a hollow wood Doric column (page 24) of apartment 3B at 28 rue de Galilee;
2. The lifting stair unit of three or so steps in the hunting lodge in Le Chesnay about 10 miles west of Paris (page 87) where Solomon Geiber and Miriam hid (Chapter 19, page 107) and were almost caught due to the smell;
3. The space behind the fireplace (page 121) in the apartment building at 29 rue de Renard where the Serraults died, which today does not stand—in its place is the Pompidou Center, building with the duct work and escalators on the building's exterior;

4. The hidden floor drain access (page 191) in a small country “stone cottage ... on the outskirts of Paris is the first one designed with an underground escape way that leads to a forested area and pregnant Juliette Trenet evades capture;
5. The standing space behind the pilaster in the townhouse on the rue de Brassano (Chapter 41), and Mendel Janusky was not found, but a spray of bullets into the walls would have killed him if Schlegel was there;
6. The deep windowsill hiding space (page 292) in Bette’s apartment (3 rue Payenne) for Jewish children Emile and Carole (from Mr. & Mrs. Kaminsky) whom she has “adopted”; and
7. The high space cut into the wall behind the large painting at 12 rue des Saussaies (Chapter 53) hides Mendel Janusky long enough for him to get to safety. In Chapter 65 Janusky escapes again, with Manet’s help, disguised as a priest.

The Nazis discovered by accident the lifting stair section and the hidden floor drain in the country cottage. The space behind the painting is spared from the bullets when the crazed Schlegel is ordered to stop the shooting since the bullets will hit the Gestapo’s headquarter across the street. Major Herzog, knowingly, to protect Lucien, misdirects the soldiers by his pointing out the importance of a painting by Giorgio de Castelfranco (page 350), who is Titian’s master.

Each time a hiding place is created, the danger and the chances of being caught are increasing.

The author compacts time and thereby carries forth a sense of credibility to the design and the construction of the hiding places. This is accomplished in the story through Manet who has extraordinary people who are capable of extraordinary deeds. Belfoure’s writing style does not let the reader become bogged down with considerations such as:

1. How was the debris removed without anyone noticing?
2. How could the construction of the hiding places not cause noise and dust?
3. How could workers not be noticed?
4. How could a hinged stair not be felt as loose if no one is hiding inside with the lock engaged?
5. Is it conceivable that Pierre could forcibly stab to death Alain in order to protect Lucien?
6. How could Janusky be so careless with his hand and ring shining across the street from the Gestapo office?

Belfoure bridges the facts with the observation that ordinary people during the War did extraordinary deeds, and at the same time they can let their guard down and suffer the consequences. Belfoure is asking the reader, what would you have done?

### Names and Language

I believe Belfoure named his major characters for their symbolic or associative references. I have noted that the name Lucien means light and is parallel to the City of

Light and the evil Lucifer. The name Manet is well known as that of Edouard Manet the master French Impressionist painter. Impressionists were exploring the effect of light in their images. Major Herzog's name is interesting because it can be known as a Jewish surname; however, the same name has a root connotation for one who acts as if they are noble. Bette's name is in contrast to Elizabeth I. Manet's first name is Auguste, which is the name of the French Architect Perret (1874-1954) who was a pioneer in developing reinforced concrete for buildings, which in turn relates to the fact that Lucien's factory design is based on reinforced concrete construction. 29 rue du Renard has an associative reference. The association is the sheet metal flue pipe, in which a bird had built its nest and defeated its use in the hiding place behind the fireplace as a fresh air source. Today the apartment building is gone. It is now the location of the Pompidou Center with its exterior feature of ductwork.

Belfoure's use of a contemporary style of language is very readable and works with the pace of story. However, I find that his editor missed some out-of-place words and phrases.

Belfoure writes (page 87) that as Lucien is "[t]hinking about this [fooling the Germans] had the effect of a handful of amphetamines ...". This language reference to a drug is not in keeping with the WW II era, and nowhere in the story does the author write about Lucien's use of a drug for this association to be made. I note that during WW II amphetamines were not dispensed as pills but as inhalers.

Amphetamines date from 1887 and would have been known in 1942 by some, and were used by Allied soldiers as a stimulant. Lucien did serve in the French army until Germany invaded France on May 16, 1940. Reference to "bennies" (the Benzedrine inhaler was the first pharmaceutical use of amphetamine) does not appear in literature until 1953 with Ian Fleming's James Bond novel *Casino Royale*. In everyday language, a Parisian in 1942 would not verbalize on "a handful of amphetamines" to describe his state of being. Such language style does not occur until years later on.

Similarly, the profanity that is expressed in a few places was also not the language one would expect from a character living in 1942. The profanity interrupted the pace of the story, especially in the nondialogue portions of the text.

Finally, "so unique" appears on page 102, about a third up from the last line. This is not the language one expects from a person living in 1942. I place "so unique" and "so fun" as examples of the idiomatic speech of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## Conclusion

Although the author does not confront Lucien with the potential conundrum caused by his designing a factory that will be used for Nazi war effort, Lucien must have realized that one of his commissions could be designing a death camp. *The Paris Architect* is a morality tale that compels one to ask, "What would you have done?"

Belfoure, who is an architect, rightfully uses the social responsibility that society places on us architects in telling his powerful story.

I enjoyed reading the book and I have recommended *The Paris Architect* to friends and colleagues.

Ar. John Mclean  
3 December 2015

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i The book-trailer is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g9FPIU47VbA>.

ii The interview is seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6X3uovtXGk>.

iii The author's biography is documented at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles\\_Belfoure](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Belfoure).

iv Architectural documentation was rarely ever admitted as evidence in the war crime trials. Construction documentation is the foundation of the work of architectural historian, Robert Jan van Pelt, who wrote *The Case for Auschwitz: Evidence from the Irving Trial* (2002), a case about Holocaust denial, and co-authored *Auschwitz: 1270 to the Present* (1996). His work contradicts the deniers of the Shoah with the plans of the death camps as evidence.

v There are a few locations on the Map that are not mentioned in the book, which may have been the result of the editor's deleting certain scenes.

vi The modern movement of the early twentieth century is densely populated with many movements and numerous manifestoes and pamphlets written by most artists and architects. France is one of the hotbeds for the pamphlets and Paris is the center for the intellectual life. Hitler too writes a manifesto about art and never forgets his rejection to attend art school in Austria. Frank Lloyd Wright presents his famous lecture and article, "The Art and Craft of the Machine", March 1, 1901 (at the Hull House, the settlement house and center for social reform in Chicago co-founded by Jane Addams) and first published in *Brush and Pencil*, volume 8, May 1, 1901. Later Wright is invited to Germany to exhibit his work and the work is published as a portfolio, known as the Wendingen editions, from 1921 through 1925. Discussions and photographs of modern architecture are available at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern\\_architecture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_architecture).