



The Invention of Paris: A History in Footsteps, by Eric Hazan, translated by David Fernbach (Verso, £9.99)

Paris evolved organically, growing in concentric rings “like an onion”, its faubourgs spreading out uncontrollably beyond the city walls, which in time were demolished and rebuilt further out, only to be once again overwhelmed. The final one - the hated wall of the Farmers-General - was torn down by the people during the Revolution. Hazan begins this superb history of Paris with an essay on the “psychogeography of the boundary”, then explores the city from the inside out, starting in the medieval heart before moving out to the faubourgs and the once suburban villages. As well as essays on flânerie and the city’s depiction in photography and art, there is also a section on Red Paris, “the insurgent city”. It is arguably the most important theme: “The list of Paris demonstrations, riots, coups, uprisings . . . is so long that no other capital can claim anything similar.” This wonderfully rich, detailed meditation on the historic substrata lying just beneath the surface of the modern city needs to be read with a street map. But Hazan’s love of Paris and his passion for its past brings this city truly alive. **PDS**