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GENDER, SEXUALITY AND RACE IN THE STORYVILLE PORTRAITS

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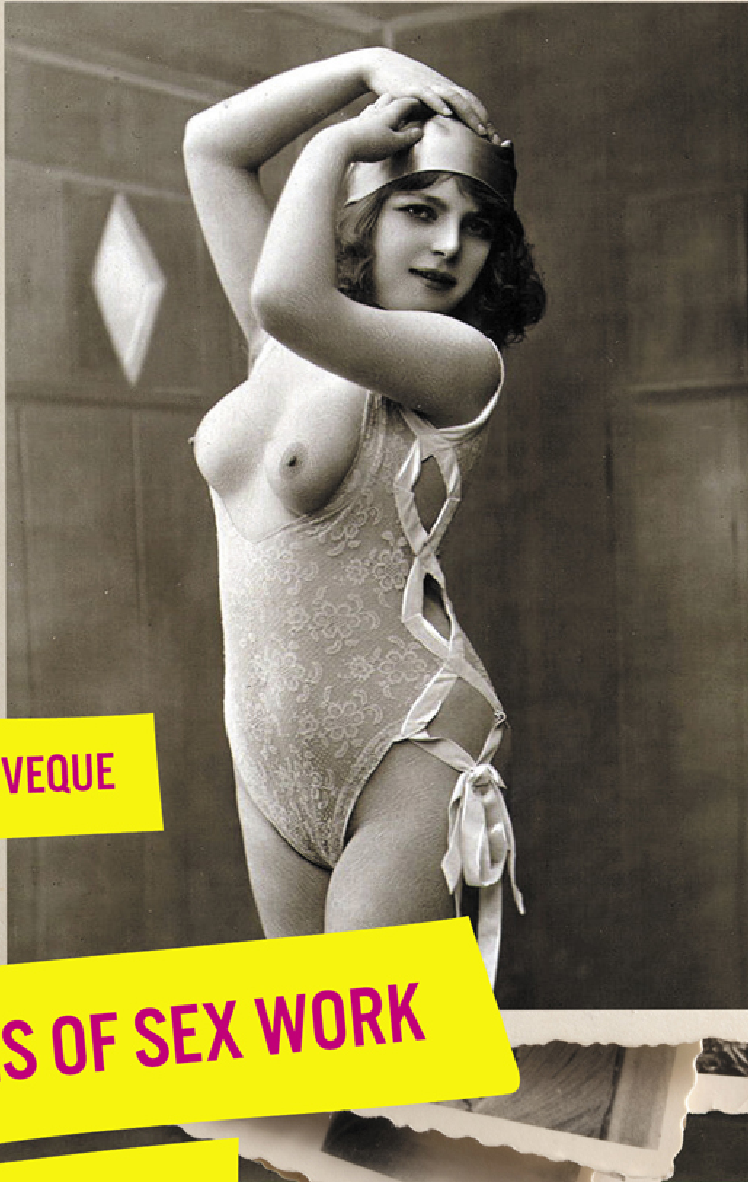

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Mollie Le Veque received her PhD from the University of East Anglia. Currently, she is an associate tutor, consulting historian and developmental editor. Her research interests are the interplay of images, archives and texts, fandom histories, erased urban spaces and the Storyville Portraits.

‘Le Veque has crafted an intriguing look at an important topic.’

Court Carney, Associate Professor of History, Stephen F. Austin State University and author of *Cuttin’ Up: How Early Jazz Got America’s Ear*

‘Notable for its astute analysis of Bellocq’s Portraits … a group of photographs that have inspired almost as much speculation as the fragments of Heraclitus.’

Joseph Slade, Emeritus Professor of Media Arts and Studies and Emeritus Director of the Central Region Humanities Center at Ohio University

‘As it examines self-representation, agency and legitimacy in pornography and sex work, Le Veque’s magnificent work shows us what stigma and taboo do to the historical process. She compellingly charts how stories are spun around people, places and artifacts, and how impulses from morality to voyeurism shape the way those stories are subsequently repressed and retold. Fascinating reading for scholars of New Orleans, sex work and the photographic archive.’

Hannah Yelin, Senior Lecturer in Media and Culture, Oxford Brookes University

‘In this compellingly-written account, Le Veque presents a rich and complex history of the “Storyville portraits.” By attentively showing how infamy, myth and prejudice have enduring effects on the way that images of female sex workers have been (mis)understood, Le Veque’s intelligent and nuanced reading of this enigmatic and striking collection of portrait photographs gives back agency to their historic subjects. This is an important contribution to the historical study of sex work in America, and to photographic portraiture more broadly.’

Sarah Moulden, Curator, 19th and 20th-Century Collections
National Portrait Gallery, London

‘Mollie Le Veque has written a detailed, subtle, study of a centrally important subject. Anyone writing on visual documents in this period will need to take her work into account.’

David Peters Corbett, Professor of American Art, Director, Centre for American Art, The Courtauld Institute of Art

Images of Sex Work in Early Twentieth-Century America

Gender, Sexuality and Race in the Storyville Portraits

Mollie Le Veque

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LONDON · NEW YORK

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To my Memaw and Bull, and in remembrance of Ed Beardsley,
who kindly loaned me his old copy of Storyville Portraits
and helped me begin this research in earnest.

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My editor, Lisa Goodrum, was a constant source of reassurance and guidance. I was lucky to work with her, and I am deeply thankful for her commitment to this project.

Foreword

Two issues have strongly influenced *Images of Sex Work in Early Twentieth-Century America*. One concerns the Storyville Portraits' copyright status, as well as general image rights matters; the other has to do with the interplays of language, semantics, and stigma. First, in respect of Lee Friedlander's express wishes, none of E.J. Bellocq's Storyville Portraits have been reproduced here. However, they are available in *Storyville Portraits: Photographs From the New Orleans Red-Light District, Circa 1912* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1970), or on the Museum of Modern Art's website, where, as at the time of writing, *Storyville Portraits* was viewable. Because of the requests (or lack of responses) of their respective copyright holders, the other images referred to in the text have not been reproduced either. In the majority of cases, these are accessible in other books and media.

I refer to individual Portraits using their plate numbers as given in *Storyville Portraits*. Please note, though, that some Portraits are popularly known by other titles, such as 'Raleigh Rye Girl' or 'Multiple Wall'. Most of the 'canonical' Portraits have been posted online – at best, with credit, and at worst, without attribution or explanation. Bellocq's work will, therefore, probably look familiar to readers, especially those who are fond of New Orleanian, film, or visual histories. His *oeuvre* also encompasses more images than were selected to be in *Storyville Portraits*. Many people assume that the Portraits are within public domain because of their age. In reality their copyright situation and provenance are both less straightforward. (Friedlander is the Portraits' copyright holder and has asserted his rights over the images in *Storyville Portraits*.)

Some contemporary images have been misattributed to Bellocq too – René Rondeau's beautiful tintypes are a good illustration of this. Until I

contacted Rondeau, he did not realize that some of them had been wrongly grouped with Bellocq's Storyville work. Meanwhile, this book's cover features images by French photographer Jean Agélou, whose vast array of cabinet cards contains many images that appear 'Bellocqian.' In part, this helps illustrate the point that Bellocq's work is neither 'exploitative' nor more 'insidious' than other images of sex workers (or any photographs of nude women) from this time. They actually fit within a tradition of such photographs – Agélou was contemporaneous with Bellocq – and of all these images, Bellocq's may actually display more egalitarian, and at least more quotidian or straightforward, relationships between models and photographer.

Curator Robert Flynn Johnson recently published *Working Girls: An American Brothel, circa 1892 / The Private Photographs of William Goldman* (2018): the result of his longstanding interest in 'the unique and artful *private photographs of commercial photographer* William Goldman [emphasis my own].'[1] The publication of Johnson's new book is both serendipitous and highly relevant to discussions raised in *Images of Sex Work*. *Working Girls* contains images of women working in a Reading, Pennsylvania brothel, and these predate Bellocq's photographs by about twenty years. They share similar themes and aesthetics, and like Bellocq, Goldman was a 'commercial photographer.' Johnson's book bears mentioning because the appearances of Goldman's photographs, as well as their contextualizations with essays by Ruth Rosen, Dennita Sewell and Dita Von Teese only bolster the suggestion that there is nothing enormously singular, bizarre or insidious about the Storyville Portraits. Of chief importance here, Goldman's 'private photographs' help attest that the majority of relationships between photographers and sex workers were far more nuanced than that of 'the exploiter' and 'the exploited' or 'the artist' and 'the model.'

Second, my use of the terms 'sex work' and 'sex worker' have been repeatedly challenged by some of my academic peers. Their concerns are predominantly that this 'sanitizes' history, disregards injustices against women (often, unease is instigated by the erroneous idea that sex work enables trafficking), and imposes contemporary biases on a historical subject. However, as I completed my degrees current and retired sex workers asked me to refrain from calling Storyville's sex workers

‘prostitutes’ or other slurs. They asserted that ‘sex worker’ was more reflective of historical and lived realities that have been repeatedly sensationalized, spoken over by non-sex work ‘experts,’ and often disregarded in favor of ‘abolition’ arguments.

We (especially those of us with the privilege to do so openly) must address the long-held, historically rooted stigma against sex workers in both feminist and labor rights’ movements by discussing the history of prostitution – sex work – as objectively as possible. This includes being mindful of our words, being open to change, questioning how we have arrived at a present moment when many self-identifying ‘feminists’ participate in events like the Women’s March and embrace #MeToo – but balk at listening to sex workers, any discussions of decriminalization, or #SexWorkIsWork – and shifting it. I am by no means the only scholar to make this change (nor am I perfect in my attempts). Carol Leigh (also known as ‘The Scarlot Harlot’ [*sic*]) coined ‘sex work(er),’ while Kate Lister, for example, has repeatedly set out reasons why non-sex workers should use ‘sex worker’. I encourage readers who are interested in intersections of representation, language, stigma and injustices to begin by consulting Leigh and Lister's respective works and projects. (Naturally, this is not an exhaustive or thorough recommendation; the online publication ‘Tits and Sass’ is also a good place to start learning about how these issues impact sex workers.)

Words are not neutral and history has not been fair; they shape conflations and discriminations that are still experienced. A century after Storyville’s closure, we are having conversations that are still framed by moralistic words and ideas, and these can lead to policies like the recently passed SESTA-FOSTA (Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act-Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act).[2] Combatting sex trafficking is an incredibly worthwhile endeavor, but, among other issues, the law has already been shown to compromise sex workers’ precarious safety. Furthermore, and of pertinence to this book, its language and rationale have their roots in nineteenth-century beliefs and rhetoric.

In 2016, for instance, I attended a talk given by two women from the English Collective of Prostitutes, where the stories told in support of decriminalization – which is not the same as legalization – sounded like those that had been relayed by Gilded Age or Edwardian-era sex workers.

This was during a conference hosted by *The Norwich Radical* at the University of East Anglia called, fittingly enough, 'War of Words.' Outlining the ECP's 1975 genesis, the speakers explained the rationale for decriminalizing prostitution. They spoke of sex workers being deported, losing custody of their children, enduring prosecution and detainment, suffering abuse – including rape and sexual harassment –and having their earnings or savings seized. Many of my fellow attendees seemed stunned. For anybody whose general knowledge of sex work came from abolitionist (but insidiously, ostensibly anti-sex trafficking) newspaper editorials, or grisly Jack the Ripper tales that turned murder victims into a spectacle (whether for anti-sex work agendas, or to make money from 'gore porn' that capitalized on butchered women's bodies, or both), it was seemingly confusing to hear sex workers state that, actually, the best way of protecting them was through decriminalization.

In keeping with the theme of 'War of Words,' the speakers also addressed issues of language. Noting how the ECP kept 'prostitute' in its title for historical reasons, one woman, Laura, explained some connotative differences between 'sex worker' and 'prostitute.' The former term encompasses a variety of roles. It allows for a sense of fluidity. Of course, it also emphasizes the idea of this being a job. 'Prostitute,' however, carries a complex, generally damning, and gendered history.

Because I am an outsider, it was too reductive and ignorant not to make or acknowledge these distinctions. I also tried to recognize that 'sex work' could span many situations during the 1900s, just as it does now, including 'treating' (the practice of providing sex for a meal, gifts, an outing, or so on) or posing for 'lewd' photographs. I have used older terms in context and direct quotes, or tried to limit them specifically to cultural archetypes (or stereotypes) and simplistic, moralistic understandings of concepts such as 'prostitution,' 'prostitute,' 'fallen woman,' 'underworld,' '*demimonde*,' and 'vice,' and so on. Further, it is not unrealistic to suggest that 'prostitutes' regarded themselves as employees or businesspeople at this time; an American struggle for sex workers' rights had started. In 1917, for example, sex workers from San Francisco's Tenderloin district organized a large protest march.[3] A sense of solidarity and collective identity amongst urban sex workers, at least, had already emerged.

Crucially, it must be said that unsafe, exploitative conditions, and precarity were not exclusive to 'the trade.' Sex work was not categorically more hazardous than 'respectable' occupations. It was simply work that had different risks. To many women (indeed, people of any gender, though this book's focus is on women), sex work's potential hazards were more tolerable than, for example, those of char- or cleaning work, factory work, or other morally 'suitable' forms of paid labor. Its adaptability made it viable as either a source of supplemental or sole income. (Considering my use of language was vital to underscoring these issues, which were more often related to poverty, not morality.) In the end, women in Storyville provided services for money. This fact tends to be overshadowed by sensationalism (glamorization or otherwise) and concerns about trafficking. Ironically, exploitation – including work-related illnesses, injuries, and deaths – was not an issue limited purely to sex work, as abolitionists might have imagined. It was present in many, if not all, industries open to women.

New York City's Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire, which occurred on 25 March 1911, was an infamous symbol of culminated, exploitative labor practices. It galvanized rights campaigns. Nearly 150 workers perished; the majority were young women. As an eyewitness said of the disaster, referring to those he saw jumping out of windows while the fire raged, 'I only saw one man jump. All the rest were girls. They stood on the windowsills tearing their hair out in the handfuls and then they jumped.'[4] In a letter, Pauline Newman provided explanations of the challenges workers faced. She mentioned why so many people took jobs in these types of factories, as well as why they stayed despite the risks:

No, we did not get additional pay for overtime. […] Working men and women of today who receive time and one half and at times double time for overtime will find it difficult to understand and to believe that the workers of those days were evidently willing to accept such conditions of labor without protest. However, the answer is quite simple – we were not organized and we knew that individual protest amounted to the loss of one's job. No one in those days could afford the luxory of changing jobs – there was no unemployment insurance, there was nothing better than to look for another job which will not be better than the one we had. Therefore, we were, due to our ignorance and poverty, helpless against the power of the exploiters [*sic*].[5]

These experiences were not unique to her situation. As she said, 'No one in those days could afford the luxury of changing jobs [*sic*],' especially young women, and there were few protections for any workers.

A survivor of the fire noted, 'Working conditions at the Triangle shop were quite bearable, for those days.' But she also affirmed, 'Yes, the doors of the shop were kept locked.'[6] When she testified in court about the fire, she maintained, 'If the front elevator had also been in use and if the front door had been open, there would not have been so many victims.'[7] The implications were clear; these workers were, at least in the eyes of their bosses, easily replaced and not to be trusted. In short, the more 'moral' industries did not ensure women's wellbeing. They were not free of abuse, classism, racism, or misogyny. This is as true today as it was then.

Without a doubt, women who offered sexual services in Storyville were called, among other things, 'prostitutes' and 'whores.' Not all of them worked within safe conditions. Not all of them were wealthy or held social clout. But none should have needed to adhere to traditional ideas of feminine, sexual, or racial 'respectability' in order to be treated, then remembered and discussed, with respect. I want here to help foster space for interpretations of the Storyville Portraits that discuss women who have been repeatedly judged, caricatured, maligned, or erased by those creating the archive.

The presuppositions we currently make are rooted in these representations and histories. By failing to actively characterize nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century sex workers as people who were aware of their labor and how it was stigmatized, I would be upholding the same biases that I was trying to test. Because of the countless stigmas that it endured and flouted, Storyville was destroyed. Conversely, anything that might be demonstrative of the hypocrisy, violence, and racism of many Progressive reformists has generally been softened or disregarded.

Though it is important to acknowledge that life was not easy for all of Storyville's sex workers – especially women working in the 'cribs' – that condition was not exclusive to their jobs, and fixating on this idea would not have been productive. I was wary of oversimplifying these women's experiences, and did not want to turn injustices into morbid clichés. I also

did not suggest that there was no rape, coercion, and sex trafficking in Storyville, or that it was some kind of ideal paradise for sex workers.

However, working toward the illegality of sex work or other 'vice' trades did not, and does not, prevent inexcusable things. It just enables them and belies hypocrisies regarding the treatment of sex and women; increasing sex workers' rights would have helped, and would help, make exploitation (e.g., trafficking) more difficult. 'Prostitute,' especially, connoted a gendered criminality and inferior status that was and is imposed. It also virtually erased women who were truly forced or trafficked. In writing this book I wanted to problematize these and many other assumptions.

Introduction

Well [photographs of sex workers] were so commonplace; I mean, we knew all the people who he was taking pictures of […] There was this saloon on South Rampart, and above this saloon was a little room, and in this room were thousands of pictures; they looked like they were made in France, of fornication and anything related to that in all its possible […] positions.[1]

This book upholds the idea that cities and various locations within them – such as red-light districts – have functioned as narrative 'through lines,' or connecting, unifying threads in representations of sex work and sex workers. It uses this idea to re-read some of the most misunderstood images of early twentieth-century sex workers: the 'Storyville Portraits.' On the brink of entering war, a nation gripped by conservative, prohibitionist rhetoric that was hostile to 'vice,' urbanization and sex was hardly amenable to a rowdy red-light district like Storyville. After roughly two decades of infamy, the district – often known to both locals and visitors as *the* District – closed in 1917. This was ostensibly because, due to its proximity to and use by military men, it was regarded as a health hazard and distraction from their patriotic duties. But, like other tenderloin districts across the country, Storyville was the subject of scrutiny and controversy since its genesis. It had also inherited the reputation of its surrounding city, New Orleans, which had and would continue to enthral imaginations and enrage moral sensibilities.

By the early twentieth century, New Orleans was not the only American city with such a prominent red-light district. Storyville was not unusual for the amount of money that its madams amassed, nor did it uniformly provide opulent or safe experiences. Chicago and New York City, among other places, had their own districts populated with glittering, eye-wateringly

costly brothels and, like Storyville's establishments, they produced their own array of advertisements for customers.

Storyville was a place of, and which created, contradictions. On one hand, it was the place described by the local 'Blue Books,' guides of 'high-class,' generally more expensive sex workers. Apart from showcasing women in 'tasteful' terms, they were also littered with advertisements for goods and services that one might need – among these were funeral homes and cure-alls for various ailments. The Blue Books, and other guides produced by madams for their businesses, demonstrate Storyville as it wanted to be seen: expensive, safe, and cultured, but uninhibited – very much the space for sexual fantasies that its patrons desired it to be.

On the other hand, not all of the District's sex workers were part of that world. There were many 'cribs:' miniscule, dirty rooms where clients were serviced quickly. Although the reliability of older, mid-twentieth-century histories of Storyville should be questioned (e.g., Al Rose's – Rose was subjected to some hoaxes regarding 'genuine' source material) and they need to be read with an understanding of the influence of popular culture stereotypes that span decades, the cribs' realities were still undeniably different from life in the 'mansion brothels' of the Blue Books. Crib work would have largely fallen to women of color and black women who were not light enough (and therefore not 'attractive' enough) to be employed otherwise. These repetitions of structural oppressions were strong, and they are seen in Blue Books by the omission of the many women of color who were not working in mansion brothels.

At its heart, Storyville was an urban, capitalist venture and, like other workers in cities, many of the 'girls' were experiencing new ways of living – as single women, for instance, perhaps with roommates and disposable incomes. This was a new reality that was being represented in the media and popular culture – not only in larger metropolises, but in smaller cities too. A major point of contention for prohibitionists and reformers was, however, that Storyville had become part of the fabric of 'respectable' life. Its influence was present in civic politics. It also had a reputation that gained traction from the fuel provided by 'New Orleans' as the era's public imagined it. Without this, Storyville would have been alluring, but it would have lacked its particular panache. With New Orleans as an archetype behind it, its madams needed only to capitalize on choice 'New Orleanian'

stereotypes – among others, the ‘octoroon,’ erotic licentiousness and close ties to the ‘Old World’ (Paris, especially) – to rouse their patrons’ interest.

The ‘Storyville Portraits,’ a group of over 80 images produced in approximately 1912, provide unembellished glimpses at some of Storyville’s sex workers. Due to their surprising simplicity, they are remote from the imagined ‘New Orleans’ and imagined courtesans that Storyville often relied upon as a marketing tactic. Indeed, they contrast with these ideas. Yet, they remain intrinsic to how ‘Storyville’ has been reimagined and translated into history. The Portraits reveal only light-skinned women and very little of the women’s surrounding interiors, or, in some cases, exteriors. Despite these omissions, they have galvanized a film and a ballet, as well as novels and poetry. They are also featured on walls in French Quarter hotels and bars – May Bailey’s Place, which is operated by the Dauphine Orleans hotel, for example. In spite of their lack of obvious visual links to the District and their focus on evidently white women (though it would be impossible to state with certainty whether all of Bellocq’s models were ‘white’), they became emblematic of a concept of ‘Storyville’ that greatly simplifies complex lived realities. This vision of Storyville is also distant from the fact that sex work was common in the urban United States at the turn of the twentieth century. Far from being singular in its situation, Storyville was just one instance of a red-light district that gained power within its respective city.

When Storyville was legally closed, officials decided the next step was to get rid of its physical traces; their work to that end was ultimately effective. That the Portraits exist at all is remarkable. Brothels, as well as sex workers, were an indisputable symbol of excess and moral decay. By the early twentieth century, an emphasis on the preservation of ideals of ‘white masculinity’ – rather than just the protection of white women from ill influences – meant that the brothel, like the dancehall, was a perverse domain that could compromise society’s integrity. According to Eric Powell, very few of Storyville’s original structures remained in 2002.[2] Of course, there are still many intact buildings that would have been in use during Storyville’s era, such as the Eagle Saloon, in the French Quarter and other parts of the city. (The Eagle Saloon is near the Superdome.) Some of these, particularly those outside the Quarter, are currently empty.[3]

There was an avid fixation on ridding Storyville of both sex workers and the spaces in which they did business because it was thought that their negative impact on the body, soul, and mind – which New Orleans was already thought to encourage – could be curtailed. Although many women who had worked in the District lingered, with some disregarding police warnings by continuing to offer their services to clients,[4] the ‘mansion brothels’ were sold to ‘respectable’ owners or left to stand vacant.[5] By the mid-twentieth century, however, housing projects stood roughly where the main section of the red-light district had been.[6] Finally, 1949 witnessed the demolishment of Mahogany Hall, one of the most popular and consistently advertised brothels. One of Bellocq’s portraits is even supposedly of Lulu White, its affluent madam, although this is probably not the case; White had one of her ‘girls’ pose as her in another photograph,[7] and most likely made this a habit as she grew older.

Bellocq may have taken portraits in the infamous bordello. He provides some of the few pictures of its intact interior. Compared to these, civic photographer Dan Leyrer’s snapshot of the empty stairwell depicts a shell, a revenant from a bygone era. Bellocq affirms descriptions of the opulent place at its height, while Leyrer documents its demise. These two images are characteristic of the extremes this book navigates; the Portraits exist at the center of polarized and polarizing representations, not only of ‘fallen women,’ but also of the spaces they ‘corrupted’ with their presence. At least subliminally, Bellocq seems aware of this association. He does not reinforce typical connections between ‘prostitutes’ and cities, or even ‘prostitutes’ and brothels; his portraits are devoid of many characteristics that could suggest a definitive ‘city’ or ‘brothel.’ Some place women in liminal spaces where they are neither fully indoors nor fully outdoors. This ambiguity is the product of urban modernity, an indication of uncertainty in the face of an age that shifted gender relations and sexual conduct; the city and Bellocq’s eye function within them as an unseen, but still impactful, force. Eventually, their resurrection was to be steeped in artistic and curatorial decisions that, while removed from these temporal contexts, were still shaped by them.

Scraps of the legendary saloons and bordellos once known for their ‘opulence’[8] held an almost mystical power. Speaking on the subject years later, Johnny Wiggs recounted how he was compelled to take away small

mementos from Mahogany Hall during its demolition.[9] However, after returning home from a trip, he found that his housekeeper had discovered and thrown away his hidden souvenirs (apparently they were no more salacious than a swath of wallpaper and some pieces of wood paneling) as though she disapproved of, or even feared, their influence. Storyville, then, became a literal manifestation of what Walter Benjamin calls the 'trash of history'[10] because it was something the city wanted to forget. Tellingly, the discarded remains carried an insidious persuasion all their own.

The memories and their vestiges inspired divisive reactions: disgust or devotion; recoil or reverence. Not coincidentally, this iconoclasm had its roots in racism, as well as disdain for sex workers. Alecia P. Long explains that during the early 1900s, professionals and laypeople alike often believed the sexuality of 'African Americans or other women of color […] was beyond their conscious control – animal like and depraved.'[11] This perception also often applied to Creoles, who were losing their cultural relevance (and presence) and spaces by the turn of the century. Eradicating Storyville in a very physical sense after it had been shut down meant cleansing an array of unwanted, or supposedly unruly, social forces.

Collectively, Bellocq's portraits remain some of the most enigmatic images of sex work from the time – and from Storyville's nearly 20 years. It was open, writes Al Rose, 'Between January 1, 1898, to the fall of 1917.'[12] They were probably not, however, produced for wide public consumption.[13] Indeed, they remained hidden until the 1950s. When a cache of fragile negatives was rediscovered with belongings that had belonged to Ernest's younger brother, it seemed that Leon Bellocq – and by then, Leon was an ordained Catholic priest – secreted them out of sight after Ernest died in 1949.[14] In total, there were over 80 negatives – a number that clearly indicates Ernest considered this project to be worthwhile and compelling. It was not until the early 1960s, though, that the Portraits started to be introduced to the larger world.

Leon and Wiggs kept – and supposedly hid – Storyville's concrete traces much like sacred objects in a shrine. Whether Leon kept his brother's negatives out of sentiment or for another reason, he still decided not to destroy them. Conversely, dominant public opinion ran in the opposite direction. The red-light district was something to be forgotten and ignored.

Carolyn Steedman writes, ‘you cannot be shocked at [the archive’s] exclusions […] at what is not catalogued […] nor that it tells of the gentry and not of the poor stockinger.’[15] Likewise, we cannot be shocked at the exclusion of sex workers – ‘prostitutes’ – from any official archives. This exclusion, however, did not stop with the archive; it encompassed entire spaces.

Meanwhile, as Benjamin writes, ‘to live means to leave traces. In the interior these are emphasized […] The traces of the occupant also leave their impression on the interior,’[16] which was exceptionally true in this case. Without physical interiors, the memories and events were fragmented, transmuted into jazz and oral histories. Officials were hyperaware of the histories of Storyville’s interiors and went to great lengths to literally dismantle them. Therefore, it was thought, they would be exorcised of their previous ‘demons’ of interracial sex and prostitution. The brothel gripped *fin de siècle* imaginations because it was where sex was a transaction, and in Storyville, says Smith, ‘The patina of glamour cultivated by a select few houses and individuals often wore thin very quickly.’[17] Even the fundamentally useless remnants of brothel interiors were treated as threatening, which Wiggs’s housekeeper demonstrated through her disposal of keepsakes.

Beyond this, even many official archival records having to do with the red-light district were apparently lost or destroyed – possibly under the guise of creating more jobs in the midst of the Great Depression. Louise Coleman points out that many landlords’ wives obscured traces of any connections with vice in their husbands’ official records, as well.[18] Aggression toward the literal existence and even the memory of sex work, then, was even motivated by its imagined symbolic, psychic influence. This aggression left tales of Storyville’s women, despite their varied lives, with a scattered physical setting that reinforces and legitimizes their exclusion from many narratives. Through any examination of the remaining ephemera and Bellocq’s images, it is inevitable that, as Benjamin writes, ‘The detective story that follows these traces comes into being.’[19] Such a ‘detective story’ has been the result of omission and disavowal, and the stereotypical ‘prostitute’ is at its center. After all, she was part of the reason why Storyville was so provocative, and she became the reason for its eradication. Although the majority of Bellocq’s models are individuals

whose stories will probably never be told, they represent urban, modern women, and they do it compellingly. Like pieces of wallpaper snatched off a wall about to be knocked down, Bellocq's negatives had enough affective power to inspire their own preservation and rescue.

At first, Storyville was represented and marketed as a place where fantasies could be lived without questions. Though the red-light district provided alarmingly cheap options in the cribs and elsewhere, it also portrayed itself as a place where wealthy, white clients could enact their wildest fantasies. As the 1900s approached, Storyville's brothels facilitated a reaffirmation of social roles that were under threat, and allowed these clients to exercise what they believed were their rights over women – especially women of color and black women. This process was guised in 'historic' fantasies (particularly racist fantasies of antebellum slavery and misogyny). These fantasies were only strengthened by contemporary fears of 'unregulated' female sexuality and agency. Cities were now full of women who went to their own jobs, had sex outside of marriage, and otherwise lived life far differently than their mothers and grandmothers had before them.[20]

Sex workers, women who had casual heterosexual relationships, and even a rising number of more overt romantic relationships between women were regarded as challenges to traditional, ostensibly heterosexual masculinity. In the city, these scenarios were all more possible and ultimately rendered more visible. Storyville, then, situated in 'exotic' New Orleans – with warrens of cheap cribs and a handful of reputedly palatial brothels – functioned as a panacea to the anxieties inspired by these realities. Unlike other American red-light districts, it had inherited New Orleans's considerable imaginaries. These granted it an enduring sense of 'Old World' nostalgia (especially for the days of 'octoroon,' 'quadroon,' or slave mistresses) and unfettered inhibitions. Long observes:

Storyville was by no means a singular phenomenon, [but] during the twentieth century it gained a reputation as unique. This is partially due to the parochial nature of what has been written about it, and also to the widely held notion that New Orleans is *sui generis*, unique among American cities.[21]

Though Storyville was not fully unique, its position in New Orleans, with the associations that location already garnered, is in part what makes Bellocq's portraits difficult to compartmentalize.

They originate from a red-light district with a 'raucous reputation'[22] that readily catered to those seeking nearly anything. Yet for the most part, and were they to be viewed without any accompanying knowledge of their origin, the Storyville Portraits do not affirm these expectations. In contrast to popular novels and 'white slave' narratives, women shown in the Storyville Portraits do not bear signs of shame, illness, or extreme hardship. Simply put, they do not suffer any visible consequences for being part of their 'immoral' trade. Of course, business arrangements between madams and their 'girls' varied. The extent to which they were mutually beneficial is debatable. But to an outsider – to a moral reformer, especially – it would appear that material benefits had been garnered consistently and independently through sex work.

Bellocq's portraits rest among rich and uniquely disordered circumstances. They exist amidst media that depicted both sex workers and women who were otherwise unconventional, yet they – like Storyville – have developed a reputation for being more singular than they are. Some of this media, at least by the early twentieth century, was starting to question moralistic narratives put forth by those in power or those with vociferous religious or misogynistic opinions.

Bellocq did not see fit to release the portraits to the public as images meant to inspire sexual arousal. They are not examples of anti-vice propaganda, either. His brother, who because of his extensive religious training might have felt morally justified to dispose of the negatives, could not bring himself to do so. Their reticence to either publicize or eradicate photographs of these women is strange. After all, the women worked in a red-light district and, as Powell observes, 'The physical legacy of the district has been swept away, but the past has a way of surfacing at unpredictable moments, no matter how hard you try to bury it.'[23] Likewise, Storyville's madams and women were not known for their predictable, submissive behavior, as even a cursory glance through any of the relevant police reports or newspapers reveals.[24] Lulu White was brought up on charges of violence,[25] while her contemporary, madam of the nearby

‘House of All Nations’ Emma Johnson, has been described by Gary Krist as a tall, ‘masculine, Cajun lesbian’ who did not brook any insolence from her clients.[26] The tales of Storyville are, like the tales of other red-light districts, packed with fervor and memorable women. It stands to reason that such an energetic and frenetic place’s history cannot be ‘swept away’ and remains ‘unpredictable.’ The meanings of its narratives of sex work are complex, yet have been strategically simplified and silenced.

To try to remedy this, *Images of Sex Work* explores the Portraits by reading them through archetypes and the cultural contexts provided by cities, because without these contexts they become stereotypical clichés. By providing different narrative scaffolding that relies on cities for its rationale and trying to account for exactly why viewers are conditioned to regard the women in these portraits as ‘victims’ of tragedy or brazen ‘temptresses,’ a more nuanced picture of what the portraits can convey emerges.

Typical of many of the inscrutable images, Plate 16 in *E.J. Bellocq: Storyville Portraits – Photographs from the New Orleans Red-Light District, c.1912*, reveals austere surroundings that belie no trace of their legendary locale.[27] The scene is simple. There is just a scuffed windowsill draped with a sheet that frames a smiling, naked young woman whose dark hair is arranged in careful ringlets – a luxurious hairstyle compared to her lack of either clothing or enticing lingerie. Beyond her, we can just make out a nondescript metal bedframe with rumpled linens that rests at a diagonal, seeming to connect with her legs and torso. Although she is bathed in daylight, the room is ominously dark and appears flat as a backdrop; in effect, she is a gatekeeper, an obstacle to approaching the room. It is both a disarming image, and an intriguing one.

While there are few overt confirmations about this woman, there is enough included in her portrait to piece together a cogent story. As Rebecca Zurier writes about John Sloan’s images of urban New York City, her portrait’s ‘unnamed setting [can] tell a great deal about the story unfolding in it’ because it does present ‘enough specific detail.’[28] The bed lurks in shadow and looms in the scene like a faint ghost. It suggests the woman’s profession, providing a more subversive sign than her nudity alone, and cannot be missed or discounted as insignificant. This image with its bizarre setting – somewhere between indoors and outdoors – and what Brian Wallis

calls ‘tawdry details’[29] like rumpled sheets and peeling paint, is not an advertisement or one of the decade’s many cabinet cards of pretty, nude young women. It provides neither fantasy nor indulgence at a time when expensive brothels like the one where this unknown woman most likely worked, explains Gina Greene, ‘Deliberately sought to conjure up [an] erotic world of aristocratic privilege.’[30] Instead, the portrait gives viewers a glimpse of an early twentieth-century reality separated from that strategic artifice. This woman is, in all likelihood, a sex worker lounging on a threshold that separates public from private.

Lee Friedlander was captivated by these images and set out to make more prints from Bellocq’s negatives. After some study, he turned to methods photographers would have used in the 1900s.[31] Even if some of the resultant portraits may not indicate it, as a frequenter of one of the rowdiest red-light districts in the United States, Bellocq had to have been steeped in the day’s erotic aesthetics.[32] A photograph of his desk reveals edited and framed versions of his Storyville photographs – each is of a woman or a small group of women – as well as art nouveau images and a miniature cabinet card of a woman in a kimono at the desk’s far-right corner.[33] Although we can see from this photograph that he perfected and changed images by manipulating the ‘raw’ portraits, he only left behind a puzzling array of unadorned negatives. These negatives, which were made into photographs by several mid-twentieth-century photographers, including Friedlander, constitute the collection of images now known as the ‘Storyville Portraits,’[34] which have continued to intrigue twenty-first-century viewers.

Friedlander’s work was eventually displayed at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City between 1970–1, where it shared space with photographs by contemporary artists. This was to have an irrevocable effect on how Bellocq was interpreted. In fact, the portraits have been exhibited in galleries on several occasions, which has strengthened their association with art and artists. So far, they have mainly garnered responses that address them as rediscovered *objets d’art* with an enigmatic maker and a serendipitous introduction to the public.

Despite how they have been narrativized in cultural and art histories, the Storyville Portraits are best regarded as part of a vast spectrum of ‘obscene’

images and mass culture pertaining to sex work and sex workers. Their creator has been implicitly elevated above and problematically distanced from the role of someone who took pornographic photographs. As John Szarkowski writes, 'Bellocq – whoever he was – interests us […] as an artist: a man who saw more clearly than we do, and who discovered secrets.'[35] In reality, he was not exceptional in his choice of subject, and there is no way to definitively determine whether he regarded himself as an artist. More to the point, it does not seem particularly likely; like many other commercial photographers of his time, he was experimenting with more *risqué* subject matter.

Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America was saturated with a variety of 'pornographic' images and literature created by a large number of people who had access to the right technologies. Scholars have studied the prolific interest in pornographic novels and novellas during the antebellum and postbellum periods, and they have established that a large variety of tastes and fantasies were catered to across media; this carried through into the twentieth century and was met with reform efforts. Of course, both pornography and sex trades flourished in cities. Research indicates similar trends and underscores how pornography production, trade, and consumption occurred across boundaries of nationality, class, and gender throughout the Western world.

Misconceptions about pornography and sex work industries in a transatlantic context owe much to the moralist rhetoric of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which has in turn impacted receptions of the Storyville Portraits. In fact, boundaries and stereotypes associated with 'obscene' images or reading during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – that, for instance, only men produced or consumed pornography – are often inaccurate. The visuality and the phenotypes of sex workers and pornographic models are, as well, less homogenized than those of mainstream sex symbols. This is perhaps why the Storyville Portraits have been categorized as niche and melancholic; they do not reinforce the stereotypes, and many of them appear instead to be almost documentary. As Jamie Stoops writes, successful nude models possessed a certain 'theatricality' that enabled them to manipulate the viewer into having a sense of control, voyeurism, or dominance. This was due to the association of the theatre and actors with prostitution, which was no less true in New

Orleans than it was in other cities; the belief was evidenced in an 1888 illustration of the French Opera featured in local New Orleans paper *The Mascot*, which provided glimpses of at the supposedly morally corrosive effect of the venue.[36] But what this 'theatricality' amounted to, visually and stylistically, was an array of images featuring women who appeared seductive – subservient in some cases, but also smoldering and worldly. Humor, too, played its part in creating a visual code of eroticism that conveyed to the viewer that this image was for erotic stimulation. There were also examples of early photo manipulation and collage; a photographer could have models pose, and use their bodies and gestures in conjunction with other photographs to create a new scene. Many of Bellocq's portraits are at home in the enormous milieu of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century pornography. That his work shares traits with pornography, yet is interspersed with mundane aspects of *fin de siècle* life, simply points to the fact that sex work was an occupation in the city. Importantly, it was starting to be represented as such.

However, the notion persists that somehow, we are 'privileged' to see scenes like this because brothels were all actually horrific, thus Bellocq is an interlocutor for those less fortunate than himself. Chris Waddington writes that

His pictures present glimpses of life lived outside of commerce, when one is surrounded by friends: the silliness, the daydreaming, the casual nudity and occasional settings among hanging laundry and rooms decorated with postcards and university pennants. In effect, today's viewers are ushered behind the doors of a 1912 New Orleans brothel, witness to privileged moments […].[37]

This book tries to move away from the notion that Bellocq provides 'privileged moments,' and considers the deceptively simple suggestion that these were just moments and women he wanted to photograph. They are neither fully candid nor fully staged scenes, and Bellocq must have been aware of and to some extent emulating 'obscene images' that involved an 'artistic' or 'romantic' style. What remains notable about his work, however, is the amount of respect and moral distance it accords its subjects.

Even within his portraits of nude women, there is evident rapport – very little, even none, of what Stoops observes of the ‘theatricality’ in many other ‘lewd’ photographs. Bellocq’s models are not performing facial expressions or scenes. In the case of the other portraits, women are completely clothed. We are left to wonder if these are more of a documentary effort. Bellocq sometimes seems just as confused; amongst his portraits we can find what might be examples of the ‘naughty’ postcard (or the portraits needed to make them), snapshots and instances of what almost – but do not quite – amount to social realism. Meanwhile, some of the portraits have been defaced with no explanation. Speculation about why the images might have been defaced runs rampant.

Still, his models are neither ‘victims’ who need to be saved, nor ‘criminals’ who should be corrected. They pose frankly, but not seductively – this is indicative of how accustomed they were to being naked. In fact, sometimes the clothed portraits feel more uncomfortable than the ones featuring nudity. Yet the paradigms through which these women were interpreted by their society insisted that they must be either tragic or cunning; this was, though, the same dynamic that madams and sex workers utilized for survival and in other cases profit.

In effect, *Images of Sex Work* triangulates the Portraits within representations of prostitution in urban spaces. Four cities, namely Paris, London, New York, and New Orleans, function as ideological and geographical anchors because they shed considerable light on the ‘prostitute’ as an urban archetype. This structure also takes into account New Orleans’s actual transatlantic connections – for example, to Francophone and/or Creole cultures – and its imagined ones. The presence of Creoles and expatriate Parisians fostered cultural hierarchies and practices reminiscent of those in France or French colonies, and New Orleans was an attractive – though *risqué* – destination for foreign travel writers and tourists. The Civil War’s repercussions on the South effectively ended these social orders, but it could not obliterate them.[38] They, along with other influences, had differentiated New Orleans from the rest of the United States long before it was admitted to the Union.

By looking across urban mass, visual, and popular cultures that comprise imaginaries of ‘obscenity’ and ‘prostitution,’ Bellocq’s portraits become more legible. He was not exceptional; he followed his interests and was

surrounded by a thriving vice trade that included the creation and distribution of pornographic images. By Storyville's heyday in the early 1900s, an overwhelming number of these existed. They ranged from the graphic – depictions of penetrative acts were common – to the scenes that had been made under the guise of 'artistic' studies or nudes. Models were understood to be immoral, if not outright sex workers. However, this imposed shame was the result of a popular culture and wider socio-cultural landscape that was fascinated with 'deviant' women in the city. It took a specific turn in New Orleans, which was perceived to be different from other American cities.

In part, the ways in which the portraits contain few direct, visual ties to New Orleans – but remain emblematic of urban sex work during the 1900s – is what makes them so compelling. Exploring cities' portrayals of, and impact on, sex workers – both in life and in a more abstract sense – means the portraits are less 'sensational' or 'strange' because they no longer seem so singular. Susan Sontag, Friedlander's contemporary, addressed this potential when she observed how the Storyville Portraits could have been at home in any decade that spanned 1880–1912. To her, these women appeared representative not only of sex workers, but of other types of 'fallen' women across decades of urban life – including Kate Chopin's Edna Pontellier, who was neither a sex worker nor an artists' model. Sontag noted:

The year is 1912, but we would not be surprised to be told that the pictures were taken in 1901, when Theodore Dreiser began writing *Jennie Gerhardt*, or in 1899, when Kate Chopin published *The Awakening*, or in 1889, the year Dreiser set the start of his first novel, *Sister Carrie* – the ballooning clothes and plump bodies could be dated anywhere from 1880 to the beginning of World War I. The charges of indecency that greeted Chopin's only novel and Dreiser's first were so unrelenting that Chopin retreated from literature and Dreiser faltered. (Anticipating more such attacks, Dreiser, after beginning his great second novel in 1901, put it aside for a decade.) Bellocq's photographs belong to this same world of anti-formulaic, anti-salacious sympathy for 'fallen' women, though in his case we can only speculate about the origin of that sympathy.[39]

Contemporary reactions to the Portraits belie how applicable Sontag's observations were; these women are, in a word, 'ordinary' – not at all the sordid or sad caricatures we expect 'prostitutes' to be. 'Some [of the models are] dumpy with distinctly overripe curves,' wrote one journalist in her review of their presence in a 2002 exhibition.[40] This mild disdain is a common enough response to how the women look, which exists, apparently, in a dramatic contradiction to how they are *expected* to look. The photographs are atypical because of how they survived to be seen today and how 'normal' the women seem, regardless of what popular culture tells us about their lives. In regards to this realism, another reviewer simply reminded his readers, 'As for these women's naked bodies, onlookers need to remember these assorted breasts and bellies predate Calista Flockhart, let alone Marilyn Monroe.'[41]

The thought that the images were not, or should not be, segmented from popular culture is not new. The majority of this project, then, rests in considering Bellocq's images as a manifestation of the figure that proliferated diverse media in the city, such as novels like Emile Zola's *Nana* (1880), realist paintings like John Sloan's *Three A.M.* (1910), Victorian and *fin de siècle* New Orleans newspapers (or virtually any newspapers), and even some of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* stories. They have become commonplace figures; even today, they are still present in films (2017's *The Limehouse Golem*, for example) and television (*Ripper Street*, which has aired since 2012), as well as novels, plays, and poetry. The portraits are 'anti-formulaic' and 'anti-salacious' exactly because they are part of this metropolitan milieu of erotica (or erotic representations), and facilitate readings of the 'prostitute' as a cultural icon. At the time of their creation, representations of 'prostitution' were in wide circulation across a variety of media well across the globe. The 'prostitute' as an icon was one of the most significant figures of the *fin de siècle*, encompassing a range of anxieties, commentaries, fetishes, and aesthetics.

The fact that the images surfaced out of New Orleans's lush cityscape only adds to their complexity. They exist at a mythopoeic crossroads of powerful imaginaries: one of the 'prostitute,' another of the 'Crescent City.' Each encompasses what Norman Klein calls 'fictions [that] are built into facts' and has witnessed the shift of 'facts into fictions.'[42] This is both an exploration of the representation of prostitution across the last decades of

the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, and also an attempt to better understand the Storyville Portraits within the rich contexts of representations of sex work, the 'city' as a trope, and perceptions of New Orleans. Without reflecting on their place in these immense, reciprocal discourses, we risk oversimplifying an unconventional, potentially interventional archive of images.

Apart from providing pivotal points from which we may consider the Storyville Portraits, organizing chapters through ideologically interconnected cities allows for a consideration of the imagined qualities that were part of New Orleans's image as a destination, and especially its identity as a destination for sexual tourism. References – or implications of – how 'worldly' New Orleans was in comparison to other American cities were common. They abounded in Storyville's advertisements, which often took the form of the local Blue Book or booklets published by individual madams. Clara Miller's advertisement in a souvenir book promises:

She has been in the principal cities of Europe and the Continent, and can certainly interest you as she has a host of many others. When we add that the famous octaroon was born near Baton Rouge we trust you will certainly call on her.[43]

Storyville's women consciously manipulated New Orleans's reputation and its attraction to travelers from other cities, as well as the cultural capital granted by cosmopolitan travel – which implied a level of financial security and a reasonably good education – to turn a profit. Importantly, a focus on representation of urban sex workers and women more generally allows for themes to be brought to bear on the portraits through discourses particularly exemplified in each city. Among others, these include coercion, violence, criminality, secrecy, self-determinism, and ambiguity. Bellocq's images are part of a network of representations, rather than images that are disconnected from, or exceptional because of, what they portray. Over the years, they have become part of a wider cultural conversation about sex work, although this was most likely not Bellocq's intent.

Chapter 1 looks to New Orleans. Much of the representation of prostitution within its sphere of influence was initiated by sex workers themselves, and owes the majority of its vernacular and style to the urban

popular cultures explored in the next three chapters. Though other cities also had red-light districts that indubitably created their own advertisements and pornography, Storyville was in New Orleans, a city that was regarded as different. It demonstrated the marked effort of madams and their 'girls' to create and control both sexual and business personas. Under this remarkable amount of social power were insidious cycles of poverty, racism, and stigma.

Chapter 2 is rooted in New York City,[44] where by the start of the twentieth century the 'prostitute' had morphed into either the 'white slave' or 'New Woman.' New strains of skepticism surfaced in art, illustration, and fiction that focused on sex workers as everyday women and hallmarks of life in the city. Sexual mores, too, were changing, and sex workers (or promiscuous women) were hardly shocking aspects of city life by the 1910s. While many studies of white slavery and sex work in New York's visual culture do exist, this chapter contextualizes and compares them with representations of the 'white slave' in New Orleans. I also account for the appearances, and to an extent, the content, of Bellocq's portraits by comparing them with paintings and illustrations of women by the 'Ashcan School' and John Sloan in particular.

The second half of the book shifts to cities in the 'Old World,' a concept that had an immense impact on the representation of sex work in New Orleans. Two cities in particular, London and Paris, left their marks on Storyville. In the third chapter, I look from New York to London, which witnessed a brutal series of crimes toward sex workers in the late 1800s. Jack the Ripper not only terrorized the city and fascinated the world; he became as iconic as his victims and dictated how they – and other sex workers – were to be portrayed. Through the interplay of the popular press and public hysteria, violence and crime were reaffirmed as part of the narratives of prostitution. They manifested in *The Illustrated Police News* and seeped into other newspapers and magazines. The unsolved mystery of the Ripper's identity, along with other infamous cases of violence against women, also had a marked effect on the prostitute's portrayal in fiction, for example, in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's 'The Illustrious Client', which was published in 1924, but conjured up a turn-of-the-century London similarly to how the *Storyville Portraits* evoked a *fin de siècle* New Orleans. There was also a vested interest in international media about the Ripper; American

newspapers and even New Orleanian newspapers eagerly reported on the topic.

Chapter 4 addresses the considerable influence of Parisian narratives on the archetypes of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century 'prostitute.' Indeed, it is difficult to discuss any history of sex work at this time without reference to Paris. This influence needs to be taken into account, especially considering the popular American (and international) notion that New Orleans was more 'Creole' and therefore more 'French' than the rest of the country.[45] Beginning with Eugene Sue's *Les Mystéres de Paris* (1842–3) as an early, key incarnation of the nineteenth-century relationship between sex workers and the city, the chapter sets up the notion of 'prostitutes' and exploitative individuals as 'characters.' It addresses Baron von Reizenstein's obscure city mystery novel *The Mysteries of New Orleans* (1854–5) and Zola's *Nana* (1880) to establish the rhetoric of tragedy and corruption that was prevalent in the representation of prostitution. It also discusses George du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894) and the massive popularity of Trilby herself – who was neither overtly a sex worker, nor a chaste woman – as a character, and the surprising repercussions this had on New Orleans sex workers' self-representation and the city's media.

There is no dearth of scholarly work that can connect the Storyville Portraits to the figure of the urban sex worker in art history, visual, and print culture and literature. Essentially, as cultural icons of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, 'cities' and 'prostitutes' interact with each other on a fundamental level. In Storyville's case, there was a fervent effort to expunge New Orleans of certain aspects of this history. In turn, this poses a challenge to discussing the portraits without moralism or negative judgment. By ceasing to use only the conventions of understanding established by earlier literature and scholarship – for example, casting Bellocq as an 'artist' or his models as 'victims' – we may better understand how these myths were made to remedy our uneasiness with their subjects. This provides distance from assumptions about 'exploitation' and 'tragedy' that condition receptions of the portraits. Because of cultural discomfort with the topics of sex work and eroticism, our reactions to and interpretations of the Storyville Portraits have been limited by reductive stereotypes about 'prostitutes,' pornography, vice, and art. It would be difficult to address them without also addressing the extreme hold that

‘prostitution’ as a theme had on late nineteenth-century popular culture, and how perceptions of it changed as the twentieth century loomed.

Thus, I do not explore the portraits within a history of New Orleans, Storyville, or even the United States alone. (My work does owe much to Emily Epstein Landau and Alecia P. Long, who both navigate aspects of those histories.) Instead, I use a lateral approach to look across representational practices and tendencies. The Portraits, due to their respective appearances – many do look more like something John Sloan would have painted or etched than anything that might have emerged from Storyville, given its reputation – require us to orient them as images that are part of a transatlantic imaginary of sex work in cities. Without acknowledging this, the portraits turn into icons of what we *assume* about Storyville, which now often functions as an urban legend or a story to spice up histories and memories. It allies itself well with, as Long says, the vision of New Orleans as a ‘languid and alluring courtesan’[46] and merges seamlessly with the most audacious perceptions of the city. In some respects, the ‘courtesan’ overtook the city for roughly two decades, so this is not unexpected. But few physical traces are left of the district, and the Storyville Portraits are among the most memorable.

A comparable absence of more traditional resources contributes to the ‘scandalous’ imaginaries, although it is also true that madams and saloon landlords actively encouraged a bombastic image laced with sex, money, and unfettered morality. Yet Bellocq’s portraits do not sensationalize to titillate, or moralize to educate, viewers. They do not echo the beguiling haze that characterized New Orleans in the late nineteenth century, either – nothing within them is truly emblematic of the city. Since his purpose remains, and will probably remain, vague, his portraits provide an invitation and the space to examine how they relate to pornography, representations of sex work and women. They come from a city and a period within that city whose histories, as Court Carney writes, are extremely ‘embellished’ and difficult to separate from ‘mythomania.’[47] The clash between the portraits’ thematic familiarity – to other aspects of mass, popular, and ‘high’ culture – and their simple, often haphazard, visual narratives creates an uncomfortable state. We expect them to make sense within set expectations, to echo and reinforce other tropes about New Orleans, yet they still remain unusually unembellished portrayals of Storyville women and where they

worked. It would be wrong to say that they have not been impacted by the perceptions and biases held by contemporary viewers.

As such, my aim is not to assert that the photographs possess, or should have, a revelatory message about New Orleans that has been misunderstood. Rather, this book puts them in dialogue with what occurred around them, and stresses that they are part of a spectrum of ‘obscene’ representations that were created and are best read in the context of urbanity, sex crimes, and gender roles – not necessarily just New Orleanian history. Exploring the relationships between Bellocq’s photographs and representations of the urban sex worker and sex work brings these portraits forward into the twenty-first century. With the right contexts granted by urban explorations, the models in the portraits can be regarded as women who were simply working, and we can begin to understand how pervasive the myth of the ‘prostitute’ was, as well as how instrumental it is in dictating our interpretations of Bellocq and the Storyville Portraits.

1

(Self-)Representing Storyville Women

This chapter is concerned with the way that sex work was represented in New Orleans – and also, crucially, the ways that sex workers represented themselves. Even though New Orleans's exceptionalism is often overstated without much thought, in this instance of fostering countercultural self-representation, it is arguably unique. Storyville was imagined as sensational despite being one of many red-light districts in the United States. Much of this perception can be seen today in madams' advertising efforts. Apart from their drive to not only operate, but also construct, some of the costliest brothels – thereby changing the landscape and social fabric of the city – they also engaged with mass and popular culture representations of sex work to configure and present their own images.

Here, threads of self-representation and media portrayals are examined in an exploration of predominately primary source materials, then contextualized with interpretations of the Storyville Portraits. One trend manifests in the local press, which was ostensibly motivated by presenting facts, but was always subject to bribes and what sold copies to the reading public. Among the many mainstays, newspapers such as *The Daily Picayune* (in 1914, this became *The Times-Picayune* due to a merger) and *The Sunday Sun* were popular options. Both featured relatively factual stories that were sometimes overblown for dramatic effect, but remained essentially defined by their purpose to 'report.' Satire and sensation followed in similar media; *The Mascot*, a weekly magazine, blended sensationalist journalism and caricature to comment on troubling issues. Among the variety of 'seedy' topics on the minds of 'respectable' New Orleans residents, these frequently included prostitution, opium dens, and overindulging in alcohol.

In contrast to more mainstream media, though not totally separate from their influences, there were the self-produced personas cultivated by madams and 'working girls' alike. Fabricated and calculated origin stories, sometimes paired with a well-placed photograph, appear in souvenir booklets. Meanwhile, the ubiquitous Blue Books circulating in the city also helped entice clients.[1] Eric Platt and Lillian Hill explain:

[They] were meant to inform and direct clients toward lavish, enticing houses filled with women ready to provide song, dance, and sex […] Blue Books allowed madams to learn from their competition. Successful madams kept their houses ornately decorated and well advertised and regularly introduced new forms of entertainment, such as live sex acts and private carnal circuses.[2]

These were not mailed, and numerous similar directories existed before Storyville was legislated. They form a large survey of how sex workers marketed and represented themselves while also providing an indication of what kinds of women – relatively affluent – could engage with the practice of advertising.

Pornographic photographs form another aspect of the regional mass culture that the Storyville Portraits were part of; the pornography trade in Storyville thrived. Supposedly, most of Bellocq's models were also present in 'lewd images.'[3] This is hardly a surprise, given what is known about pornography markets in other *fin de siècle* and Jazz Age cities. But to underscore how the nude portraits are both similar to, yet different, from the day's 'obscene images,' I discuss how the 'prostitute' as an icon changed through the influence of pornography and its versatility as a source of income. Further, fetishes for bestiality, interracial sex, and lesbianism were rampant in New Orleans for decades. Therefore, the lack of these overtones in any of Bellocq's work is both significant and noticeable.

Indeed, the Portraits surface away from the newspapers, Blue Books, and explicit pornography, because they were apparently never published and left hidden until years after the red-light district was shut down in 1917. When considered collectively, these sources all form a milieu of visual and print culture, and by considering these representations together, a method of understanding Storyville as being unique in its situation can emerge.

Concurrently, and conversely, this approach acknowledges how the Storyville Portraits were not fully anomalous; this pronouncement has been imposed upon them because of where they originated. New Orleans has always been conceptualized as exotic, different, and strange in comparison to the United States, the rest of its region and its home state of Louisiana. Storyville acquired some of that same status in the national imaginary. American history seems to regard it, when it regards it at all, as an isolated incident, while its women are largely forgotten. Though nothing strictly like it appeared afterward, the conversations about and representations of both sex workers and sex that it generated are neither unusual nor shocking.

Through exploration and analysis of these representations (some mainstream, some self-determined by the women, and others, like the Portraits, clandestine and more enigmatic), a visual and print – or popular mass – culture of Storyville sex work is established in an early twentieth-century setting. Here we see them emerge in New Orleans even before the new tenderloin district was proposed as a solution to rampant brothels that had, in the minds of supposedly upstanding citizens, corrupted too much of the city. Deceit, race, sex, and money mingled in mass media and the Blue Books, creating a New Orleanian twist on the perennially popular topic of prostitution.

'The Terrible Fate of Kate Townsend': Melodrama and Morality in the Media

On the morning of 4 November 1883, *The Daily Picayune* reported a murder that occurred in one of the expensive city brothels. Kate Townsend, a popular Irish or British (depending on the source) madam who had immigrated to Louisiana, was stabbed to death by her 'fancy man' Treville (also called Troisville or simply Bill) Sykes, who lived in his own private quarters in her establishment.[4] New Orleans newspapers had long internalized the grisly artifice of transatlantic journalism; consequently, this sets the tone for the Storyville Portraits and Bellocq's narratives. *The Daily Picayune* capitalized on the brutality of the murder rather than details of their affair, which lasted for over ten years. These included, among many other dubious things, habitual domestic violence at the hands of both partners. Evidently, Townsend was fond of beating Sykes with a marble

rolling pin when she was inebriated; by all accounts, Sykes retaliated similarly.

A spectacle used to sell the new editions to a public already accustomed to crime and sensational weeklies, the murder was illustrated in a style not unlike the world-famous *Illustrated Police News* of London. Townsend's life story is displayed in dramatic panels, from her introduction to the world of 'vice' as a teenage barmaid in a Liverpool dancehall, to her abrupt death in her own New Orleans brothel.[5] Inset cameos pointedly display the cast of characters in a gripping drama, a demonstration of vice that led to an inevitable disastrous conclusion. These include Kate Townsend, successful madam and businesswoman but now definitely 'The Victim' in death, the younger 'working girl' Molly Johnson, unfortunate witness to the crime, and Sykes himself. Almost gleefully, the headline that accompanied the illustrations blared in capital letters:

CARVED TO DEATH! THE TERRIBLE FATE OF KATE TOWNSEND AT THE HAND OF TREVILLE SYKES WITH THE INSTRUMENTALITY OF A BOWIE KNIFE.[6]

The graphic impact of the illustration, paired with the specific mention of the murder weapon, was blunt and powerful.

Readers' sympathies were engaged in a typical motif that would change as Storyville neared the twentieth century; Townsend is presented as a victim of prostitution's snare, a casualty of social corruption despite her considerable wealth and autonomy at the time she died. One scene depicts her leaving two young children in a barren but furnished sitting room; the seemingly older of the two clutches at her full skirts in distress. As a young woman, the paper shows here, she gave up the proper feminine status of mother and left her native country to come to the United States. Despite the facts of her life, the illustration implies that this was not an easy choice to make. Newly arrived in the Crescent City, she lingers in the doorway of a 'harem,' thinner than all the other women – whose telltale plump bodies are draped in lingerie. They beckon her toward them, and again readers understand that although she sought out this life, it was not an ideal option. She is forced, then coerced. More than anything else, Townsend is a 'fallen woman.'

The illustrated guide to ‘The Townsend Tragedy’ neatly and melodramatically encapsulated the life and death of the prominent New Orleans madam. The narrative wants to show that she made a harrowing choice to leave her family. Though she ultimately engaged in the trade of prostitution she did not choose her profession as a matter of enjoyment; even here as the preface to a murder story the mythology of the ‘prostitute’ as a type is turned into a polemic guided by headlines and illustrations. But Alan G. Gauthreaux and D.G. Hippensteel report that Kate, whose birth name was either Bridget or Katherine Cunningham, abandoned the ‘twins born as a result from [*sic*] her liaison with a sailor’ in Liverpool, and arrived in the United States through New York City before moving to New Orleans in 1857.[7]

The vignettes, made in a style typical of the time and reminiscent of other nineteenth-century magazines and newspapers, promote sympathy (and condone socially acceptable nosiness and metaphorical ‘staring’) rather than disgust by linking Townsend to the acceptable ideals of womanhood that she ‘lost.’ It is implied that she was forced or compelled to shed them by events that were out of her control; thus she gave up the trappings of a more feminine and acceptable life. Before she entered sex work, for example, she was a mother who had to ‘[bid] adieu to her children,’ and although they are not told why explicitly, contemporary readers would have been able to surmise that she probably fled poverty or a sour marriage. The veteran women in ‘a public harem in New Orleans’ are larger than Townsend, which implies that their work is viable and leads to a full income, and they lean toward her while she stands uncertainly on the brothel’s threshold. It is as though they mean to ‘corrupt’ her and ‘trap’ her into leading their way of life. Ironically, Kate became an affluent pre-Storyville madam.

The prostitute as ‘fallen’ implied that the woman necessarily departed from a higher or more moral state that befit her femininity. This was a facet of earlier reports about prostitution in New Orleans, and it eventually became less of a focal point as the years drew closer to Storyville and such melodramatic rhetoric was replaced by a more violent vernacular in the early twentieth century. Linda Nochlin writes:

Fallen in the feminine […] understood as any sexual activity on the part of women out of wedlock, whether or not for gain – exerted a peculiar fascination on the imagination of nineteenth-century artists, not to speak of writers, social critics, and uplifters.[8]

Though prostitutes were not always synonymous with tragic fallen women, and indeed the idea could also apply to villainesses popularized in sensational literature, or female criminals known on either side of the Atlantic, Townsend herself was sadly characterized as 'fallen' rather than intrinsically deviant. *The Monroe Bulletin,* in fact, scoffed about Treville Sykes's prior abuse:

[Sykes's] wounds [were] so trifling that a child could have inflicted or an infant borne them. If the law can be construed to excuse such a crime […] then it will be high time to change it to something more consonant with the ideas of advanced civilization.[9]

Perhaps the sympathy extended toward her and the newspapers' forthright attitude had to do with New Orleans, a place infamously relaxed in matters of the flesh, and a city where some madams and 'working girls' reached near-celebrity statuses and lived almost, but not quite, respectably.

The *Picayune* meant to establish Townsend in anything but a criminal light; its illustrations following the morning of her murder reinforce the intention. Though a madam, she is also indicated as a member of the community – with her popularity serving to indict Sykes despite any maltreatment he might have suffered. That potential aspect of the story is neglected, omitted from a scintillating and didactic newspaper narrative. Intriguingly, Townsend was no stranger to the city or the press by the time of her ghastly murder, surprisingly sedate funeral, and the ensuing court battles over her will were headlining stories.[10] In her early days as a new madam, apparently, a report of her personal boudoir was made for readers and it accounted for all details – from the types of linen in her wardrobe, to expensive oil paintings on the walls.[11] A distinction had been drawn between her establishment, which catered to a better class of customer, and the common cribs that could be found in the poorer, rougher parts of the city. If Townsend did have a hand in the story's publication, the use of a

daily newspaper in this fashion would have been calculated to reach as large a readership as possible.

On the other hand, the readers of Blue Books, or souvenir books, were assuredly most often men who indubitably read them in specific environments – well away from family obligations. The preface to one (an Eighth Edition from 1907 published by Billy Struve, who also 'signed' the Blue Books as 'Billy News') explains:

WHY NEW ORLEANS SHOULD HAVE THIS DIRECTORY
First – Because it is the only district of its kind in the States set aside for the fast women by LAW
Second – Because it puts the stranger on a proper grade or path as to where to go and be secure from hold-ups, brace games and other illegal practices usually worked on the unwise in Red-light Districts [*sic*].[12]

Newspapers, conversely, had readerships comprised of all genders and most classes. Whether Townsend bribed the newspaper's editors as she reputedly did the police and other officials is unknown for certain, but we can imagine that she benefitted from the glowing account. In some ways, it was a precursor to the Storyville advertisements; the continuation and solidification of vernaculars used to discuss prostitution in New Orleans are present in the media's later choices of stories. Townsend was already well-known before she died, and her murder was a fantastic bookend to a tempestuous life. She was representative of what several Storyville madams would later become: rich, shrewd, and fat – bearers of physical hallmarks of a fiscally sound industry as well as financial excess and voracious 'appetites.'

The *Picayune's* readers were regaled with the story of Townsend's funeral not long after the tale of her murder, which was, while not ultimately stranger than fiction, certainly comfortable in an ideological milieu shaped by sensational journalism and Victorian moralism. Townsend was able to afford the best in death as she had in life, and according to the press, her procession was a study in understated wealth.[13] Evidently, noted the press with relish, she had grown corpulent in her middle age; the coffin was both good-quality and far larger than expected for an average woman.[14] While mourning was performative during the nineteenth century, and an art

in both Southern and New Orleanian culture, this public display was upheld differently given who was being commemorated. No one could or wanted to forget that this was a madam who had been murdered. Under the beautiful coffin lid, Kate Townsend's corpse still bore wounds created by 'the instrumentality of a Bowie knife,'[15] as the *Picayune* had explained. This predates the Ripper murders, and unlike the autopsy photographs of the London victims, for example, the public would never actually see any illustrations, but the newspaper described the scandal as dramatically as it could manage in text.

Townsend became a ready-made icon of prostitution. From her beginnings as a barmaid from Liverpool who gave up a life of motherhood to become a sex worker, to her domination of a corner of the pre-Storyville New Orleans *demimonde*, she provided a variety of material for the press to use as an attractive story. Though it was true that the public had also been perversely curious about the details of her bedroom and the types of paintings she displayed on its walls, her abrupt death created a novelistic ending. It was a brutal – and ideal – finish to the narrative of the young, foreign woman who eventually rose, or fell, to the role of New Orleans madam. Yet what the paper indicates most of all is not only the nineteenth-century fixation on the ideas of the *demimonde*; it established a precedent for later pieces on vice and Storyville while also demonstrating a sensationalism that saturated New Orleans culture in 'respectable' and, more expectedly, muckraking newspapers. It equally laid foundations for representations of the prostitute as an archetype, and the most famous madams were to become archetypes too. Some of the best examples of this process can be found in *The Mascot*, which ran every Sunday between 1882 and 1897.[16] Readers could expect to find commentary and sensationalism in its eight weekly pages and were not disappointed; according to Sally Asher, 'it was the largest illustrated journal in the South.'[17] Although these kinds of dynamics have been discussed with a considerable emphasis on the massive boom in newspapers and magazines as evidence for insatiable public appetites for stories of the strange, grisly, and unsavory, they have not been as readily applied to discourses around Storyville. Yet the tenacious moral and legal campaign pressed by the United States Navy overshadowed media fixations on the prostitute. Ultimately, the Selective

Service Act of 1917 would outlaw any vice districts within several miles of a naval base in the hope of 'containing' moral and physical disease.[18]

In the minds of many, sex workers were still walking 'contagions' best understood through the mediation of hearsay or the press and not in person, as various covers of *The Mascot* make clear regarding the menace of 'loose' or conniving women. The headlining story on 21 May 1892 featured the headline 'Lewd and Abandoned' under a caricatured Emma Johnson leaning from the doorway of her brothel on Gasquet Street, her fat tentacles slithering out to grab unsuspecting people from the street.[19] The article explains a raid on her premises and the ensuing court hearing, all brought about by, apparently, Johnson sitting in her window even after a new law was drafted that forbade the practice. A dichotomy is made between night and day versions of New Orleans, and this is meant to correlate with understandings of morality and immorality, honesty, and evasiveness. Most importantly, night is understood as time for the insidious conduct that is, ideally, curtailed by daylight. 'When one strolls at noon down one of the beautiful avenues of this city, the whole world appears fair,' the magazine proclaims, as though 'sin' could not happen under the sun:

On every hand are green, well-trimmed lawns, set out with palms and other sub-tropical plants; or gardens where roses, pinks, violets, lilies, forget-me-nots, crocuses, and many other flowers blend into a variegated mass of color.[20]

After the beauties of nature in harmony with man are declared, the lines are drawn even more deeply:

But behind and beneath all this is the reverse of the picture. Behind the beautiful houses are the receptacles of ordure, flushed by the sewerage system, the effluvium of which mingles with the atmosphere and, on misty days, assails the olfactories of the people.[21]

'Behind' is repeated numerous times in the piece, conjuring thoughts of deception, which, no doubt, many citizens of New Orleans feared most. There is more to the scene than 'beautiful houses' and 'gardens.'

Indeed, even the idea of a 'picture' is summoned to connote deceptive qualities that are latent in the city. Like a picture or a photograph, the magazine seems to imply, the streets can hide and deceive. Women like Johnson, but not anything intrinsic to New Orleans itself, are to blame for enabling vice. *The Mascot* separates its city from the activity that characterizes its reputation. It does so through the caricature, which needs little elucidation to be understood and the accompanying article, which makes it perfectly clear that Johnson and other 'procuresses'[22] like her are regarded as a public problem.

The reader, or at least New Orleanian readers, are almost implicated as complicit in the 'epidemic' of prostitution, so the text and the comical illustration are slightly at odds with one another; although Johnson appears to abscond with a young boy, a little girl, and several innocent men at different stages of life in her octopus guise, sex work could be a lucrative business and it always had clients. The most profitable brothels relied on willing customers and a level of what might politely be termed 'friendliness' with local officials.[23] There were, though, areas of New Orleans, like 'Smoky Row' on Burgundy Street, whose sex workers were believed to be dangerous and ruthless when it came to gaining any custom; their reputations did not encourage the presence of wealthy visitors. Smoky Row was raided and shut down in 1885, about 13 years before Storyville existed. Errol Laborde claims, 'The police, fearing the worst, looked for bodies in the patios and courtyards. There were none, but there were bloodstained wallets and piles of men's clothing.'[24]

The desire to control these types of places (and women) was predominately why Storyville came into existence. Violence directed at clients was supposedly going to be more limited there, or it would in theory be limited to that area. Instead of sex workers mugging and killing men, as was purportedly the case in Smoky Row, Storyville clients would, in theory, enter altercations with each other more often than they did with sex workers. Just as it is today, it was rare for a woman to have turned a man over to the police, but 'girls' and madams alike used various methods for discouraging assault and rape; a sharp, pretty hatpin within strategic reach on a dressing table was widely considered a warning that a woman was willing to defend herself on the job, for example, while many madams vetted their patrons before letting them go 'upstairs' into more secluded

spaces.[25] The idea was that crime within the District would, hopefully, be better reported and recorded.

Sex workers were still blamed as, or implicated in, the cause of many crimes and sins apart from promiscuity or adultery. Predictably, *The Mascot* implored in 1892, 'Why are the gutters allowed to remain filthy?'[26] after an impassioned, vociferous tirade about vice. Through a diatribe that evokes every Western cultural reference about sin, from its presence as 'the filth-begotten Frankenstein' or the 'dragon' of legends in which 'an ancient legion […] tells of a dragon,' and after saying that 'Vice [*sic*] protrudes its Medusa head from its lair' to 'grin sardonically' at nightfall,[27] *The Mascot's* agenda is clear to us today. It means to sensationalize the common concerns over immorality that continually arose in New Orleans because of the brothels, cribs, opium dens, and dancehalls that punctuated the city's nightlife and its daytime economies.

Many readers completely agreed with the flowery and forceful arguments, if letters to the editor about Storyville were any indication. Like the *Picayune* and *The Sunday Sun*, however, *The Mascot* wanted to sell copies. Whether it did so via tapping into satire, fear, or both, does not matter as much as what it reported. Even as it sensationalized the morality tracts and sermons about prostitutes, drink, and drugs, it probably echoed powerful madams' jests over dinner; they would often meet to trade business tactics and gossip. Nell Kimball, a retired Storyville madam, recounts in her purported autobiography, 'We'd sip brandy […] in each other's parlors […] and talk of our protection and costs and girls.'[28] Although the veracity of Kimball's account could perhaps be questioned,[29] the milieu she – or her author – describes is not totally fabricated.

This ensemble and its gatherings could include politicians whose interests were well established in New Orleans vice and brothels,[30] such as Kate Townsend's and later, Emma Johnson's, Josie Arlington's, and Lulu White's. The cribs were not their world and they lived the distinction. If Johnson saw the caricature of herself as a chubby cephalopod in the 21 May edition of *The Mascot*, one hopes she laughed. As the illustration and its story demonstrate, while the divisions between morality and immorality were stark for the upstanding, in the *demimonde* of New Orleans they were far more malleable. After all, vice was seemingly integral to the city; it had

been for decades. Tom Anderson (Louisiana state legislator, New Orleanian political boss and affable, unofficial 'mayor' of Storyville) and his ilk understood this situation readily, and took advantage of it.

Blue Books and Manufactured Personas

Directories of sex workers existed alongside the media; in relative contrast to newspapers like the *Picayune* they presented a more commercial, though no less partial, vision of the underworld to their readers. While newspapers published discreet advertisements for balls and dances, the Blue Books were devoted exclusively to a curated taxonomy of New Orleans sex workers, with accompanying advertisements for other entertainments, services, and products, including booze, medicinal tonics, and funeral carriages. They dominated how more expensive brothels in Storyville were advertised. At least one madam, Lulu White, published her own versions of 'Blue Books' to communicate directly with prospective clients.[31] This was to become useful; after 1900, 'lewd and abandoned women' could not advertise themselves in public according to the law, which stated that

Notoriously lewd and abandoned women are forbidden to stand upon the sidewalks in front of or near the premises they may occupy, or at the alleyway, door, or gate of such premises, or to occupy the steps thereof, or to accost, call, or stop any person passing by, or to walk up and down the sidewalks, or to walk up the city streets indecently attired, or in other respects so as to behave in public as to occasion scandal, or disturb and offend the peace and good morals of the people.[32]

However, media often described women in interiors in the same way the depiction of the 'public harem' in 'The Townsend Tragedy' made sure to reveal women in underclothes. Women needed to be contextualized as prostitutes and brothels had to be contextualized as such, not simply buildings that housed them.

Activity, albeit the sort that was repugnant to 'upstanding' citizens, was at the core of the Blue Books and newspapers' stories about vice. These activities were the point of Storyville, a space devoted to almost every act that upper-class, or just 'moral,' early twentieth-century society attempted

to control. Parameters of the laws that created the District were the result of common applications of 'science' and 'reason' to what were regarded as moral failures, even diseases, as though vice – which was necessarily devious, wrong – could be contained by spatial regulations and rationalism. Further, among other institutions who did the same, the Navy eventually started terrifying campaigns warning the public about, for example, how anyone could be a carrier of venereal diseases like syphilis, yet show no symptoms.[33]

Though the Blue Books and other publications were aware of these dynamics and capitalized on curiosity about their liminal space by teasing and implicating, Bellocq's *oeuvre* is, in contrast, frank, made dramatic only because of the interpretations imposed upon it after its rediscovery. The year 1883 foreshadowed what would later characterize Storyville, and Kate Townsend's murder seemed to mark an eventual shift in how the city's press treated prostitution. Though successful brothels and their proprietors had always been a spectacle before, popular Storyville madams now had a distinct forerunner in Townsend. She was proof that they could be noted as celebrities both during life and in death; even the *New York Times* had a short announcement in February regarding Sykes's acquittal.[34] There was no such thing as a totally private life for them, and that helped business.

Unlike magazines and newspapers, Blue Books and souvenir books were not mailed. They could be obtained at the train station, where tourists and newcomers could easily access them, and were also available in pubs, saloons, and barber shops, as well as other establishments that catered to men. Their audience was as specific as the mass and popular media's was varied; Blue Books especially targeted patrons who could pay, as it was assumed that the cheaper brothels would not be advertised.[35] 'Sporting men,' as they were called in the day's vernacular, knew Blue Books were constructed with this in mind. Whereas the *Picayune* concentrated most on Kate Townsend's rise to fame, for example, her hypothetical Blue Book entry would have been oriented toward her location and trade – though Blue Books' references probably seem oblique or quaint to twenty-first-century readers, they would be obvious to a *fin de siècle* man.

Some of the biggest Storyville personalities, Kate Townsend's ideological and professional 'ancestors,' can be traced in the Blue or

souvenir books. Two of these women were Lulu White, still one of the most famous Storyville madams due to her Mahogany Hall, featured in the song 'Mahogany Hall Stomp,' and Josie Arlington, madam of The Arlington, a popular 1900s mansion brothel.[36] Among other madams who presumably engaged in self-advertising, these women contributed their own variations of a 'Blue Book' or advertisement to the myriad available in New Orleans. Arlington's could have been orchestrated by Tom Anderson, a state senator of Louisiana often known as 'the Mayor of Storyville' because he maintained so many interests in the area (he had longtime associations with Billy Struve, Arlington, and another madam called Hilma Burt, among others), and eventually married Gertrude Dix, who managed Arlington's business affairs when she retired.[37] White's souvenir books, however, are some of the most prolific examples of Storyville-era souvenir books orchestrated by a madam.

Neither of these madams was murdered. Importantly, for this discussion, at least, neither seems to have the repeated press coverage that Townsend garnered, and they did not need it. Arlington's well-kept residence in a very respectable neighborhood became fodder for disdainful gossips who did not approve of her occupation – especially when she returned home to live among them – regardless of her income or ability to purchase property. Thomas Ruys Smith notes that she could not buy 'respectability,' only the semblance of it,[38] while Louise Coleman explains that the house itself was moved to a different location after Arlington's death – to discourage the curious members of the public who came to gawk at it.[39] Arlington and White's advertisements provide examples of the presence of self-determined personas in Storyville, which flew in the face of their detractors' claims.

A manufactured image was just as crucial to madams and sex workers as it would have been to any other performer or service provider; perhaps even more so because their business relied on advertisement and, though it was endlessly sensationalized in the press, much of it was carried on behind closed doors. Almost anyone could read a newspaper article about Mardi Gras or murder. Fewer would read a Blue Book, and only men who paid for the privilege could go somewhere such as Mahogany Hall. Any well-paid sex worker was fully aware of the power of advertising and the impact a phrase or photograph could have on prospective clients. The expense of

this, too, limited the ability to reach affluent (white) men to those women who could afford to have photographs taken or advertise via these means.

Arlington and White seem to have retained a measure of professional distance from anything reported or said about them. Instead, they manufactured impressive arrays of social influence and personal myth. But this was purposeful; to keep control of their respective empires, it would have been easier not to engage openly with newspaper or tabloid conversation, instead spending more time crafting an image and maintaining business standards. In many ways, this creation and maintenance depended on shrewd direct advertising that could lead to word of mouth and, ideally, repeat customers who would come back for either the same women or to discover new ones, and possibly bring friends or family. Since the Blue Books could not travel the same distances or transgress the same spatial and class boundaries as newspapers, encouraging customer loyalty as well as attracting new clients were both key.

One of the most common uses of the Blue Books was to sell experiences that crossed the 'color line.' This was done in a fashion that was related to the master–slave dynamics of the antebellum city; many women were advertised as black women or women of color, and according to Platt and Hill, 'Madams created lavish households reflective of antebellum decor to attract clients nostalgic for an age of white male power and female subordination, especially black female subjugation.'[40] For customers, this all implied nostalgia and exoticism generally, but it also implied a lineage, a genetic predisposition to sexual talents and overall promiscuity. The Blue Books and souvenir books, as well as their advertisements for 'Quadroon Balls' and 'French Balls,' conditioned patrons of Storyville to prize 'octoroons' and 'quadroons,' those women who would have looked like – or so they imagined, at any rate – enslaved concubines of the old, antebellum South.[41]

This further marginalized and factionalized back sex workers because it elevated 'white-passing' and/or lighter-skinned women to have more cache, which in turn reinforced shadism. As displayed in its surviving ephemera, this tier of the district was based on luxury and appearances, never just sex on its own. Madams knew what kind of language and nostalgic, racist associations to evoke in the advertisements that were associated with their respective houses. It was not enough simply to provide black women for

white men, or to provide a space for sexual fantasies. One also had to manipulate existing myths about prostitution, slavery, women, and the South, and be able to discern which were most lucrative. In 1883, a madam's murder was shocking, thrilling news. Twenty years later, the madams arguably had more influence over what was news in the first place, revealing that for all its faults and indubitably hidden sins – the ones that would not lead to profit – Storyville itself was influential in New Orleans life.

One of the advertisements for 'the famous Mademoiselle Rita Walker' used pictorial and verbal references to the 'Orient' as well as France, but transplanted them to Storyville. Walker was evidently known for her dancing– she is called the 'Oriental Danseuse' in the text that accompanies her photograph. She leans on a slender arm toward the viewer, smiling at him, and she is decked in a headdress and matching beaded bustier with her bare legs splayed beneath her on a leopard skin carpet.[42] The advertisement entices potential clients by promising:

Yes, this […] is the Oriental Danseuse who some years ago set the society folk of Chicago wild about her 'Salome' dance. She was one of the first women in America to dance in her bare feet. Aside from her marvelous dancing, Mademoiselle has a $5000 wardrobe which [sic] she uses for her dances. Mademoiselle is at present a guest of Mrs. Bertha Weinthal, 311 N. Basin St., where she can be seen in her marvelous dances.

A repeated assertion that Rita's dancing is 'marvelous' is hyperbole characteristic of the advertisements, but what is also found regularly is the emphasis on cosmopolitan and European influences on women of the district, along with uses of popular Orientalist and sensationalist vernacular. The proud distinction that Rita 'was one of the first women in America to dance in her bare feet' flouted the standard of clothing the body properly, especially women's bodies, and underscored the rigid – but increasingly fragile, as the twentieth century progressed – codes of comportment between genders. Seeing a woman's bare feet within a home environment, much less a brothel, would have been titillating.

There is also a frequent genteelly coded phrase of the woman being 'a guest' of a certain madam; the advertisements are never vulgar enough to

attract obscenity charges or offend sensibilities, and nothing was brought into a public vernacular where men and women spoke openly of sex. As Pamela Arceneaux explains, there were, however, faked 'Blue Book's published during the 1960s that contains graphic descriptions of individual women. One, Maria Henry, is completely fictitious; her address is, in fact, a Parisian address, which shows how conflated Montmartre and Storyville were in American popular culture.[43] By contrast, the lack of explicit language in the originals was pragmatic; although prostitution was decriminalized in Storyville, women could not legally exhibit themselves 'along the sidewalks in front of or near the premises they may occupy, or at the alleyway, door or gate of such premises.' They also could not:

Occupy the steps thereof, or to accost, call, or stop any person passing by, or walk up and down the sidewalks, or walk up the city streets indecently attired, or in other respects [so as to] behave in public as to occasion scandal.[44]

Sex happened quite explicitly within the confines of brothels, but the advertisements that sold it were careful not to be 'obscene.' They were, however, always indicative of the prostitute as an 'Other' and made that distinction by placing her in an ideology of the exotic, often one of exotic New Orleans.

Women in the advertisements might also carry some reference to being an 'octoroon' or having a Louisianian birth status, along with the reiterations that if a man frequented a Storyville brothel he could be assured of the best-quality women and a sensuous experience. Rita Walker's wardrobe, for example, is emphasized in her short description, in spite of the photograph that displays what must have been an expensive costume. The special consideration given in advertisements to the amount of money that women invested in their own professional repertoires, including a sumptuous work wardrobe, is one manifestation of that reassurance. The lure of money was an attractive marker of desirability. Overall, the connections between pleasurable, 'safe' sex and cost upheld the connections between means and exclusivity – a new evolution of the master-slave dynamics that had been openly present in antebellum years. The most consistent trope that is upheld in the souvenir books, aside from the supposedly European refinement of the women and their rareness when

compared to other American women, is the sexual prowess of black and mixed-race women. Emily Clark writes:

The quadroon sex slave became the quadroon prostitute in postbellum New Orleans, marketed to locals and visitors alike as descendants of the beautiful, exotic women described by Karl Bernhard and Frederick Law Olmstead.[45]

Many brothels featured 'colored' women as a term, it could encompass black women, mixed-race women, and/or other women of color – but two in particular were strong examples of brothels that specialized in demographics of 'born and bred Louisiana girls.'[46] At 'Countess' Willie V. Piazza's brothel there were 'without doubt, the most handsome and intelligent Octaroons in the United States [*sic*]' and clients were told, 'You should see them; they are all cultivated entertainers.'[47] The second of these brothels was White's Mahogany Hall. White exemplified how the combination of an origin story, monetary resources, and an enticing tale of one's ancestry – fabricated or factual – could work to a business advantage. Her self-published souvenir booklets were distributed on their own, and they bragged about the cost and quality of her establishment.

It was never referred to as a crib or a brothel, but as a boarding house:

The NEW MAHOGANY HALL, A picture of which appears on the cover of this souvenir was erected especially for Ms. Lulu White at a cost of 40,000 dollars. The house is built of marble and is four story; containing five parlors, all handsomely furnished, and fifteen bedrooms […] The elevator, which was built for two, is of the latest style. The entire house is steam heated and is the handsomest house of its kind. It is the only one where you can get three shots for your money:

The shot upstairs
The shot downstairs
And the shot in the room.[48]

Apart from the sumptuousness of Mahogany Hall itself, Lulu described her own ancestry as that of a 'West Indian octaroon' but declined to give detailed stories of her 'girls' even though these 'would no doubt prove

reading of the highest grade.'[49] In advertisements that featured individual women, there was a painstaking effort made to showcase their ladylike, educated qualities and ability to entertain, sometimes paired with their origin. This practice distinguished Storyville by underscoring how its women – always referred to as 'ladies,' 'boarders,' 'girls,' or 'darlings,' and in a few of the later adverts, 'jolly good fellows' – were of a high-class standard and offered the 'exoticism' of a mixed-race heritage.[50] Clara Miller was promised to be:

Demure, everybody's friend, can sit up all night as necessary she has been [*sic*] in the principal cities of Europe and the Continent, and can certainly interest you as she has a host of many others. When we add that the famous octaroon was born near Baton Rouge we trust you will certainly call on her.[51]

Her picture, set above the text, reveals the face of a young woman with long dark hair and high cheekbones. She smiles invitingly with her chin resting on one slender hand. Unlike Mademoiselle Rita Walker, her photograph is not focused on her full body. Sadie Levy, featured shortly after Clara to a similar effect, does look similar to a model in several of Bellocq's photographs. She worked in Mahogany Hall, where her entry proclaims accordingly:

Miss White's Octaroon Club would certainly be incomplete without Sadie. Accomplished, beautiful, and charming. We are not given to flattery, so invite you to call and convince yourself that, while there are others there is only one Sadie Levy. Born and bred right here in this city and a girl any city should feel proud of.[52]

Meanwhile, although she never claimed to be anything but white, the name 'Josie Arlington' was also a fabrication, a stage name created by a young woman called Mary Deubler whose ambitions led her to New Orleans – and before she went by Arlington, she used Lobrano, the surname of her lover at the time.[53]

Like Kate Townsend, Arlington eventually grew to be a powerful and influential player on Storyville's scene. Arlington and White were, like many others in Storyville, self-created. Their identities were contingent on a

whirl of fetishism, panache, and varying degrees of falsehood. Storyville displayed and promised almost everything if one could pay; some of its most successful madams were more selective about what they divulged and how they did so, but seemed to believe they earned that right. Instead, they focused their attentions on advertisements, maintaining reputations, and running businesses. Unsurprisingly, there were brothels whose lures were far less 'cultured.' Among these were Emma Johnson's, which housed 'sex circus' performances that attracted regular enthusiasts.[54] These 'circuses' were comprised of a mixture of burlesque acts, explicit strip teases, and according to some – not for the fainthearted, or those accustomed to well-read and well-traveled young ladies who also happened to be sex workers – acts of bestiality with animals such as dogs and, supposedly, auctions for inexperienced girls' virginities.[55]

Needless to say, these activities would not have been explicitly advertised in the Blue Books; they would have been familiar in pornography. Of course, there were niches in Storyville for those whose tastes were more brutal or unusual, but this does not surface in either souvenir or Blue Books. It comes instead through retrospective accounts, through memories of people left on the fringes such as musicians who were treated like fixtures by clients. Few come from ex-sex workers. Being at the center of a place eventually closed by moral and legal campaigns, where Smith says the 'patina of glamour […] often wore thin very quickly,'[56] they were hardly given credibility after the fact. They were subsumed back into a society that relished their escapades only in select circumstances: perhaps in pornography, or as the cautionary or sensational tale in morning newspapers, or as the villainess or fallen woman of novels. In practice and in person, the 'prostitute' functioned differently.

The District's infamy grew in tandem with stories of its women, who were still often regarded as contagious and deviant. As Smith notes, 'Though marginalized from polite society, Storyville's residents left indelible marks on the city's culture,'[57] and the only question is what sort of 'indelible marks' were left. They were not of the wholesome variety and, further, Platt and Hill explain, 'Although the district was legally sanctioned, many New Orleanians did not agree with its existence.'[58] More importantly, the 'indelible marks' show that power in New Orleans was not exclusively the province of the respectable. In fact, until 1917, some New Orleanian

culture moved from the *demimonde* outward, influencing law as well as popular culture. According to a popular story recounted by several sources, Josie Arlington once bribed the police to raid a Mardi Gras ball held for the wealthiest New Orleans residents and visitors. The issue for Arlington was that this event was taking place near Storyville and, most vitally, her business. As the tale goes, any woman in attendance who could not identify herself as a sex worker was arrested – which benefitted Arlington by leaving a bevy of unattended men free for the taking.[59]

Years later, Piazza, Dix and White[60] worked separately to keep Storyville 'unsegregated,' with the aim that black and mixed-race women could continue to work together in brothels within its limits. As Landau notes,

The 1908 Gay-Shattuck Law […] criminalized interracial fraternizing in bars, saloons, and restaurants, and entrepreneurs applying for permits to operate barrooms had to specify which 'race' they would serve.[61]

In addition to this, 'White segregationist imperatives demanded a stricter adherence to the hardening color line as time went on, and customs that had been part of New Orleans's distinct history came under attack.'[62] Storyville's patrons, however, had already been segregated along racial and social lines; as Jelly Roll Morton remarked, 'No poor men could even get in these mansions,' which would have ruled out many black men at the time, regardless of changes in the law.[63] A black man could, in theory, frequent 'white' Storyville as a customer if he 'passed' as white and possessed enough money, but black, mixed-race and women of color who passed were always one of the tantalizing options available for white men who went to Storyville. If the French Quarter was a fashionable, romantic destination for foreign travelers, it could be expected that some of the men would make their way a few blocks over to Storyville, which locals often called 'Anderson County' in reference to Anderson's extensive investments and affable personal relationships with so many people working in Storyville.[64]

Anderson understandably took to being allied with Storyville far more readily than the unfortunate Alderman Sydney Story, whose planning led to the laws that created the new tenderloin district. Before Storyville, men would have had their choice of a variety of brothels that were not regulated

to one part of the city. After it had been opened they could still seek out cheap, now technically illegal, alternatives that probably most resembled their predecessor, Smoky Row. But as one Storyville Blue Book cautioned its readers:

If you are in the A.B.C. class you want to get a move on yourself […] to do it proper is to read what this little booklet has to say and if you don't get to be a 2 to 1 shot it ain't the author's fault. To eliminate any confusion, it gives the precise boundaries of the young 'Tenderloin District commonly known as Anderson County or Storyville,' which were 'North side Customhouse St. to South side St. Louis and East side N. Basin to West side N. Robertson streets' [*sic*].[65]

Yet in New Orleans – as in any other city – the role of sex worker was significantly more complex than what the newspapers and Blue Books reveal. The resulting, enticing hierarchy of women was not at all simple. It was complicated by ethnicity, age, income, geography, and a host of other factors, and all of these sources only hint at any of them. Some sex workers gained notoriety, wealth, and influence, and as Platt and Hill state, 'Storyville was created as a separate, socially perceived space fueled by capitalism that afforded women in financial need an opportunity to make money.'[66] According to some women, being a sex worker granted them more respect and social mobility than working as, for example, a maid. This was not the kind of opinion that anti-vice reformers wanted the general public to embrace:

I don't say – never did – that whoring is the best way of life, but it's better than going blind in a sweat shop sewing, or twenty hours' work as a kitchen drudge, or housemaid […] Wages were low for women in the town, and no one had much respect for a girl who had to work.[67]

The assertion is echoed by others' tales after Storyville was shut down.

Former sex workers were forced to find new occupations that generally did not pay as well and required longer hours for less pay, under what could be more immediately hazardous conditions. However, one must wonder what their races, appearances, and ages might have been, as well as which sector of Storyville they had worked before: the 'Storyville' that tends to

characterize the district now in popular culture, or the cheaper, 'black' sections that remain more elusive. These were distant from the glitter and monetary power of the mansion brothels; their conditions would not have been favorable. Less was recorded about this side of Storyville because it was saturated by cribs that were the destination of black men, blue-collar workers, and laborers – and cribs did not generate, for example, souvenir books.

The working lives of Storyville women were not as advertised, nor were they portrayed accurately in media tales. In general, they were probably repetitious – like any other working lives. As police records of the era indicate, life could be dangerous.[68] While there was a notable upper caste of madams and other sex workers, many more now-unknown women worked the District. Even the famous women who had taken on a persona for work had to step out of it sometimes; one could hardly be the Miss Lulu White of legend every second. She existed primarily in imagination, not in reality. Until nightfall, Storyville itself virtually projected a persona. It was, when it was not working, nearly sedate; women who worked evenings and nights slept through daylight. If saloons and bars were open, the activities they engaged in during the day were a (slightly) tamer version of those offered at night. There is a distinct distance between how the district and its women were depicted, and how they functioned. But no one wanted to regard Storyville as a destination without its makeup and costume, so to speak. To do so would be to acknowledge its existence as normal, the result of law and practicality. It would also mean acknowledging that sex workers provided services to clients, much like other tradespeople.

By the late nineteenth century, then, the icon of the prostitute was at a turning point. She still proliferated in the media, yet a distinction could be made between the imagined women of the earlier half of the 1800s, and those of the latter. While both were cast as a contagion whose influence had to be contained like a disease, from the middle of the century forward sensuality and independence grew to be a much larger factor in her characterizations. She was not only a disease, but also a scintillating muse, an active agent in her own destruction and that of others. Symbolically, she encompassed a much more 'proactive' sort of deviance, for example, she often engaged in same-sex acts or relationships,[69] or led to the ruin of the men who fell in love with her.[70] This transformation meant that sex work

and pornography were addressed together, with the same terminologies and mythologies behind them. Focus moved from the legal and scientific to the social and ideological; prostitutes represented impetus and active deviance, not just society's ills. They exemplified the potential that women possessed to act outside of the prescribed boundaries of society and, more troublingly, that they might either enjoy or gain from it.

This was echoed in Storyville's print culture, from the newspaper report that sneered at Lulu White for being 'treated too tenderly' by 'the law,' to the souvenir book advertisements that boasted of massive expenses.[71] It was also echoed in the transatlantic mass culture, particularly in 'obscene' publications, that Storyville produced and interacted with; the publication of *Nana* (1880), for example, was preceded and surrounded by both pornographic and prostitute archetypes. Zola's novel might have encapsulated the late nineteenth-century courtesan, but he was not the only author to have offered his interpretations of the trope. *Nana* merely heralded the latest in a slew of novels, some explicit, others less so, which fed into the market for 'racy' plays, pornography, and erotica. Leslie Choquette observes that these were often written in English and capitalized on other aspects of modern culture that were likely to incite interest or fear, such as racism, antisemitism, homophobia, and misogyny:

Five years after the publication of *Nana*, Paul Adam, another of Zola's imitators, invented a lower-class prostitute who resembled Nana […] but who no longer merited a name. His book, entitled *Limp Flesh: Naturalist Novel*, contained only one new twist; the prostitute who initiates our lump of flesh into lesbianism is a Jew.[72]

Thus, eroticism found itself complimented by problematic, racist portrayals of xenophobia and supposed social transgressions – for example, a distrust of people of color and Jews, and a fascination with the idea of same-sex activities as lewd and immoral. Storyville made sure to provide this brand of eroticism.

The 'Indelible Marks' of 'Lewd and Abandoned' Women – Pornography and Print Culture

While there has been sustained debate about what constitutes ‘erotica’ as opposed to the implicitly less-erudite ‘pornography,’ and while there are contentious, stereotyped associations with the subject of women in pornography (or sex work more generally),[73] ‘pornography’ and ‘erotica’ are used interchangeably here. Pornography, and the themes of sex work and sex workers, were so well integrated into popular culture by the late 1800s that there would have been little more ‘ethical’ merit in, for example, *Nana*, than in its explicit pornographic imitators. The old erotic novels written for a higher echelon of consumers were a fixture of the Enlightenment rather than the *fin de siècle*. Still, pornography was consumed by most genders and classes in the cities of the United States, Britain, and France.[74]

Though purchases and preferences were not discussed openly, genres and media were available for a variety of demographics. Michael Millner writes that, from a legal standpoint, ‘it [was] extremely difficult to know what exactly constitut[ed] an obscene print’[75] because so many existed as ‘artistic’ nudes or ‘academic’ studies. Collectively, all were prolific, and Storyville must have offered a vast amount of pornography, even though this is not possible to fully corroborate. During the 1800s, like sex work, pornography was not so much a clandestine industry as it was an open secret that was extremely resistant to categorization or, despite legislative efforts, regulation or eradication, because of how copious and heterogeneous it was. Carolyn Dean writes that

The vagueness of nineteenth-century criteria for pornography is infamous. The British jurist Alexander Cockburn, for example, wrote that pornography ‘deprave[s] and corrupt[s] those whose minds are open to immoral influences,’ and although his nebulous statement gave rise to some debate about the dangers of such imprecise definition, no sources suggest that contemporaries had any doubt about what constituted pornography.[76]

This chapter is most interested in the intersections of general pornographic material with the theme of ‘prostitution’ or pornography about prostitutes (and the presence of sex worker characters in literature and art, which might have led to it being categorized as ‘obscene’), as well as the perceived accessibility and convenience of modeling for pornographic images. These

issues overlapped considerably, and without much conjecture, one can imagine that they found a foothold in Storyville. After all, as Jamie Stoops observes,

In the popular ‘whore biography’ genre, for example, prostitutes recounted their erotic experiences for the reader. As one middle-class author observed, ads offering payment for erotic anecdotes hung in bookshop windows next to copies of popular whore biographies.[77]

‘Whore biographies’ could have influenced Al Rose’s ‘Man About Town,’[78] who apparently recounted his Mahogany Hall escapades (he will be discussed later in Chapter 4); surely they were available in Storyville.

Stoops also asserts that ‘terms used to describe pornography included ‘pestilence,’ ‘plague,’ ‘scourge,’ and ‘pollution,’ all of which imply transmission between individuals or groups.’[79] Prostitutes, pornographers, pornography, and Storyville (not to mention New Orleans itself) were also described with the same terminology: that of a sickness. However, far from being an aspect only of the underworld, they were all part of a very overt public culture. Millner explains that ‘[pornography] unfold[ed] as a popular, even mass cultural form’ in early 1830s America, and continued to be a visible part of mass culture well into the 1900s;[80] this trend was paralleled to varying degrees in Paris and London. Thomas J. Joudrey states that nineteenth-century pornography ‘allow[ed] the presence of certain […] desires that were excluded, suppressed, distorted, and demonized within the major fiction of the century.’[81] This was not, however, quite the case when it came to the figure of the prostitute: her suppression and distortion in fiction led to her continued fascination for the public. In addition, Storyville and so much of that fiction – as well as mass culture more generally – was focused on her. Distinctions between pornography, erotica, and popular culture that was obscene – but not explicitly ‘pornographic’ – were not steadfast if she was at their core. They indicated anything but repression, especially as representations of the prostitute changed to encompass different subversive qualities, such as her ability to appear ‘respectable’ or ensnare both women and men.

This suggests that unspoken attitudes held by the public toward sexuality and even prostitution were not necessarily as ‘demonizing’ or ‘suppressive’

as Joudrey and others maintain, which was exactly why reformists were so adamant to change hearts and minds. Much of the controversy was, after all, about maintaining appearances of – and the safeguards for maintaining – a public propriety that was still integral to many senses of self. Some Progressive activists in New Orleans seemed obsessed with ensuring that there was no racial mixing – this was construed as moral dilution. Within pornography, however, there had been a longstanding trope of – in particular – 'white' men and women with 'black' women. Acknowledging this gives another dimension to why Storyville was so iconoclastic and undesirable: it brought the trope to life.

Many examples exist of black women with white (or pale) women well into the twentieth century, such as Franz von Bayros's drawings, which he completed in the early 1900s, and images by predominately unknown photographers. For example, von Bayros's *Der Rivale* depicts two women, presumably of different races, together. Interestingly, in the case of 'obscene' or *risqué* photographs, there was an assumption that the models were almost always 'fallen women,' a suggestion reiterated by Johnny Wiggs.[82] This is more telling than settling the question of whether or not they were selling sex for money; sex workers and the sex work industry – pornography included, in this instance – were so ideologically intermixed that it was difficult to imagine that any women in pornographic photographs were not also being paid to provide sex. Many sources assert that the connections between pornography and prostitution were far more casual and difficult to separate, indicating their viability as sources of work. Further, early 'obscene' photographs, such as daguerreotypes, were created and sold by a range of professionals or tradespeople, including optometrists, doctors, and commercial photographers like Bellocq, who already had access to the necessary technology.[83]

Additionally, advertisements were put forward in various urban, reasonably public places for models; when necessary, their discreet but loaded language would have been interpreted as a call for models who would be in 'saucy scenes' (i.e., pornography).[84] Not all the women who engaged in this kind of employment were full-time sex workers. Yet 'scenes' ranged from whimsically coy to completely explicit, homosexual and heterosexual and – though they can be separated by chronology as well as genre – catered to almost any imaginable fetish at any given time.

Depictions of heterosexual sex were rife, especially amongst anonymous models and photographers, but these scenes also included many practices derided by polite society, including oral sex, same-sex activity, bondage and sadomasochism (often men being subservient to women), and the use of props or everyday objects with performative pleasure.[85] Conversely, there was a large number of socially acceptable female nudes or 'academic studies' that were erotic yet 'artful' enough to be 'tasteful.' The nude Storyville Portraits may rest in this category.

Given stigmas against sex work and moralistic views of pornography that helped lead to the destruction of many of Storyville's primary source materials, conjecture spurred by the details that exist in remaining ephemera must be considered to explore these ideas. The idea of a woman posing for any of these images, yet not having sex for pay, was still antithetical to 'acceptable' womanhood. Because of this, the prostitute served as a symbolic, fictional mediation between these roles – a 'traditional' sex worker versus a woman who had chosen to model in pornography – although the separations themselves were fading by the twentieth century. Even the means of production and circulation of pornography were not strictly gendered or demarcated. Stoops notes that women oversaw their husbands' business interests if they had been jailed for violating obscenity laws by creating or circulating pornography; wives sold and perhaps also helped create the images themselves.[86] Storyville madams, meanwhile, orchestrated the publication of souvenir books and, most likely, pornography. Landau explains that Lulu White commissioned a series of photographs of herself having sex with a dog in 'the late 1880s or early 1890s.'[87] It is difficult to verify how many women undertook similar projects. But the intersections of self-directed print culture – the Blue or souvenir books, and pornography – with the much more visible trades in Storyville were intricate. Women were involved in key ways. This involvement clashes with the narratives of the forced 'white slave,' not least of which because Storyville's women were not all white, and not all forced into sex work.

Overall, what the 'prostitute' signified in this context of prolific pornography and 'obscenity' was a willing mobility and willful movement from social outcast to social norm. While she might have been part of a subculture and a *demimonde*, she was present in the 'daylight' world, too,

as *The Mascot* implied with its illustration of Emma Johnson and the accompanying report. Johnson was also allied with homosexuality and pornography – which were corrupting forces. However, sex workers and pornography were already public. Ironically, these efforts had normalized the prostitute as much as they picked out her difference; by making pornography and the prostitute a fixture – even if only as warnings – in a popular culture that also promoted tourism, they tried to diffuse her influence but reinforced her potential to fascinate. She was also, once again, allied with other women who were 'outsiders' – artists' models, actresses, and single promiscuous women, which implied a fear of the loss of cultural propriety almost more than it implied sexual impropriety alone. After all, the wealthiest madams could afford beautiful houses in respectable New Orleans neighborhoods. As Coleman notes, Josie Arlington's house drew curious people after her death, so the sex trade, public spectacle, and tourism collided again, though with a different effect; the house was relocated to a new street.[88]

Depictions of Collateral Damage?

There were differences between sex worker and madam-instigated representations of themselves and media representations of prostitutes and prostitution. However, these topics and their respective narrators or creators all prompted production and consumption, including the production and consumption of pornographic literature and images. Amongst both representations in the Blue Books and New Orleans's print and mass cultures, though, Bellocq's portraits are unique. Discussions of these media accentuate how, particularly within New Orleans, his work is unusual for not supplying us with tangible evidence of a practical or economic purpose. It does not have the same strong, identifiable pattern of intent as these other contemporaneous materials – for example, it does not seem to target any particular group of consumers or viewers.

Without the context and assumptions provided by the Storyville Portraits as a collective set of works, viewers would not say that Plate 9 is a photograph of a 'prostitute.' In fact, had it not been rediscovered with them, there would be no reason to assume it was meant to be included amongst nude or traditionally *risqué* portraits. Indeed, as Laura Thomson writes,

there are effectively ‘three categories of image’ amongst the entire group – an idea that is useful especially for the sake of interpreting the portraits with more precision than has been previously afforded to them.[89] The woman in Plate 9 wears her ‘Sunday best’ attire: a lacy, light dress with a high collar and elbow-length sleeves. Even without an accompanying hat, the effect is demure and ‘respectable.’ She stands outside on the grass and in front of a tall hedge, looking away from the camera with a small, calm smile. Unlike most of Bellocq’s portraits, this was taken outdoors and evidently not directly near a building in Storyville.

Plate 9 flouts both the self-representative and media portrayals of sex workers. However, since it has been interpreted as the portrait of a ‘prostitute,’ it is entrenched in clichés; among others, that the woman could not look like ‘other’ women, and this was a rare moment that Bellocq captured or was evoking for the purposes of a photograph. In actuality, like other early twentieth-century sex workers, she would have dressed this way on many occasions while she was not at work. Susan Sontag writes that ‘at least a third’ of Bellocq’s models do not look like prostitutes, and the model in Plate 9 is a particularly strong instance of Sontag’s observation.[90] This, then, begs the question of what ‘the inmates of a brothel,’ as she writes, are supposed to be like. We find our answers in newspapers, pornography, and the Blue Books.[91] In the end, we can surmise that what this means: they are exotic, tempting and without a doubt ‘sinful.’ Even in the early twentieth century there were still visual cues that signified and represented ‘respectable’ femininity, though they were changing, so a young woman standing outside in a modest, delicate lace dress would not summon the word ‘prostitute’ to mind.

However, it is important to remember that Bellocq was first and foremost a commercial photographer, so any photographs he took in Storyville relied upon this expertise. His usual work encompassed school portraits for First Communions[92] and being called to give ‘expert’ evidence for ‘the celebrated case of State of Louisiana against the State of Mississippi, with relation to a settlement by the courts of the oyster boundary line between these two states.’[93] Although I argue, as others have, that Bellocq must have had a personal concern for the women he photographed, perhaps the Storyville Portraits that look so surprisingly mundane – especially one like Plate 9 – are better framed as part of his

‘commercial’ continuum of daily work, rather than part of his ‘*risqué*’ or ‘artistic’ work. Plate 9 is not a woman’s studio portrait. But it is an offhand snapshot, the kind of portrait a photographer could take for his friend if she asked him.

Plate 9 underscores how false the lines between ‘morality’ and ‘immorality’ are by erasing common pictorial and ideological boundaries between the two categories, especially if this woman was indeed a sex worker. But within many of Bellocq’s known portraits, there are no definitive reminders that can be used to conclude that the women are – yet their portraits are included with images of women in a state of *déshabillé*. Though *The Mascot*, for example, implies that the boundaries between vice and respectable life are thin, it does this through shock and for a different effect. Bellocq muddles the supposed boundaries almost unwittingly or carelessly. For example, at least three of his photographs show women playing with or holding their dogs – in one, a woman sits in her underclothes with a happy dog on her lap. Behind them is a white sheet that seems to have been placed as a background for other photographs. The presence of incidental details like the sheet indicates that the point of these particular images was not to advertise Storyville, or be printed as titillating cabinet cards.

However, the fact that these models are not so much posing as sitting with their pets is also significant. If, for instance, bestiality was present in Storyville as rumored and claimed, and since contemporary illustrators, authors, and photographers did go so far as to depict women in sexual situations with animals, the same themes could be shown in these portraits – if that is what Bellocq intended. Instead, we see photographs of women who also happen to be Storyville’s sex workers and they are enjoying time with their pet dogs. There are no suggestions of sexual proclivities or sex more generally. With the exception of the women being in their underclothing (and in these images, it is being worn less like lingerie and more like a rough equivalent of today’s loungewear), there is nothing else to hint at the women’s occupation, or what society thinks of them and their work. It is almost as though Bellocq is not concerned with depicting this overtly.

Bellocq was certainly aware of the prevalent newspapers, magazines, and Blue Books. These saturated his home city as much as tourists did.

Representations of prostitution and of sex workers had been part of discourses about New Orleans for generations, and their presence only intensified in new ways during the late nineteenth century. As *The Mascot* said in the headline on the cover of its 11 June 1892 edition, there was, and had been, a decided 'Plague of Prostitutes' in New Orleans.[94] No doubt this history was part of Storyville's prelude when politicians and citizens attempted to address and contain the single vice that monopolized so much of their concern even in comparison to other sins like drinking, gambling, and smoking opium. Platt and Hill note that by 1913, only four years before it was officially shut down in 1917, 'Storyville was described as a den of labored captivity, vice and depravity' in 'Prostitution, an Appeal.'[95] Bellocq conveys nothing that might echo what the 'Appeal' rails against; his women are, in a word, normal, and not at all frightening or monstrous. They are often awkwardly posed. They appear wan, bored, unoccupied, sometimes amused, and at other times resigned. What the varying moods of his work might reflect most is the timeline of Storyville itself – these women's timelines – rather than any individual or premeditated commentary.

The 'Appeal' also contradicted Nell Kimball's claim that the more affluent madams would meet to discuss their 'girls' and businesses. She implies that their employees worked willingly, even if they were not working joyfully, but the features deplored in 'Prostitution, an Appeal' were hinted at even in 1883's 'Townsend Tragedy.' The key difference is that vice – shown as a descent into prostitution – and depravity – the violent actions of a crazed ex-lover – were used to create a stirring morality tale instead of political or legal impetus. The passage of time had witnessed a shift in representation and practice; Storyville was now a thriving economy and tourist lure to New Orleans, an absolute antithesis of what Alderman Story intended when he proposed its creation. Some of its madams dined with (or were married to) local politicians. They were all members of a community, and that community gained a decided social edge.

Bellocq did not either reflect, or actively confront, the representations of Storyville and prostitutes in local and transatlantic media. His works do not quite fit all the accepted narratives of their subjects, but this iconoclasm is never fully intentional. They also never replicate the same level of finery and self-awareness that is present in the souvenir booklets, or the pitch of alarm and sensationalism in newspapers and magazines. There is something

nebulously amiss about the portraits. In details as varied as out of focus mirrors in the corner of the frame, or a crooked mask that skews across a woman's eye, a sense of unease often manifests. Some of this unease can be attributed to the portraits' settings; Bellocq worked indoors more than he did outside, although some of his photographs show brick courtyards, wooden sidings, and glimpses of gardens. Presumably, when his models are indoors, they are in their respective workplaces (which, for some of the women, might have also been where they lived, depending on how well-off they were). While it is a possibility, no current evidence suggests that they went to his studio. Indeed, at least two people who supposedly knew him have stated that they could not remember Bellocq ever being without his camera – and this was apparently true of his habits later in life – which supports the idea that he traveled the short way to the district, rather than having women travel to him.[96]

Indoors, the women, who are often nude or nearly nude, become more subversive. Popular culture espoused a view that prostitutes were always insidious in some manner, but the way that Bellocq uses these indoor spaces destabilizes their usual, intentional uses and directly challenges how interiors were understood by the *fin de siècle* public, which would have been more provocative. One implication of all the mansion brothels was precisely that you could be as comfortable as you were at home; in fact, you could be more comfortable than you were at home – and become more cultured – while you were being 'entertained.' As an advertisement for the Arlington read, it was:

Absolutely and unquestionably the most decorative and costly fitted out sporting palace ever placed before the American public. The wonderful originality of everything that goes to fit out a mansion makes it the most attractive ever seen in this and the old country. […] Within the great walls of the Arlington will be found the work of great artists from Europe and America. Many articles from the Louisiana Purchase Exposition will also be seen.[97]

Storyville customers had grown to expect the perversion of a woman's place in the interior. But it would be another matter entirely to be confronted with the images of naked women, sex workers or not, in settings that were dangerously close to the domestic. The rooms he chooses to

photograph sex workers in are incredibly mundane. Bellocq also never foregrounds his portraits as part of, or from, Storyville, which may not have been intentional. It does, however, create a paradoxical sense of displacement, even though some of the portraits contain small nods to Louisiana, like university pennants and postcards. Their lack of a published presence also adds to their ability to unsettle. After all, some of the main concerns over prostitution were its visibility – thus its supposed ability to percolate outward to influence the rest of society – and these concerns were visible in mass culture.

As such, perhaps the most striking element of the portraits is that they do not always try to represent the women as, first, prostitutes and, second, prostitutes who interact with the city. They feel sealed off and segmented, moments isolated from the hypersexual, racist rhetoric, and outrageous performances of Storyville. Though some of the women are naked, this is not wholly tantamount to a sexual performance. Nudity alone was not what sold anything in the district. Because of the subtext of nude women being inside otherwise innocuous rooms, the 'finite' margins between respectable conduct and vice are shown to be false. Storyville Blue Book advertisements were overt about the finery present in the brothels and so were newspapers; customers expected luxury and safety in the district.

Without accompanying explanations or appearances, however, the portraits become an exercise in impropriety and strangeness. There is no evident motivation or reason for them. In comparison to people like Kate Townsend, Tom Anderson, Emma Johnson, Gertrude Dix, Josie Arlington, and Lulu White (with whom he could have been most affiliated), Bellocq is more enigmatic. His portraits share the same ambiguity as their maker, and lead to more questions than actual answers. Though the images taken indoors could ally with some contemporaneous pornography, for example, they still resist fully having that categorization, again because of their details rather than overarching or intentional themes. They do not interrupt the status quo of Storyville representations because they are sharply critical, or because they try to 'save' the women by taking an opinion against their work, for example.

Yet they are interruptive, and allow us to question established histories because of their vagueness. Even in the wake of so many sources calling prostitution lewd, and demanding a re-examination of the prevalence of

vice in New Orleans (as in many 'great' cities around the Western world, especially ones that were also port cities), the photographs remain calm, in a sense. They are also ambivalent; there is nothing about them that either incriminates vice, or supports it outright. The latter is especially unexpected, particularly if one considers any potential links between Bellocq, Storyville, and all the various madams that inhabited the district. If his portraits always employed the women as pornographic models, that would be more explainable; it would make some sense in the wake of the cultural products and discourses about and within Storyville itself. Additionally, if they were used in Blue Books with or as the advertisements, that would suggest another business interest on Bellocq's part. But overall they remain a murmur under the mainstream hum and represent an alternative view of sex work in Storyville. His portraits underscore, however implicitly, that the *demimonde*'s culture was more than what manifested in concrete visual or textual documents. Together, the portraits might represent Storyville outside of its public persona.

Erotic as they sometimes are, they still provide a foil to the façades of the madams and 'girls.' Bellocq's models do not appear to be the glamorous, 'handsome and intelligent Octaroons' of Willie Piazza's,[98] or *The Mascot's* outlandish and poisonous 'procuresses.'[99] They are anonymous and unguarded, reminders that for whatever happened in Storyville publicly and was recorded, we possess only an incomplete knowledge, and there are always untold stories. Some of these might have been jarring tales, like the supposed crimes in Smoky Row. Others might have been more quotidian, the daily, mundane happenings in any neighborhood. A few could have fallen under both categories. In spite of its high profile, Storyville functioned because of desires and events that were not considered topics fit for polite society. It was assumed that it was better for an attempt at containment to be made, and so officials tried. Within this flawed infrastructure there were things that happened only to be disregarded. Bellocq's portraits also remind us that, despite their 'normalcy,' many of the women he depicted, as well as their (his) friends, colleagues, or lovers, became collateral damage in the moralist conflicts that criminalized them.

2

The 'White Slave' and the Question of Ambiguity

The Storyville Portraits existed at the turn of the twentieth century amidst tensions regarding how 'prostitutes' were represented. By then, some significant American artists, such as John Sloan and George Bellows of the 'Ashcan School' in New York City, started to portray them without traditional, moralistic markers of their role. This chapter investigates how representations of sex workers in New York and New Orleans were impacted by narratives of the prostitute as a victim of white slavery, which erased the idea of sex work while it deflected focus from the most vulnerable demographics of women, including working-class black women and women of color. Conversely, newer, much more ambiguous representations of sex work reflected the facts of living in a city: that there were single women and sex workers who existed more openly and casually than they had in the 1800s. Through the 'Ashcanners' and Sloan especially, notable aspects of Bellocq's visual arc can be traced.

Neither explicit nor chaste, Bellocq's portraits are similar, unceremonious portrayals of women whose 'independent behavior' – even apart from their occupations – as Rebecca Zurier and Robert W. Snyder have written, would have been 'branded as vulgar, deviant, or unwomanly.'[1] Set against the backdrop of a New Orleans fraught with arguments against miscegenation (illegal under American federal law) and 'white slavery' – while, ironically, white women in particular were experiencing more public freedoms – Bellocq's reluctance to overtly classify women as 'prostitutes' becomes one of his portraits' most distinctive qualities. They still evoke associations with sex, yet function within a whirl of, to borrow from John X. Christ's analysis of Sloan's paintings of women, 'slippery' contemporary identities; namely, sexual and

cultural identities.[2] As Snyder explains, ‘Sex roles […] were being played out in a kind of interregnum, in which the old ways were fading but the new ways were not entirely clear.’[3] Alongside the fact that urban women were exploring more public ways of being, the sustained worry about ‘white slavery’ was only strengthened by concerns over shifting gender roles and white power.

‘White slavery’ was used as a blanket term for both sex work and sex slavery, with there being no difference established between the two from reformists’ – though perhaps not the public’s – perspectives. As a theme, it was prolific in mass media as well as political discourse. Yet skepticism toward these narratives did exist. Some of the Ashcanners purposefully portrayed an aspect of this ‘interregnum’ through their images of women. So did Bellocq, unwittingly. They represented a far different view from the ones normally granted; these changes were part of an ordinary urban experience, and were not symptomatic of either social catastrophe or sexual depravity. Overall, the Ashcanners’ images of women triangulate Bellocq’s portraits as images that were not anomalous, but were part of a shift in modern representations of women, sex, and sex work. Though the Portraits were not purposefully works of art, satires, or trenchant social commentaries, they nonetheless possess subversive qualities. They need to be contextualized and understood within larger transatlantic contexts for their more destabilizing aspects to be explored. There are three key threads in this analysis: interpretations of ‘types’ of women, the white slavery scare in popular culture, and the uncertainties of modern city life. These intersect and impact readings of the Storyville Portraits. They also predetermined interpretations of working-class sex workers and sex workers of color in the 1900s.

The first section establishes the idea of white slavery as it was understood in New York City and manifested in its popular media. This is compared with the reception of the concept in New Orleans. Then there is discussion of the ambiguities present in the Storyville Portraits – of ‘moral’ identities, especially – using Ashcanners’ and Sloan’s images of women to demonstrate how old visual differences between vulgarity and acceptability were fading. Without intimating that we can, or would need to, retrieve the intentions that motivated the Storyville Portraits, viewing them within frameworks inspired by other images of women that blurred the distinctions

between ‘kinds’ of women accounts for how unembellished they are. I am less concerned with whether we should focus on Bellocq as ‘an artist’ who has been excluded from, or misrepresented by, art historical canons, and most interested in the heterogeneous emotions and meanings in the portraits.[4] Investigating this ‘visual arc’ allows for us to preserve the enigmas in Bellocq’s photographs and lets them function as the images’ key revelatory qualities.

‘Degrees to Which a Woman could be Considered Fallen’: White Slavery Scares and Sloan’s *Three A.M.*

The notion of ‘white slavery’ garnered impassioned responses elsewhere in America and the Western world. But fascination with the subject reached an especially intense manifestation in New York City during the years leading up to World War I.[5] While vice during this time was being tenaciously combatted in many American cities, for most Americans the epicenter for this battle, or at least the most emblematic US city where vice was being contested, was New York City. Shelley Stamp Lindsay explains, ‘Local panic escalated sharply in 1909 when *McClure’s* magazine published an exposé of vice trafficking and police corruption in Manhattan penned by muckraker George Kibbe Turner,’ and this further primed the nation for a slew of films and plays that capitalized on the trope of ‘white slavery.’[6] In turn, these were often adapted from novels such as Reginald Wright Kauffman’s *The House of Bondage* (1910), which ensured the presence of an eager audience already accustomed to the jarring blend of moralistic rhetoric – even the title comes from Bible verses[7] – and supposedly covert sensual gratification.[8] The inverse was also true, with fashionable plays like George Scarborough’s *The Lure* (1914) inspiring novels that were internationally popular.[9]

There was a growing sense that the market for these entertainments was motivated most by a keen fetishization of vice rather than a desire to eradicate it, which posed a complication to the reformist rhetoric that it should be completely erased from American life. In the summer of 1913, the *New York Times* declared that so-called ‘brothel plays’ were ‘veiled thinly with the pretense of deploring the social evil’ but ‘their real purpose

[was] to hold it up to morbid eyes.'[10] Theatres and cinemas possessed stimulating and visual qualities that apparently proved more dangerous than print; the fact that 'white slave films' took in many female spectators deeply troubled activists and reporters.[11] While it was true that women could always just read the novels on which the films and plays were based, blurred boundaries between public entertainment and private lives caused no small amount of disquiet. Not coincidentally, white slavery's value as a persuasive device was questioned in reformist circles at this time because of its massive popularity and presence in 'questionable' media.

As Mara L. Keire observes, Wirt Hallam, based in Chicago, and Frederick Whitin, based in New York, did not agree on using 'sensational stories' from either the news or popular culture to further their initiatives. Their concerns were characteristic of many similar discussions:

> Wirt Hallam, a Chicago white slavery activist, and Frederick Whitin […] were both passionately committed to closing vice districts, but in their correspondence they argued about the value of white slavery narratives in the campaign against commercialized vice. Hallam advocated telling lurid tales of wasted youth, while Whitin touted the power of a tempered legalism. Both Hallam and Whitin believed that sensational stories would arouse human sympathy but Whitin feared that these stories would discredit anti-vice reformers.[12]

Journalism – even in its muckraking forms – did not problematize white slavery for all reformists in a useful way by rendering it useful as a didactic tool. However, the trope's popularity in fiction, stage, and cinema did mean that it became part of public knowledge and fears; these were all media consumed by rising numbers of women. With its film and theatre industries, New York functioned as an epicenter for the production of white slavery imaginaries, and its thriving sex work industries flourished alongside popular entertainment venues. There was a strong and not at all unfounded sense that women were avid consumers of these representations – fictions that, according to newspapers, deceptively served as proxies for the real thing. However, with sex work being so commonplace in New York, one wonders how much of the chagrin directed toward white slavery overall was really the sublimated desire, as Christopher Diffee writes, 'To police

working-class female sexuality in particular and working-class culture more broadly'[13] and, as ever, conflate consensual sex work with trafficking.

Compared to New York's fascination with white slavery as an undermining, sensationalized force that had the potential to entice women into a life of vice, New Orleans had more specific concerns motivated by the South's entrenched racism. It was already accustomed to the thought of chattel slavery. Still, the intense concerns over 'white slavery' had crept into its consciousness, as well. By 1908, a new main rail terminus was completed and it was very close to Storyville, which caused an uproar amongst those already opposed to the red-light district's noticeable prominence in city life. Women who were active in reformist politics were especially offended. Emily Epstein Landau writes that 'vociferous female moral reformers in New Orleans,' among them Jean Gordon, were 'worried that the Terminal Station would serve as a recruitment ground for procurers looking for young girls from the countryside.'[14] In effect, they were worried about sex work's – which they understood only as criminal prostitution or sex slavery – impact on white women and girls.

The city's 'most prominent women's reform and suffrage organization, the Era Club, convened a committee to investigate the conditions of vice,' writes Landau, which led to the founding of the Travelers' Aid Society of New Orleans.[15] This society was devoted to protecting women in a continued crusade against the intertwined evils of miscegenation and prostitution. It was now armed with the momentum of a growing, national – in some regards, transatlantic – anti-vice movement.[16] Although many national and international reformists could not agree on how to, or even if they should, use languages provided by the popular culture visions of white slavery, similar frameworks were readily accepted by female reformers in New Orleans who sought to preserve the perceived purity (and superiority) of their whiteness and social class.

In this way, they hoped to combat Storyville – which still slyly and knowingly drew on the expansive, erotic melodrama provided not only by white slavery, but also the narratives of the 'tragic' octoroon among other tropes – and foster a proactive stance against vice in their city. Themes that were used to entice cinema and theatre patrons in New York in particular, and the North more generally, were being fiercely fought over in the

Southern city. For New Orleans, the tropes of white slavery and bondage possessed unique, real complexities – the largest of these being that madams and their 'girls' employed Orientalist, sensationalist, and sensualist stereotypes to market themselves successfully.[17] Iterations of what served as fodder for films in New York just sounded like stories from Storyville.

New York, of course, was not without vast numbers of both full-time and more 'casual' sex workers. But, despite prostitution's prevalence in New York, writes Lindsay, a naïve belief still existed that 'film versions of the slave trade offered what no other medium could: an actual glimpse into the city's brothels and red-light districts' – when, in fact, many New Yorkers had already taken this 'actual glimpse,' as we can observe in contemporary visual and print media.[18] The press and local politicians were worried precisely because sex work had become so commonplace, not because citizens had never paid a sex worker or otherwise been near them. They were not singular, alien individuals; they were neighbors, friends, and acquaintances.

Despite the pervasiveness of white slavery fictions and beliefs about both the 'prostitute' and especially working-class women, images created by John Sloan and George Bellows – such as their illustrations for *The Masses*, a socialist magazine – belied skepticism toward the fervor cultivated by the lurid 'brothel play' trends. As Snyder and Zurier observe:

The ferment accompanying [social] changes was a difficult subject, and not all of the Ashcan artists addressed it directly […] Of the six artists, Sloan and Bellows, who tended to seek more socially complicated subjects, were especially inspired to create art that addressed the changing relations between men and women.[19]

Their art countered the generally militant and alarmist stances of Progressive Era reformists toward prostitution. Regardless of how individual reformists chose to interact with and address popular culture, the city was embroiled in complex changes in thought and policy that impacted women. In particular, working-class women were considered most at risk of turning to prostitution, and their families' welfare constantly provoked concern. Still, sex work was not regarded as a viable way for mothers to avoid economic hardship.

Closely allied with anti-prostitution sentiment was the desire to improve these family units and their respective wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters. Diffee states:

Only after the turn of the century was the working-class residence seen as a family at all, undoubtedly menaced by vice, intemperance, pauper-ism, delinquency, and immorality, but nonetheless an institution deserving of assistance and advice.[20]

This was a marked change from what he terms 'the unilateral dismemberment' of households that often occurred in the 1870s and 1880s, when children were taken from parents deemed to be unfit by regulatory societies and placed 'into middle-class families or properly administered foster homes.'[21] The shift in perception did not, however, mean that women were always better respected as being able to oversee their own family lives, or that there was a larger variety in their representations.

While very select aspects of life had improved for working-class women, they were still believed to be most susceptible to vice. Long points out how 'in this era, most Americans understood vice to include several objectionable activities, including prostitution, gambling and the intemperate use of alcohol,'[22] and these were all supposedly 'objectionable activities' that were most often taken up by poorer classes. As such, working-class women's participation in, or proximity to, 'vice' was still a major source of worry. In 1913, it led the *New York Times* to lament that media, and particularly films, were definitely pouring 'oil upon the flames of vice,' and not helping to curtail it.[23] About a month later, the pronouncement was made that film 'tends to deprave the morals of those whose minds are open to such influences.'[24] The fact that more young women found themselves working outside the home and engaging with popular entertainment in cinemas, theaters, and dancehalls kindled concern, too; they had far less familial and community supervision than previous generations of girls.

'One of the most disturbing aspects to the general public about America's transition from a rural to an urban economy was that thousands of girls were leaving the watchful eye of parents and small-town neighbors,' writes Suzanne L. Kinser, 'and streaming into the cities to seek

employment.'[25] As Kinser remarks, vulnerable young women being pressed into sex slavery or otherwise exploited was a focal point in popular fiction before the wide advent of white slave films and plays, with Stephen Crane's *Maggie, Girl of the Streets* (1893) and Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1901) expressing, as she writes, sharp 'unease' with their heroines' plights in the city.[26] Though they were sympathetic and written with an aim toward informing and potentially reforming the reader politically, these novels reaffirmed anxieties instead of offering a critical, or at least less dramatized, portrayal of women and sex work, or of sex slavery and human trafficking.[27]

However, dissenting depictions of both single women and sex workers began to surface in New York during the 1900s, largely because of the number of sex workers present in working-class neighborhoods and the rise of leftist politics on either side of the Atlantic. Emma Goldman pointed out what others gestured towards in their more sympathetic, less moralistic art, illustrations, and photographs. Referencing George Bernard Shaw's play *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (written in 1893, and first performed in 1902),[28] she said:

With Mrs. Warren these girls feel, 'Why waste your life working for a few shillings a week in a scullery, eighteen hours a day?' […] Whether our reformers admit it or not, the economic and social inferiority of woman is responsible for prostitution.[29]

Bellows and Sloan, apart from the 'Ashcan' artists who were unified by their affinity for portraying and exploring what Zurier outlines as 'commerce, the city's diverse population, changing mores and above all looking' provide the most intriguing examples of these less-judgmental, not-sensationalized images.[30]

Shifting sexual values and a preoccupation with observing – for looking without necessarily judging or imposing didactic plots – are key qualities in their depictions of sex workers and women in general. Overall, Zurier explains, the combined presence of these themes amounted to a new visual ambiguity, one result of New York's 'representational challenge to visitors and natives alike' that the Ashcanners were negotiating and interpreting in their art.[31] Sloan created many images of contemporary, urban women that

can be used to reinterpret Bellocq's Storyville Portraits. Sloan's work was often without moralist overtones, like Bellocq's, yet it was indicative of more voyeuristic tendencies – a quality that is useful in underscoring how Bellocq does not spy on his models or simulate that pretense.

'In 1892,' writes Janice M. Coco:

John Sloan joined Robert Henri's circle of artist-reporters from the *Philadelphia Enquirer*, including William Glackens, George Luks, and Everett Shinn. After moving to New York City, these artists comprised part of The Eight – a group that later expanded into the popularly-known Ashcan School.[32]

Artists of 'The Eight,' then eventually the 'Ashcan School,' tended to make realist depictions of modern New York influenced by their respective backgrounds in painting, etching, illustration, printmaking, and journalism. As Coco notes, 'True to their nineteenth-century predecessors Winslow Homer and Thomas Eakins, these artists preferred representational realism.'[33] This proved to be a marked resistance to the established aesthetic 'hierarchy of the National Academy of Design,' because 'prior to the 1913 Armory Show, the first major exhibition of European Modernism in America, Henri's "gang" distinguished itself as a revolutionary force.'[34]

Along with being part of this new 'revolutionary force' of artists, Sloan was also active in the Socialist Party. Between 1912 and 1914, he was the art editor of *The Masses*. Sloan's politics influenced his depictions of (frequently working and middle-class) women. However, I am interested in the visuality of these images and how Sloan depicts aspects of modern, 1900s womanhood that are sensual and should be private. He called himself an 'incorrigible window watcher,'[35] but his work was often non-judgmental toward 'unorthodox' women. Bellocq did not engage in the same kind of voyeurism as Sloan, but because of his interest in depicting sex workers, his portraits inevitably prompt concerns over consent and exploitation.

These dynamics are crucial for nuanced considerations of Bellocq's work. They can help demonstrate the 'realism' of the Storyville Portraits – this realism separates them from salacious tales of white slavery while connecting them to a fractious, contemporaneous American visual culture pioneered by the Ashcanners and their ilk. It is also crucial to note

Bellocq's lack of voyeurism compared to Sloan, who portrayed women of similar appearances at the same moment in American history. Coco elaborates on Sloan's voyeuristic dimension by explaining:

The rear window of [Sloan's] west twenty-third street studio furnished him with intimate views of tenement life […] Sloan used binoculars to watch his subjects within their private spaces.[36]

By recalling these 'intimate views of tenement life,' Sloan created images such as *Turning Out the Light* (1905), an etching from his series *New York City Life* (1905–6). In *Turning Out the Light*, which Coco writes was deemed 'too *risqué*' even though *New York City Life* was met overall with 'critical acclaim,'[37] a woman reaches over to turn out a light while looking at her male companion lounging in bed. The scene is enigmatic and sensual; the woman is dressed in a voluminous, sleeveless nightgown, and her stockings hang over the bedframe as though she has just removed them. She is smiling and seems unrushed, while her companion also appears to be at his leisure. There are no details to specify whether this is a married couple, an unmarried couple, or a sex worker and client. Nevertheless, both the man and woman in *Turning Out the Light* are comfortable with their situation.

Other examples of Sloan's work, such as *Bachelor Girl* (1915), portray similar rooms and women, though without explicit companionship. *Bachelor Girl* suggests a relationship or the woman's desire for one in its details – the title does hint at her availability, but the possibility that the woman could attract someone to bring home is equally evident in the way she considers her dress, holding it before her, and the coat and hat resting on her bed. They are all clothes and accessories to be worn in public. Again, we have no indication of her marital or relationship status; viewers know only that this is a woman in her bedroom. Both *Bachelor Girl* and *Turning Out the Light* share many qualities in common with Bellocq's portraits; they do not give viewers strict narratives, they do feature details of modernity – for example, bedframes, electric lights, or evidence of electricity being fitted to the rooms, modes of dress – and do not impose moralist, negative judgments on their subjects.

Sloan's sense of spying, as much as the similarities between his work and Bellocq's, also highlights how much the Storyville Portraits –

especially the nudes – can be reexamined. Although the portraits do indicate Bellocq's interest in looking at his models, they do not suggest that he felt compelled or entitled enough to observe them without their consent. Sloan takes pleasure in depicting both the women in *Turning Out the Light* and *Bachelor Girl*; he gives them a curvaceous charm. However, this pleasure takes a different turn in *Prone Nude* (1913), which portrays a nude woman on her stomach. Her face is hidden from view – it rests on her arms, which are crossed under her head. Without context, the scene raises many questions; she could be asleep, yet the nudity gives viewers pause, especially since Sloan provides no indication of where the woman rests and nothing else is visible, except for her body and the sheet beneath her. Although Sloan often depicts small interiors, *Prone Nude* is more claustrophobic, free of minutiae, and dark except for the light falling on the woman's body; viewers have no sense of a room around her. Unlike other instances of his work, including his 1913 painting *Prone Nude (Nude Lying Down)*, *Prone Nude* expresses voyeurism in a potentially more sinister manner. Due to the woman's position, spectators are presented with her entire back and the side of one of her breasts. At first glance, *Prone Nude* is nothing more than a study, but it is invitational and suggestive in a manner that Sloan's tenement scenes are not. Without anything else present in the frame, we are forced to focus on her body. However, the most well-known of Sloan's work is far more rooted in recognizable tenements and streets. His refusal to sensationalize these circumstances (although he does idealize the women somewhat because they are young and conventionally attractive) jarred his contemporary audience.

In 1910, about a year after Kibbe's piece about vice and police corruption was published in *McClure's* magazine – and two years after New Orleans witnessed the completion of the new rail terminus next to its thirteen-year-old vice district – Sloan submitted a painting of two women for an exhibition by the National Academy of Design.[38] He mused wryly that the submission would have the shocking effect of 'a pair of men's drawers slipped into an old maid's laundry.'[39] Abstrusely titled *Three A.M.*, his painting depicts two women in a small tenement apartment in the tenderloin district. One woman is stylishly dressed, sitting at a table with a mug of tea or coffee in hand. The other is in a white shift while she cooks a meal and enjoys a cigarette. We know from Sloan's diary that he watched

these women through their window before he completed the painting, but we can surmise very little about them from his portrayal alone.

He was unsure whether they were sex workers, and he observed two different men in the apartment on separate occasions.[40] Among other things, this suggests that both women could have had partners. It also reveals that if they were sex workers, they probably did not entertain clients where they lived. Sloan only noted the presence of two men, and practicing prostitution from within a private dwelling was illegal – though not, of course, unheard of. Crucially, though, this situation emphasizes the indeterminacy of many urban women's statuses, while it also reveals Sloan's interest in observing women without their knowledge.

Old ways of identifying 'prostitutes' had become ineffective despite police efforts, because the work and social habits of working-class women, in particular, had changed. Some readings of the painting assert that these women are, though, undeniably sex workers. Kinser firmly states:

It is apparent that the critics of the day […] could hardly have overlooked the fact that the seated woman, sipping a cup of tea, is a prostitute. Indeed, the other woman, who is busily engaged in cooking her a meal, would appear to be one also.[41]

While there are plausible reasons for assuming this, such as the thought that the seated woman's hat appears to have just been placed on the chair opposite her – implying that she has returned from work or being out – or the day's belief that only immoral (or avant-garde) women smoked, there are as many to problematize the interpretation. Schreiber, however, helpfully notes, 'Other scholars have agreed that numerous readings […] are possible, none more conclusive than the other.'[42] She proposes that instead of focusing on who the painting is, or is not, portraying and assuming that determining this identity dictates its political or thematic value: 'Sloan's intended ambiguity is precisely the political message of this painting.'[43] *Three A.M.'s* undeniable narrative vagueness is perhaps its most important quality, more so than any of the scholastic arguments that the women it depicts are, or are not, sex workers.

Sloan's painting was influenced by the growing social discomfort with women's increasingly hard-to-read roles, and it challenged that discomfort

by depicting women in an ambiguous situation. There are no definitive markers of status or profession, but there are heavy suggestions without confirmations. Instead, viewers must trick themselves into creating artificial closure to resolve their confusion. It is as though Sloan is testing the thought that 'reformers might have […] encouraged the belief that single women in the city must be prostitutes,' writes Schreiber.[44] This was an assertion encouraged by the fear that single women who moved to, and lived in, the city would come to harm. But it created contrived reassurance and that deviant women could be identified. Of course, this was extremely evocative of earlier beliefs in phrenology and pathology, because making the deduction still relied on reading markers of marital and social status.

Yet, for the first time during the 1900s, Christ notes, 'there were degrees to which a woman could be considered fallen.'[45] Sloan counters the presumption that women could be 'typed,' writes Schreiber:

By giving us a variety of possibilities, demonstrating that one should proceed with caution before making assumptions regarding these women and how they earn their living. In so doing, he also acknowledges that working-class women were exploring their sexualities in ways that challenged traditional values.[46]

By acknowledging these explorations, he offers an alternative view of the working-class woman and, depending on the readings of his respective images, the 'prostitute.' His drive to present this alternative may have had much to do with the fact that his first wife, Dolly, had been a sex worker[47] and was an 'active suffragist.'[48] But his perspective was not 'characterized by arguments that the problem was less a matter of personal sin than of societal forces requiring systemic legislation,' either.[49] It did not give in to 'the intensity of public hysteria over the "white slave trade," manifest in the establishment of several government investigatory commissions and the popularity of the subject in film and the press.'[50]

Intersecting Taboos

In New Orleans, meanwhile, the sexual abuses and implications of slavery had never mellowed or left public consciousness. Earlier in the nineteenth century, the words 'white slavery' could imply the enslavement of 'white' individuals. This situation was exemplified and made especially of interest to locals during the convoluted Sally Miller case between 1844 and 1845. The case involved contentions when, writes Marouf Hasian, Jr.,

Several antebellum communities fought over the racial identity of an individual who at various times was called 'Salome Muller,' 'Bridget,' 'Mary,' and 'Sally Miller.' This 1844–1845 decision would be forgotten in the twentieth century, but in the nineteenth century this 'white slavery' case was considered to be one of the seminal decisions that showed how 'law made the performance of whiteness increasingly important in the determination of racial status' (Gross 112).[51]

However, anti-slavery activists were reluctant to use the situation to bolster their cause, and similar cases failed to allay white Southerners' fears that racial mixing could threaten their 'superior' status.[52] For the rest of the nation, Keire states,

White slavery acquired its sexual connotations unevenly over time. Abolitionists had sexualized chattel slavery, so it is not surprising that anti-vice reformers, one of the many groups that incorporated abolitionist language, should have kept its sexual overtones.[53]

The 'sexual connotations' that were brought to the forefront of the debates had complex ramifications, one of which being that Storyville readily harbored and encouraged the enormous, infamous vogue for octoroon women – women who were white enough to be elevated above their black counterparts in both racial and moral purity, as well as educated enough to entertain upper- and middle-class (white) men. Yet they were still black enough to suggest antebellum slavery and attract a considerable number of clients to particular brothels.

Initially, though, white slavery's usage as a reference to trafficking had its beginnings in France and Britain. In 1870, after the Civil War had finished in the United States:

Victor Hugo wrote to British reformer Josephine Butler that the slavery of black women is abolished in America, but the slavery of white women continues in Europe and laws are still made by men in order to tyrannize over women. In this context, Hugo used white slavery to represent state-regulated prostitution, particularly the medical examination of prostitutes required by Britain's Contagious Diseases Acts. Ten years later, however, Alfred Dyer, an ally of Butler's, shifted the meaning of white slavery away from the systemic metaphor representing unequal power in the capitalist state to the meaning with which we are most familiar: involuntary brothel prostitution.[54]

The phrase came to be used extensively in America, where it did not fail to produce visceral reactions because of its simultaneous evocations of whiteness, slavery, and sex.

During the 1900s, explains Keire,

For reformers all along the rhetorical spectrum, red-light districts were the strongholds of organized vice. Also known as 'restricted' or 'segregated' districts, these areas of municipally-tolerated prostitution represented the commercialization of sex at its worst.[55]

Storyville, being one such district among many in American cities, still posed a challenge to these common rationalizations for vice districts because it blended almost every quality reformists were trying to control in various ways: sexuality, alcohol, drug use, extreme poverty, violence, disease, gambling, and racial mixing.

Landau writes, 'Jim Crow segregation and the creation of vice districts […] emerged in the late nineteenth century as ways to create order out of the increasingly disorderly urban experience.' Further, she notes that the growth of national tourism and to some extent, civic pride and its goals to cultivate tourism, were linked to Storyville and the creation of other red-light districts.[56] Before then, at least, the red-light districts were regarded more pragmatically as utilitarian necessities and not necessarily marked as destinations for pleasure. They served a purpose by giving specific classes of men a sexual outlet with debased women that they could not possibly corrupt. Landau writes:

As pleasure travel and tourism grew, along with new business practices and the growth of a new class of professional urbanites, red-light districts arose to serve men on the make and to employ (or entrap) women adrift. This situation was not unique to New Orleans, and indeed New Orleans was typical in this regard. So while Storyville is often conceived as part of an entirely different history, it was, to the contrary, an extreme example of a common trend.[57]

There were, however, key reasons why Storyville caused more than its fair share of trouble, even though it was indubitably 'an extreme example of a common trend,' and they all had to do with New Orleans's cultural uniqueness and the ways in which it dealt with class and race. It was simpler – at least from the day's ideological perspectives – to speak so straightforwardly about prostitution in other cities.

In the Crescent City itself, attitudes toward Storyville were intensely polarized, and this was not unusual. But they were rooted in different historical, cultural, and socio-economic influences that had never been shared by other regions in the country – even other Southern regions. Among the most notable, Landau says, was 'the legacy of a three-tiered racial structure of whites, free people of color, and slaves that endured culturally for years after the color line,' a boundary that was well under construction by the 1900s, 'was sharply drawn.'[58] This was partially because people 'had long been distributed according to a salt-and-pepper pattern, and lines between and among groups were less than fixed.'[59] Crucially, it meant Storyville was an intersectional taboo – it thrived on so many fears to such an extent that there was no way it could comfortably exist within federalized, 'American' culture.

'Whiteness,' too, was being solidified as an ideological, legal, and racial category by the early 1900s, and its preservation, not to mention elevation, was prioritized by many reformists. The Travelers' Aid Society was only one such specialized group. Eventually, the interest in officially segregating the city occurred in tandem with the fight to rid the city of Storyville, which did not segregate its women in the full legal sense. The argument could be made that the women self-segregated by shade because certain skin tones were more conventionally attractive or alluring, and patrons were also expected to abide by the idea of there being 'black' and 'white' houses. But

overall, these changes (and all their complexities, which would take another book to fully discuss) were linked to heavy national uncertainties. They were not simply isolated attempts to enshrine white Southern culture. There were nationalist responses throughout the country that encompassed asserting 'masculinity' and 'Anglo-Saxon' dominance. These fed into accompanying ideologies about whiteness and, indeed, gender.

Zurier and Snyder note how, during the early twentieth century,

Simultaneous male assertiveness produced an exaggerated masculinity. At a time when some expressed fears that middle-class men were becoming too soft in white-collar jobs, or that Anglo-Saxons would become displaced by more vigorous immigrant races.[60]

In conjunction with this heightened 'masculinity,' there was also a renewed focus on 'femininity.' Of interest to considerations of the Storyville Portraits and the popular culture of Storyville, many white, women activists reacted to 'blackness' and correlated it with what they believed was the theatrical sexuality of sex workers. White women's purity was prioritized because black or mixed-race women, as well as women of color, had already been stereotyped as naturally inclined to sexual excess or deviance. Therefore, by many reformists' logic, they were not salvageable. After all, one of Storyville's most tenacious strategies was to sell exactly what reformers sought to repress, even if those things were embellished. For example, Gary Krist writes that Emma Johnson's brothel purportedly 'offered some of the youngest (the very youngest) prostitutes in the District [and] purportedly gave nightly "sex circuses" in which every form of fetishism, voyeurism, and sadomasochism' could be indulged.[61] The success of these services – or the rumors of their existence – were inseparable from Storyville's reliance on taking advantage of what Jennifer Greenhill calls the time's 'exaggerated masculinity' – found particularly in middle-class men who were worried they might become 'too soft' due to the supposed ease of white-collar jobs and what they perceived to be the diminishing femininity of women.[62] Concurrently, black women or women of color posed a crisis to both white femininity and 'whiteness' in general when they could pass, or were light skinned, but continued to claim the sexual prowess of 'blackness.' Ironically, Greenhill notes that 'whiteness

would remain an abstract idea in the courts into the twentieth century – it would evade precise location.'[63]

'Think I Want to get Pinched under the White Slave Law?': Ambiguity in Representations of Sex and Sex Work

Like ideas of 'race,' expressions of sexuality were tested and changed during the 1900s. Part of this process involved the erosion of the 'prostitute' archetype itself – women were experimenting with new types of relationships and existences in the city, which exposed a spectrum of sexual experiences and modes of sex work in urban environments. Christ explains:

> In addition to dress, in action, too, there were degrees to which a woman could be considered fallen. Charity girls, for example, did not accept money for sex and were officially, therefore, not prostitutes. What they did was known as 'treating,' the offering of sexual favors and companionship in exchange for gifts such as food, clothing, rent, or a night out. Further muddling the lines between 'fallen and respectable' were the 'occasional prostitutes.' These women usually turned to the more lucrative business of prostitution only when wanting of money, because unemployed or otherwise.[64]

Although New York City was evidently filled with women who occasionally had sex for money, the perceived situation in Storyville was almost exaggerated by comparison. Working-class women in New York were, according to popular perceptions, all but expected to 'treat' men or become sex workers. In New Orleans, there was apparently a caste of women who had been working-class or middle-class at home, then gravitated toward sex work, later becoming quite wealthy or influential – this includes Josie Arlington and pre-Storyville madam Kate Townsend.[65]

Their situations, as well as those of other now-unknown women, were very different from what Christ describes regarding '[women] who [were] between jobs' who decided to have sex for pay. He writes, 'For these and other reasons, working-class sexuality often could not be limited to bourgeois moral standards.'[66] Storyville's madams particularly problematized these assumptions because they were 'prostitutes,' but were

not necessarily working-class. However, as noted earlier in the chapter, there were also a vast number of cribs in New Orleans where poor, often black and conventionally 'unattractive' women worked thankless hours; their decisions were decidedly not informed by 'bourgeois moral standards' but rather, economic necessities and racist realities. Bearing these dynamics of understandings of 'whiteness,' monetary power, and changing gender roles in mind, interpretations of the Ashcan School's images of women can be brought to bear on the contemporaneous Storyville Portraits. Sloan's paintings and illustrations of women provide a similar sense of ambiguity as Bellocq's portraits. They also enable us to productively notice contrasts that lead to more nuanced considerations of the Portraits that do not just rely on what is known about Bellocq, and instead take into consideration what he omits to portray.

Dark-skinned women, for example, make no appearances, despite their undeniable presence in the sex trade in New Orleans, and their presence in popular culture media. These omissions are often of more interest than what Bellocq *does* depict. But, starting with what is perhaps their most obvious quality, the portraits are of 'attractive,' albeit 'ordinary,' women who are neither 'hard' nor 'malicious' looking, as reformist rhetoric might have claimed about prostitutes. For example, this statement about Sloan's paintings could easily apply to Bellocq's portraits:

The physicality of the women's bodies conveys an erotic, earth-mother appeal when wasp-waisted figures were still in vogue and 'liberated' women of Sloan's own social group were debating whether to discard their corsets.[67]

In the end, it is most productive to avoid fixating on whether or not the Storyville Portraits' models' occupations and identities can be definitively 'read' (they certainly cannot always be); like Christ, I posit that 'a more fruitful understanding of the issue of prostitution in these images can be found in an interpretation in which identity loses fixity' and add that a less stereotypical understanding of the Storyville Portraits is found when we address the enigmatic, amorphous qualities of the images.[68] There is very little, visually, that binds the portraits to New Orleans. Aside from where they were found, their creator's origin tales, and scattered details in the photographs themselves (a few university pennants, etc.), there would be

little reason to situate them in Storyville at all. Pragmatically, however, it is not sensible to avoid the assumption that these women were indeed sex workers in Storyville.

At the same time, though, applying discourses that have been generated by studying and interpreting some Ashcanners' images of women is helpful. It temporarily and helpfully distances the portraits from New Orleans scholarship to include them in the heated dialogues about urban women that were going on throughout the United States, Britain, and Europe at the time of their creation. Among the issues under scrutiny was a notable deviation from 'art historical tradition,' say Zurier and Snyder: 'Unlike some of the Ashcan artists' other subjects, there was a long art historical tradition to contend with in depicting the sexes.'[69] The Ashcanners' respective artistic productions were compounded by increasingly contentious debates about how women were expected to behave in a jarringly modernized, urbanized world. Artistic and visual portrayals were still moored to moral and representational traditions that were becoming rapidly outmoded by life's realities. Regardless, portraying women as they appeared in the moment was not yet normal or acceptable. 'In practice,' Zurier and Snyder elucidate, it was still the case that 'depicting women as objects of aesthetic pleasure' was expected. In many regards, Sloan and Bellocq do this by simply offering an alternative picture of attractive womanhood, and in this manner, they do not radically break from 'art historical' or aesthetic traditions.[70]

For Sloan in particular, it is clear that he enjoyed looking at the women he painted and, as Snyder and Zurier write, 'In his own way, [he] idealized or even romanticized these women, as if they represented a truer, more instinctual femininity than their counterparts uptown,' an assertion that is upheld by the fact that he observed these women without their knowledge.[71] On the other hand, Bellocq worked with models who all knew they were being photographed – and were used to being photographed, if the tales about pornography made in Storyville are not half so exaggerated – so the dynamic between photographer and model is perhaps more reciprocal. The Portraits are less 'romanticized' – they are full of details that might be considered compositionally or technically sloppy. Nonetheless, Bellocq seems to enjoy the act of looking, too. That alone is not manipulative. Crucially, although the women that these men have painted, illustrated, and photographed are visually appealing, they still do not quite conform to

portrayals of 'women working, or misbehaving, [who] appeared only as picturesque characters from other times and places' at a time when ironically, 'even the imagery of the women's suffrage movement conformed to accepted ideals of feminine beauty and moral purity.'[72]

This insistence on how 'misbehaving' or 'rebellious' women were supposed to be portrayed within established paradigms cannot be ignored. It immediately impacts how all of Storyville's visual culture, advertisements included, was formed, read, and ultimately excluded from American mainstream culture. Further, the District added another layer that the New York scene did not: a fluid translation of 'race' that was shrewdly being used to optimize transactions. Nevertheless, there were certain indications that the very term 'white slavery' was as inert and nonsensical as these outdated representational traditions, even in a city that did not boast an entire vice district that was readily thriving on the stereotypes conferred by racism.

May 1914's issue of *The Masses* contained a cartoon by George Bellows, which depicted a scene that – if taken out of context – would not seem out of place in a Storyville mansion brothel. In a finely furnished room complete with the edge of a gilt-framed painting, a white woman in a draped, light gown sits on a sofa with a sheaf of papers on her lap. She has paused in her reading to address a black woman, who has apparently come to talk about a job advertisement. The caption ran as follows:

'But if you've never cooked or done housework – what have you done?'
'Well, Mam, Ah – Ah's been a sort of p'fessional …'
'A professional what?'
'Well, Mam – Ah takes yo' fo' a broad-minded lady – Ah don't mind tellin' you – Ah been one of them white slaves [*sic*].'[73]

There is no mistaking the black woman for a servant or cook; she stands to the right of frame wearing gloves, earrings, and a large feathered headband. On closer inspection, she also appears to have a fur stole and a delicate handbag dangles on her wrist. This satire functions on a number of levels. She refers to herself with a term that divorces her own identity from the suggestion that she could be reluctantly involved in sex work – much less trafficked – while the white woman seems entirely unruffled by what the

media constructed as a terrifying or titillating threat to (white) femininity, and viewers might wonder why a woman would apply for a servant's position in a household when she already owns such fine things. Extra money – as well as a means to subsist – was why many women entered sex work in either New Orleans or New York, after all. The illustration almost seems to place the white woman in the position of a madam, too, even if she is ostensibly not; her applicant calls her a 'broad-minded lady,' and the demure turn of phrase sounds like it could be a euphemism for madam found in the Blue Books.[74]

In the years following the passage of the Mann Act (1910), *The Masses* published this and several other satires that underscored the hysteria over white slavery. The Act, a federal law named for James Robert Mann, a Republican Congressman from Illinois, was 'known and referred to as the 'White-slave traffic Act' in its own text.[75] While the legal treatment of prostitution as such was still left to individual states, the Mann Act owed much to progressive campaigns that demanded the eradication of sex slavery rings that purportedly operated in large cities. There were a number of influential women involved in the vice commissions whose pressure and enquiries led to the eventual formation of the act, including Harriet Burton Laidlaw, who worked in New York's Chinatown with young women who had been trafficked.[76] Yet only a few of these activists explicitly acknowledged the black women, women of color, or Asian women – in other words, women who were not white – who were sex workers or had been trafficked. Among the number who did was Goldman, who said:

What is really the cause of the trade in women? Not merely white women, but yellow [*sic*] and black women as well. Exploitation, of course; the merciless Moloch of capitalism that fattens on underpaid labor, thus driving thousands of women and girls into prostitution.[77]

Illustrations in *The Masses*, by comparison, criticized the act's lofty applications by calling into question officials' actual ability to ascertain which women were either willingly 'deviant' or being exploited. Whereas Goldman indicted the 'Moloch of capitalism' as the driving force of 'prostitution,' Bellows steps back from any causal relationships and instead comments on the absurdity of 'white slavery' as a concept.

Bellows overtly used the figure of a black woman to underscore the irrationality that was inherent in calling sex work 'white slavery,' but he was an exception. There was a tendency of avoiding depicting women of color and, instead, more emphasis was brought to bear on the ambiguity of white urban women's statuses. As Rachel Schreiber writes:

Glenn O. Coleman's cartoon from the February 1914 issue of *The Masses* responds to the Mann Act, exposing its spurious claims of protecting young women from sexual predators, while simultaneously gesturing towards the difficulty in distinguishing between women who worked as prostitutes and those who did not.[78]

Like Sloan often did, Coleman depicts women at their leisure. His cartoon is of a crowded dancehall filled with men and women, a common enough place for sex workers to find or meet with clients. But all types of women were frequenting them more often, a point Coleman makes with the caption. The couple in the left foreground of the illustration seem to be the ones having this exchange:

'Are you going to see me home to Jersey to-night?'
'Think I want to get pinched under the white slave law?'[79]

Overall, the humor rests in the impossibility of being able to tell a deviant woman (or man) from any of the others in the scene. Prostitution, then, looked 'normal,' and there was little reason to assume that 'prostitutes' would appear to be any different from Coleman's young woman. In effect, if there really had been any Victorian markers that denoted sex workers in a crowd, they were now ineffective – even if they were still being used in fiction.

'Infinite Stories Whose Endings We Will Never Know' in Bellocq's Portraits

Despite insinuations that the Storyville Portraits are different for being 'sensitive' or 'alternative' portrayals of sex work, concurrent trends in art and visual culture of their day affirm that this is not quite an accurate assumption. This chapter makes a case for shifting our perspectives; rather

than clichéd Victorian ‘prostitutes’ or early twentieth-century ‘white slaves,’ we are looking at women whose roles in society had plainly changed. White slavery was a persistent and prominent idea, even though, as some of the Ashcanners and others portrayed, numerous urban women were more openly promiscuous, turned willingly to sex work, and sought out materially beneficial relationships. Rather than accept this – especially the amount of sex work in cities – detractors were eager to maintain the illusion that sex trafficking or conjugal violence were the only realities. This dichotomy of either ‘victim’ or ‘wanton woman’ must be interrogated when discussing Bellocq’s portraits. Although the circumstances they often hint at would not have been idyllic (though it seems we only expect sex workers to be in love with their jobs), they do not depict women who were forced to take photographs, or who were made uncomfortable by the photographer.

Plate 12 of *Storyville Portraits* is an example of Bellocq’s work at its most endearing and perplexing. It is also useful for problematizing ‘white slave’ narratives of exploitation. The model perched on a chair is probably in her late teens, and she appears to be waiting for Bellocq to finish taking the photograph; her grin is good-natured, and one imagines they could have just been joking with each another. Her pose, though not fully relaxed, hints more at imminent fidgeting than fear or resentment. The young woman’s chemise is settled above her thighs but does not expose her to the viewer, while her bare legs are crossed at the ankle. We can also consider if her naked feet are displayed to arouse; though they are noticeable, Plate 12 is not dedicated to a foot fetish. This is a full portrait, and although it casually ventures into the erotic, the background is too incidental, the model too present, for this image to allow male viewers to immerse themselves in fantasy.

It is possible that Bellocq meant to crop or otherwise modify these portraits, which might account for why they generally display such disorganized surroundings. This photograph, for example, gives us a strange triangular composition to the left of frame between the model and a small table, which is echoed by her extended arm and fist on her hip. To the right and just behind her chair, someone has draped a large chest of drawers with a shawl, while a framed image, or perhaps a mirror, is turned away from us

as it sits on the ground. This room, then, is either lived in or used for her work– there are even books and a folded newspaper piled on the table.

Furthermore, Plate 12 does not show a 'white slave,' despite the fevered worries. It portrays a young woman in her everyday surroundings. Though she is almost fully undressed, this does not suggest her discomfort. Like the standing woman in *Three A.M.*, she seems at ease with not wearing 'proper' clothes while interacting with another person, indoors at least. A key difference between Plate 12 and *Three A.M.*, however, is that this model engages with Bellocq and understands he is looking at her. In short, she has consented to this photograph being taken, and that sense of consent destabilizes any assumptions that she was always being exploited. If we recalibrate our expectations of what the portraits represent or register, even their settings – the decisions to obscure some objects but not others, the eccentric compositions, the objects and furniture that are out of focus – lend credence to the idea that Bellocq represents 'modern' women accompanied by the debris of their lives. Consequently, they sell sex, but they are also part of a changing urban order, one in which women negotiated new sexual habits both within and outside of sex work.

One of the Portraits' unifying characteristics is the fact that all the women knew they were being photographed and seem comfortable with Bellocq, which implies free agreement rather than the 'subjugation' that is so often underscored in negative interpretations of images of sex work. The expressions on their faces vary, but no woman is caught in what David Peters Corbett calls the 'private, unself-conscious and intimate' moments that characterize Sloan's work – these models may not be self-conscious, but they are not being spied upon in a 'private' moment – and there are no given instances in which Bellocq simulates the pretense of spying.[80] Of itself, this is not necessarily strange. In the day's pornography, for example, women often looked at their viewers, and Bellocq was no doubt aware of Storyville's voracious appetite for erotica. So, my comparison between his portraits and any of the Ashcanners' respective artworks and illustrations, but especially Sloan's, may seem odd for the simple reason that Bellocq worked with his models' knowledge.

As Corbett writes, Sloan displays a strong 'fascination with working-class women' in situations he observed but was not necessarily part of himself. He did not know the women, and they did not know they were

being watched. Conversely, regardless of any beliefs about their potential relationships beyond the frame, Bellocq's models were engaged in a transaction with him when they posed. I mean to stress several powerful themes by drawing comparisons between these previously unallied topics. First, even if the Storyville Portraits are still part of unclear genres – whether professional commissions or not – they undeniably encapsulate tensions and certain misgivings with their subject, namely sex workers or 'deviant' women. Though a sense of familiarity or even fondness between the photographer and models is almost always evident, as in Plate 12, this does not mean that these are all comfortable photographs. Indeed, this familiarity sometimes renders them even more uncomfortable because – despite the rapport between Bellocq and his models – on their own, the portraits do not readily declare meaning, function, or conform to derogatory stereotypes about sex work. However, tension in images with similar content is often understood differently, with the concepts of voyeurism and a lack of consent driving the suggestion of conflict. What I want to address here is Bellocq's reserve; Sloan looks very freely, but despite what has been said about him, Bellocq does not.

Bellocq's portraits are as morally ambivalent toward sex work as Sloan's. Still, they suggest different personal reservations, cultural boundaries, and physical restrictions. This even becomes evident in Bellocq's compositional choices or more precisely, the portraits' haphazardness – within what Brian Wallis calls the 'tawdry background details' that are cut off or left unfocused.[81] It also has something to do with the interiors themselves. Instead of the populous and busy city, Bellocq's models are in small rooms that have been made to appear private. This has an intimate effect. Intriguingly, too, Bellocq seems to be aware that the women he uses as models are emblematic of Storyville's highest promises of 'pretty' women; he keeps a reasonable physical distance from them. More than that literal distance, they are demonstrative of a specific 'attractive,' pale aesthetic – whereas police reports and Bertillon cards feature women with a variety of skin colors, and many who have very dark skin.[82] There is dissonance between the dirty, dangerous Storyville written about in civic records, and these interiors, which housed pretty, young, light-skinned women.

Bellocq's avoidance of the outside world and its fetid alleys and drunken arguments should be regarded as the result of choice and possibly repulsion, not ignorance. After all, he lived close enough to Storyville (and went to it often enough) to understand exactly how unpleasant it could be, and in his youth, at least, he was a man of relative means who could afford to spend money there. In conjunction, New Orleans and New York's citizens were preoccupied with vice at the turn of the twentieth century, much like the rest of the nation and Western world. New Orleans had perhaps the most infamous red-light district in the United States, but New York possessed its own thriving and long-established sex trade. A possible difference between the two was that many New York women were evidently more inclined to engage in casual relationships to supplement an income without identifying as 'sex workers,'[83] whereas in New Orleans, career sex workers were – though it is difficult to know accurately why, or with what regularity, all the women who did so would have offered their services for pay – promoted as intrinsically part of Storyville.

Further complicating this new sexual culture was the tendency amongst young, working-class, or just more 'bohemian' women to trade sex for outings, meals, or favors within the context of a monogamous, or more casual, relationship. This environment allowed Sloan to cultivate and demonstrate his 'fascination with working-class women in private, unself-conscious and intimate moments.'[84] Regardless of what their families might have thought, the women who made these choices were part of a new social order that did not have the same misgivings toward trading sex for favors, that is, sex work of a sort. This was entrenched in a much broader social shift; women were negotiating a new presence in the city, and images like Sloan's and as I suggest, Bellocq's, cannot be viewed as indicative of their creators' indifference to social politics or changes.

Some posit that the Storyville Portraits do however indicate disengagement. Christian Waguespack, for example, addresses Bellocq's intentions to give the portraits a new 'vernacular reading,'[85] writing:

Bellocq's seeming disinterest in Storyville's politics and social issues reflects his interests as a commercial photographer whose day job was to record objects and events without casting judgment or effecting change.[86]

Although it is true that Bellocq casts no negative judgment on his subjects – and was not politically or socially oriented in the same way that Lewis Hine and Jacob Riis were, as Waguespack rightly points out – this should not be regarded as evidence of his disinterest in 'Storyville's politics and social issues.'[87] On the contrary, it seems he did have some interest in civic matters. When called to be a juror in the murder case of a woman called Annie Lavin – who, although she was never named as a sex worker in the newspapers' coverage of the case, fits the profile of many 'modern' young women of this time[88] – Bellocq was excused because he 'did not believe in capital punishment.'[89] If it was untrue, it could be a cover for any number of reasons – perhaps he knew Lavin or possibly sided with the accused murderer, her lover George Cassanova – but potential jurors cited these types of conflicts of interest as reasons why they would not serve on a jury. He, then, would have had little reason to lie. While only a very small incident, it points to his awareness of, and a possible engagement or a discomfort with, social issues relating to sexual dynamics and crimes of passion.

Bellocq's portraits of Storyville women reveal his stake in Storyville's and New Orleans's social spheres, as well as the influence of unstable, national popular cultures that were still fixated on prostitution. Bellocq seems to have avoided taking portraits of dark-skinned women, which can be no accident when we also consider that his models are, in general, conventionally attractive. Further, differences between the cribs and the mansion brothels – including Mahogany Hall, where Bellocq supposedly took many of his pictures – would have been striking; Landau and Long have described these inequities in detail. Tales of injustice, poor hygiene, and drug use also abounded in the press and amongst reformers.[90] While much of this was no doubt sensationalized, the searing headlines and homilies were still derived from truths. For every 'Diamond Queen' of a madam who made her own fortune, there were other 'girls' who worked out of miniscule, dirty cribs. Their lives were punctuated by violence and exploitation because they were afforded little legal protection and burdened with social shame. These women were unlisted in Blue Books, but they made up a sizable and presumably underreported – taken-for-granted – number of available women in Storyville.

Yet, if we were to form an impression of the district based purely from Bellocq's photographs alone, none of the cribs' women would factor into our inferences. In itself, this reveals a bias best explained by Bellocq's racial, ethnic, and social status. He chose not to portray Storyville's true 'underbelly' if he ever ventured into it, and omitted even to depict it from a distance. Instead, he overlooked any suggestion of it. Omission is a strong theme in the portraits in many respects, and this is particularly significant. There was a hierarchy of vice in New Orleans – and there was a dichotomy between rich madams who were essentially socialites, and women who worked long hours in narrow, cramped rooms. While the prior often transgressed social and cultural boundaries, or at least influenced matters beyond their immediate social spheres, the latter held little power. In comparison, they were in no position to dictate their working or living conditions. Bellocq does not acknowledge this aspect of Storyville life, which could have fallen closer to the grisly narratives of 'white slavery': but this only hints at an acceptance of certain kinds of vice over others, as well as his own position in New Orleanian culture, rather than full neutrality toward his models' profession.

After all, most of the men who frequented Lulu White or Josie Arlington's brothels would, in general, not make visits to the cribs. There were too many layers of classism and tacit assumptions of safety and finery – which the richest madams manipulated to garner custom – to assume that all men visited all kinds of sex workers. As Ann Scholfield and others have noted, high-end Storyville brothels were sumptuous and employed markers of respectability to strengthen their attraction to affluent clientele.[91] It is sensible to assume that Bellocq operated within the same paradigms as others who frequented the District. He was native to New Orleans, white, and from a Creole family. When Storyville was established, he would have been in his twenties. He also would have been embedded in certain aspects of his city's culture – aspects that were under fire at the turn of the twentieth century. If this has been addressed, it has often created a Francophone stereotype that owes more to Montmartre than to Storyville.[92]

A more troubling undercurrent does run through these images. This has less to do with the mysterious, defaced photographs that are apparently part of the original cache of Bellocq's negatives, and more to do with the social dynamics, misogyny, and racism that none of the portraits overtly show.

While Bellocq was not a classic voyeur in this series of images, his preoccupation with the women of Storyville is not totally benign, either; after all, the sex worker – regardless of how she was portrayed – was believed by society at large to be 'deviant.' At its heart, this would have been, and is often still, regarded as a transaction where the client or photographer had, or has, the most power. Because of its location, Storyville simply provided a unique setting for this situation. In many regards, like Corbett says of Sloan's work, 'perhaps' the Storyville Portraits 'are darker images than we usually think, marked by […] desire [and] visual power,' and that darkness simply manifests itself differently because of New Orleans – and does show through Bellocq's work.[93]

These qualities must be understood as part of a larger whole that was being subjected to immense change. Snyder and Zurier end their essay on the Ashcans with the acknowledgement that the Ashcanners' art denies definitive 'endings' to the viewer:

These pictures are filled with details and incident: light on a tenement wall at the end of a day […] the confident gestures of single women enjoying a night on the town. But for all their insights, the pictures also show us that there are things we cannot see: the inner thoughts of people on the street. They present a city of infinite stories whose endings we will never know.[94]

The Storyville Portraits share this trait. Indeed, when we take into account Wallis's observation that Bellocq filled his portraits with 'posh and tawdry' minutiae, it is imperative to consider these aspects of Storyville's visual culture in the same way: as images that provide insight largely by reminding us 'that there are things we cannot see.' Despite the lingering assumption that sexual deviance could always be read, they still present 'infinite stories whose endings we will never know.'[95]

3

A Fog of Violence, Voyeurism, and Crime

Through case studies that pivot between London and New Orleans, this chapter examines how criminality and victimization permeated discourses around prostitution, and influenced the languages of reform. To consider the Storyville Portraits as images of sex workers these dynamics must be acknowledged, especially because the mythologies surrounding Bellocq owe much to the problematic assumption that he must have had either an overly malevolent or sympathetic interest in his models. He is imagined as perverted, or alternatively as a fellow social outcast; like that of the women he photographed, his role is predetermined by the overbearing correlations between 'criminal' and 'victim' that saturated the idea of the prostitute. When the final years of the nineteenth century witnessed a quintessential case of violence against sex workers in London, the sensational press and photography conjoined dual themes, and further made violence into an acceptable vernacular used to discuss women and prostitution.

In 1888, Jack the Ripper stalked the alleys of East London and slaughtered at least five women. By the 1890s, and certainly after, an international public was well-aware of the Ripper murders, which were recounted in a variety of media and evoked for a range of purposes. They reached the level of a transatlantic, mass cultural phenomenon and hailed a renewed and continued fascination with gory crime. Further, they confirmed that prostitutes – even when, or especially if, dead – were objects ripe for purportedly rational enquiry and repeated media spectacle. The role of photography and imagery in fueling both the murderer's infamy and the objectification of the victims was an enormous lure to the public. It played a crucial part in capturing their imaginations; for the first time to such an extreme degree, graphic, so-called impartial photographs were used to make sense of a high-profile case that influenced not only reportage and police procedures, but also fiction and mass culture. Crime scene photographs – as

well as verbal descriptions of the crime scenes – gave a sense of objectivity and documentation to the proceedings. In actuality, they encouraged a heightened focus on the female body. But this was acceptable within a social context – alongside, for example, academic nude portraiture.

The New Orleans press had an avid interest in the Ripper, and its practice of rehashing both local and international grisly crimes was shared by its London-based counterparts. Primary sources demonstrate how the Storyville Portraits' reception, and indeed their reappearance, was impacted by an atmosphere infused with sensational crime and the tenor of reforms spurred on by cycles of voyeurism and viciousness. Among others, these sources include New Orleanian newspapers, London newspapers, the Ripper postmortems, and Arthur Conan Doyle's short story 'The Illustrious Client'. These diverse materials situate the Portraits within a transatlantic, Anglo-American milieu – one that they share elements with, but do not fully conform to – that has impacted their interpretation, yet has gone remarkably unacknowledged.

The chapter is comprised of three sections that provide a different perspective on themes of the criminal and victim. Far from being separate notions, these often converge. First, I discuss sensational crime's prevalence in the news, using reports of the Ripper murders and the later American (but equally transatlantic) case of Dr Thomas Neill Cream to demonstrate how the 'villainous predator' set on murdering sex workers (prostitutes) was both a real threat and constructed archetype. Reportage echoed his voyeurism as a much more quotidian social practice; via newspapers, the public was entitled to look at women's bodies or invade their privacy under the guise of staying informed about malicious events. In turn, this manifested in fictional representations of photographs of immoral women.

Voyeurism as both an exercise in control and sexual perversion appeared in Doyle's 'The Illustrious Client' (1924) and appeared again in Michael Ondaatje's *Coming Through Slaughter* (1976), where, because of his habit of photographing Storyville's sex workers, Ondaatje's fictionalized Bellocq is suspected of being a murderer. Without any tangible evidence to prompt the association – but because of a longstanding alliance between themes of violence, voyeurism, and sex work that was established in late Victorian mass culture (then reiterated in popular culture that conjured the Victorian era, like Doyle's late Holmes tales) – Bellocq is represented as ominous, a

potential villain. Last, I end with a discussion of how perceptions of reformers and reform efforts were influenced by such violent crimes against sex workers. Because they existed within such normalized practices of voyeurism, shame, and force, the same vocabulary of the sensational press was used both to convey and criticize reformists' agendas.

'Violently and Downwards' – the Ripper Postmortems and the Curious Case of Thomas Neill Cream

The Ripper postmortems and press coverage are perhaps the most recognizable images and representations of sex workers in the late nineteenth century. At the very least they undeniably comprise some of the most familiar images and discussions of vice during the late Victorian period. This needs to be foregrounded as a preconfiguring influence on our reception of the Storyville Portraits. Although Storyville opened roughly ten years after the Ripper's murder spree, Storyville's antecedents in New Orleans – such as 'Smoky Row,' an area that was notorious because of women who allegedly robbed and murdered their unwitting clients[1] – were also not without their ideological ties to sex, brutality, and death. Isolated incidents, too, were discussed with the same awe that would come to dominate discussions of the Ripper. New Orleans madam Kate Townsend's 1883 murder, for example, was almost lovingly detailed in the local press[2] and referenced in other American newspapers – which had all been primed by earlier stories like the 1836 murder of New York City sex worker Helen Jewett.[3] Writing about prostitution in New Orleans, fittingly, Barbara Eckstein agrees with Walter Benjamin that 'prostitutes were modern figures of thanatos rather than eros.'[4] This is evidenced in the torrid affairs that nineteenth- (and early twentieth-) century culture had with crimes that were directed toward, or supposedly perpetrated by, sex workers.

In August of 1888, prostitution's conceptual alliance with death – not disease, as had been fairly usual, but pure murder – took an irrevocable turn when an unknown killer began a cruel, soon to become iconic, spree of murders. Although fatal attacks against women in London's East End were regarded as common by the police and public, this instance was marked by its sheer viciousness. Mary Ann Nichols, a reputed alcoholic, had gone out

late to earn her night's rent, supposedly having spent it on alcohol rather than her doss-house lodging. Nichols, however, was slaughtered before she could return home with any money. An inquest by coroner Wynne Edwin Baxter, who would be responsible for three of the recognized Ripper murder postmortems, reported:

On the left side of the neck, about 1in. [*sic*] below the jaw, there was an incision about 4in. in length, and ran from a point immediately below the ear. On the same side, but an inch below, and commencing about 1in. in front of it, was a circular incision, which terminated at a point about 3in. below the right jaw […] The cuts must have been caused by a long-bladed knife, moderately sharp, and used with great violence […] There were no injuries about the body until just about the lower part of the abdomen. Two or three inches from the left side was a wound running in a jagged manner. The wound was a very deep one, and the tissues were cut through. There were several incisions running across the abdomen. There were three or four similar cuts running downwards, on the right side, all of which had been caused by a knife which had been used violently and downwards.[5]

Baxter gave copious details, edging as was expected of a medical report into technicalities of the death rather than emotional assertions. However, he reveals that the dead woman was conceptually the site of a murder rather than the victim of it; Baxter does not refer to the body as female, continuously using 'the' rather than more possessive or gendered terms.

This was the result of a clinician's usual approach, yet also it had the effect of dehumanizing and almost legitimizing the attack as something to be witnessed and judged. But he left no doubt that the circumstances were unusually violent. This was the first of five murders that were definitively attributed to the killer, or killers, known as 'Jack the Ripper.' Some later contested that there were more than the five killings, and in different parts of the world, yet official statements placed the Ripper's murderous timeframe from August to November 1888. There was continued speculation that more murders were committed by the same killer until at least 1891 in London, then in later years abroad.[6] Despite all the unknown actualities, the Ripper became a demonic figure who reached sensational heights due in no small measure to minutely detailed, grisly newspaper reports. Public interest in how savagely he had mutilated his victims soared,

while armchair detectives eagerly submitted theories to the police and newspaper editors. Of course, reports to the public erred toward the graphic.

Evocative media nicknames such as 'The Whitechapel Murderer' and, among the earliest, 'Leather Apron,' were pervasive. Because of letters sent to police and other parties by either the killer or clever pranksters, 'Jack the Ripper' became the calling card of the murderer who stalked Whitechapel, Aldgate, Spitalfields, and the City of London in search of his next quarry.[7] Always women who had engaged in prostitution, the victims were immortalized in investigations documented by the media. Their murderer, however, remained safe under twin covers of anonymity and infamy, invading discourses and capturing imaginations while evading his own arrest. The Ripper has been well vetted by historians and remains a figure that imposes a long shadow on studies of late nineteenth-century urbanity.[8] The dank London streets were at the heart of the case, but the Ripper himself influenced the treatment and discussion of urban serial killings, and sex crimes, for years to come and in many countries.

This was true particularly in the United States, even if the murders were not exclusively of sex workers. H.H. Holmes was rumored to have been the Ripper after his deathly hotel, which he operated in Chicago during the 1893 World's Fair, came to light.[9] The still anonymous 'Axeman' of New Orleans made a direct gesture to the chilling 'From Hell' letter – received in 1888 by George Lusk, who was head of the Whitechapel Vigilance Committee[10] – in 1919 when he (or someone else posing as the Axeman) wrote to the *Times-Picayune*.[11] The Ripper left a bloody mark on the annals of criminal activity – even in New Orleans, which had its own impressive history of crime that was infamous the world over. Dr Cream, a murderer who was finally executed in 1892 after claiming victims in Canada, the United States, and England, was also briefly believed to be the Ripper. (Admittedly, this was only because of a rumor fueled by his executioner, but it gained traction, demonstrating just how keen the need for definitive answers – no matter how farfetched they were – could be.) Curiously, though it forms an engrossing body of material that could be studied on its own, the media generated by the Ripper case and the cases after it have garnered less continued interest than the question of the Ripper's identity.

Anwer writes:

The paucity of criticism on the photographic evidence of Jack the Ripper's murders is striking and surprising, particularly given that these images amount to one of the first visual documentations of what are now called sex crimes. Even Robert McLaughlin's pioneering study *The First Jack the Ripper Victim Photographs* falls short of adequately decoding what's really going on in the pictures themselves [sic], in part because he seems less interested in the content of the photographs than in the biographical details of the photographers who created them.[12]

In contrast, there was and still is an enormous variety of speculation about who the Ripper was and what might have motivated the murders. Morality was often discussed as a motivation. Further, a pronounced 'cult of feminine invalidism'[13] fed desires for illustrations, descriptions, and other depictions of the victims. This existed in conjunction with what Walkowitz terms the 'New Journalism of the 1880s […] which encouraged anonymous male villains like the Ripper […] to communicate with a mass public through the newspaper,'[14] and both factors – the 'cult of feminine invalidism' and the 'New Journalism' – created a crucible in which misogynist, classist, and, in New Orleans, particularly racist, conditions prevailed. If prostitutes had to exist and could not be contained, the logic seemed to go, there was a certain relish to be had in seeing them dead. In death, they were finally neutralized; looking at them was no longer unsafe, tempting, or questionably moral. This fixation on dead prostitutes, however, was part of a larger aesthetic that influenced paintings, literature, and theater.

At the time, this aesthetic 'cult,' described by Bram Dijkstra as idealizing women's weakness and vulnerability,[15] had a vast effect on standards of femininity and female attractiveness; hardy women – literally healthy, but more troublingly, this implicated women who survived without proper male help in their lives, for example, from a husband or father – were not feminine. Physical health and assertive personal qualities were intertwined together to create an atmosphere in which prostitutes were easily reconceptualized as more marketable and more intriguing if they were corpses. And, as Anwer states, so-called good 'women were encouraged to appear starving and consumptive as proof of their superior breeding, feminine refinement and spiritual purity,' which was apparent in

contemporaneous art that she writes 'consolidated and celebrated a sadistic culture push[ing] women into self-sacrifice to the point of death.'[16] Prostitutes were transformed, even purified, in death, and this is made clear by the depictions of dead bodies in the Ripper case.

A pointed contrast did exist between the culturally attractive 'starving and consumptive' aesthetic and the well-circulated illustrations of Annie Chapman in the *Illustrated Police News*, even though the later post-mortems did enshrine qualities of feminine invalidism to an extreme degree by aestheticizing the women's corpses – providing a voyeur's look at the nude, butchered bodies.[17] Meanwhile, Chapman, the second Ripper victim after Nichols, was depicted before her death as a stout woman with a dull, round face and wide-set eyes. Her appearance was suggestive of the beliefs in phrenology and eugenics that asserted that deviance – as well as other qualities of personality or temperament – could be ascertained by the study and assessment of physical features.[18] Her double chin is soft and weak; her neck is thick above her collar. The illustration uses her postmortem photograph as a reference, but there is an extravagant, theatrical effect to her facial injuries and deep bruises. Compared to a photograph of Chapman around 1869, the illustrations were barely recognizable as the same woman in the portrait.

Just as Nichols was rendered inhuman by Baxter's inquest, *The Illustrated Police News* transformed Chapman into a grotesque figure that reaffirmed the negative perception of prostitution. Her photograph as a young wife, however, could have been of any lower-middle-class female and her husband; Chapman is a small brunette, unremarkable with her severe features and grim expression. The portrait was also clearly taken in a studio. Yet the 1888 illustrations show her disfigured and slaughtered. Even further, they show that she had been altered before her murder by a life of continued immorality. Their emphasis was not on catching the killer, but on the excitement he inspired, and the effect of vice upon the female body and mind. Prostitution was just an added note of intrigue to the entire affair– it was a familiar, sordid strain that enriched the proceedings.

When the New Orleans press reported on the Ripper, it did so with gusto. Papers speculated on his identity and whether he might even be in the United States well after the London murders had seemingly concluded.[19] At

times, the theory that he was actually a woman came into conversation; many were apt to blame a prostitute for murdering other prostitutes.[20] New Orleans even had its own mutation of 'Jack' when the Axeman evoked the same frenzied terror in 1919.[21] Whoever they were, they built upon the cloak-and-dagger mythology already laid by their London forerunner, and certainly incited a level of interest that was indebted to the Ripper at least as much as any pragmatic concerns about citizens' safety. However, the Axeman, unlike the Ripper, targeted 'ordinary' citizens, not exclusively sex workers. He (or she, or they) reveled in vice, as well. So far as we know, the Axeman did not murder sexually 'deviant' women and enjoyed jazz – often condemned as 'sinful' music – enough to command that it be played to forestall more murders.

Murdered prostitutes, however, were neutralized; they could not tempt, and they certainly were not romantic paragons who withered for the sake of their femininity. The Ripper's victims were never, as Johnny Wiggs mused about Bellocq's models, 'Pretty whores [...] Some of them were very pretty [*sic*].'[22] Instead, their images affirmed what many Victorians believed, and indeed, what those who frequented sex workers often believed in spite of explicit erotica or racy rumors: 'That's something I never ran across in my life, was a pretty whore [...] I mean in any of those places, I've never seen anything that resembled beauty [*sic*].'[23] There was nothing conventionally 'beautiful' about Nichols or Chapman in life or death, but the representations of their bodies encouraged open stares and incessant conversation. By the late 1890s, then, the conceptual alliance between death and sex workers firmly encompassed disease and murder, and this had a strong influence on discussions of prostitution and attempts to represent it.

The Ripper case's influence on portrayals of sex workers, as well as on the iconography and symbolism of the prostitute and her overall milieu, haunted 'respectable' women and sex workers for decades to come. Undeniably, it confirmed the artificial separation between the two and marked a change in discourses; the Ripper's victims were not exactly characterized as tragic murder victims. They were a collective display of brutal sexuality and gore, and they were fascinating to the public. In a story called 'The Optimist Goes Slumming,' as reported in a New Orleans paper, Charles Batell Loomis recounted how he went on a trip to Whitechapel, and remarked:

I couldn't help feeling disappointed (the sensational part of me) that I had witnessed no murders, not even a wife-beating or eye-blacking, and if I had not afterward substantiated the fact that I had really been in Whitechapel I would have had a suspicion that my friends, being humorists, had been stringing me.[24]

This demonstrates not only how prolific the Ripper stories were in the American press – Loomis travelled to Whitechapel specifically because of 'one Jack the Ripper' – but equally how entwined the concepts of urban poverty, murder, and sex work had become.

Like parts of New Orleans, areas in London were irrevocably tied with sensational crime. Loomis says Whitechapel was, to his mind, 'One of the saddest, most vice-haunted, sodden, foul, pestilential dark, dismal, dreadful' places.[25] But he was disappointed that it did not live up to that expectation, which is ironic considering New Orleans's international reputation. He also, however, directly mentions 'wife-beating,' which reinforces the assumption that street crime was so heavily directed toward women. Given the popular cases in the newspapers, it is not difficult to imagine why one might assume he would see a 'wife-beating,' if the dead bodies often reported in the press belonged to women.

Not long after the Ripper, London would again be the site of dramatic killings of women, and this time they would have a transatlantic culprit. Within several years of the Ripper's mayhem, a gruesome set of poisonings in London shocked – and thrilled – the Anglo-American public. This time, the killer was eventually identified through his bragging and suspicious inside knowledge. By late October, 1892, Dr Thomas Neill Cream, a Canadian medical doctor who had been educated at McGill University, was finally being tried for the latest in a tandem string of international murders and opportunistic blackmails.[26] The case was unique mostly for its transparency, rather than its cast of characters. Prostitutes, mad doctors, serial killers, and police inspectors were all elements of daily life – at least in newspapers, magazines, and novels. The Cream trial is illustrative of common dynamics that were at play regarding the treatment of vice in late Victorian culture, but it was singular for its thorough documentation of the suspect and the evidence against him. It was also distinct for its conclusion, which was found with the culprit's true identity.

However, the case exposed plenty of subverted apprehensions despite its tidy closure. Paula J. Reiter writes, perceptively:

> The Cream trial provides a remarkably complete record of a Victorian serial killer and blackmailer. What is more remarkable, however, is the nexus joining this deviant Victorian with his society at large. The Cream trial remains important not as a picture of a singular maniac – 'a doctor gone wrong' – but for traces of the anxieties felt by others that his crimes made visible.[27]

Cream, a 'deviant' doctor who purportedly helped inspire Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to write his Sherlock Holmes short story 'The Adventure of the Speckled Band,'[28] had already committed murder in Canada and the United States by the time he resided – and was being tried for murder again – in London.[29] However, the most remarkable quality of his trial was the extreme and specific disquiet it captured. At stake in the proceedings were questions of professionalism, gender roles, and the presence of vice in modern culture. Cream was a doctor who went after another kind of professional: sex workers.

Prostitution was discussed (however begrudgingly) as an occupation by the late nineteenth century, particularly in metropolises, or vice districts as established and efficient as Storyville. Louis Armstrong, who worked there before moving on to his more prestigious venues, noted that many of the women who worked in Storyville lived in other parts of the city – like other workers did – and commuted to the district.[30] These remarks suggest that beyond what were, by then, routine arguments about respectability and morality, sex workers provoked thought about the role of women in all workplaces. 'Professionalized' vice called into question the definition of 'legitimate' work or occupations, however accidentally. This accentuated its potential to undermine traditional social orders. Moreover, these new misgivings helped allow Cream, a doctor, to be treated with more respect because of his profession and its perceived superiority to sex work, even though he was a murderer.

Unluckily for his prosecutors and victims, Cream was prone to relocating fairly often and freely, even though, as Reiter recounts, he had an alarming habit:

[He] left a trail of dead women in his wake, [but] his victims' sudden and excruciating deaths repeatedly failed to trigger official investigation […] Primarily [Cream] targeted women seeking abortions and women working as prostitutes – women regularly vilified by society. He counted on the silence and shame associated with abortion and was protected by public indifference to the fate of prostitutes.[31]

Though at first sentenced to life imprisonment in the United States, he was eventually granted clemency – probably due to a bribe – and freed.[32] He continued indulging in his penchant for murdering the 'vilified' women against whom he carried a marked grudge. Cream's story was not stranger than fiction. It was commonplace, particularly after the Ripper had paved the way for him in headlines. He was being charged with his third official murder by the time he was 42, but the overall number of people he killed is unknown. It could be more substantial than the mere handful he was assigned in court. 'By employing poison (primarily strychnine) under the guise of 'medicine,' his violence could be misattributed or misinterpreted,' writes Reiter, 'unless an autopsy was performed.'[33]

Authorities were reluctant to question Cream until later in his criminal career, just as they were originally reticent to treat prostitutes' deaths as suspicious. Other supposed corruptions, such as alcoholism, further incriminated the women, and were convenient explanations that could also explicate their deaths. Despite claims to the contrary made by detective inspectors, the blackmail threats that Cream sent to fellow medical men Joseph Harper and William Henry seemed to be more offensive to the court than murder. There was a pattern in how Cream was convicted, and it had been set during his residence in Illinois. Reiter writes that

Not until Cream poisoned Daniel Stott, age 61 and Cream's only known male victim, was enough evidence gathered to finally convict him. One suspects that a male, middle class, 'respectable' victim […] may also have tipped the scales in this case, an early indication that the gender and class of Cream's victims would be crucial in determining the response of law enforcement agencies.[34]

Boundaries between decent and indecent behavior, categories of respectability and the illusion that crime was specific to certain classes and

genders of people (namely the lower classes and, often, poor women), were all issues during the 1892 Cream trial. Having already been confronted with a serial murderer of prostitutes who went unknown and unnamed – except for a newspaper moniker that stuck – the American public was enthralled by a pernicious doctor who also targeted these women. It was, though, more indignant about the other individuals he compromised or killed.

Assessing and asserting the 'right' kind of victimization became of paramount importance within the media. A 'unified front' was created 'against Cream and the prostitutes'[35] so that police, detectives, and doctors would not be discredited by the actions of a select person of their ranks that had gained infamy. In other words, even though Lou Harvey, a sex worker who escaped Cream by pretending to swallow a poisoned pill he gave to her, testified in court, this was not meant to generate sympathy for her ilk or suggest that the murdered women were more victimized than anyone else had been. They, instead, were more like living photographs or taxonomies to be used for restoring proper order and bringing justice.

As women, they were already at a social disadvantage, but as sex workers they were just as, if not more, unlawful and immoral than Cream. After all, they were the perpetrators of criminal acts that put gender and family identities at risk. They compromised physical safety, too. Therefore, they could not possibly be victims to the same degree of severity as anyone else. Although the press cast Cream as a renegade (not to be thought of alongside other physicians), the prostitutes who testified against – or were murdered by – him were still, in many ways, less trustworthy. These social dynamics were echoed in popular fiction well into the 1900s. Assisting Mr Sherlock Holmes, one fictional artist's model and mistress was to bring an abusive, murdering ex-lover to justice. While scholars like Reiter have acknowledged the influence of Cream's trial on Doyle's fiction, specifically citing the vitriolic Dr Grimesby Roylott of 'The Adventure of the Speckled Band' as a caricature of Cream, 'The Adventure of the Illustrious Client' (1924) retains a high and directly recognizable number of the same figures and tropes. Furthermore, parallels between the story and Bellocq's rediscovered portraits exemplify the preconceived notions about maker and models that they still carry.

‘But I Am What [He] Made Me’: The Storyville Portraits as ‘Lust Diary’

Descended from Edgar Allan Poe’s genius, eccentric French detective C. Auguste Dupin,[36] who was active in the 1840s, popular sleuths were still a foil to the disorder of city life with all its crime and violence in the 1890s and early twentieth century. Most curbed their more bohemian and flamboyant qualities – such as drug use, or intimated libertinism, or homosexuality – by the turn of the century. This signified both growing unease and a continued fascination with surveillance, sexual intrigue, and associations with criminal folk. Sherlock Holmes, debatably the most popular detective to emerge from the latter half of the century, embodied these issues by taking on cases of sexually charged blackmail in ‘A Scandal in Bohemia’ (1891),[37] ‘The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton’ (1904),[38] and ‘The Adventure of the Illustrious Client’. Intriguingly, these tales all involve the use of photographs or documents to demonstrate the danger of inappropriate social and sexual associations. The same archetypes permeate readings of the Storyville Portraits and Bellocq; they are often seen as tragic, while Bellocq has been – depending on the decade – described as disabled, an outcast, simply strange,[39] or an ‘invert’ who was not sexually attracted to women.[40]

Bellocq’s clandestine portraits can be powerfully compared to the hidden ‘lust diary’ of ‘The Illustrious Client’, in which Holmes’s antagonist is the womanizing murderer Baron Adelbert Gruner.[41] Gruner’s ‘lust diary’ illustrates the full implications of the discourses scholars have used to make sense of Bellocq and his portraits. Fictional Victorian detectives, however – unlike some photographers – rarely fully immersed themselves in places that were reminiscent of Storyville. This is equally true of Holmes, who often voices his disgust with Gruner’s immorality. As the tale unravels, readers learn from Miss Kitty Winter, the friend of Holmes’s criminal informant Shinwell Johnson, that Gruner keeps a book of his past mistresses. According to Kitty, who is all but said to be a sex worker or courtesan, it includes ‘snapshot photographs, names, details, everything about [us].’[42] Kitty’s role in the story is like Lou Harvey’s in Cream’s trial; without her, the villain could not have been exposed, and uncovering this hidden item becomes the key to preventing Gruner’s marriage to a society

woman. While the book serves as something for Holmes to find and isolate as evidence, the implication of what it contains is immensely troubling.

Ultimately, it does lead to the Baron's downfall; it is the material center of his unpalatable activities. Although Gruner murdered his last wife, his invasive records of women represent the pinnacle of his deviousness, and together comprise 'a beastly book – a book no man, even if he had come from the gutter, could have put together.'[43] By implication of her inclusion in the book, Kitty is portrayed as a woman of 'ill repute.' Watson describes her as possessing a 'fierce energy,'[44] which reinforces the assumption that Kitty is neither prim nor especially 'feminine.' Doyle also provides an unconscious commentary by shifting focus from Kitty to Gruner's scandalous proclivity; she is incidental on her own, one of many women of her kind, yet she becomes instrumental to the hero's genius. Without her, Holmes would not have discovered this devious book, but if there were no women like her, Doyle seems to imply, the book could not exist. Though a more enlightened portrayal of a woman who, if she was not directly in 'the trade' was still from a 1902 circle of what she calls 'Hell, London,'[45] Kitty's role in 'The Adventure of the Illustrious Client' is – despite her language of revenge and her own misfortune at Gruner's hands – one of the savior or penitent. She is a lower-class woman who works to preserve the life and honor of her distinguished double, Miss Violet de Merville, Gruner's new fiancée.

By aiding Holmes in this endeavor, Kitty absolves herself of whatever past she had. Conversely, he solves the case, upholds social order, and prevents Violet from coming to harm. However, there is no such purpose to the Storyville Portraits, no matter how much we might like to imagine they are indications of sordid affairs; these were all satisfying points for Doyle's readers, but the portraits will probably never be able to claim the satisfying closure of a Holmesian tale. They do not possess the shock of a Ripper postmortem, either. They linger at the periphery of Storyville's stories, perhaps going without sustained comment because they remind us of what has been purposefully forgotten. Unlike Gruner's book, they do not appear to serve as a trophy and are ambiguous in their intent.

Gruner, conversely, counts 'on the silence and shame'[46] of his past mistresses, as well as the implicit trust of his new fiancée, to protect him.

Further, his social status and title mean that others are deeply reticent to challenge his assertions of innocence – even when he is suspected of dealing in bribery, blackmail, and murder. As Sir James Damery tells Watson and Holmes when he asks if they will accept the case, Gruner is not above all suspicion. He is merely too clever and affluent to be convicted without explicit evidence. 'He has been fortunate in some rather shady speculations and is a rich man,' says Damery of the Baron, 'which, naturally, makes him a more dangerous antagonist.'[47] Gruner is a 'brilliant, forceful rascal' who has convinced his fiancée that he is innocent of all accusations, and Holmes concedes that he must indeed be 'a complex mind.'[48] When pressed to reveal more details of the engagement between Violet, the daughter of a distinguished retired British general, and Gruner, Damery replies exasperatedly:

The cunning devil has told her every unsavory public scandal of his past life, but always in such a way as to make himself out to be an innocent martyr. She absolutely accepts his version and will listen to no other.[49]

Gruner adeptly manipulated Violet's feelings to ensure her loyalty to him. This is despite his history with women: 'he is said to have the whole sex at his mercy and to have made ample use of the fact.'[50] The polite allusion to his many affairs foreshadows macabre knowledge to come, while reminding readers that Violet knows about that aspect of his reputation. It hints at the idea, too, that apart from setting his sights on women of her standing, he was previously involved with prostitutes or mistresses. After all, Damery uses the words 'shady' and 'rascal,' which were hardly qualities associated with moral men. However, Winter discloses Gruner's most disturbing secret: the 'lust diary.'

With no qualms, Kitty introduces herself to Watson and Holmes as an 'old mate' of the reformed convict 'Porky' Shinwell Johnson,[51] which means that like Shinwell, she is affiliated with London's criminal subcultures. Watson describes Johnson's history in an aside; Doyle seems uninterested in creating an origin story for Kitty outside of the connection she has to Gruner. In effect, she is a plot device who also serves to establish and offset Violet's identity properly. One could argue the same of Violet; the two women, different as they are, provide the game for two brilliant

men. Most discussions of the Storyville Portraits until very recently have, despite showing compassion for the models, always remarked most upon Bellocq's mysterious intentions. While this may be because we know little about the individual women, a focus on Bellocq is also comfortable, and convenient, within a popular culture tradition of the men connected with 'fallen' women monopolizing the women's stories. As Kitty says,

You needn't go into my past, Mr. Holmes. That's neither here nor there. But I am what Adelbert Gruner made me. If I could pull him down! […] Oh, if only I could pull him into the pit where he has pushed so many![52]

In effect, most perceptions of the models in the Storyville Portraits echo her words.

In general, viewers assume that Bellocq 'made' these women, regardless of his intentions. And however obliquely, Kitty blames Gruner for her present state. Readers are left to wonder what exactly he has made of her, and why she remains vengeful, when the conversation swiftly moves toward a discussion of the Baron's current life. Kitty and Holmes address Violet's awareness of the Baron's past, and Kitty offers to reason with Violet in person, which would be a violation of social conduct between women of different ranks. However, such different women often passed one another in public spaces, especially by the turn of the century. The conversation goes as follows:

'Couldn't you lay proofs before her silly eyes?'
'Well, can you help us do so?'
'Ain't I a proof myself? If I stood before her and told her […]'
'Would you do this?'
'Would I? Would I not?'
'Well, it might be worth trying. But he has told her most of his sins.'
'I'll lay he didn't tell her all,' said Miss Winter.[53]

The two ladies are part of vastly different circumstances. Just as Kitty was, Violet is in physical and emotional danger, so long as she remains with Gruner. But unlike Kitty, Violet is not anonymous enough to hope that any scandal that might involve her could remain private. She is also not expendable; being part of a respectable, well-connected family, she is not

the subject of ‘public indifference’ or scorn like an artist’s model or a sex worker.[54]

By making her offer, Kitty presents herself as an insider and tells Watson and Holmes about the ‘brown leather book with a lock’ that Gruner secreted away in his study.[55] This locked book is a collection of trophies, an arrangement of conquests – not, as Watson later assumes, purely of old lovers’ mementos. It is not even as pragmatic as a madam’s black book of information about clients. As Kitty says, it houses a large assemblage of women’s portraits and Gruner’s notes. It is incriminating against the Baron, but most of all toward his past mistresses. Although some New Orleanian souvenir books contained at least as many photographs as this mysterious book would have – and readers are never told explicitly what it contains – they are overt. Blue Books, for example, were meant to be read by many men, and did not, according to Pamela Arceneaux, contain ‘lewd’ images or text.[56]

Conversely, the ‘brown volume’ that Holmes eventually takes back to 221B Baker Street haunts the women it contains. It even inspires unease among the men, who might otherwise be interested; it silently menaces instead of intriguing them to look at it. Watson asks – perhaps endeavoring to find something relatable about the case – ‘Is it his love diary?’ and Holmes replies, flatly, ‘Or his lust diary. Call it what you will. The moment the woman told us of it I realized what a tremendous weapon was there, if we could but lay our hands on it.’[57] While this ‘tremendous weapon’ could be used for extortion or blackmail, and something like it might have been used for that purpose in Storyville – almost to the point of rousing little interest amongst other instances of foul play – Holmes means to use the book to persuade Violet to end her engagement. His role is to uphold the law, and further than it, morality. Unambiguously, he states, ‘It is [Gruner’s] moral side, not his physical, which we have to destroy.’[58]

On the other hand, Kitty only has the power to mar Gruner’s persuasive physicality: she sneaks into his house, attacks him with vitriol, and leaves him permanently disfigured. Watson, who was present during the abrupt assault, recounts its effect on Gruner’s face, ears, and neck in almost mournful, homosocial terms. ‘The features I had admired a few minutes before were now like some beautiful painting over which the artist had

passed over a wet and foul sponge,' he says. 'They were blurred, discolored, inhuman, terrible.'[59] In the end, Gruner's physical appearance mirrors his internal corruption, but his assortment of women remains fully intact.

The Storyville Portraits are not traditionally manipulative, and they are not sinister in the same fashion as the 'lust diary' of 'The Adventure of the Illustrious Client'. Bellocq's only known similarity to Gruner would have been his purported good looks when he was a young man; as Rex Rose writes, he was probably 'a Storyville dandy,' which leaves one to imagine that the district possessed its own fashionable set (or regulars, at least, whether or not they were fashionable) like other *demimondes*.[60] This said, the figure of the 'prostitute' (as well as the heinous blackmailer or murderer) as presented – even obliquely, since Kitty is only overtly named as a mistress and artist's model, but those two roles were closely allied with prostitution in the nineteenth century – by Doyle refracts our viewings of the Storyville Portraits. These tropes are embedded in our conceptualizations of Storyville, of New Orleans, and of the models in the portraits.

Regardless of why Bellocq made his photographs, they do still amount to a collection of women. This can be regarded as strange – if not downright sinister to some. As a fictitious creature, the Baron had his beginnings in vivid newspaper reports and the villainous men of sensational literature. Like Dr Cream, he was an attractive murderer, and, like the Ripper, he was good at not being caught committing his crimes. Doyle's increasingly outlandish writing shows how his imagination had tired of Sherlock Holmes by 1924, which was when he wrote 'The Adventure of the Illustrious Client'. As a result, his stories became more supportive of a nostalgic, fantastical Victorian age that relied on popular culture. Similarly, what we know of Bellocq is disjointed, questionable, and melodramatic; it often reads as sensationally as one of Doyle's short stories and has been just as fabricated in many respects.[61] It makes sense, then, that we might be predisposed to wonder if the Storyville Portraits are simply evidence of Bellocq's debased nature.

The singular 'lust diary' within the Holmes canon – itself steeped in criminality (used for blackmail), popular culture, and pathology, like

histories of vice districts and Storyville specifically – pairs well with the Storyville Portraits and their serendipitous origin. John Szarkowski writes:

A plausible guess might be that [Bellocq's] working life reached from about 1895 through the first four decades [of the twentieth century]. The 34 pictures reproduced here are selected from a group of 89 plates – portraits of Storyville prostitutes – which were discovered in Bellocq's desk after his death. These negatives were made about 1912. As far as it is known, they constitute the only fragment of his work to have survived.[62]

While this 'fragment' of his work does not humiliate the women who were involved and, further, there are no notes attached to the images that have been included in any monographs, the fact that it seemed to be relatively private – perhaps a personal exercise for the photographer – is the source of many questions and few answers.

At the very least, the secretive nature of Bellocq's portraits must be considered if we are to fully engage with them. Perhaps this secrecy can be interpreted as a reaction against the frenetic responses to the District, though; they complicate the prostitute's archetypical presence in discourses about vice and crime by not affirming her 'deviant' nature. The models they contain are more reminiscent of Kitty Winter or Lou Harvey than the caricatured illustration of Annie Chapman. They can radiate melancholia; the women are enigmatic, but instead of theatricality, they possess quietude. They are what Bellocq 'made them,' as Kitty says of herself and her relationship with Gruner, yet they remain individuals with a variety of figures and expressions.

A salient question to ask about his work, then, is whether it was intended to be sold alongside the massive amounts of pornography that Storyville generated. When asked about the popularity of pornography in Storyville, 'Adele' – a woman who, apparently, was the 'subject of several of Bellocq's portraits' (though no one seems to note which portraits are actually of Adele)[63] – said that, 'there were so many taken, I don't know why they're so scarce [today]. Lots of, you know, dirty pictures.'[64] Even if there 'were so many taken,' they were ephemeral items that originated from what was commonly regarded as a den of vice, so 'dirty pictures' would hold little value in any sense after Storyville's demise. Logically, many

would have been destroyed and they would thus become ‘scarce,’ akin to bits of fallout or refuse rather than treated as objects and images with historical or aesthetic importance.

Still, the nude Storyville Portraits are not at all the most explicit examples of *fin de siècle* pornography, whether from the United States, Europe, or Britain. Emily Epstein Landau notes that Lulu White commissioned a series of explicit photographs of herself having sex with a dog, as well.[65] So, we can surmise that if she or anyone else wanted Bellocq to take more *risqué* photographs, they would have had no trouble broaching the subject. Szarkowski’s belief that ‘it [was] more likely that Bellocq photographed the women of Storyville because he found them irresistibly compelling’ is probably the most accurate assumption we can make, despite the somewhat maudlin suggestion that Bellocq somehow had access to their personal confidences.[66]

Of course, that is what we might like to imagine as viewers; it is compelling to think about the conversations that occurred between the women and the man behind his camera, and this is easily part of what makes the portraits so haunting or affective. They suggest, but never affirm. Many of the portraits are of naked women, for example, but nudity does not automatically create eroticism. And if later testimonies were any indication, pornography was rife, but Bellocq was not just making his living as a pornographer; sex workers were used to their presence and would have no motive to lie if he was always making ‘dirty pictures.’

We have no reason to doubt this was the case, regardless of whether Adele was truly one of Bellocq’s models – or just a creation based on an amalgamation of several, now nameless, women, and jumbled hearsay. Perhaps disappointingly in comparison to tales of intrigue and crime from their home city, the portraits’ survival is one of the most remarkable things about them. They have origins which have been even more confused by numerous retellings, research complicated by the presence of both urban legends and verifiable events, and large amounts of editorial – not to mention artistic[67] – license. If anything, the portraits are an ideal case study of how nonlinear history can be in theory and practice, especially when vice is involved. Significance is attributed to the city they came from and their creator, but not particularly to what they portray.

'I Am Just Aching To Take My Axe and Go Down Canal Street': Violence As a Convention of Reform

In 1894, Laura Ormiston Chant, a British 'suffragist, novelist, poet, and nurse'[68] said 'the Love that overcame Negro slavery in the United States shall overcome the white slavery of London, of England.'[69] Contrary to what Chant claimed, 'Love' had very little to do with how 'white slaves' were understood, spoken about, or treated. Misogynistic and racist violence had been demonstrably normalized in transatlantic fiction and mass media – which, given the cyclical and fickle nature of *fin de siècle* and early twentieth-century reporting that Ryan Cordell highlights, could be counted as a genre of fiction[70] – and, ultimately, this meant brutality became part of the rhetoric of (and criticisms against) reformers. Already embedded in law enforcement against vice, violence toward women and sex workers infused discussions about (and held by) women reformers, leading to inseparable parallels between crime and 'justifiable' brutality. Consequently, a virulent cycle of language, images, and action meant, with no shortage of irony, that those who thought they worked on the side of fairness or justice were governed by assumptions that 'deviants' had to be met with unflinching force to be 'cured' for their own good.

The perspectives of purported ex-sex workers illustrate the complexities and paradoxes of these beliefs, as do those of reformers. But underlying all of them, especially by the early twentieth century, was a rich sediment of literature depicting slums and vice (Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* or Zola's *Nana*, for example), sensational journalism that thrived on crimes more frightening than any horror fiction, detective stories and pornography (and much of the pornography was spurred by popular literature like *Nana* or Du Maurier's *Trilby*). All its production or reception had been swayed by grisly realities like the Ripper and Cream cases; it was no longer possible to think about prostitution, or even sexual liaisons, without concurrent thoughts of voyeurism and murder. By implication, the sense that 'bad' women must have also had deficient intellects and emotional capacities grew stronger; no 'sane' person would choose a life that was both a crime and permeated by it.

Yet in her 1909 autobiography *The Underworld Sewer*, American ex-madam Josie Washburn rebuffed readers who assumed sex workers were

unemotional and unfeeling. At the time, that readership would have still included a large number of people. Washburn, who had once been a 'working girl' herself, then a madam, in Nebraska, openly refuted the view that such a woman must be inhuman, almost demonic, to partake in the profession. 'To the warped minds who believe that a fallen woman is incapable of possessing a human emotion,' she says, recounting humiliating public raids that were often carried out by police on her boarding house (brothel), 'it would be useless to explain our feelings.'[71] Without hiding her disdain, calling those who could – or would – not empathize with sex workers 'warped,' Washburn made an incisive criticism against society rather than, as was common even at the turn of the century, women who turned to vice as an occupation.

As Gary Krist explains, many anti-prostitution activists in New Orleans 'held astounding beliefs about eugenics,' believed that deviance could be 'read' and prevented, and would act on these beliefs for the betterment of the public. These included the sisters Kate and Jean Gordon, who arranged for the sterilization of at least one girl whom they regarded as potentially deviant (as well as 'destitute,' in the day's vernacular). Heads of the Milne Asylum for Destitute Girls, writes Krist, they:

Advocated for the forced sterilization of children who showed signs of a future in crime, prostitution, or alcoholism: Took Lucille Decoux to the Women's Dispensary [for an appendectomy follow-up] Jean wrote in her diary. This was an excellent opportunity to have her sterilized […] and thus end any feeble-minded progeny coming from Lucille.[72]

To a large degree, the feelings of the 'feeble-minded' were believed to be non-existent. Knowing this was a pervasive belief, Washburn declared, 'those who are less burdened with ignorance and prejudice regarding us will have a faint comprehension of our sufferings when I say that each time we were taken up in that way [raided by the police] we felt like committing suicide.'[73]

Almost without exception, Washburn characterized her 'girls' – admitting that she was at one time a moneyed madam – and other women she knew in 'the trade'[74] as victims of a corrupted system, not moral impurity; they were individuals who had been failed by their communities

and government. They were not simply products of their biology or an unavoidable, gendered immorality. Even more remarkably, she posed a challenge to the rhetoric of 'fallen women' as necessarily deviant criminals who were somehow intrinsically fated to commit indecent acts and tempt others to do the same. Washburn's women were definitely 'prostitutes,' but none were criminals due to their work. They were *treated* as criminal. '[The police] would pile us all in the wagon like a lot of criminals' after any supposed 'transgressions' had been committed, Washburn says, 'and carry us through the streets'[75] in highly public displays of discipline and shame that were intended to make the women into examples. But for her, prostitutes were explicitly not lawbreakers in the same sense as violent offenders. This evidences a rare, and eventually more common, attitude.

Washburn believed that the criminal quality of the prostitute was allied with her performative sexuality and especially her occupational role, not her gender. She writes having conducted business predominately in the Midwest, but astutely situates prostitution as the sector of business that it was in many American cities by the turn of the century. As Beckson notes (citing the final, 1902 volume of *Life and Labour of the People in London* by Charles Booth), Gilfoyle states that engaging in full-time or casual prostitution was a viable supplement to the low incomes generated by more acceptable occupations for women, such as teaching or being a seamstress: 'As women entered the world of wage labor in larger numbers after the 1870s, prostitution was attractive to some. Most female occupations paid very low and inadequate wages.'[76] As shown by powerful Storyville madams and some of their girls, however, sex work could grant a higher income and in many cases a better quality of life than remaining part of the 'proper' workforce.

Crucially, Gilfoyle says, 'Willingness on the part of some women to choose prostitution over other forms of labor reflected an alternative attitude regarding their bodies.'[77] This suggests how representations of the female body, sexuality, and prostitution were also changing. But reformers, Washburn included among their number despite her more liberal beliefs, were often most disturbed by the 'very different' idea 'of the meaning of coitus' that sex workers made manifest.[78] This freeness toward the body and what might be done with it, as well as the implication that women could actually enjoy sex, or materially benefit from having extramarital or

premarital sex, also impacted the ways in which women who were not sex workers chose to conduct themselves. What it reflected, more than an intentional subcultural consciousness centered on subversive sexual identity, was 'the wide range of female sexual behavior' that belied an expansive 'variety of personal economies and financial circumstances that encouraged women to prostitute.'[79]

Reformers generally did not embrace sex – whether for money, recreation, or both – as a liberating activity for women; on the contrary, many early feminists believed that women should have equal social rights to men and not be subservient to them, but that sex was best situated within a marriage. Although turn-of-the-century hysteria about prostitution was different than the debates around the topic at the beginning and middle of the nineteenth century, as it focused on capitalist wage structures and ideologies of purity, as well as violence, it still oversimplified the massive 'variety' of circumstances that made selling sex a more attractive and feasible move for many women. If, like Washburn, authors and activists did on some level concede that poverty, the need to survive, or simply a desire for 'fine clothes and luxuries'[80] were powerful motivators for women to become sex workers, they often spun them into tragedies rather than pragmatic actions.

Like London, New Orleans was a battlefield between the presence of vice and citizens who were keenly interested in divesting the city of its sinful industries.[81] This battle can be glimpsed in letters to newspaper editors, which expressed decided opinions not only about vice itself, but on how to curtail it. These responses varied according to the author's gender and political persuasion, but rarely demonstrated empathy for any sex workers. The language used in these letters was often reminiscent of descriptions of sexual violence. Further, it reinforced specific gender binaries in which women were supposed to be subservient while pathologizing 'manhood' and 'womanhood.' On 31 May 1914, E.C.G. Ferguson, president of the Arena Club, wrote to the editor of the *Times-Picayune*, convinced that 'the voter […] the maker and enforcer of public morals and all law' should 'enforce his own will on the community even for its own good.'[82] Ferguson wrote:

It is with profound gratitude that the Arena Club notes the proposed action of the clean manhood of New Orleans relative to eliminating the restricted district of our city.

This step is a verification of [our] position that the abolishment of that district was man's work, for only the voter, molder of public opinion, the maker and enforcer of public morals and all law can enforce his own will on the community even for its own good. The thanks of Louisiana womanhood are due the men who are in very truth and in fact to be the 'protectors' of the youth of both sexes, the 'sons of women' as well as their daughters, of our city and State. God speed you, gentlemen, in your wise and just efforts to remove from our city's escutcheon the shameful blot now on it, of having a 'law-protected' red-light district.[83]

Several days later, William C. Harder said in his letter to the editor that the current 'coterie of vice crusaders' was going about confronting Storyville in the wrong way – that their focus on redrafting laws was 'unnecessary' because ones that should have better controlled or ultimately be used to eradicate Storyville already existed.[84]

Harder explained the 'Storyville law' in great detail, ending with the complaint:

But it is not enforced. The police department's hands are seemingly tied. Therefore, you dear vice crusaders […] your only recourse will be to strive to get rid of our present city ring of administration at the next election, and with it will naturally go to oblivion the present lethargic police department, to be replaced by a police department that will have hands free to enforce the various laws upon this social evil.[85]

Because many of the most notorious 'vice crusaders' were women, Harder's disdainful tone implies that he directed his words at them. And like Ferguson's, his terms are extremely bodily; the 'police department's hands' are tied – if they are replaced with a new order of police, they 'will have hands free to enforce the laws.' The entire topic of vice had been saturated with corporeal discourse. Indeed, Lottie Watcher demonstrates how this consciousness even affected her perception of the female anti-vice campaigners. In her letter to the *Times-Picayune*, she declared:

I do think that Miss Jean Gordon and her followers should attend to feminine affairs, and let men's work alone.

Women should stay home. Political work and speeches are not in their line. Men were made to rule […] Gordon and her followers should not try to gain notoriety and criticism by outstepping their bounds.[86]

In an ironic turn of events, during the last few years Storyville was in business, women 'vice crusaders' came under more fire for exhibiting similar traits to Storyville's women sex workers. They too, disregarded normal boundaries and took on 'mannish' behavior.

Some of the more adamant reformers, such as the Gordon sisters, were natives, while others detested New Orleans because of its reputation and not because they lived within the city.

Carrie Nation, an outspoken activist known throughout the United States for wielding hatchets against saloons, is exemplary of the intense conviction that came with this belief. Like her supporters, easily some of Washburn's 'warped minds,' she maintained that prostitutes should be reformed and became more hostile over time. In a display of aggression directed toward prostitutes rather than saloon landlords, she entered a Butte, Montana dancehall and engaged in a physical altercation with madam May Malloy during January 1910. Malloy, however, tossed Nation from her establishment complete with a 'wrenched elbow.' The incident made national papers, generally with Nation's role being cast as that of comical victim instead of moral crusader.[87] Interestingly, journalistic reports in more socially liberal – or more 'lawless' and generally less federalized – locations tended to treat Nation as a joke as her escapades grew bolder. What this suggests, then, is that there was skepticism toward female reformers, even though admittedly Nation was one of the easiest and most convenient to parody with her self-claimed name (Carry or Carrie A. Nation, though she was born 'Carrie Amelia Moore') and bombastic rhetoric. Ironically, Nation did not seem to realize, or never acknowledged, that many of the women in the Blue Books also took working names.

Before the fracas with Malloy, though, Nation passed through New Orleans and had decided opinions about the city. Unhesitatingly, she relayed these to a *New Orleans Item* reporter in 1907. Upon being asked how long she would stay, she replied, 'Just as long as it takes me to go from this train

to the one for Washington […] I would like to stay here a week and teach you wicked people how to live, but business calls me East and I am compelled to go straight through.'[88] She had not properly visited New Orleans yet, which the reporter pointed out; her response was characteristic of a woman whose reputation had been made by taking hatchets to local watering holes across the United States. She pugnaciously retorted:

I have not […] But I am just aching to take my axe and go down Canal Street, bursting out the plate glass fronts of the grog shops and other vices of sin I read about that are here […] Why, New Orleans is one of the biggest drinking places in these United States […] I have seen people who have spent some time here and they tell me that you are not in it unless you can put down a keg of beer and a flask of whiskey every twelve hours.[89]

For Nation, alcohol was deeply allied with all 'vices of sin' but especially sensual gratification. She did not make the short trip to Storyville from the train station because she was only staying enough to change trains. One imagines that her urge to dismantle it was deeply pressed, that day. However, what resonates most about her remarks is that the District was not the only worthless part of New Orleans; the entire city was full of 'wicked people' who were complicit and benefitting from the vices that surrounded them. This was the reputation the city had inherited; the turn of the century spurred a resurgence in the national perception of New Orleans as sensually, sexually charged. Such a lawless place, it was imagined, needed to be met with – and would encourage – more unflinching violence and discipline.

'Bellocq Never Said Anything and They Always Let Him Go' – Imposed Criminalities

The crucial connections between these discussions of violence and crime and the Storyville Portraits are the beliefs – as portrayed in print culture and popular literature, largely – that have been used to conceptualize Bellocq's portraits as a portrayal, or the result, of something 'shameful' and 'criminal.' High-profile criminal cases, Kitty Winter's contributions to Baron Gruner's downfall, and the tone of female reformers (as well as the backlash against them) in New Orleans demonstrate how easily facts and

fictions support the idea of the Portraits as secrets that had to be kept hidden due to their subject. This perception does not have as many consequences for Bellocq as it does for his models; they are, once again, cast as a locus of corruption and violence either instigated by, or directed toward, them.

The defaced Storyville Portraits often rouse concerns over violence toward women, if not violence toward sex workers. Of the canonical portraits, some of the most conspicuous are the ones where – for an ultimately unknown reason – models' heads have been gouged out, leaving behind a faceless body. Supposedly, Friedlander's replication of Bellocq's original printing process suggested the scratches most likely occurred while the negatives' plates were still wet, which means that Bellocq would have made the marks himself.[90] In several photographs, this appears to be hastily or sloppily done with part of a face still left behind, while in others, black scratches have eradicated any identifiable features. Plate 33 is one of the most dramatic defaced portraits. It was also made from one of the most physically damaged negatives, which adds to its visual impact. A nude woman stands in front of a bed, posing for the camera in stockings and shoes. One of her arms rests along the footboard, while the other is bent, her hand at her hip. Her defacement paired with the poor condition of the negative produces a visceral, potentially disturbing effect.

Because I wanted to avoid the clichés that can dominate conversations about Bellocq's work, I have chosen to address the defaced portraits only after discussing themes of hostility, disease, and delinquency on a larger cultural scale. Although Plate 33 is indeed unsettling without context, the need to explain it as evidence of 'violence' or 'domination' is merely hard to avoid rather than inevitable. The portrait itself predisposes viewers either not to accept a less-egregious explanation, or that they might never know precisely why Plate 33's model was defaced. By making assumptions that Bellocq maliciously destroyed the photographs, we are participating in the same process of mythmaking and stereotyping that has always followed his work. As Steven Maklansky wrote to Laura Thomson in 2005, explaining the timeline of the 1996 reissue of *Storyville Portraits* by Random House:

Szarkowski is the guy I think who shaped the first exhibition/book- if you read the original transcripts of the interviews that he used to create the 'play' in the introduction you can see how he picked and choosed to create

a compelling story – remember, back then photography was still trying to gain acceptance as an art form- Szarkowski created the Toulouse Lautrec of New Orleans to help make the case [*sic*].[91]

He then explains:

One thing that Friedlander and Random House did have access to was all of the negs – and they could have made a very different book simply by selecting different images – i.e., examples that show Bellocq showing different women at different times in the same place and same position- or images that feature what is obviously the same woman with her face scratched out in one but not another [*sic*][92]

One of the lingering modern myths – instead of Bellocq as a 'Toulouse-Lautrec' – has evolved to be about Bellocq as a 'Baron Gruner' figure, or someone who – despite clues within the portraits that he was not malicious – was secretive and manipulative, as well as potentially violent. Conversely, in her short essay about the defaced Storyville Portraits, Chelsea Nichols raises the idea of Bellocq's 'unusual corporeality' motivating the defacements as an expression of 'self-loathing.'[93] Although the notion that Bellocq was physically disabled has been largely discredited, her suggestion is more evidence that the myths surrounding the defaced Storyville Portraits are fixed in discourses about masculinity and the artist, as well as folklore having to do with Bellocq himself.

Meanwhile, Maklansky makes the point that '[Random House] could have made a very different book simply by selecting different images,' and this cannot be overlooked. Because of the images that *were* selected, which, as he writes, do not 'feature […] the same woman with her face scratched out in one [photograph] but not another' it is tempting to imagine a scenario where the defacements were personal or possessive. Further, Bellocq has evidently deprived the woman in Plate 33 of her ability to 'gaze' at the viewer, which is a loaded act in the context of his model's presumed occupation and echoes the final scene in Zola's *Nana*.[94] However, as many cabinet cards show, photographers could and did alter bodies and faces; Bellocq was just as likely to engage in this practice.[95]

The systemic issues of power and misogyny raised by the defaced portraits are not irrelevant, but these respective images need to be discussed in a less sensational, predetermined manner that allows room for more pragmatic possibilities regarding their existence. They should also be contextualized with the very real concern of violence against sex workers who were – and are – simply working. The inconsistency in the defacements – especially if, as Maklansky notes, there are other, intact images of the women whose faces have been scratched away – does not quite support the proposal that Bellocq was trying to maintain the models' anonymity. However, it also negates the voyeuristic scenario that Nichols describes as a potential reason for the defacements; she writes:

The defaced photographs, then, might be seen as the ultimate manifestation of [Bellocq's] voyeurism: rather than understanding it as destructive, perhaps we should see the act of scratching the negatives as his means of 'taking' these women purely through looking.[96]

Because of its model's inability to 'look,' Plate 33 adds to the mystery of the Storyville Portraits by playing into the well-established vernacular of deviance that surrounds not only the male artist or pornographer, but also the prostitute – who, within the paradigm, is always female.

Margaret Olin explains, 'Respect for the power of the gaze survives today in the injunction not to stare, and the need to ask permission before watching someone at work or play,'[97] yet this formality of 'ask[ing] permission' to '[watch] someone at work' was denied to sex workers exactly because of their work. Mainstream society did not recognize 'sex work' as an acceptable occupation, even if the possibility was being discussed. There was an 'injunction not to stare' at pornography or prostitutes because of their perceived immorality. But as it was in other instances, this 'injunction' was still motivated by 'many negative constructions of looking' and a concern with the wellbeing of the 'gazer' – their moral purity, in this case – rather than the person who was being looked upon.[98] Olin also states that 'culturally determined precepts regulate photography, which involves having one's image looked at in one's absence. It is customary at least to ask permission, in some cases to obtain a release or pay a fee.'[99] However, we may be uncomfortable with Plate 33

(or others like it in Bellocq's *oeuvre*) and rush to explain it because, not only has this nude woman's identity – or at least her face – been obscured, but without her face, we are looking at her 'image' in her 'absence' in more than one sense. We have no way to judge how she felt while this portrait was being taken; her face has no way of conveying her 'permission' to us because it has been omitted. We then might feel as though we are participating in a non-consensual act of looking when we view Plate 33. Even if all other evidence points to the contrary – that there was and is a far less negative transaction occurring – the mythologies of prostitution, and the stigmas against sex work, are too powerful a force on our imaginations.

After all, brutal attitudes toward sex workers at the turn of the century had dangerous precursors. There were subliminal ideological links between the supposedly righteous acts instigated by Nation, for example, and more unconscionable, criminal violence – such as the Ripper murders, the Axeman's murders or Cream's international murder spree – that had been present for much of the century. Clearly Nation never said she meant to kill the people she targeted. Yet she, like the Axeman, took a hatchet as her weapon and symbol of choice. The interest I have in violence in this chapter is not meant to insinuate that the more extreme reformers' actions were necessarily the same as murders. However, the casual way in which Jean Gordon seems to mention having young Lucille Decoux sterilized does demonstrate the dangerous links between representations of, and beliefs about, prostitution, and the concrete, dehumanizing actions taken against girls and women who were believed to be at risk of 'deviance' – for example, poor women, women without families, and very often black women or women of color – so that they would never be able to reproduce.

Both symbolic and literal types of violence, as well as a hierarchy of pragmatic and less premeditated aggression directed toward sex workers, were all present and intermixed at the early twentieth century. Brutality – in an enormous number of forms – influenced representations and perceptions as much as it influenced social politics. In light of these views, one remarkable aspect of Bellocq's portraits is that they are ambivalent about their charged contexts. Unlike the Ripper postmortem photographs, they were not placed in the public's eye to shock or titillate, and, unlike Baron Gruner's private book of conquests, they are not invasive images.

Yet, regardless of how they appear, they are subject to these narratives and part of them. Although they do not conform exactly to what we might expect of photographs of sex workers, the unanswered questions about their purpose make them seem insidious because we are inclined to understand Bellocq and his models within a criminal-victim dichotomy. Thus, Bellocq becomes a suspect, while the models become victims. Michael Ondaatje's *Coming Through Slaughter* (1976), in which Bellocq is a secondary character, characterizes him in a Dr Cream or Baron Gruner-like way. A detective, Webb, says that every time the police found a woman's body under questionable circumstances, the department took Bellocq in for an interrogation. He says:

[We] knew Bellocq. He was often picked up as a suspect. Whenever a whore was chopped [*sic*] they brought him in and questioned him […] But Bellocq never said anything and they always let him go.[100]

Because of the influences of sensational crime and its ensuing photography, as well as the presence of rife pornography, when we look at the Storyville Portraits it is easy to regard them as illicit. Ondaatje capitalizes on this; Bellocq's apparent hobby ultimately makes him a suspicious character. According to the mass culture of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, no photograph of a naked woman (or a sex worker) could be innocent. If the images were not in the open as a didactic tool – or as a way of selling papers to a public eager for gore – they must have been dangerous, indicative of some criminal persuasion.

Since the figure of the *fin de siècle* prostitute cannot exist without sensational melodrama and violence, it is uncomfortable to admit that Bellocq's portraits – even Plate 33 and the others like it that have been defaced – might have no salacious explanation, yet they are read and understood within stereotypes of violence and crime, and that tendency needs to be unlearned. Quite feasibly, they were just taken by an intrigued photographer who liked to frequent the District (perhaps to have sex, perhaps not) and used its women as models for whatever aesthetic he attempted to achieve. Especially compared to what Holmes called a 'lust diary' in 'The Illustrious Client,' the Portraits are not representative of a genre that would have been damning in the 1890s.

However, they are still indeed found objects. As mentioned, sources claim that after Bellocq died in 1949, his surviving brother found the cache of his work. Evidently not knowing what to do with them – but not intending to destroy them, either – he hid them in a sofa. Eventually, the Portraits were then rediscovered after both brothers had died.[101] What can be agreed upon, even if the story varies (others have said all the negatives were found in Bellocq's desk rather than anywhere else – for example, a sofa – which is far less theatrical), is that there is an element of secrecy inherent in the Portraits. They had to be found, and they are still mysterious in their intention.

The models are, with very few exceptions, unknown to us today.[102] Like the 'brown volume' that finally came to the safe confines of Baker Street, Bellocq's portraits were reportedly hidden away in a desk in his study – as though they were painful or frightening to behold. Meanwhile, Storyville – itself characterized as a living 'lust diary' – was saturated with pornography. There seems to be no pragmatic reason why Bellocq should have kept his work private.

As Wiggs recounted in agreement with Adele's statements, 'I mean, we knew all the people who [Bellocq] was taking pictures of. There were a vast number of people [in Storyville], you know.'[103] Even at the time, apparently, there was confusion about why and how Bellocq, who could not have gone unnoticed in the very busy district, kept his finished portraits from becoming part of the deluge of 'dirty pictures.' Wiggs further elaborated, asserting that there was an enthusiastic market for not only sex but pornography, too, that 'there was this saloon on South Rampart, and above this saloon was a little room, and in this room were thousands of pictures; they looked like they were made in France, of fornication and anything related to that in all its possible […] positions.'[104]

While we may always be left to wonder about the veracity of some recollections of Storyville, if we consider the trends of the period and its intense shifts between what comprised acceptable morality and sexuality, anecdotes that concern the pornographic trade within the district cannot be too embellished. Invariably, the Bellocq portraits do not rival what would have been in the 'little room' above a saloon on South Rampart.[105] Of the ones reproduced in Storyville Portraits there are only a handful of

photographs, if that, that would be considered explicitly pornographic. None, as Wiggs tactfully put the matter, show models in 'positions.'[106] There are no portrayals of any sexual acts. Instead, they 'possess a sense of leisure in the making' that lends itself well to the idea that they were not intended to gratify predatory urges.[107] A sense of voyeurism is not present; each woman is aware that she is being looked at and photographed. The portraits suggest Bellocq's fascination or rapport with their models, but they are not exactly the malicious records of women we would imagine being kept inside a 'beastly book:'[108] many of the women look at us, and all knew Bellocq was looking at them. But, nonetheless, nothing is especially purposeful about the images. Bellocq was not an insider of the underworld who seemed interested in using his work for any social or political commentary, and it does not seem likely that he used the photographs to commemorate personal conquests or as blackmail.

However, given who his work is about – sex workers, or at the very least, women who might pose naked – and where they are from – New Orleans – it is almost inevitable that the portraits carry the stigma of imagined exploitation, violence, or obsession. This may be due to the fact that they were not made prolifically available like the varieties of pornography that abounded. To be sure, they would not have had a place in public discourses where prostitutes were victims, criminals, objects, or some strange mixture of all three categories. Anwer observes that the Ripper postmortems, with the exception of Mary Kelly's:

Resemble portraits of sleeping women, photographed clandestinely, voyeuristically, without their knowledge. All that is required of us, the viewers, is a slight associative *legerdemain*, and the sleeping women transform into the women who sleep around.[109]

'Associative *legerdemain*,' however, also occurs when applied to the nude Storyville Portraits. We are often presented with women who have disrobed, women who are, then, used to being nude.

We can surmise, even without necessarily knowing who took these photographs or where they were taken, that these were 'the women who sleep around.' However, the portraits deny any ontological neatness, and they furnish no false assurances that we can understand exactly what takes

place within their frames. They are neither what Anwer calls 'an archive profiling streetwalkers – a female counterpart to the predominantly male mug-shot compilations of criminal types,'[110] nor images produced exclusively for sexual pleasure, and it is not easy to associate them with crime because there are so few allusions to Storyville.

A few of Bellocq's models, for instance, are clothed in what appears to be their Sunday best or their leisure clothes. The woman in Plate 9 stands outdoors in a crisp, white dress trimmed with lace and clutches a bunch of flowers; this image does not echo how we would expect sex workers, perhaps especially Storyville prostitutes, to look. Plate 13, similarly, portrays a woman wearing a large, fashionable feathered hat, and her white blouse is tucked into a long, dark skirt; the cameo pin at her neck could belong to any middle-class woman. Unlike the crib workers who made far less money, one gets the impression that these women could afford quality items for their wardrobes.

Without any knowledge of their occupation, these models become examples of the new, independent, modern woman – well-attired, but with a few dubious trademarks such as messy or shorter hair – the model in Plate 12 sports shorter locks like several of her peers. Another model in Plate 21 is attired in an intricate evening gown that drips with pearls and glossy ribbons; over the gown is a fur stole. The tight, delicate choker she wears and her bracelet, a discreet glimmer on her forearm, are both accessories for a wealthy woman, or one who can access fine things. All of these women fall far from the likes of Annie Chapman's illustrations, as well as her photograph, and they do not appear remotely 'criminal' or 'unpleasant.' For the most part, they are young, and as Wiggs said in disbelief, they are 'pretty' – which was doubtless his most diplomatic way of saying they did not look diseased, haggard, or deviant.

We might get a sense that they are not exactly conventional, but their unconventionality calls to mind the variety of young, respectable women who frequented London streets at the turn of the century, as described by Judith R. Walkowitz:

A few independent women adopted a less 'ladylike' public style to match their heterodox views. Annie Besant affronted the sensibility of many by her working-class dress, her heavy laced boots, short skirts and red

neckerchief, and close-cut hair. Novelist Olive Schreiner, a so-called 'colonial comet' who talked with her hands and rode on the top of omnibuses, was only slightly less shocking to conventional sensibilities.[111]

Irene Adler, the eccentric New Jersey-born 'adventuress' of Doyle's 'A Scandal in Bohemia'[112] is another representative of these new (American) women, and she is another woman who falls under scrutiny for her sexual activities – yet remains able to negotiate boundaries between her sex life and daily life. The distinctions between the 'prostitute' and the 'normal' woman, therefore, had been blurred in fiction and reality.

By the time the twentieth century loomed, it was no coincidence that some young women were stopped by police on the suspicion that they were sex workers even if they were not. Schreiner herself was publically 'accosted' in 1887 by an officer because he believed she was soliciting male clients.[113] At the turn of the century, it became obvious that although vice was treated no less seriously than it had ever been, fashions and social habits shaped by a strange collision of early feminist beliefs and the presence of sex workers in everyday life were changing how women could be read and interpreted by those around them. While this was not without its own complex repercussions that varied for women of different races and classes, it started to render old typologies of women – those exhibited by newspapers, art, or pornography, among other media – inert when 'respectable' young women looked, if eccentric, like they could be sex workers.

Even worse (by the era's standards, anyway), sex workers who were not on the clock looked and lived like 'respectable' young women. It was no longer always possible for appearances to account for internal qualities or unspoken facts, but the illusion of that possibility was under strain at the *fin de siècle* in a way it had not yet been. The circumstances that bred Dupin's amazing deductive abilities and allowed him to understand in detail what varieties of people he observed over half-a-century before were gone:

He boasted […] with a low chuckling laugh, that most men, in respect to himself, wore windows in their bosoms, and was wont to follow up such assertions by direct and very startling proofs of his intimate knowledge.[114]

Of course people had never been open texts to be read easily by those who knew how to do it, but the early twentieth century made this comparatively palpable and apparent. The detectives were obsolete, prostitutes had become even more subversive and difficult to discern in a crowd, and any women who took control of their self-presentation, much less their sexuality, were suspect. Bellocq's portraits underscore this reality in their refusal to reiterate the criminal narrative – or to provide the subservience – expected from images like them.

4

The ‘Paris-ification’ of New Orleanian Vice

Paris loomed large in the nineteenth century’s imaginary of sex work – especially in New Orleans. Thus, this chapter serves as a ‘bookend’ to the first. Storyville’s Blue Book advertisements like the ones for ‘French Balls’[1] and indeed, all of New Orleans’s imagined, romanticized identity within the fabric of American popular culture reaffirmed how intrinsic the concepts of ‘Paris’ and ‘Parisian’ were to New Orleanian stereotypes. Ideas of Paris, however, had also merged with more national (and international) notions of the thrilling, the erotic, and the *risqué*.[2] This prevalence owed itself to a popular culture that had long depicted cities as milieus of courtesans and mavericks while it effectively interchanged ‘Paris’ with ‘France.’

Visual and textual media kindled a fascination with Paris, prostitutes and Parisian avant-garde women, even if, like George Du Maurier’s tragic heroine Trilby, they were not – not strictly speaking – sex workers or ethnically French. Placing New Orleans in the ‘New World,’ this chapter examines Paris’s ‘Old World’ influence upon the prostitute as a cultural icon, and, more specifically, upon Storyville sex workers’ representation and self-representation. This is, in truth, a truly transatlantic story. These connections – their effects on American and British representations of sex work and vice – as well as the implications of the notion that New Orleans was often more ‘Parisian’ than ‘American’ – had enormous impetus. This chapter, therefore, establishes how traditionally ‘Parisian’ tropes and icons can be used to frame the Storyville Portraits within a panorama of representations.

This was an era when, as Paul Woolf notes in his analysis of Edgar Allan Poe’s ‘The Murders of the Rue Morgue’ (1841), all ‘American cities were quickly becoming, or perceived to be becoming, just like Paris, that is,

'hotbeds of sin and merchandise.'[3] So although New Orleans was indeed an 'other' and had been since it became part of the United States, there existed the perception that cities in general harbored all the same obscenities and 'unsavory' types. Paris was simply the prime example. Woolf explains how after 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', Poe's friend Nathaniel Willis referred to the 'imminent Paris-ification' [*sic*] of New York […].'[4] Willis writes in *The Rag-Bag* (1855):

But, generally, as to the imminent Paris-ification of New York: - There is a floating population of seekers of the world's pleasantest place, who, as it will appear to every connoisseur of European capitals, are very sure to follow the sweetest voices, most bewildering legs, best players, boldest riders, etc. These independent idlers, in turn, are sure to be followed by the best cooks, the prettiest glove-fitters, the most inspired milliners, the best portrait painters […].[5]

Meanwhile, Poe, a lifelong 'Francophile' who had never actually been to France,[6] exploited the beguiling trend of the United States's perceived 'imminent Paris-ification' by setting his tale in the center of Paris. As events begin Poe's unnamed narrator says he and Auguste Dupin

Were strolling one night down a long dirty street in the vicinity of the Palais Royal. Being both, apparently, occupied with thought, neither of us had spoken a syllable for fifteen minutes at least.[7]

The image of two young men taking a late-night stroll along a 'long dirty street,' especially one near the Palais Royal, would have immediately summoned a suggestion of illicit and risky activities. Though Willis envisioned a New York that benefitted from 'Paris-ification' by attracting droves of fashionable, if avant-garde 'independent idlers' and 'the best' tradespeople who followed them, Poe depicts a darker, more vice-riddled vision.

To be sure, Woolf asserts, 'In the American cultural imagination, Paris was […] the world capital of sexual immorality, with the Palais at its heart,' and it is this imagined Paris that I evoke in this chapter.[8] New Orleans, meanwhile, was the American 'capital of sexual immorality' with Storyville

'at its heart.' By extension, then, the thought of Parisian women – sex workers, of course, but all of Paris's women, collectively – being more sexually available than others was already part of 'the American cultural imagination.' Strains of this belief were found in 'sporting newspapers'[9] or guides like the New Orleans and, eventually, Storyville Blue Books, as well as its less-illustrious newspapers like *The Mascot*.[10] But suggestions of immorality were also found in media that was not meant to sell vice, such as family magazines. Woolf concludes:

'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' was first published in *Graham's Magazine*, a middle-to-highbrow periodical with an educated audience, I would suggest that, given the widespread notoriety of the Palais […] Poe could depend on readers of the story also making an immediate mental association. Poe's reference to the Palais would, if only subliminally, have inserted into his readers' minds the idea of prostitution.[11]

Storyville, then, manipulated these 'subliminal' triggers. Unsurprisingly, given ideological links between prostitution, Paris, and the visual, some authors have likened E.J. Bellocq to Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, a comparison that is indicative of how inseparable the idea of Paris was from the early-twentieth-century sex worker in Storyville.[12] In other words, this does not necessarily describe Bellocq's aesthetic so much as it demonstrates how connected these ideas collectively were, and are. More recent researchers, however, have posited that this comparison had most to do with making connections between Lautrec's biography and Bellocq's highly mythologized one during the mid-twentieth century.[13]

It has indeed been used as a discursive strategy to attempt to explore Bellocq's biography. Parisian and Parisian-influenced archetypes played a role in in representations of 'fast' women, sex workers, and male artists. However, comparing Bellocq to Lautrec could be repurposed and made more impactful: Lautrec portrayed 'the biggest stars of the Parisian circuses, dance halls and café-concerts' – many of whom were courtesans – 'as skilled professionals.'[14] He also dealt with sexuality (many of the celebrities and sex workers he painted in Montmartre were openly lesbian or bisexual) in a manner that did not sensationalize or exploit it. But he did not attempt to obscure these kinds of themes, either.

By considering specific aspects of popular culture tinged by its references to Paris or its Parisian-ness, we can excavate how New Orleans – thought of as the home of Creoles, those with French ancestry and values[15] – and Paris were similarly imagined in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This influenced the ways in which sex workers advertised themselves and were represented. New Orleans, too, should be part of a discourse that considers the ways in which it was influenced by associations with Paris – the more lurid aspects of actual and imagined Parisian life – and what this meant for representations of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sex work. What emerges is a network of imaginaries that brought Paris, New Orleans, Creoles, sensuality, and sexuality – including sex work and 'obscenity' – into contact with one another. Through them we better understand representational influences that can be used to triangulate the Storyville Portraits in a nexus of mass, popular, and visual culture.

The first section begins with Eugene Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* (serialized in 1842–3), and considers its impact on Baron Ludwig von Reizenstein's *Mysteries of New Orleans* (serialized in 1854–5), a German-American urban mystery novel that was rediscovered and translated into English by Steven Rowan. The few scholarly discussions it has inspired are, in general, about Reizenstein's politics and his detailed depiction of nineteenth-century New Orleans, as well as his use of prophesy as a structural, narrative motif.[16] But my discussion rests on his representations of women, including the lovers Claudine and Orleana, and the domineering madam Parasina Brulard. The second section considers two texts that use not New Orleans, but Paris, as a setting: George Du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894) and Emile Zola's *Nana* (1880). These tales of two immoral women, who were both 'transgressive' in their own ways, were popular in New Orleans – especially *Trilby*, which had a direct effect on both Storyville's self-advertising and the city's popular culture. Further, they owe much of their style and eventual popularity to the fact that authors like Du Maurier and Zola used styles and tropes that had been directly impacted by urban mysteries like – if not *Mysteries of New Orleans* itself – Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* and Baudelaire's more *risqué* poetry. The third, final section explores how the figure of the Creole woman as imagined in New Orleans was refracted by the city's fascination with Paris and its fictional sex workers, or in *Trilby's* case, its transgressive, non-sex working women.

Through all of this, the concurrent issue of New Orleans being imagined as more Parisian than other American cities is also addressed.

Americans seemed ready to believe that all their cities were becoming more 'Parisian' due to the more assertive, visible presence of vice, but New Orleans had already been 'othered' by its history and cultures. Because of these factors, New Orleans madams and sex workers – before and during Storyville's time – utilized terms such as 'Creole' and 'octoroon' while boasting of their 'continental' travels or possessions. The conclusion of this chapter posits that by looking at how New Orleans reacted so readily to aspects of Parisian print culture – which also inspired plays, more novels and novellas, and pornography[17] – we can consider the Storyville Portraits as examples among many images whose interpretations have been conditioned by a vast imaginary of Western 'prostitution.' This imaginary was, overall, framed by urban centers and their interconnected networks of communication and mass culture, and Paris had a lasting and pronounced presence as a cultural arbitrator in New Orleans.

Mysteries of Paris; Mysteries of New Orleans – Promiscuity, Sex Work, and Sex Slavery

Published in *Le Journal des Débats* between 1842 and 1843, Eugene Sue's novel *Les Mystères de Paris* follows the adventures of a disguised German nobleman, Rodolphe, the Grand Duke of Gérolstein, as he wanders the *demimonde*. Rodolphe is both a voyeur and philanthropist, interested in observing the lower classes while acting, when it suits him, as a dashing savior. Elizabeth Erbeznik calls him a 'social chameleon' and notes that as the story's linchpin, the 'numerous characters and plots of the novel are tenuously connected through' him.[18] During the course of the massive novel Sue's minute descriptions and supposed realism jostle with unlikely, romantic occurrences – for example, the young *grisette* Rodolphe saves from certain violence at the very start of the novel turns out to be his elusive, long-lost daughter. Sue absolutely captivated nineteenth-century Parisian and international readers; *Les Mystères de Paris* drew on, as Erbeznik states, 'familiar characterizations propagated by popular panoramic literature' and it greatly appealed to a readership that was both

interested in 'social legibility' and 'avid' for titillating, urban stories.[19] The novel's effect on American popular culture was almost immediate; it instigated a translation and publishing race for who would be first to present it to an English-speaking American audience (it had already been translated in Britain), and it inspired numerous imitation novels.[20] Undeniably, this meant that Paris had become the prime symbolic intermediary for representations of urban vice in America, while the novel itself impacted the styles and tropes at hand for subsequent authors who wrote about intrigue, *demimondes*, and crime in English (including Edgar Allan Poe, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Stephen Crane).

As it was imagined in *Les Mystères de Paris*, Paris operated on paradoxes that seemed uniquely Parisian, but ran in representations of all cities; it was theoretically navigable yet claustrophobically secretive, opulent yet criminal and redemptive yet seductive. Sue, despite his novel's specificity to one place, offered up a formula of archetypes that were mapped onto other locations so that they too could be re-presented and re-imagined. Louis James explains that *Les Mystères de Paris* 'greatly boosted' the readership of *Le Journal des Débats*, 'and prompted *Le Courier Français* to serialize a rival, and also highly popular, *Les Mystères de Londres* [...].'[21] Slightly later, there was a flurry of 'Yankee' city mysteries published entirely because of the popularity of Sue's work in America. Though the process of the Paris-ification of American cities was well underway in 1841, and was hastened by a similar mania in London – whose press, Ryan Cordell notes, shared trends and stories with its American counterparts[22] – the publication of Sue's novel in English in the United States in 1844 clinched the process.

Apart from all his characters, all of whom owed something to *argot*, the Parisian street slang that fascinated both Victor Hugo and Charles Baudelaire[23] and, as Erbeznik stresses, the multitude of panoramic literature popular during the mid-nineteenth century,[24] of most importance to this discussion is the beautiful prostitute nicknamed *La Goualeuse*. Revealed to be Rodolphe's daughter Fleur-de-Marie,[25] she ultimately refuses a respectable marriage – to a prince, no less – because she 'has been polluted by the bandits of the Cité' and fully redeems herself by dying.[26] Though this narrative of a 'fallen' woman (or just a somewhat deviant woman)

dying because of her perceived sins was not new, and would indeed repeat itself in many different characters (e.g., Emile Zola's Nana, Stephen Crane's Maggie, George Du Maurier's Trilby, and Kate Chopin's Edna), it was encapsulated and tied to Paris for an enormous audience by Sue.

Like the city of Paris, Fleur-de-Marie could be transferred and reconfigured elsewhere. One of her most extraordinary manifestations occurred in New Orleans, where she was not transposed onto one character, but instead inspired facets of flawed, occasionally more self-actualized female characters. Between 1854 and 1855 both Paris and Fleur-de-Marie were transformed in New Orleans by Baron Ludwig von Reizenstein, a German who had immigrated to the United States and settled in New Orleans. Apart from penning an expansive, gothic urban mystery, he also integrated occult and queer elements into his novel that can be interpreted as criticisms of slavery, sexual violence, misogyny, and (to use Moya Bailey's term) misogynoir.[27]

Overall, Reizenstein's *Mysteries of New Orleans* was an ambitious and potentially subversive descendant of Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris*, one that, in some ways, mapped an imagined Paris onto an imagined New Orleans. It is also a representation of nineteenth-century New Orleans that has, until recently, garnered little notice or scholarship. Part of a genre of German-American literature inspired by Sue's work and other 'mystery' novels, *Mysteries of New Orleans* provides potentially seditious perspectives on women's sexuality, sex workers (and sexual liaisons generally), and slavery. Steven Rowan explains that 'German writers [of the antebellum period] showed much more sensitivity than their English-speaking contemporaries to the ethnic diversity of the United States,'[28] and as well as demonstrating this inclination, Reizenstein's 'only sympathetic lovers – really the only "straight" people – in his entire story are the tender lesbians, Claudine and Orleana.'[29] While their relationship is described in flowery, poetic terms characteristic of gothic and sensational novels, it is not tinged with undertones of ill judgment.

The 'tender' character of their relationship is marked, and perhaps surprising, given New Orleans's nineteenth-century reputation. There is, though, sensuality to their love; Reizenstein gives no illusion that they have a chaste or platonic relationship, and their relationship flourishes because of

where they live. As Rowan notes, '[Claudine and Orleana] represent an alternative lesbian society flourishing in New Orleans as nowhere else in America'; he elucidates:

This particular vision of lesbian communal utopias derives from a masculine pornographic-voyeuristic tradition that ritualizes the sexuality of 'others' in society, whether they are repressed monks or women ensconced in harems.[30]

While 'this particular vision' derives 'from a masculine pornographic-voyeuristic tradition' and we can conjecture that it made appearances in New Orleanian pornography at the time – this later infused Storyville's own mythos, at any rate, where both same-sex acts for an audience and personal, private relationships were common – it does not, at least not entirely, function erotically in the text. Similarly, Reizenstein's visions of either sex work or women who have casual sex are straightforward and varied, and derived from pornographic traditions.

In conjunction, they are also influenced by Reizenstein's concerns over slavery. Although he does depict willing participants in sex work and extramarital sexual affairs, for example (Lucy, the free woman of color[31] and Parasina, the '*Negresse*'[32] to name two), there are also young girls who have been forced into sexual slavery: in Parasina's harem of underage girls. These are all recognizable archetypes that can be traced decades later in Storyville's Blue Books, reminiscences of the district, and its prevalent mythohistory. Uniquely, however, Reizenstein provides a sense of where New Orleans fell within the 'panorama' of vice in the United States, and one quality made it infamous: slavery. Like Sue's Paris, his New Orleans is a character rather than a setting, and it is an entity that, in key respects, encourages and thrives off the presence of slavery and violence.

As Sara James observes, '[T]he character of Paris in *Les Mystères de Paris* is frequently associated only with the underworld, a Gothicized image of poverty and crime,'[33] and by consciously evoking this in his novel, Reizenstein too resurrects New Orleans as America's 'Paris,' if to different effects. 'Now we lead the reader into the Third Municipality,' says the narrator at the beginning of Chapter 7, 'where he will see crimes committed that, although they are rather common in and around New Orleans, are still

horrifying and debasing.'[34] New Orleans, then, is demarcated as a place accustomed to 'horrifying and debasing' acts – even a place that relishes them – because 'Robbers' Roost and similar hiding places in St Louis are temples of the fairies […]' in comparison.[35] However, here Reizenstein chooses to mention not two brothels or houses of vice specifically, but locations that were known more for their overtly violent activities. This suggests that his portrayals of promiscuity, sex work and sex slavery in nineteenth-century New Orleans were more nuanced, or at least provocative, than others.

Reizenstein does not automatically correlate the idea of 'New Orleans' with sexual transgressions, although the connection is made. Likewise, he does not necessarily interchange the idea of sex work (or promiscuity in general) with immorality or oppression. Rather he dwells on slavery, physical violence, and emotional manipulation as the worst evils. He differentiates between Parasina's abused, enslaved girls – especially Pharis and Elma, her most prized commodities – and women who have sex for gain, money, or outside of marriage. The narrator is in fact sympathetic toward those characters. The first description of Parasina's harem is meant to rouse readers' emotions:

They were all young girls of eleven to fourteen years of age: Negresses, mulattos, mestizas, quadroons – in short, all the shadings of colored blood. Whoever might appear at this hour without knowing the reason for these girls' gathering would have doubted his own sanity, believing instead that his senses had been clouded by some sort of trickery from the wand of an evil magician. [But] he had entered a shameful den of vice and […] the bodies of these pretty maids were being sold and rented. He might have throttled the woman who owned these girls in his rage, little suspecting that he would never leave this pit alive.[36]

Immediately, readers are told that these are sex slaves and they are 'sold' and 'rented' out by another woman.

To add to the scene, they are underage and on a spectrum of 'shadings of colored blood.' Although Reizenstein does use the word 'prostitution' in a derogatory way, he is more attuned to and concerned with the subjugation of slavery than with 'deviant' sexual activity. The narrator says 'the round,

swelling contours of [Pharis and Elma's bodies], all welled up with the warmth of life […] had not been stilted by the poisonous pall of habitual prostitution,' but later makes it clear that Parasina has 'exploited' their youth and beauty most of all through her ownership.[37] In a rushed conversation before Parasina comes on her morning rounds – to collect all of the money that was procured the night before – they reveal that they are accustomed to having sex with Parasina's customers, but are worried about her legal rights over them. Elma says:

But just consider what torments we will endure if we are brought back! Madame will not rest until she has us in her clutches, and her connections with rich gentlemen will make it easier for her. I do not know the laws, but Celia, who came to us from a plantation a few weeks ago, tells me that her brother fled to Boston due to his massa's brutality, and that he was brought back and had to endure the most dreadful tortures [*sic*].[38]

Describing Parasina herself, Reizenstein's narrator declares, 'whoever has an imagination that can fly high enough to conjure up the Whore of Babylon and fix it in memory would have found Parasina her double.'[39]

Parasina's magnetism comes from her intimidating features and nature. '[She] was a powerful figure, a full six feet in height' whose skin 'could easily be compared with dark pitch gilded by the shining rays of a tropic sun.'[40] Her power over others as an owner, rather than because of her exceptional beauty, however, is what really distinguishes her from her favorites Elma and Pharis. Reizenstein draws from sadomasochism and pornographic tradition here in his descriptions of Parasina and her 'dormitory,' but he also draws from archetypes of the 'Creole' or 'colored' concubine. Parasina, Pharis and Elma are part of an already sexualized and romanticized idea that was popular in the antebellum American South. The tone Reizenstein uses to describe Parasina's girls is similar to Charles Baudelaire's poems inspired by the Haitian-born woman he claimed was his lover, Jeanne Duval; she was also 'Creole' and said to be promiscuous and imperious. Since so much of our understanding of Duval comes from Baudelaire's portrayal, this is the primary role assigned to her.[41] But as Jerold Siegal observes, 'she was the Black Venus who inspired many of his

most erotic poems; both [by] her later testimony and others, however, their liaison was never physical.'[42]

Because of the gothic inspirations of *Mysteries of New Orleans* and Baudelaire's romantic and symbolist influences, Jeanne's presence – like Parasina's – as an 'erotic' force is significant (even if she and Baudelaire never had a physical relationship). The two authors share a cultural moment when the 'Creole' – a concept that was both nebulous, yet oddly specific when it came to sensuality – and the 'prostitute' scintillated, and this shows in their characterizations of women of color and black women. Reizenstein began publishing his novel in a serialized form between 1854 and 1855, while Baudelaire did not publish the first edition of his infamous *Les Fleurs du mal* until 1857. Reizenstein would not have been using the book as an inspiration (although Baudelaire had already published poems that would later be included in *Les Fleurs du mal*), but this does attest that women like Parasina circulated in mid-nineteenth-century fiction – in a very specific manner that was layered with implications of sex, witchcraft (or voodoo, in New Orleans), and intoxicating beauty. Baudelaire's poem 'Sed non satiata' casts its female subject as a demonic presence: 'Singular deity, brown as the nights […] O pitiless demon! pour upon me less flame,'[43] which is reminiscent of Reizenstein's 'Whore of Babylon' description of Parasina. Additionally, 'Sed non satiata' depicts this enticing, demonic woman as black, and it focuses on her tyranny and physicality. 'Witch with ebony flanks, child of the black midnight' declares unquestionably the fact this woman has dark skin, too;[44] it could have been written about Parasina, the nefarious slave owner who attracts both fear and devotion.

If Reizenstein wanted to make a lasting social commentary, however, it was overshadowed by his own reliance on the familiar, often racist or sexist tropes condensed by Sue, and their uncontrollable interactions with the forces of New Orleanian sex tourism. His *Mysteries of New Orleans*, though recognized today for its subversive elements such as the primacy given to a loving queer relationship and portrayals of spousal violence and American slavery, was also a sensational, serialized *tour de force*. It imagined New Orleans as a quasi-Paris, depicting inequities and giving voluminous, transfixing accounts of New Orleanian 'characters' and 'life.' Although Claudine and Orleana were in love, the 'monstrous' aspects of the city – the crime, the violence, and the sex – were what appealed.

In particular, the scheming, entrepreneurial, and alluring black woman – exemplified by Parasina and Baudelaire's fictionalized Jeanne Duval – was to make her appearance in Storyville later. In *Storyville, New Orleans*, Al Rose shares a supposedly genuine account from a man called simply 'A Man About Town' – in which the 'Man About Town' recounted visiting Storyville for the first time (at the age of sixteen) with his father, whom he says was on friendly terms with Lulu White.[45] He gives a detailed description of White, madam and proprietor of Mahogany Hall, what he says was known then as the 'Hall of Mirrors:'

[She] greeted us after we'd been announced by a Negro doorman. I don't know what you may have heard about Lulu, but take my word for it, she was a monstrosity… laden with diamonds worn not selectively but just put on any place there seemed to be an inch to accommodate them […] She smelled overpoweringly of perfume. [She] was obviously Negro. She, in her way, acted the grande dame to the hilt […] Her quick smile was as faked as the color of her [red] wig.[46]

Beyond her 'monstrous' appearance, he was stricken by her beautiful 'girls' and says that he was paired with 'Rita […] a very beautiful girl whom I knew to be an octoroon only from the fact that she was one of Lulu's girls.'[47] Again, here is an assertion of 'the shadings of colored blood' that Reizenstein told his readers could be found in New Orleans.

Additionally, here is another young woman of color paired with a 'monstrous' black madam – the 'Man About Town' says the beautiful Rita could not have been more than 19, which would have been only three years older than him. However, the 'Man About Town' has given Rose his stories later in life, and claims that he has 'been in whorehouses all over this globe,' including those of Montmartre.[48] Montmartre, of course, was known for its sex workers, its sexual *tableaux vivants* and its lesbians. He goes on to complain, 'The young lady, apart from a certain studied theatricality, was just as ill-informed and gauche as could be.'[49] If there is any reason in particular to suspect that this interview was at least elaborated upon or amalgamated from several sources – or perhaps that the 'Man About Town' just exaggerated his experiences with the benefit of hindsight – it is the narrator's own inconsistency and his tale's similarity to

pornographic novels from France, the United States, and Britain.[50] Though he says that he had had his first ‘sex experience’ before Rita, he had never been with ‘a prostitute’ and ‘expected something sensationally evil’ because he was ‘a guest in a world-renowned den of iniquity.’[51] This expectation would not have existed without the popular cultures that had built blackness and ‘shadings of colored blood’ into erotic, racist fantasies.

‘To See The Tenderloin Proper is to Visit Trilby’s’: Echoes of Nana and Trilby in Storyville

Alongside its most obvious imitations and homages Sue’s novel created more unexpected ripples in popular culture. Out of these came George du Maurier’s *Trilby* and Emile Zola’s *Nana*, two novels that represented evocative moments in Parisian histories and mythologies. They were unified by their evocations of an imagined Paris and fixations on what were, in the end, immoral women given over to the fate ensured by their respective vices. They each trickled into *fin de siècle* New Orleanian consciousness. *Trilby* was an especially transatlantic novel in all senses; Du Maurier was Parisian-born, settled in Hampstead with his wife, where he died, and his novel – first published in installments in *Harper’s* – was incredibly popular in the United States. Trilby, meanwhile, is half-Irish, half-French. Her milieu is populated by men who moved to Paris in pursuit of a ‘bohemian’ lifestyle, and of the many *fin de siècle* representations of the city, her Paris is the most passive and ambiguous. Du Maurier, reluctant to describe ghastly Parisian immoralities in the same detail as Sue (or Zola, for that matter), employs Paris as a setting that is implicitly given over to vice. By 1894, the year *Trilby* was published, readers already imagined – without a doubt, in their minds – that Paris was bohemian and romantic, and that it was equally intoxicating and corrupting.

Emile Zola’s vain, tragic courtesan predated Du Maurier’s bohemian, undraped model by almost 15 years, first appearing in his *Les Rougon-Macquart* series. Nana was a more traditional ‘fallen woman’ than Trilby, too – an opportunistic, beautiful prostitute doomed to die of smallpox after she destroyed the lives of her male lovers. Her background shares more in common with Sue’s Fleur-de-Marie than Du Maurier’s Trilby; like Fleur-de-Marie, she grew up poor, in the Paris slums. By the time readers become

acquainted with her in *Nana*, however, she is affluent – albeit awful at managing her money – and unrepentantly a sex worker. What she lacks in financial acumen, she makes up for in astutely managing many clients. Despite their differences in character (Nana is never bothered by her professions, whether sex work or stage acting; Fleur-de-Marie, conversely, longs for redemption), they inhabit similarly imagined cities – dark, dangerous Paris punctuated by elusive glamour – and are punished for their transgressions. Trilby dies as well, but Nana and Fleur-de-Marie are more straightforwardly tainted by and embedded in their urban *demimondes*. Trilby, conversely, drifts between a variety of identities; she is not a prostitute (therefore, she is not categorically 'bad') and she is certainly not fully Parisian. Without the same intentional iconoclasm as Reizenstein, Du Maurier subverts Sue again; his heroine, though doomed, disturbed the moral order that was set out in *Les Mystéres de Paris* and reiterated in *Nana*. She took on blended sexual, cultural, and gendered traits. Even if the implications of bending these boundaries are never fully realized by Trilby herself, her influence permeated out of fiction and into daily life. She was to become a style icon and inspiration to young women almost overnight.

Zola's novel merited more restrained mentions in the press. Indeed, it was accorded a brand of distance that *Trilby* never seemed to receive because of the perception that it was – though scintillating and shocking – somehow more continental and literary, somewhat excused for its sensuality and carnal details because it was written by a French author. Ironically, observes Choquette, this was only underscored by the pornography that *Nana* inspired.[52] Nana's connections to the 'erotic' were more obvious than Trilby's; her status did not challenge conventional ideas of 'good' and 'bad' women. She had sex for money, she was an actress, and she was beautiful (which was why, despite her terrible acting, she remained a fixture of the theater); thus, her 'type' was clear, like Fleur-de-Marie's.[53] Her fate, as well, was an appropriate end for such a woman, and while Zola's narrator extended some sympathy to Nana, one of the novel's most subversive aspects was its language – Zola insisted on detailing everything, and he created a lurid world that did not shy away from depictions of disease, hedonism, and sex work – as things that spread ruin. Nana's life begins and ends in unfortunate tragedy. But she is, unquestionably, what Steven Wilson

calls a ‘contagion’ who leads the men in the novel to various states of ruin.[54]

Nana did not seem to inspire the same level of popular mania that developed around *Trilby*. It appeared to be more segmented from the same wide audience that consumed Du Maurier’s novel, even though it did inspire novels, pornography, and plays. On the other hand, *Trilby* galvanized a prolific response, inspiring a language of idioms (e.g., the hat, or the use of ‘Svengali’ as a derogatory term) that would not have succeeded without a huge readership’s shared knowledge of the book itself. The level of its success was borne out in Du Maurier’s continued bewilderment that his novel had done so well. Together, though, the heroines – or anti-heroines – of each novel represent a ‘rupture’ in popular culture that helps contextualize the Storyville Portraits. Trilby gained a following of women who wanted to emulate her, which is constantly reiterated in articles and advertisements;[55] despite her moral shortcomings, she was desirable to men, who could, perhaps, potentially ‘reform’ her, and was not repugnant to ‘good’ women. Although Nana was an incendiary figure, she was ultimately outmoded by Trilby because she was so clearly ‘bad.’ Trilby’s identities were fluid, intermixed, and interchangeable; this was unremarkable and emblematic of ‘modern’ women, to a degree. Her popularity in New Orleans occurred alongside the development of the amorphous, liminal identities imagined to be represented in the Storyville Portraits, and it signified that her kind of womanhood was not limited to fiction.

New Orleanian newspapers ran routine reports on the Parisian and local thaters,[56] Paris-themed columns,[57] and featured an array of literary reviews;[58] these are collectively where Zola and Du Maurier, as well as their fiction, received their press in the city. Zola was known then more as an intellectual figure, and as time went on, his fiction was mentioned less frequently than his personal and political matters. *Trilby*, however, became Du Maurier’s calling card, and it was repeatedly featured because of the new wave of themed parties and fashion trends. *The Times-Picayune’s* pages and columns targeted at ‘women’ readers, such as ‘Women’s Work and World,’ often reported on what the press called the ‘*Trilby* fad’ – which encompassed shoes, coats, and, of course, hats, as much as the alluring story itself.[59] The rest of America experienced similar *Trilby* fads propelled,

in particular, by themed apparel and memorabilia; New Orleans was no exception.[60] It had at least one *Trilby* glee club and *Trilby*-inspired clothes were even advertised in newspapers.[61]

Apart from inspiring more innocuous trends, *Trilby* also inspired erotic fantasies, though these were only hinted at in polite society. But Trilby's transformation into La Svengali evoked already established links between the theater, mesmerism, and women's submissions to men.[62] Her promiscuity, status as an artists' model, and the narrator's disclaimer that he would not go into detail about her past were less-subtle indications that Du Maurier's heroine was not a proper – and *was* a sexually available – young woman.[63] Her manner of dressing, meanwhile, was tantalizingly neither fully 'masculine' nor 'feminine,' and hinted at her inner 'provocative' inclinations. In gothic or sentimental novels, women who cross-dressed, as exemplified by Lucy in *Mysteries of New Orleans*, signified their lax approach to social and moral convention via wearing clothes designated for the 'wrong' gender. Lucy, known for her physical beauty, dresses in her lover Emil's clothes to try to trick him. There is a sense that the extreme contrast between the clothing and her body only enhanced her sexual appeal. Likewise, Emil dresses in 'women's' clothing, which suggests his effeminacy.[64]

Trilby, who regularly wore some menswear items – her coat, for example, which Du Maurier showed in his illustrations for the novel – is implied to have somehow imbibed more stereotypically 'masculine' qualities by doing so, including promiscuity. This was part of her charm, and in reality, it did not discourage anyone from reading and enjoying *Trilby* even though it was, for the time, scintillating. But overall, it was her feet that became the most charged focal point of her appearance; New Orleans papers were keen to mention them. This was due, according to the papers, to 'Du Maurier's description' of her feet.[65] The *Picayune*'s 'SHE' page devoted itself to reporting a letter sent to another newspaper, the *St. Louis Republic*. It was supposedly from a woman so moved both by Trilby's plight and her beautiful feet that she claimed, 'Nothing else [… had] more subtle power to suggest […] the lordship of woman over all.'[66] Women, then, had taken notice of Trilby's physical charm – which seemed

to appeal as much as the novel's sensational twists and stimulating topics – in a homosocial way.

This interest in Trilby's feet or having Trilby-like feet reached a pinnacle by the time a French actress took the stage in New Orleans, where she was touted to be 'posing' as Trilby.[67] Audiences were assured that she would have nearly bare feet – this was an enormous selling point. Though Nana had posed almost nude on a stage (draped in thin cloth that left nothing to the imagination), something about Trilby – even clothed, baring her feet – was more powerful. It was, it seemed, her vulnerability and realness, her likeness to 'real' women, or the fact that she was not prohibitively 'corrupted' as Nana had been. Never named as a prostitute and in possession of a sweet disposition, Trilby was free to recover her virtue, which was ostensibly in more peril. Thus, she was more marketable, as well as more likeable, than Nana.

The two fictions collide in an early Storyville Blue Book, which provides a scrap of compelling evidence that *Trilby* did inspire the same carnal interests as *Nana* had, at least in New Orleans. At 986 Customhouse Street, there resided a landlady who called herself Trilby O'Farrell, and her advertisement's most prominent feature is the word 'Trilby's' in a bold font. 'To see the tenderloin proper is to visit Trilby's. Unless this has been done, the district has not been thoroughly covered,' warns the advertisement. The landlady's birth name remains unknown. But taken in context with the 'Trilby fad' that had swept New Orleans, her professional name, doubtless, was chosen due to the success of Du Maurier's novel. While we can only conjecture what aspects of the story 'Miss Trilby O'Farrell' re-enacted or embodied for clients, its representations of promiscuity and bohemianism must have been a strong lure. Trilby's submission to Svengali had to have appealed, as well – and what has Bellocq been envisioned as, if not a Svengali of sorts – submissive women were ubiquitous in both contemporaneous pornography and Storyville's brothels, while mesmerism fascinated audiences because of its implications of absent social decorum.

Était Dans Le Vice Comme Un Poisson Dans L'eau: Creole and Parisian Influences on Narratives of Storyville

As evidenced by the advertisement for 986 Customhouse Street, Storyville tried to summon decadent associations with 'the Continent' in its advertisements, which boasted that women had toured the supposedly more cultured, cosmopolitan cities outside the United States. Furthermore, Louisiana natives who had supposedly cultivated their talents in Europe were presented as especially genteel, educated, and desirable. But this was accomplished with a new display of old exoticism that often relied on phrases once associated with house slaves, free people of color, or those who had European – generally black or white Creole, French, and Spanish – ancestry. Even as the city attempted to modernize and federalize around them, madams were happy to benefit from the sensual 'otherness' that their locale conveyed.

On balance, a shift in attitudes during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries caused New Orleans's intricate cultural and racial gradients to be collapsed into more finite, and fewer, categories. Creole identities were slowly made into a mystique used to characterize and codify the city while Louisiana was pushed to be more federalist and 'American' in the nineteenth century. Being Creole was then repurposed and again coded as exotic, sexual, or an insult. Gary Krist notes how 'Creoles of Color' were impacted by these changes:

Any difference between Creoles – often educated, urban and middle-class – and African Americans – the children of slaves more recently arrived from the countryside – was gone now, at least in the eyes of whites.[68]

'Whites' in New Orleans encompassed a range of ancestries, but after the Civil War had concluded in 1865, they increasingly unified and defined themselves against those whom they perceived to be 'black.' As Krist explains, ''Negro' and 'disreputable' had become functionally synonymous.'[69]

In a post-Civil War, stubbornly 'American' New Orleans, Creoles, regardless of their appearance or ancestry, had become 'disreputable' to varying degrees because it was erroneously believed that all their cultures were, somehow, tied to France. This intensified the already-existing rifts between white Creoles, Creoles of color, and African Americans. To further complicate matters, Creoles had been collectively immortalized in popular

culture by George Washington Cable, the author of *Les Grandissimes* and *Old Creole Days*. Thomas Ruys Smith writes:

Cable and New Orleans might have parted company in the middle of the 1880s, but his influence on popular conceptions of the city had a long shadow, stretching well into the twentieth century. For some New Orleanians, this was problematic.[70]

So this 'long shadow' strongly influenced tourism, with many tourists brought in search of people like the Grandissime family and beautiful women of color: 'Cable's works clearly drove the nascent tourist industry,'[71] drawing a range of people from all around the world to the city. A dramatized yet extremely fluid idea of 'Creole,' which had grown to connote many of the same sensual and ethical excesses as 'Parisian,' allured the federalist American public after the Civil War.

This may explain why references to 'French' and 'Creole' blood came to be increasingly prolific and somewhat interchangeable during the 1900s, especially in literature. 'Creole,' much in the same way as 'Parisian' had, connoted an emotional nature, an openness that was never far in American imaginations from a lack of decorum and, potentially, a lack of sexual inhibition. As a shocked, but intrigued, Edna Pontellier observes even of upper-class Creole women in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, 'A characteristic which distinguished [them] and which impressed [her] most forcibly was their entire absence of prudery.'[72] Christopher Benfey elaborates, explaining how Edna, a 'Kentucky-bred woman of Anglo-Saxon background [who] entered an ethnically 'mixed' marriage with a somewhat older Creole from New Orleans called Léonce Pontellier,'[73] finds these women are utterly different from her own understanding and experience of womanhood, motherhood, and marriage.

These interactions, however, actually call to mind contemporaneous Parisian women, and the social dynamics that Storyville madams like Lulu White wanted to cultivate, or have clients believe existed, between themselves and high society. If we are to believe Rose's 'Man About Town,' Storyville brothels were more 'vulgar' than the competition in Europe, and this had something to do with the fact that they could only aspire to the cultures of Paris and Montmartre. In turn, this pivoted on the

stronger acceptance of 'respectable' Parisian women possessing sexual desires. Michele Plott writes:

In [late-nineteenth-century] Paris, relations between men and women were often flirtatious and were never based on an assumption of women's asexuality. The increasing acceptance of respectable women's sexual desires found its least controversial expression in the idea that men and women should feel a passionate connection within marriage.[74]

What Storyville dared to do, and what all New Orleans vice industries had dared to do before it, was capitalize on the assumption that its women – because of where they were, at least as much as their trade – were not without 'sexual desires.' This was not an acceptable idea to mainstream American culture. In general, its *fin de siècle* brothels still subverted instances of 'increasing acceptance of respectable women's sexual desires' that were acceptable in, for example, Paris. The effectiveness with which the most popular madams and sex workers did this was largely made possible by the contentious, yet alluring – to Americans, anyway – presence of 'French' influences in the city. It was particularly striking because it happened in the midst of ideological, medical, and political battles over vice, white supremacy, and women's sexuality. Extending into many spheres of life, the question of the latter was fraught with just as many intersectional, international issues. Plott observes:

In the 1890s, [believing French women were more sexual] was at the core of a wave of misogynist literature. However, this view may have provided an advantage as well: by the late nineteenth century, upper-middle-class French women may have been more at ease with their sexuality than their British or American counterparts or an earlier generation of French women, even if they were less secure in their respectability.[75]

This is not dissimilar to the depictions of Creole women that abounded in the nineteenth century.

The imagined cultural links between New Orleans Creoles and Paris, then, had very real ramifications upon the representation and advertisement of sex work in New Orleans. Understanding Paris's role as a setting, a trope, and its undeniable tendency to appear in ideologies and archetypes of

sex work is crucial to understanding how New Orleans sex workers were represented and represented themselves for survival and profit's sake. Even as the city attempted to modernize around them, madams were happy to benefit from the sensual otherness that their locale conveyed while implying their own similarities to women on 'the Continent.' It implied worldliness, sensuality, and an education. Expensive sex workers, then, were still giving the appearance that they could be – if the occasion called for it – classically accomplished and conventionally womanly. This was reminiscent of Creole women as they were imagined in popular culture.

In *The Awakening* (1899), Chopin takes care to mention that although Edna Pontellier thinks '[Creoles'] freedom of expression was at first incomprehensible […] she had no difficulty in reconciling it with a lofty chastity which in the Creole woman seems to be inborn.'[76] Although the supposed 'freedom of expression' of all Creole women was apparently innate (at least from the point of view of a non-Creole woman, either Chopin or her fictitious Edna), the ones fit for society retained a 'lofty chastity.' This safely contained their expressiveness and did not allow it to contaminate surrounding individuals. After the Civil War, 'Creole' influences and identities were, according to Nicole Willson, 'anathema' to American 'republican' values. They, in fact,

Became increasingly anathema to the ideology of an exceptional republican identity. This was undoubtedly fueled by the pervasive presence of 'other' Creoles (and particularly Saint-Domingan Creoles) in the turbulent decades following independence. This sense of creolistic coherence was thus supplanted by a republican exceptionalism that secreted its Creole history (and its echoes within Creole 'others'). […] This 'America' was envisaged as exceptional and redemptive […][77]

Because of its plurality of connotations and usages, 'Creole's' inherent incompatibility with what Willson calls 'an exceptional republican identity' also allowed it to be associated with, and tacitly used by New Orleanian sex workers alongside terms like 'octoroon.'

Despite its linguistic and historic origins, the word came to be understood by many curious Americans as something uniquely New Orleanian – and French, but French by way of Paris – as well. It attracted

tourists and clients who had been used to conceptualizing it as 'other' while adding to late nineteenth-century perceptions of New Orleans as somewhere 'other' than America. Paris had such a lasting influence on representations of sex work in New Orleans because en masse, respectable Parisian women behaved differently from their Anglo-American counterparts. They supposedly behaved more like Trilby (or more like sex workers). It would have been strange for Storyville not to capitalize on this ingrained assumption, or the perception that all cities were being subjected to 'Parisification.' All Parisian women were comparatively improper, or had the capacity to behave improperly, in the eyes of their British and American peers. As Plott notes, Parisian women had significantly different social expectations and standards, even in comparison to other French women.[78] These distanced them from more conservative moralities and ideologies in France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Plott explains:

The French experience differed in many ways from that of upper-middle-class women in Great Britain or the United States. As in France, British and American women of this class led lives of relative leisure, in which the rituals of "society" played an important part. However, even well-to-do English and American women appear to have placed less emphasis on their role as fashionable women than was common in France. British and American mores also allowed women a different experience of social life; stricter rules of social and sexual propriety ensured that the atmosphere between men and women remained far less overtly sexual in British and American society.[79]

What was so unthinkable to particularly Americans and the British was precisely this sexual frankness amongst middle and upper-middle-class women and men, which manifested in overt flirting and covert (but still condoned, provided one followed the right protocols) sexual liaisons. In general, this dynamic, which did not privilege women's chastity above all else, became acceptable far earlier in Paris than it did in either the United States or the United Kingdom, if, in fact, it ever really did.

Parisian women were still concerned with maintaining appearances and social standing, but Plott notes:

Within a larger context, in which the French always assumed that women were sexual beings, there is some evidence of a change between 1860 and 1900: to a far greater extent, upper-middle-class women could construct a sexual sense of self while remaining respectable.[80]

It is little wonder, then, that Edna was so stunned by her Creole acquaintances' 'entire absence of prudery,'[81] a trait they evidently shared in common with the Parisian women Plott discusses. Edna, being neither Parisian nor Creole, was not raised either to 'construct a sexual sense of self' or embrace her emotions. Many Creoles, conversely – at least to the American mindset – were more connected to this Parisian culture and were also part of New Orleans, which was 'outside' the American mainstream in its own way.

'Remaining respectable' while cultivating 'a sexual sense of self,' however, was not a viable option for American women of any class until well after the 1900s. Even then, a sexual woman was not generally regarded as 'respectable.' It was more likely that the thought of an American woman engaging in extramarital sexual activity (sex work or not) would provoke morbid curiosity or outright censure – no matter what her class. The qualities of 'sexual' and 'respectable' could not co-exist within any one woman. Literary fiction about unconventional women and prostitutes affirms the dichotomy. Stephen Crane's working-class Maggie, for example, is met with continuous violence and ridicule.[82] Beyond that, and troublingly – because it insinuates that an 'immoral' woman is better off a dead woman, or that women who do not conform to narrow standards of morality should be compelled to hurt themselves for the sake of a social, moral order – both she and Edna commit suicide at the end of their stories. Their differences in social standing do not excuse either woman for what mainstream society deems to be their transgressions, but aspects of New Orleans had, and would continue, to flout these views.

When Frederic Law Olmstead wrote of the city:

I have rarely, if ever, met more beautiful women than one or two I saw by chance, in the streets. They are better formed, and have a more graceful and elegant carriage than Americans in general […] Of course, men are attracted to them […][83]

he encapsulated what many visitors would think about ‘quadroons’ and ‘octoroons’ for years, while offsetting them from ‘Americans.’ This trope of the ‘beautiful women’ of color who possessed ‘a more graceful and elegant carriage than Americans in general’ was readily utilized by sex workers, and it was blurred together with the idea of Creole women, too. In addition, the respectable *femme mondaine* that Plott says was found in Paris from the 1860s onward became a readily inverted archetype during the late nineteenth century and persisted well into the early 1900s. Many of the women who worked in ‘mansion brothels,’ combined signifiers of respectability and upper-middle-class affluence like pianos and lavish furnishings with their sex for sale.

They found their socially acceptable inverse, then, in the *fin de siècle femme mondaine* of Parisian society. Plott writes:

A Parisian woman was expected to develop a worldly persona after marriage – to become a *femme mondaine*. This phrase implied a high degree of sophistication and ‘finish’ […] as well as participation in high society’s rituals. In Paris, it suggested a worldly tolerance of sexual intrigue among one’s acquaintance.[84]

This subversion was particularly effective in the city because of the ambiguity of the word ‘Creole’ and its ideological intersections with ideas of French (Parisian) women, which – irrespective of actual, regional differences in social customs and representations – were conflated with a distinctly ‘Parisian’ version of womanhood. In New Orleans, already ‘a crucible’[85] of identities whose uniqueness was being challenged and changed after the Civil War, there was a convergence of taboos that sex workers could draw upon. Assumptions about race, ethnicity, female sensuality, and vice all came together to echo Parisian strains of the same types.

As opposed to the ‘neighborhoods of colored and white where we all got along just like one race of people’ that Johnny St Cyr fondly remembered,[86] a keen fear of racial mixing – whether of actual miscegenation or the perceived dilution of ideological or moral purity – meant that there were invigorated assertions of white, ‘American’ superiority. These had complex ramifications for representations of women, as well as tangible effects such

as the push for legalized segregation. There was an ‘American’ way of being a respectable woman that shaped how all women were evaluated and conceptualized. Creole women, with their supposed similarities to Parisian women, fell outside of these ideas even if they were white.

Like their Creole counterparts, ‘French women simply could not rely on more general ideas about women’s asexuality to support their reputations as respectable women. Nineteenth-century French authors, both sympathetic and hostile to women, tended to describe them as inherently sexual beings,’ Plott writes.[87] However, in the United States, women did not have this framework to impact their presentations and experiences of sexuality. Not even ‘middle-class’ women were represented in such a way that might allow a more feasible connection between ‘respectable’ and ‘sexual.’ This is partially why sex work in New Orleans – the city already known to be what Bruce Boyd Raeburn calls ‘a boiling cauldron of violent antagonisms’[88] despite its ‘surface gaiety’[89] – was represented by tongue in cheek references to France and ‘the Continent.’[90] Even in France, however, as William A. Peniston explains, prostitution and ‘same-sex sexual activity [were] not illegal, [but] the police assumed that [they] led to crimes against both property, such as theft, blackmail, and extortion, and persons, such as assault and murder.’[91]

It was not only the French connections New Orleanians had, but also their responses to them, that made the representations so effective and prevalent in popular culture. Benfey explains that the presence of Creoles, Cajuns, and expatriate Parisians had long fostered cultural hierarchies and practices reminiscent of those in France or Francophone colonies; the Civil War effectively ended these social ecologies. However, they, along with other influences, differentiated New Orleans from the rest of the United States long before it was admitted to the Union. Even after, it had a tense relationship with the rest of the nation. Creoles were often especially ‘scornful’ of Americans as the century waned, because their own ‘social status’ had been diffused by the time the war ended.[92]

As ‘blackness’ became even more deeply re-associated with traits like promiscuity, while being ‘Creole’ was heavily romanticized – even cast in antiquated terms, as though it was becoming obsolete – by the likes of Cable, it became more difficult for white Creoles to maintain relevant

statuses in an Americanized New Orleans. Ideologically, ‘Creole,’ ‘French,’ and ‘Paris’ summoned similar in popular American consciousness: to promiscuous women, ‘a lack of prudery,’ and decadence. Maggie and Nana demonstrate this duality in fiction, which was borne out through transatlantic exchanges of literary, artistic, and popular culture to the point where pornographic postcards were called ‘French.’ Trilby, too, despite not being a sex worker in the sense that she provided sexual services in exchange for money, underscores the divide between French decadence and Anglo-American morality. Zola’s narrator declares unequivocally that Nana *‘était dans le vice comme un poisson dans l’eau’* (‘she took to vice like a fish in water’).[93] She loves her work, and is not troubled by its implications. Representations of prostitution in New Orleans had the public believe its sex workers also ‘took to vice like fish in water,’ as well.

Stephen Crane’s Maggie, on the other hand, was an American girl predestined by her urban, New York environment and lower social class – not anything intrinsic to her personal, racial, ethnic, or national identity – to enter a world of vice. Her brother Jimmie’s scruples indicate that, though she does not seem to be acting upon it, she is still inherently ‘good’ and only lacks the sense or opportunity to act upon that quality. Crane writes:

[He] publically damned his sister that he might appear on a higher social plane. But, arguing with himself, stumbling about in ways that he knew not, he, once, almost came to a conclusion that his sister would have been more firmly good had she better known why.[94]

A binary is presented, again – American girls or women who enter vice trades were not ‘meant’ to be part of them, whereas French or Creole girls, with their supposed heritage of sensuality, were preconfigured to coquetry. This heritage was, in effect, extended to New Orleanian sex workers.

‘An Opulent City of Sin, […] a Dangerous City of Death’ – New Orleans’s Parisian ‘Otherness’

There are symbolic relationships between New Orleans, Paris, Creole ‘otherness,’ Storyville, and the Storyville Portraits, and these longstanding connections frame our reception of the portraits and fundamentally

influenced their mythologies. The associations between New Orleans and France have been well-established, but fictions about, particularly, Paris and New Orleans shape current readings of the Storyville Portraits and Bellocq himself. New Orleans and Paris were imagined, especially within what Charles Bernheimer terms the 'male imaginary,'[95] so similarly during the nineteenth century that their most troublesome characteristics fell into almost twinned categories. These were, generally, disease, excess, violence, and sex for hire. Smith notes, however, that New Orleans's 'other foibles – drunkenness, gambling, violence, sexual impropriety – were felt to be more offshoots of the original sins of slavery and slave trading'[96] and this is true for Reizenstein, who focuses on slavery as an ultimate evil. But 'otherness' – whether it is Creoleness, interracialness, or cultural mixing – is on the list of 'other foibles,' as well. En masse, these factors collectively made a difference to representations of its sex work industry and sex workers, even while New Orleanians mimicked and borrowed from their Parisian counterparts, and New Orleans itself was imagined through ghosts of Sue's immense serialized novel. It is little wonder that, with such representational paradigms in place, the New Orleans media remained fascinated with Paris and gave it a repeated spotlight.

Sex and death underpinned rhetoric about both cities in the 1800s: Bernheimer cites hygienists Alexandre Jean-Baptiste Parent-Duchâtelet[97] and Maxime Du Camp's assessments of Paris, saying, 'Du Camp [also] speaks of a cesspool in need of cleaning, of a gangrene so deep it threatens to disintegrate the social organism.'[98] Even years after it was written, Du Camp's work impacted how sex work was understood; sexual activity, specifically prostitution, was deeply associated with disease and both New Orleans and Paris. This was even more obviously the case when it involved women of 'foreign origin.' In nineteenth-century Paris, 'the great courtesans of the time were frequently of foreign origin'[99] – a trend which New Orleans sex workers wasted no time in emulating with their own twists (they did not always promote their foreignness, but many played up their New Orleanian status, again implying that to be from New Orleans was to be 'exotic' or novel) or simply followed obliquely for the sake of business. Meanwhile, writes Bernheimer, the Goncourt brothers – well-known Parisian art critics and writers – sneered in 1863:

Paris is a bordello for foreigners. […] There is no longer a single woman kept by a Frenchman. They all belong to Hanoverians, Brazilians, Prussians, Dutch. It's an 1815 of the phallus.[100]

This revealed their belief that if Paris was to be a 'bordello' (as they apparently felt it was), it should at least be 'kept by Frenchmen.'

New Orleans was, likewise, envisioned as an exotic destination that drew visitors and residents from all over the world for sexual tourism. But by the time the twentieth century drew nearer, reformists – alongside the Navy – considered the presence of the infamous red-light district to be a direct threat to American public health and national interests. The issue was not just 'loose women'; it was loose women catering to the men who were most crucial to protecting national autonomy and power. Well before then, though, Smith affirms, 'Disease [had] certainly entered into the popular imagination, and the relationship between New Orleans and illness became proverbial.'[101] There is, as Bernheimer elucidates about Paris's reputation during the nineteenth century, a stubborn correlation between illnesses, 'prostitutional traffic, the circulation of liquid currency, and biological, even national degeneration'[102] at the core of how Paris and New Orleans were both imagined.

Both were considered to be, as Smith writes about New Orleans, 'An opulent city of sin, […] a dangerous city of death.'[103] One was in the new world – tugged along into a United States that had been fractured by war – while it echoed the other in the Old World. Indeed, popular culture wanted to entomb New Orleans in an antebellum twilight and keep it in a state of arrested decay. But it was struggling to reshape its own identity. Innumerable contentions were occurring behind the attractive, if thrilling, façade created by travel writers and novelists.[104] Even if New Orleans was 'corrupted,' like Paris, it was still alluring. Stephen Wilson writes that Zola's *Nana* memorably ends with 'the rotting, putrefying, decomposing body of Nana – the most notorious *insoumise* in a distinguished tradition of nineteenth-century *romans de la prostitution*.'[105] Like her city, Nana had supposedly been perverse from the inside out.

Most importantly, this image, however, was to have a lasting effect on the representation of sex workers. Like the grisly postmortem photographs

of Jack the Ripper's victims, Zola's verbal portrait of a dead sex worker was evidence of moral order taking its 'rightful' course. But it also titillated and drew in voyeurs eager for gore, and gore entwined with – as it could only be, given the entire course of the novel – sex. Zola's narrator relishes every detail; Nana is not only dead, she is a disgusting corpse, and her face is minutely described. Tellingly, her eyes are incapable of looking and do not even resemble eyes at this point:

Un oeil, celui de gauche, avait complètement sombré dans le bouillonnement de la purulence; l'autre, à demi ouvert, s'enfonçait, comme un trou noir et gâté.

[An eye, the left eye, was completely lost to purulence; the other, which remained half-open, looked like a deep, spoiled black hole.][106]

That Zola took the time to minutely describe her now incapacitated, unrecognizable eyes is suggestive, especially given the negative, scathing commentary that had surrounded Edouard Manet's *Olympia*, his infamous painting of a courtesan, when it was exhibited in 1865.[107] Manet's model, Victorine Meurent, could look and would continue to stare coolly out at viewers, but Nana not only could not – her eyes had also rotted away beyond much recognition.

Unsurprisingly, then, one of the Storyville Portraits' most engaging qualities is their models' eye contact with the viewer.[108] Far from being suggestive, sultry or docile, these women simply have, to choose one word, comfortable expressions. 'Most obviously,' as Susan Sontag writes about Bellocq's portraits, however, 'it could not be detected from at least a third of the pictures that the women are inmates of a brothel.'[109] This is a crucial claim to consider; Bellocq's portraits do not foreground sex work as a topic. Nothing within them is specifically reminiscent of the city or red-light district, either. The portraits deny us that instant association with Storyville or hypothetical subjugation, but so many look like other instances of 'saucy scenes' that it is difficult not to consider them as part of that spectrum. Yet New Orleans, as ever, capitalized and complicated paradigms by blending them with its own long histories – and myths – of 'octoroons,' 'quadroons,' Creole, and slave mistresses. There was slippage between terms and

symbols of sexuality and sex work in the city. They were all linked by a Parisian influence, as well as racism strengthened by centuries of slavery.

Herbert Asbury tells how ‘In other days visitors to the city were escorted to Congo Square to see the dancing of the slaves, and to the old Orleans Ballroom to watch the beautiful quadroons trail their silks and satins across the dance-floor [*sic*].’ But by Storyville’s day, he says, ‘they were taken ‘down the line’ to see the plush and velvet parlors of the palatial mansions of sin, to shiver at the bawdy shows and dancing in the cabarets […].’[110] Asbury does not take this any further, but in these ‘palatial mansions of sin,’ there were provocative, and often false, displays of foreignness that were enmeshed with assertions of racial otherness that had been built, over the last two centuries and beyond, into sexual and attractive fetishes. According to Smith, ‘Antebellum travelers to the city, like others before them, rarely failed to comment on the nature of black life in the Crescent City, and in so doing, were clearly conditioned by popular culture.’[111] He notes that an almost tactile pleasure was taken in describing women of color, too. Men alone were not limited to engaging in this pleasure, which was as much a symptom of white, as it was gendered, entitlement. He describes: ‘Mrs Houstoun noted “the rich dark cheek of the Quadroon. The eloquent blood in her soft cheek speaks but too plainly of her despised descent.”’[112] The old Victorian impulse of classification blended with the racist entitlement that tourists (not by any means exclusively – New Orleanian natives clearly felt a sense of ownership, too) felt regarding women of color; blood was ‘eloquent’; it marked humans as property or objects to be appraised and enjoyed.

If we begin to look at the Storyville Portraits with the expectation not that they are anomalous for their time, but rather with an expectation that Bellocq gives us versions of a figure who was already prolific in mass culture, we can look at them differently. While they have been hailed as exceptional, and in some respects, they are – their survival after the loss of many of Storyville’s records and ephemera, as well as New Orleans’s infamous hurricanes, was serendipitous – in reality, Bellocq was only depicting a common, very popular subject as she was configured by New Orleans. He does so in a surprisingly mundane manner, but without overtly depicting ‘legibly’ black women like Parasina.

When regarded as a refraction of the topic of sex work rather than a deviation from it, we realize that his work is not as strange as it first appears, and in fact can point to an arc of inquiry that tests our presumptions about New Orleans (Storyville) sex workers. This, in turn, shifts our perceptions of both Bellocq and the portraits. In order to assert that his portraits are not as iconoclastic as they have been made to seem – and that they were part of the vast panorama of *fin de siècle* visual and print culture about both women and sex workers – this idea of Paris arbitrating New Orleans's immorality in American popular culture is instrumental.

What then results through this acknowledgement is a re-orientation so that the portraits can be part of a more inclusive imaginary that accounts for their ordinariness – and also the level of intimacy that makes his photographs stand apart from the spectrum that encompasses them. The portraits suggest that models and photographer were comfortable with each other, even if Bellocq's intentions are impossible to know. It is helpful to remember that New Orleans itself seems to inspire this inscrutability of emotions and allegiances; for example, Steven Rowan observes that Baron von Reizenstein's reasons for devoting an entire chapter to Claudine and Oleana's relationship in *Mysteries of New Orleans* are unclear – it served no pragmatic purpose in the overall narrative. He believes that it must have had some personal significance to Reizenstein – it is, after all, included and their relationship is the only 'healthy' one in the novel. But Rowan does not speculate further on intentionality;[113] this logic should be applied to Bellocq, too. Rather than concentrate on speculations about whether he 'meant' to create pornography (or art, or advertisements, or documentary images), it is enough to say that specific portraits do resemble these things.

We remain unaware if Bellocq's models were his lovers or friends. (They have importance and significance outside of those potential identities.) But because there are almost 90 negatives, we should assume that he did have a personal interest in these women. Bellocq's portraits do not often match the visions conjured in Baudelaire's poetry, or city mysteries and *fin de siècle* novels. Plate 5 in *Storyville Portraits* is among the most antithetical to this mythology; despite the young woman wearing undergarments, dark stockings, and patent leather shoes – all traditional for women in *risqué* postcards or photographs – the way she lounges on what looks like a makeshift table (strewn with a small rug) with a little dog makes this image

relaxed, perhaps even relatively candid. All of her attention is on the dog, and she smiles happily at it. Viewers still might be drawn to the curves of her back, bottom, and legs, especially because they are offset by the horizontal lines provided by wooden paneling and shutters behind her. Bellocq did not however choose this setting particularly to highlight her body or create a fantasy scene, even if he considered it for the lighting, as seems likely.

The door to the right of the model's feet does not indicate exactly where her photograph was taken, but this could be a secluded outdoor area behind, or near, a Storyville brothel. There is no backdrop placed behind the model and she does not wear a costume. Her improper attire is not fully unexpected; this is a quiet moment. More precisely, it is a moment where her guard is down, and she is neither in public nor under pressure to entertain a client. It is not difficult to imagine that she is between clients and relaxing. Conversely, if we were to ignore the formidable mythologies that accompany the Storyville Portraits, this photograph could possibly be of any urban, turn-of-the-century single 'bachelor girl' enjoying her spare time, rather than a Storyville 'working girl' waiting for her next customer.

This portrait's connections with Storyville should not be cast aside permanently. Plate 5 merely demonstrates that, despite the ubiquitous reasons Bellocq had to turn his models into 'Trilbys' and 'Nanas' (or 'Parasinas' and 'Jeannes'), he does not cast them in those roles. Nevertheless, he does not have to; viewers, with all their preconceptions about New Orleans, are eager to supply far more lurid stories than the ones implied by many of the portraits, and Plate 5 is only one example of how they do not conform to mainstream, Parisian-influenced stereotypes about prostitution, despite retaining some influences from them. Instead of trying to understand intentions, this chapter has explored how tropes related to the 'prostitute' and 'prostitution' in Paris were refracted in New Orleans and change how we look at Bellocq's portraits. Sara James writes that Sue's Paris is 'a world that is linked by material objects and by pieces of paper, whether transmitted through theft, gift or exchange; where appearances read as signs'[114] and perhaps irresistibly, the portraits themselves have been regarded as 'material objects' within these same paradigms.

Conclusion

'I was so sure it would happen. That the past was an abused record with no choice but to repeat itself at the crack and no power on earth could lift the arm that held the needle.'[1]

Bellocq's photographs function as fragments of a past time. They are subject to the contexts of that moment as well as reinterpretation; they may be still, but are not static. Yet, because they are of sex workers, they have been confined to their narratives, their fixed frames. As Roland Barthes writes, 'when we define the photograph as a motionless image, this does not mean only that the figures it represents do not move; it means that they do not emerge, do not leave: they are anesthetized and fastened down, like butterflies,' and the Portraits capture specific moments, specific ideas, that have been 'fastened' in popular culture.[2] The women in Bellocq's photographs have been captured and 'fastened down' in folklore. They are given movement and dynamism only in limited and limiting narratives about the relationship between maker and models, as well as the tragic 'prostitute' – which the women had no say in constructing. (By contrast, some of Storyville's sex workers were instrumental in crafting their own mythologies.) This idea of being 'fastened' is telling in the context of the portraits' subject: women who worked and were, once the law determined their work was fully illegal, unable to truly move on to other ventures without bearing that stigma.

Recorded history about Storyville encompasses more than one might expect. But the spaces between these pieces of ephemera always become most intriguing in regard to everything they represent; the historical context and its preoccupations, as well as social perceptions of sex work and people of color are unified factors in Storyville's demise. Storyville, in spite of all

its character and characters, is more easily remembered as a caricature, but not quite for what it was. The start of the twentieth century was a locus for this selective memory in cities, and New Orleans is hardly alone in its possession of the attribute. Norman Klein and Daniel Hurewitz address a prevalent Angeleno 'forgetfulness' during this time in their respective books *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory*[3] and *Bohemian Los Angeles and the Making of Modern Politics*.[4] Forgetting, they emphasize, is a requisite condition of most urban centers' cultural histories just before and during the twentieth century. There are problems and paradoxes that had to be forgotten for the sake of governmental and epistemological stability – issues that did not exist a century or even 50 years before without the influence of cities or modern life. Many of these involve the policing of both sexualities and sex work. It is not surprising or accidental that the Storyville Portraits have been narrativized in the manner that they have been.

Whether embellished or factual, connections between urban spaces, sex workers, and memory are still present and inexorable. Los Angeles did not contend with the same cultural milieu as New Orleans, but its notoriety also ebbed into infamy for enabling certain moral transgressions; among the reasons that Hurewitz addresses for its own pronounced and developed 'history of forgetting' are the budding queer subcultures that were unique to its geography of hills and valleys, and the Southern California social strata of vaudeville stars and entertainment moguls. These subcultures, which arose in what Hurewitz calls the safety of bohemian 'thirdspaces,' grew to be involved with leftist movements, art, and the formation of distinct political identities well into the 1950s.[5] In many cases, New Orleans should be regarded as a 'thirdspace,' too: Thomas Ruys Smith notes that it gained a reputation for being a 'bohemian refuge' in the late nineteenth century, and this is affirmed by its reputation in popular culture.[6]

Qualities of late nineteenth-century urban life were triggers for radical changes in thought and action. These changes had not been encountered before the birth of the city – cities facilitated them. Many of these breaks from the perceptions and practices of the earlier part of the nineteenth century were imposed, often forced rather than organic, but they also occurred as an inevitable feature of modernity. With their high populations, cities contributed to a collapse of literal and ideological boundaries between

the upper and lower social classes, people of all genders, and individuals of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Most crucially for the theme of forgetfulness, urban paces of life were quicker than anything experienced before the advent of industrialization, and this was only enhanced by the progression of capitalism and its mass technologies.

It allowed for a new rapidity in the dissemination of thought and fostered intellectual and artistic merging, as well as networking. Modes of authoritarian control had to change, too, to answer new forms of resistance and so-called 'deviance' bred by urbanity. Methods of control became more invisible than reorganizing law enforcement or engaging in tactical city planning, and Storyville was one attempt at a 'proactive' control of 'vice' rather than banning it outright. What I might term 'obligatory' forgetting – 'forgetfulness' assisted by civic legislation, the exclusion, and editing of certain records or recalled events in history, or other intentional parameters that ultimately decided what was remembered and what was not – was employed in defense against unwanted changes or behaviors.

Forgetting was also easy to do when the pace of everyday life was, for the first time, fully marked by the process of earning a living in the mechanized city. Stories that were undesirable were lost or repressed. Remembrance became dictated by a hierarchy of 'rightness.' More ephemeral or oral 'archives' (locals telling stories, older people retelling tales of their youth, or so on) tried to fill the resultant lapses. Eventually, fictions and stereotypes entwined with facts. This is evident when one tries to piece together a more rational story of Storyville and Bellocq's portraits amidst the claims and speculations that have accompanied them.

Overall, this book gives perspective to the Storyville Portraits by acknowledging that they are at home amongst other representations of early twentieth-century sex workers or 'obscene' media – but this is not a negative or demeaning quality. They originate from a time when the 'prostitute' was at the forefront of debates about vice, women, and sex, so if we allow the Portraits to be refracted by their contemporaneous representations of urban women and/or sex work, they become less mysterious and stereotypical. They retain and conform to some of these imaginaries, yet manage to refute them in key respects. Bellocq was not trying to 'save' his models, either. He just photographs them, which lends the portraits a straightforward quality. This is part of what makes them so

resonant. They force us to examine why, because some of these images are feasibly 'pornographic,' we might first venture to explain them with negative, or overly sympathetic judgments – or maintain that their creator was somehow perverted or obsessed.

At the same time, they can be fraught images; as Emily Epstein Landau and Alecia P. Long have demonstrated, Storyville was not always a 'kind' place, especially to black women and women of color (this is not, and was not, exclusive to either sex work as an industry, or Storyville as a red-light district). It was a chaotic, as well as extraordinary, place. When considered in that local context, the portraits do become poignant because, despite images like them or the self-directed representations in souvenir booklets or Blue Books, there was still rampant inequality. Even amongst Bellocq's portraits, there are reminders that life in Storyville had pitfalls; a tired young woman posing next to another woman asleep in bed – supposedly, this was taken in a hospital ward for venereal disease, but even if this is not the case, it is still sobering – and a woman with a long scar near one of her breasts make appearances, for example. Newspapers and police reports, meanwhile – even when treated with skepticism – corroborate that there was violent crime. None of these issues were however limited to sex work, or even just to Storyville or other red-light districts; tiredness, overwork, sickness, and crime were prevalent in cities.

The Storyville Portraits became representative of the iconic 'prostitute.' Therefore, they carry all the suggestions of that concept. We look at them in new ways if we interrogate how that icon and narrative trope were constructed in the first place: by a heterogeneous mix of culture, law, and politics that condemned sex work's presence, visibility, and viability in favor of creating a furor over it. Vocabularies and their implications were not a large consideration for me at the start of this research, which began in late 2012 while I completed my MA degree. They should have been. My thoughts changed as my research evolved, and I am still learning.

Bellocq started something dynamic; the portraits have enthralled twentieth- and twenty-first-century spectators. Their enigmatic qualities allow, or force, viewers to be detectives, voyeurs who partake in what Patrick Brantlinger terms the 'romance of vice.'[7] The fascination with crime and 'vice' was well popularized in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by fiction, expository newspaper and magazine articles, and

eventually the detective: an ultimate fantasy of male infiltration and control. He had his origins in short stories, French literature, and British sensation fiction of the Victorian era, but was increasingly legitimized as 'respectable' in 1890s novels. We are, if current television, novels, cinema, and media are any indication, still obsessed with these themes. Unwittingly, Bellocq, then Lee Friedlander – possibly John Szarkowski, more than Friedlander – replicated this cultural obsession in the Storyville Portraits by creating images that facilitate detective work. They allow for chains of suppositions and questions, and this is only enhanced by their status as 'found objects.'

Like our own, late-nineteenth- and early twentieth-century popular culture was enamored with crime, especially crime that involved or implicated women. Ironically, Storyville existed because of attempts to contain 'prostitution.' In a similar manner to the 'contagious criminality' that made the detective and sensation genres so popular, sex work was often regarded in terms of an 'illness' that could 'spread.'[8] In many of the stories, erotically charged female villainesses instigated the contagion, but were clever enough to appear innocent or reformed while bringing criminality into the home or private spaces. Unsurprisingly, then, Storyville itself was claimed to be infectious or poisonous to respectable society, even though it was supposed to contain 'vice' within specific, demarcated parameters, and not spread it. In light of these views, it is remarkable that Bellocq's portraits are both blunt and ambivalent about their contexts.

They divest the women of most scandalous qualities – barring nudity, which would not have been scandalous to them – and contain neither a strong sense of time, nor overt markers that these women were sex workers. Officially, Bellocq's models would have been full criminals only a decade-or-so earlier; they would be again after 1917. But the Portraits deny an instant, visual association with Storyville. They do not have to declare one; the association has been supplied and strengthened by the passage of time and the creation of a Western cultural narrative of 'prostitution.' The Portraits have amorphous visual links with their original years of creation, a span of particularly tumultuous, formative years for the United States and Europe. Despite – or because of – this, they generally appear to the twenty-first-century viewer as nostalgic and indicative of New Orleans in the early 1900s.

The photographer whose presence has been assumed to be alternately voyeuristic or sensitive exists in a similarly cinematic way; he is a natural character of the city scene. In his mid-twenties when the district first opened, 'Bellocq often ventured one block from his front door into the legally sanctioned district of prostitution,' Rose explains; he also emphasizes the fact that Bellocq never moved away from the French Quarter and was a white Creole who spoke French.[9] His role as a frequenter of brothels (and allegedly, opium dens) was a familiar one in the nineteenth-century city – and would not be unallied with his role as a potential artist or bohemian. Tellingly, *Storyville Portraits* asserted, 'Bellocq – whoever he was – interests us […] as an artist: a man who saw more clearly than we do, and who discovered secrets,'[10] and this is how we might like to see him, as well as how we are accustomed to seeing him. He supposedly transgressed spatial and ideological boundaries to discover these 'secrets,' all of which indicate that the glamour Storyville cultivated for itself was simply an illusion. At the time, for locals like him and his models, that would have been no secret.

Both his initial creation of the portraits and our continued fascination with them are indicative of a desire to put them in order and control what they represent; control was a common undertone in conceptualizations of the detective and the flâneur, his less-methodical double. These archetypes preconfigure our reception of Bellocq as much as they bias our reception of his models. Paul Smith notes that Charles Baudelaire's 'comparison between his flâneur and the detective is also a way of suggesting that both figures exist as fantasies of control born out of insecurity […].'[11] Baudelaire, originator of the term as used by twentieth-century scholars like Walter Benjamin, often cast the detective and the flâneur as related archetypical – even satirical – figures. An acknowledgement and assessment of Bellocq's eye and how it might be playing into contemporary fantasies about 'masculinity,' 'salvation,' and 'authenticity' – Bellocq, as some combination of the flâneur and detective, providing a heroic portrayal of these women as they 'really' were – and not just those of the outsider artist, are not found in many considerations of these photographs. In the subjects of Storyville and Bellocq, memory, fictions (of sex, masculinity, and art) and fact have become entwined in a demonstration of William Faulkner's aphorism, 'The past is never dead. It's not even past.'[12]

Although the Portraits' ties to Storyville rely more on context than their overt content, Bellocq's connections with the District and the French Quarter were explicit; as a member of those communities, he could enter them. He did not necessarily intrude upon them. Effectively, the young photographer waited for the opportune moment to 'follow his eye' before beginning his new work.[13] Once he could, he took ownership of the space with the help of his camera and Storyville became his haunt. From all of this, viewers are left with the belief that there must be more to the Portraits, that they must be conveying some piece of an entire story – and the story only needs to be put together properly to reveal some underlying truth. This is, of course, not true.

Still, Bellocq's own story leaves plenty of room for conjecture and more than enough space for the photographs to become clues that might explain something dramatic. However, they always refuse that resolution. By contrast, though, Christopher Pittard writes that early twentieth-century detective and crime stories 'were […] "healthy" crime narratives'[14] that demonstrated typically male mastery over crime. They supplied a logical, comforting resolution to the problem. Crime took place in the knowable, diagnosable city rather than inside closed rooms. Bellocq was within secluded borders, yet the photographs he took do not amount to taxonomies of the 'real' Storyville. Thus, there is no narrative closure. Even so, the portraits seem as though they should be part of such a tale of vice, and the lack of closure is equally frustrating and enticing.

In some respects, they help us test Benjamin's assertion that:

> To live means to leave traces. In the interior these are emphasized. […] The traces of the occupant also leave their impression on the interior. The detective story that follows these traces comes into being.[15]

Part of what keeps the Portraits both engaging and difficult to categorize is their position as 'traces' themselves, ones providing glimpses into interiors and social orders that no longer exist. Further, they could be more explicit, but they are not. And unlike the proclamations of the newspapers or Blue Books, there is not a strong sense of place in Bellocq's portraits. Bellocq himself ultimately became a reclusive old man, a human vestige of bygone Storyville that still lingered as the twentieth century progressed. He was

apparently known as the 'photographer, slowly going senile […] who wandered around downtown' until he passed away in 1949.[16] If this is true, he almost took on the frenetic properties of his old surroundings, and the way they persisted and lingered after their destruction. Yet despite the rather unsettling presence he was said to have later developed, as Sontag wrote, 'No one was being spied on' and 'everyone was a willing subject' in his portraits.[17]

This presents an intriguing paradox; though none of the women seem to have been coerced or unhappy, their photographs only resurfaced far later – the result of stigma. We know who Bellocq is; we do not know much about his models, though we may believe we do. The Portraits possess the secretive patina of found objects, which is enhanced by how notorious New Orleans, and in particular New Orleans as the home of the French Quarter and Storyville, was for the early twentieth-century public. That is essentially Bellocq's legacy; while his portraits instigate questions and inquiry, ultimately, they do not reveal anything definitively 'moral' or 'immoral.' They in fact testify to the normalcy of sex work. Their survival itself is extraordinary. But their appearances are a jumble of the unexpected, and quotidian, for Gilded Age or Progressive Era pornography – women posing in stockings, body suits, and lingerie. Thus, they elicit their own reevaluation.

Even when they are considered as being indicative of different 'sets' within the larger *oeuvre*, are explored as art objects, or are incorporated into fictions – as they have repeatedly been – they raise more questions than answers. Bellocq took photographs that are at once imagined to be melancholic and unapologetic. They are full of detail, yet somehow noncommittal. To borrow from Edgar Allen Poe's 'The Man of the Crowd' (1840), they '[do] not permit [themselves] to be read' with much certainty, and suggest that there are 'some secrets which do not permit themselves to be told.'[18] This is their lure; these women evoke a certain 'kind' of woman, and then refute our assumptions without explanation. In the end, they do not owe us anything.

Notes

Foreword

1. *Working Girls: An American Brothel, circa 1892 / The Private Photographs of William Goldman*, https://glitteratieditions.com/products/working-girls, (Accessed 7 September 2018).
2. Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act, HR 1865 (2017).
3. *San Francisco Chronicle,* 26 January 1917.
4. Benjamin Levy, quoted in 'Stories of Survivors. And Witnesses and Rescuers Outside Tell What They Saw', *New York Times*, 26 March 1911, p. 4.
5. P.M. Newman, Letters to Michael and Hugh Owens, May 1951, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union Archives, Cornell University, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, Ithaca, NY.
6. Mary Domsky-Abrams, interviewed by Leon Stein, interview date unknown, http://trianglefire.ilr.cornell.edu/primary/survivorInterviews/MaryDomskyAbrams.html.
7. Ibid.

Introduction

1. Johnny Wiggs, quoted in John Szarkowski (ed.), *E.J. Bellocq: Storyville Portraits – Photographs from the New Orleans Red-Light District, circa 1912* (New York: Random House, 1996), p. 12.
2. Eric Powell, 'Tales From Storyville – Digging the "Sporting Life" in Old New Orleans', *Archaeology Magazine*, 55/6 (November/December 2002), p. 28.
3. Louise Coleman, in discussion with the author, 26 May 2016.
4. Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), p. 204.
5. Ibid., pp. 204–5.
6. Ibid., p. 205.
7. Pamela Arceneaux, in discussion with the author, 24 May 2016.
8. Thomas Ruys Smith, *Southern Queen: New Orleans in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Continuum, 2011), p. 168: 'As Morton remembered, '[t]hese houses were filled up with the

most expensive furniture and paintings. Three of them had mirror parlors where you couldn't find the door for the mirrors, the one at Lulu White's costing $30,000.'

9. Johnny Wiggs, quoted in Szarkowski, pp. 13–14.
10. Walter Benjamin, 'Paris: Capital of the Nineteenth Century', in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writing* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), p. 155.
11. Alecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex, Race, and Respectability in New Orleans, 1865–1920* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana University Press, 2004), pp. 203–6.
12. Al Rose, preface to *Storyville, New Orleans, Being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the Notorious Red-light District* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1974), p. ix.
13. Christian Waguespack posits the idea that they were advertisements, but the portraits do not seem to make appearances in known Blue Books, the local directories of prostitution that featured many advertisements for liquor, 'medicines,' and even funerary services. See C. Waguespack, 'Reframing E.J. Bellocq: A Vernacular Reading of the Storyville Portraits', MA thesis, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM, 2015. (Pamela Arceneaux was an invaluable source of information on the Blue Books when I visited The Historic New Orleans Collection Archives in May 2016.)
14. Glenda D. Skinner, 'The Storyville Portraits: A Collaborative History', MA thesis, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA, 1999, p. 9.
15. Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), p. 68.
16. Benjamin, p. 155.
17. Smith, p. 168.
18. Coleman, in discussion with the author.
19. Benjamin, p. 155.
20. John X. Christ, 'A Short Guide to the Art of Dining, Slumming, Touring, Wildlife, and Women for Hire in New York's Chinatown and Chinese Restaurants', *Oxford Art Journal* 26/2 (2003), p. 87.
21. Long, p. 107.
22. Ibid., p. 198.
23. E.A. Powell, 'Tales From Storyville – Digging the "Sporting Life" in Old New Orleans', *Archaeology Magazine*, 55/6 (November/December 2002), p. 27.
24. Emily Epstein Landau, *Hidden From History: Unknown New Orleans*, City Archives, New Orleans Public Library, Exhibition, http://nutrias.org/exhibits/hidden/hiddenfromhistory_intro.htm.
25. Ibid.
26. Gary Krist, *Empire of Sin: A Story of Sex, Jazz, Murder and the Battle for New Orleans* (Stroud: Amberley, 2014), p. 133.
27. E.J. Bellocq, prints made by Lee Friedlander, in *Storyville Portraits: Photographs from the New Orleans Red-Light District, circa 1912*, John Szarkowski (ed.) (New York: Random House, 1996). Though there is a case to be made for referring to the images as Friedlander's rather than Bellocq's alone, I do reference them as Bellocq's.
28. Rebecca Zurier, *Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), p. 276.
29. Brian Wallis writes, 'Bellocq's intention is only one of many potential readings of his pictures, and the survival of his full-plate negatives reveals much about the reality that contradicts his

own prints. For in the tawdry background details – the iron beds, the wall pennants, the bare washstands – these pictures offer a rare portrayal of the everyday lives of working-class American prostitutes.' See *The Mysterious Monsieur Bellocq* (New York: International Center of Photography, 2004), p. 15. As I argue, however, Bellocq's portraits were not 'a *rare* portrayal of the everyday lives of *working-class* American prostitutes' (emphasis mine). In reality, they were part of a complex, multimedia network of portrayals of 'prostitutes' in popular and/or visual culture. They are – as far as we know – the only portrayal of this kind to have come from Storyville. But I believe that they should not be regarded as such isolated incidents, and that the women are not necessarily always best read as 'working-class' sex workers.

30. Gina Greene, 'Reflections of Desire: Masculinity and Fantasy in the Fin-De-Siècle Luxury Brothel', *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 14/3 (Autumn 2015), p. 287.
31. Friedlander explains in the preface to *Storyville Portraits:* 'Some research led me to a printing technique popular at the turn of the century called P.O.P (printing out paper) which has an inherent self masking quality. In this method the plates were exposed to the P.O.P by indirect daylight for anywhere from three hours to seven days, depending on the plate's density and quality of daylight […],' Szarkowski (ed.), p. x.
32. These included bestiality, sadomasochism, rape, and interracial sex. Japanese *shunga* (broadly defined as a genre of sexual, or sexually humorous, drawings and photographs) also circulated in the United States by the late 1800s, which influenced domestic pornography production. See Hans-Michael Koetzle, *1,000 Nudes* (New York: Taschen, 2005) and Gilles Néret, *Erotica Universalis* (New York: Taschen, 2004) for many examples of these images, and Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), pp. 139–43, for a consideration of pornography in Storyville that is focused on pornographic portraits of local madam Lulu White. A textual source that exemplifies these popular tropes is *My Secret Life* (Paris: Auguste Brancart, 1888), a graphic 'memoir' of sexual exploits written by an 'anonymous' author. None of Bellocq's images fully cater to these proclivities, even if some of the portraits could have been used to create cabinet cards, for example, which were more socially acceptable erotic images in the guise of art or decoration.
33. Al Rose believed these were photographs of Bellocq's workspace. See Al Rose, *Storyville, New Orleans, Being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the Notorious Red-light District* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1974), p. 59. There was apparently some debate as to whether they are of a domestic setting or his studio, but Janet Malcolm also maintains that they are from 'his own apartment,' *Diana & Nikon: Essays on Photography* (New York: Aperture Foundation, 1997), pp. 200–1.
34. These photographers include Lee Friedlander, John T. Mendes, and Dan Leyrer. See Szarkowski, as well as The Historic New Orleans Collection archives.
35. Szarkowski, p. 10.
36. 'Bankoff and Girlie in Big Modern Dancing Act Headlining Orpheum Bill This Week,' *The Times-Picayune*, 3 September 1916; ''Amusements [Illegible] Rustieana' at the French Opera House', *The Daily Picayune*, 22 January, 1897 and 'Wistful And Sweet Are These Dainty Female Feet of the Stage. Some of Them Are …', *The Daily Picayune*, 24 February 1895. Also see Karl Beckson, 'Prostitutes on the Promenade' in *London in the 1890s: A Cultural History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1992), pp. 111–28.
37. Chris Waddington, 'Unlocking Bellocq's Secrets', *The Times-Picayune*, 23 September 1996.
38. Christopher Benfey, *Degas in New Orleans* (University of California Press, 1997), p. 240.
39. Susan Sontag, introduction to *E.J. Bellocq: Storyville Portraits, Photographs from the New Orleans Red-Light District, Circa 1912*, John Szarkowski (ed.) (New York: Random House,

1996).

40. Vicki Goldberg, ‘So at Ease with Life on the Edge’, *New York Times*, 6 January 2002.
41. David Bowman, ‘Strange and vanished flesh’ (25 January 2002), Salon.com, http://www.salon.com/2002/01/25/bellocq/.
42. Norman Klein, *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory* (London: Verso, 1999), p. 16.
43. Lulu White, *New Mahogany Hall*, *1898–1899*, The Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, LA.
44. Landau also points out that one of the Blue Books’ subtitles, ‘Tenderloin 400 […] highlight[ed] the boundedness of the *demimonde’s* elite by referring to Ward McAllister’s New York social register and ‘The Four Hundred’ guests from New York’s elite circles who were invited to Mrs. William Astor’s 1892 gala ball,’ (Landau, p. 112). So although the connotations may be subtle to us today, at the time, Blue Books truly were evoking playful associations with other, more ‘metropolitan’ cities like New York. New Orleans, then, was not at all closed off from the rest of the world.
45. Intriguingly, as Landau notes: ‘French tourist guides were “Guides Bleus,”’ (Landau, p. 112).
46. Alecia P. Long, ‘Poverty is the New Prostitution: Race, Poverty, and Public Housing in Post-Katrina New Orleans’, *Journal of American History* 94 (December 2007) p. 797.
47. Court Carney, ‘New Orleans and the Creation of Early Jazz,’ *Popular Music and Society*, 29/3 (July 2006), p. 304.

1 (Self-)Representing Storyville Women

1. See Emily Epstein Landau, ‘Where the Light and Dark Folks Meet’ in *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), pp. 109–31. In this, she explores and analyzes the Blue Books in detail. See also Pamela D. Arceneaux, *Guidebooks to Sin: The Blue Books of Storyville, New Orleans* (New Orleans, LA: The Historic New Orleans Collection, 2017).
2. Eric R. Platt and Lillian Hill, ‘A Storyville Education: Spatial Practices and the Learned Sex Trade in the City that Care Forgot’, *Adult Education Quarterly* 64/4 (November 2014) p. 295.
3. Johnny Wiggs as quoted in, John Szarkowski (ed.), *E.J. Bellocq: Storyville Portraits – Photographs from the New Orleans Red-Light District, circa 1912* (New York: Random House, 1996), p. 12.
4. *The Daily Picayune*, 4 November 1883.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Alan G. Gauthreaux and D.G. Hippensteel, *Dark Bayou: Infamous Louisiana Homicides* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015), p. 41.
8. Linda Nochlin, *Woman, Art, and Power, and Other Essays* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), p. 57.
9. *The Monroe Bulletin*, 14 November 1883.
10. Gauthreaux and Hippensteel write, ‘Kate’s wake and funeral were not elaborate affairs, but they did demonstrate her love of the finer things in life. Her gown was made of the finest white silk […] The mourners enjoyed the finest champagne and wines, and one of Kate’s last wishes was

that no men be allowed to attend,' and they also describe the very lengthy, convoluted court case over Townsend's will and assets (pp. 44–51).

11. The text of this article was made available on a website entitled 'Storyville New Orleans,' where it was attributed to *The Daily Picayune* without a date or other documentation. However, the many verifiable newspaper reports of her relationship with Sykes, murder, funeral, and the legal disputes over her will do attest that she was well-known and wealthy. Therefore, I have tried to keep my distance from this report of her new brothel, but it is worth mentioning for context. See 'Carved to Death; Terrible Fate of Kate Townsend, at the Hands of Troisville Sykes,' *The Daily Picayune*, 4 November 1883; 'Kate Townsend Killed,' *The Daily Telegraph,* Monroe, LA, 3 November 1883; 'Townsend Laid to Rest,' *The Daily States,* New Orleans, 6 November 1883 and 'Sykes and Townsend,' *The Daily Picayune*, 2 August 1879.
12. Billy Struve, *Blue Book*, Eighth Edition 1907, The Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, LA.
13. Gauthreaux and Hippensteel, p. 44.
14. 'Townsend Laid to Rest,' *The Daily States,* 6 November 1883.
15. 'Carved to Death; Terrible Fate of Kate Townsend, at the Hands of Troisville Sykes,' *The Daily Picayune*, 4 November 1883.
16. Ruth Laney, '*The Mascot:* New Orleans Newspaper,' *Country Roads: From Natchez to New Orleans* (October 2012), http://www.countryroadsmagazine.com/culture/history/the-mascot-new-orleans-newspaper.
17. Ibid.
18. 'Selective Service Act of 1917,' Chapter 15, Act of May 18, 1917, United States Congress, 1st Session (1917).
19. 'Lewd and Abandoned,' *The Mascot*, 21 May 1892.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Katy Coyle and Nadine Van Dyke, ed. John Howard, 'Sex, Smashing, and Storyville,' in *Carrying on in the Lesbian and Gay South* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), p. 58.
24. Errol Laborde, *I Never Danced with an Eggplant (on a Streetcar Before)* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing, 2000), p. 109.
25. Platt and Hill, p. 295.
26. Laborde, p. 109.
27. 'Lewd and Abandoned,' *The Mascot*, 21 May 1892
28. Nell Kimball, *Nell Kimball: Her Life As an American Madam*, *By Herself* (London: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1970), p. 193.
29. The Progressive movement brought a vogue for accounts of prostitution from 'insiders.' As such, Sharon E. Wood writes in the introduction to Josie Washburn's autobiography *The Underground Sewer: A Prostitute Reflects on Life in the Trade* (Winnipeg, MB: Bison Books, 1997): 'Authentic writings by prostitutes from the nineteenth century are few' but fabricated 'autobiographies' abounded.
30. Coyle and Van Dyke, p. 58.
31. See Landau, pp. 109–31.
32. *L'Hote v. New Orleans*, Case 177 U.S. 587 (1900).

33. American Social Hygiene Association, *Keeping Fit to Fight*. Pamphlet. 1918. Harvard University Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
34. *New York Times*, 2 February 1884.
35. Arceneaux, in discussion with the author, 24 May 2016.
36. One of the earliest advertisements for The Arlington (c.1901) contains numerous photographs of the bordello's themed rooms, such as 'the Chinese Parlor,' 'the Vienna Parlor,' and 'the Turkish Parlor.' See Billy Struve, *Blue Book: Tenderloin 400*, 1901, The Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, LA.
37. Coyle and Van Dyke, p. 58.
38. Thomas Ruys Smith, *Southern Queen: New Orleans in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Continuum, 2011), p. 169.
39. Louise Coleman, in discussion with the author, 26 May 2016.
40. Platt and Hill, p. 294.
41. Billy Struve, *Blue Book: Tenderloin 400,* 1901, The Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, LA and Lulu White, *New Mahogany Hall, 1898–1899*, The Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, LA.
42. Billy Struve, *Blue Book*, 1913–15, The Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, LA.
43. As Arceneaux explained to me, the Blue Books were marketing tools and not meant to be pornographic. Descriptions like Maria Henry's would not have been included, yet many like them are mistakenly thought to be correct for the period – no doubt because of 'fake' Blue Books being passed off as genuine ones: 'A CHARMING, baby face, with lovely eyes, pretty little nose, teeth like a terrier's, and chestnut locks, not disfigured by hair dye. Her charms are in symmetrical proportion, but her breasts and buttocks are soft; now about twenty-eight, has been for some years the toy of the general public. She possesses every vice in the harlot's catalogue, being an inveterate sucker of women's seed, and a facile Ganymede for rich sodomites. She will obey the orders of all who can afford to pay very highly to play with her softened globes, or recline on her flabby belly.' For an example of one of these fake Blue Books, see *Guide to Pleasure – For Visitors to the Gay City, Directory to the Red-Light District of New Orleans in the Gay Nineties (Mardi-Gras Edition),* 1963, The Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, LA.
44. *L'Hote v. Louisiana.*
45. Emily Clark, 'Selling the Quadroon,' *The Strange History of the American Quadroon: Free Women of Color in the Revolutionary Atlantic World* (Durham, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), p. 181.
46. Lulu White, *New Mahogany Hall, 1898–1899*, The Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, LA.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Smith, p. 169.
54. Ibid.

55. Al Rose's *Storyville, New Orleans, Being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the Notorious Red-light District* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1974), probably contributed the most to these assertions, which have percolated into nearly every other source about Storyville and certainly impacted the popular culture surrounding it. Although live sex shows indubitably took place in the red-light district, it is important to consider whether the stories about underage (or virgin) girls were, actually, predominately the result of 'white slavery' scares. However, by maintaining an amount of distance from Rose's 'primary source material' (some of which was not genuine, as mentioned), I do not mean to downplay the disturbing nature of these potential issues.
56. Smith, p. 169.
57. Ibid.
58. Platt and Hill, p. 292.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid.
61. Landau, p. 169.
62. Ibid.
63. Alan Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll: The Fortunes of Jelly Roll Morton, New Orleans Creole and 'Inventor of Jazz,'* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1950).
64. Billy Struve, *Blue Book,* Seventh Edition, 1906, The Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, LA, and see Gary Krist, *Empire of Sin: A Story of Sex, Jazz, Murder and the Battle for New Orleans* (Stroud: Amberley, 2014).
65. Billy Struve, *Blue Book,* Seventh Edition, 1906, The Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, LA.
66. Platt and Hill, p. 292.
67. Kimball, p. 229.
68. Although we cannot expect that all the crimes that took place in Storyville were meticulously recorded, incidents of violent crime seem to coincide with the popularity and population density of the district. Deaths often involved teamsters, laborers, and those whose professions were listed as 'none' or 'unknown.' Intoxication and altercations were frequently cited as factors. See Louisiana Police Department Homicide Reports, 1893–1947, City Archives, New Orleans Public Library, New Orleans, LA. The digitized records are available through the Criminal Justice Research Center of Ohio State University as part of their Historical Violence Database, URL: https://cjrc.osu.edu/research/interdisciplinary/hvd/united-states/new-orleans.
69. Coyle and Van Dyke, p. 58.
70. Nana is one of the most obvious examples; she had an enormous amount to do with the trope as it appeared elsewhere. But the 'prostitute-as-disease' trope is also implied in *The Mascot*.
71. 'Police Lesson Taught. Notorious Negress Treated Too Tenderly By the Law's Officer,' *The Times-Picayune*, 13 February 1909.
72. Leslie Choquette, 'Degenerate or Degendered? Images of Prostitution and Homosexuality in the French Third Republic,' *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 23/2 (Spring 1997), p. 210.
73. To be very clear I do not believe Bellocq's portraits (nude, pornographic, or otherwise) demean the models. For different perspectives on women in pornography, see Gail Dines, *Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked Our Sexuality*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2011) and Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1981). For histories of pornography, see also Rae Langton, *Sexual Solipsism: Philosophical Essays on*

Pornography and Objectification (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) and Steven Marcus, *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth Century England* (New York: Basic Books, 1964).

74. Jamie Stoops, 'Class and Gender of the Pornography Trade in Late Nineteenth Century Britain,' *The Historical Journal* 58/1 (March 2015), pp. 137–56 and Michael Millner 'The Senses of Reading Badly: The Examples of Antebellum "Obscene Reading," *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 57/3 (2011), pp. 274–313, as well as Charles Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France* (London: Harvard University Press, 1989) and Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920* (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992).
75. Millner, p. 281.
76. Carolyn Dean, 'The Great War, Pornography, and the Transformation of Modern Male Subjectivity,' *Modernism/Modernity* 3/2 (April 1996), p. 59.
77. Stoops, p. 148.
78. Rose, p. 154.
79. Stoops, p. 154.
80. Millner, p. 276.
81. Thomas J. Joudrey, 'Penetrating Boundaries: An Ethics of Anti-Perfectionism in Victorian Pornography,' *Victorian Studies* 57/3 (Spring 2015), p. 423.
82. Johnny Wiggs, quoted in John Szarkowski (ed.), *E.J. Bellocq: Storyville Portraits – Photographs from the New Orleans Red-Light District, circa 1912* (New York: Random House, 1996), p. 12.
83. See Stoops, Bernheimer, and Millner. Scholars such as Timothy Gilfoyle, John X. Christ, and Rebecca Zurier also point out that many young, urban women 'treated' their partners to sex in exchange for money or favors, especially by the end of the century. Since what might be termed part-time sex work, and promiscuity with the goal of material rewards, were both so prevalent (and I would not say they were very different practices), it is logical to assume that pornographic or nude modeling was also subject to similar trends. Importantly, it could be done anonymously and provide a quick source of income.
84. As Stoops summarizes, 'Classified sections of penny and half-penny newspapers frequently contained advertisements for artists' models. [Some] contained more questionable features. Some specified the need for a young woman with a 'good figure' or asked for applications with a photo in the 'most advantageous position,' listing only anonymous post office boxes as contact information,' p. 149.
85. Stoops also remarks upon the 'performative' expressions in pornographic scenes (especially on women's faces), which meant that actresses or actors could have an advantage: 'Recognizing the performative nature of Victorian pornographic photography raises serious questions about the validity of discussing pornographic models and actresses solely as passive objects,' p. 150.
86. Stoops writes, 'Middle-class publications provide clear evidence that women participated in the pornography trade as consumers and distributors. This industry operated in many respects like other businesses of the lower classes; just as the wife of a butcher or tailor might keep the books or manage other parts of her husband's business, a pornographer's wife often worked in his shop or took over his business while he served a term in prison,' p. 147.
87. Landau, p. 139. To return briefly to the connections between Paris and New Orleans, as well: Landau also writes, 'New Orleans was of course the "French" city within the American South, and later on archive officials at the Kinsey […] labeled White's dog photographs "French".'

88. Coleman, in discussion with the author, 24 May 2016.
89. Thomson, p. 4.
90. Susan Sontag, 'Introduction' in *E.J. Bellocq: Storyville Portraits, Photographs from the New Orleans Red-Light District, Circa 1912*, John Szarkowski (ed.) (New York: Random House, 1996) p. 7.
91. Ibid.
92. Laura Thomson, *A Thoroughly Modern Man: EJ Bellocq and the Creation of a Modernist Myth,* MA thesis, University of Sussex, Brighton, 2005, p. 9.
93. 'OYSTER HEARING IS RESUMED HERE … ,' *The Times-Picayune*, 26 August 1904.
94. 'A Plague of Prostitutes,' *The Mascot,* 11 June 1892.
95. Platt and Hill, p. 295.
96. John Szarkowski (ed.), *E.J. Bellocq: Storyville Portraits, Photographs from the New Orleans Red-Light District, Circa 1912* (New York: Random House, 1996) pp. 8–18.
97. Billy Struve, *Blue Book*, 1905, The Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, LA.
98. Billy Struve, *Blue Book*, Eighth Edition, 1907, The Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, LA.
99. 'A Plague of Prostitutes,' *The Mascot,* 11 June 1892.

2 The 'White Slave' and the Question of Ambiguity

1. Robert W. Snyder and Rebecca Zurier, 'Picturing the City,' in *Metropolitan Lives: The Ashcan Artists and Their New York* (New York: National Museum of American Art, 1995), p. 179.
2. John X. Christ, 'A Short Guide to the Art of Dining, Slumming, Touring, Wildlife, and Women for Hire in New York's Chinatown and Chinese Restaurants,' *Oxford Art Journal* 26/2 (2003), p. 84.
3. Robert W. Snyder, *Metropolitan Lives: The Ashcan Artists and Their New York* (New York: National Museum of American Art, 1995), p. 47.
4. Susan Sontag, 'Introduction' in *E.J. Bellocq: Storyville Portraits, Photographs from the New Orleans Red-Light District, Circa 1912*, John Szarkowski (ed.) (New York: Random House, 1996).
5. Mara L. Keire provides an exhaustive list of sources that discuss international perspectives on white slavery in her first endnote for 'The Vice Trust: A Reinterpretation of the White Slavery Scare in the United States, 1907–1917,' *Journal of Social History* 35/1 (Fall 2001), pp. 5–41. See also Judith R. Walkowitz's *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) and Alain Corbin's *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1990).
6. Shelley Stamp Lindsey, '"Oil upon the Flames of Vice": The Battle over White Slave Films in New York City,' *Film History* 9/4 (1997), p. 353.
7. See, 'I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage,' *King James Bible*, Exodus 20:2, and, 'I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage,' *King James Bible*, Deuteronomy 5:6.

8. Reginald Wright Kauffman, *The House of Bondage* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1910).
9. George Scarborough, *The Lure* (New York: G.W. Dillingham, 1914).
10. *New York Times* quoted in the *The New York Dramatic Mirror*, 10 September 1913, p. 8.
11. See Shelley Stamp Lindsey, '"Is Any Girl Safe?" Female Spectators at the White Slave Films,' *Screen* 37/1 (March 1996), pp. 1–15.
12. Keire.
13. Christopher Diffee, 'Sex and the City: The White Slavery Scare and Social Governance in the Progressive Era,' *American Quarterly* 57/2 (2005), p. 418. John X. Christ also explains that 'what [some women] did was known as 'treating,' the offering of sexual favours and companionship in exchange for gifts such as food, clothing, rent, or a night out,' p. 87.
14. Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), p. 167.
15. Ibid.
16. *New Orleans Travelers' Aid Society Papers*, Louisiana and Special Collections, Howard-Tilton Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.
17. Some of the best examples are Lulu White's souvenir books and photographic advertisements for Josie Arlington's brothel. Copies of White's books are packed with references to Octoroons, the 'Colored Carmencita,' etc., while Arlington's various themed 'parlors' – the Turkish Parlor, the Japanese Parlor, etc. – are depicted in enticing bids to get clients' attention. For the Arlington's advertisements, see Billy Struve, *Blue Book*, Eighth Edition, 1907, The Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, LA. and the earlier *Blue Book: Tenderloin 400*, 1901, The Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, LA. An example of Lulu White's souvenir books can be seen here: Lulu White, *New Mahogany Hall, 1898–1899*, The Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, LA, and was published even earlier than Struve's books.
18. Lindsey, p. 355.
19. Snyder and Zurier, pp. 173–4.
20. Diffee, p. 422.
21. Ibid.
22. Aecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex, Race, and Respectability in New Orleans*, 1865–1920 (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), p. 180.
23. 'Vice and Motion Pictures,' *New York Times*, 4 November 1913.
24. 'More Vice Films Are To Be Withdrawn,' *New York Times*, 29 December 1913.
25. Suzanne L. Kinser, 'Prostitutes in the Art of John Sloan,' *Prospects* 9 (October 1984), p. 232.
26. Ibid.
27. In fact, the novels were similar in their tone to Josie Washburn's *The Underworld Sewer*. However, Washburn's autobiography claimed both authenticity (allegedly being written by an actual, retired madam) and first-hand experience, which would have made it more appealing to many reformists than a fictional tale.
28. George Bernard Shaw, *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1893; first performed in 1902), http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1097/1097-h/1097-h.htm.
29. Emma Goldman, 'The Traffic in Women,' in *Anarchism and Other Essays* (New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1911).
30. Rebecca Zurier, 'Introduction,' in *Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School*, p. 4. But by mentioning the Ashcanners directly after Emma Goldman, I do not want to imply that they shared the same political goals – only that amongst others whose politics and ideas were

critical of the status quo (regardless of how they politically or ideologically identified themselves), Sloan depicted the thought that women with ambiguous and active sex lives were a reality of modern society.

31. Zurier, p. 8.
32. Janice M. Coco, ‘Re-Viewing John Sloan’s Images of Women,’ *Oxford Art Journal* 21/2 (1998), p. 79.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Van Wyck Brooks, *John Sloan: A Painter’s Life* (Dent: Dutton Books, 1955), p. 61.
36. Coco, p. 79. As given in her personal interview with Helen Farr Sloan, Sloan’s second wife after Anna M. Wall (called ‘Dolly’), who had been a sex worker before she married him, and was also a suffragette.
37. Deborah Wye, *Artists and Prints: Masterworks from The Museum of Modern Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2004), p. 120.
38. Zurier, p. 231.
39. John Sloan, *John Sloan’s New York Scene: From the Diaries, Notes and Correspondence, 1906–1913* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 396.
40. Ibid.
41. Kinser, p. 231.
42. Schreiber, p. 174.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Christ, p. 87.
46. Schreiber, p. 174.
47. John Loughery, *John Sloan: Painter and Rebel* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1995), pp. 49–50.
48. Snyder and Zurier, p. 178.
49. Ibid., p. 187.
50. Ibid.
51. Marouf Hasian, Jr., ‘Performative Law and the Maintenance of Interracial Social Boundaries: Assuaging Antebellum Fears of “White Slavery” and the Case of Sally Miller/Salome Muller’, *Text and Performance Quarterly* 23/1 (January 2003), p. 57.
52. Carol Wilson, *The Two Lives of Sally Miller: A Case of Mistaken Racial Identity in Antebellum New Orleans* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), p. 106.
53. Keire, p. 7.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid., p. 12.
56. Landau, p. 78.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. Snyder and Zurier, p. 179.

61. Gary Krist, *Empire of Sin: A Story of Sex, Jazz, Murder, and the Battle for New Orleans* (Stroud: Amberley, 2014), p. 149.
62. Greenhill, p. 746.
63. Ibid.
64. Christ, p. 87.
65. Greenhill, p. 746.
66. Christ, p. 87.
67. Snyder and Zurier, p. 178.
68. Christ, p. 84.
69. Snyder and Zurier, p. 178.
70. Ibid.: 'Sloan's images of women challenged both the traditional depiction of women in art and the ideal of femininity that it constructed, thus challenging the status quo. But although Sloan was the husband of an active suffragist, he never used pictures of his own social peers to disrupt sexual stereotypes. Instead, his work presents and celebrates a type of working-class woman whose physique, activity, and frank sexuality defied conventional representation and polite codes of behavior, and offered an alternative, powerful femininity.'
71. Snyder and Zurier, p. 178.
72. Ibid., p. 174.
73. George Bellows, 'But If You've Never Cooked or Done Housework …,' *The Masses*, May 1914.
74. Ibid.
75. Sixty-first Congress, Sess. II. Chs. 393–5 (1910).
76. H.B. Laidlaw, Papers 1851–1958, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
77. Emma Goldman, *Red Emma Speaks: Selected Writings and Speeches* (New York: Random House, 1972).
78. Rachel Schreiber, *Images: Gender in the Political Cartoons of the Masses*, PhD thesis, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, 2008, p. 204.
79. Glenn O. Coleman, 'Are You Going to See Me Home …,' *The Masses*, February 1914.
80. David Peters Corbett, 'Camden Town and Ashcan: Difference, Similarity and the "Anglo-American" in the Work of Walter Sickert and John Sloan,' *Art History* 34/4 (September 2011), p. 788.
81. Brian Wallis, *The Mysterious Monsieur Bellocq* (New York: International Center of Photography, 2004), p. 5.
82. See Bertillon cards (originating from the New Orleans Police Department between the 1890s and early 1900s), for example those used in the *Hidden From History – Unknown New Orleans* exhibit at the New Orleans Public Library curated by Emily Epstein Landau (full catalogue available online: http://nutrias.org/exhibits/hidden/hidden_contents.htm).
83. Christ, p. 87.
84. Corbett, p. 788.
85. Waguespack, p. 99.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid.

88. See ‘George Cassanova Is Home On Parole Lifetime Convict, for the Killing of a Girl, Freed,’ *The Times-Picayune*, 25 January 1915; ‘The Cassanova Case As Viewed By Experts. Surgeons Discuss the Wounds Found on the Lavin…,’ *The Times-Picayune*, 28 November 1908; ‘Cassanova Is Guilty; Escapes Execution. Jury Out Four Hours, and Brings in Qualified Verdict, Youth…,’ *The Times-Picayune*, 29 November 1908 and ‘Cassanova Case Comes Up To-Day, But Neither Side May Show Its Full Hand, Leaving the…,’ *The Times-Picayune*, 7 August 1908.
89. ‘Cassanova On Trial For Woman Murder. Jury to Decide Whether He Slew Annie Lavin, Or…,’ *The Times-Picayune*, 25 November 1908.
90. See ‘White Slavery Awful Business, But There Are Women’s Souls to Be Saved, And There Is…,’ *The Times-Picayune*, 10 March 1910, ‘Letters From The People,’ *The Times-Picayune*, 6 August 1914; ‘Era Club Probes Expo And Racing Wants “Storyville” Abolished and S. and W. Board Law,’ *The Times-Picayune*, 28 June 1914; ‘City Will Control Segregated Area Under New System Jackal Landlordism Is to Be Abolished…,’ *The Times-Picayune*, 24 January 1917; ‘Shamelessness Of The Vicious Classes,’ *The Times-Picayune*, 18 March 1900, and ‘Police Lesson Taught. Notorious Negress Treated Too Tenderly By the Law’s Officer,’ *The Times-Picayune*, 13 February 1909.
91. Ann Schofield, ‘Respectability, Decadence, and the American Piano,’ Lecture, University of East Anglia, Norwich, 3 November 2015.
92. Waguespack notes, ‘Most of what is written about Bellocq serves to construct the image of a tragic New World bohemian, the Toulouse-Lautrec of New Orleans, with Storyville as his Montmartre and Mahogany Hall as his Moulin Rouge,’ p. 29.
93. Corbett, p. 788.
94. Snyder and Zurier, p. 189.
95. Ibid.

3 A Fog of Violence, Voyeurism, and Crime

1. Herbert Asbury and Al Rose relay the most salacious stories about Smoky Row. See *The French Quarter: An Informal History of the New Orleans Underworld* (London: Arrow, 2004), and *Storyville, New Orleans, Being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the Notorious Red-Light District* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1974), respectively.
2. To name only some of these: ‘Sykes In Prison. Committed by Judge Houston Until he Produces Kate Townsend’s Jewelry,’ *The Times-Picayune*, 19 February 1886; ‘Sykes Dismissed From the Executership of the Estate of Kate Townsend, by Judge Houston,’ *The Times-Picayune*, 19 February 1884, ‘Carved to Death; Terrible Fate of Kate Townsend, at the Hands of Troisville Sykes,’ *The Daily Picayune*, 4 November 1883; ‘Sykes And Townsend,’ *The Times-Picayune*, 8 October 1879, and ‘Killing Of Kate Townsend. The Testimony Taken Before Coroner LeMonnier,’ *The Times-Picayune*, 3 November 1883.
3. Patricia Cline Cohen, *The Murder of Helen Jewett: The Life and Death of a Prostitute in Nineteenth Century New York* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998).
4. Barbara Eckstein, *Sustaining New Orleans: Literature, Local Memory, and the Fate of a City* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), p. 66.
5. *The Times*, 3 September 1888.
6. Stephen P. Ryder, *Casebook: Jack the Ripper* (1996–2015), http://casebook.org/ (May 2018).

7. Ibid.
8. Many serial murderers were then called 'Rippers' for either their brutal methods or their focus on women, including Joseph Vacher, dubbed The French Ripper or The Ripper of the South East. Vacher was finally guillotined in 1898 for murdering up to 30 women and children in rural locations around France. Alongside 'The Ripper' being used as a kind of shorthand for killers of women, there were also many conspiracy theories, e.g., of Cream's secret identity as Jack the Ripper and the American serial killer H.H. Holmes actually being 'Jack' in 1893. Even as late as 1919, when New Orleans was subjected to its own 'Ripper' known as The Axeman, there was talk of the two entities being one and the same. See Gary Krist, *Empire of Sin: A Story of Sex, Jazz, Murder and the Battle for New Orleans* (Stroud: Amberley, 2014).
9. Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair That Changed America* (New York: Bantam, 2004).
10. The infamous 'Dear Boss' letter was not sent to Lusk. It was displayed in the British Library's 'Terror and Wonder' exhibition (October 2014–January 2015) with an explanation that the two famous missives were sent to different recipients.
11. Letter published by the *The Times-Picayune* dated 13 March 1919.
12. Megha Anwer, 'Murder in Black and White: Victorian Crime Scenes and the Ripper Photographs,' *Victorian Studies* 56/3 (Spring 2014), p. 433.
13. Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin De Siècle Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 28.
14. Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 132.
15. Dijkstra, p. 28.
16. Anwer, p. 435.
17. Ibid., p. 434.
18. *Illustrated Police News*, 22 September 1888.
19. See 'The Optimist Goes Slumming. Search for Horror in Whitechapel, London–None Found —,' *The Times-Picayune*, 21 October 1906 and 'Another Jack the Ripper,' *The Times-Picayune*, 9 December 1893.
20. Ibid.
21. See Krist.
22. Johnny Wiggs, quoted in John Szarkowski (ed.), *E.J. Bellocq: Storyville Portraits – Photographs from the New Orleans Red-Light District, circa 1912* (New York: Random House, 1996), p. 16.
23. Ibid.
24. 'The Optimist Goes Slumming. Search for Horror in Whitechapel, London–None Found-,' *The Times-Picayune*, 21 October 1906.
25. Ibid.
26. Paula J. Reiter, 'Doctors, Detectives, and the Professional Ideal: The Trial of Thomas Neill Cream and the Mastery of Sherlock Holmes,' *College Literature* 35/3 (Summer 2008), p. 59.
27. Reiter, p. 58.
28. Reiter begins her article with a quote from 'The Speckled Band,' which was first published in *The Strand*. As she rightly says, scholars have noted similarities between Grimesby Roylott, the ex-military doctor in Doyle's story, and Cream. Doyle, however, omits any suggestion of sexual intrigue in 'The Speckled Band.' Roylott's paranoid brutality was motivated by avarice and

debt, not anything sexual. See ‘The Speckled Band’ in *Favourite Sherlock Holmes Stories: Selected by the Author* (New York: Atlantic Books Crime Classics, 2009), pp. 1–29.

29. See Angus McLaren, *A Prescription for Murder: The Victorian Serial Killings of Dr. Thomas Neill Cream* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) and Reiter.

30. See Randall Sandke, *Where the Dark and the Light Folks Meet: Race and the Mythology, Politics, and Business of Jazz* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010).

31. Reiter, p. 59.

32. It was not until Scotland Yard began to suspect Cream was the ‘Lambeth Poisoner’ that anyone contacted American authorities for information. They then learned that he had a criminal record dating back to August 1880. See McLaren and Reiter.

33. Reiter, p. 59.

34. Ibid., p. 60.

35. Ibid., p. 87.

36. Edgar Allan Poe, ‘The Murders in the Rue Morgue,’ *Graham's Magazine*, April 1841.

37. The King of Bohemia seeks Holmes's help in retrieving an incriminating photograph of himself with his ex-mistress, the American ‘adventuress’ (a word often used to refer to a promiscuous, overly independent, or opportunistic woman) and retired opera singer Irene Adler. See ‘A Scandal in Bohemia,’ originally published in *The Strand* (July 1891) or alternatively available in contemporary editions of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. When the King gives a false title to Holmes in the hopes that Holmes will not recognize who he truly is, it is almost certainly a nod to Rodolphe's true title (the Grand Duke of Gérolstein) in *Les Mystéres de Paris.*

38. See ‘The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton,’ first published in 1904 as part of *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*. Further, the titular antagonist was based on accused blackmailer Charles Augustus Howell, who in 1890 was found in Chelsea with his throat slit. Crimes like these were an enormous inspiration for fiction during the turn of the century. See Nicholas Freeman, *Drama, Disaster and Disgrace in Late Victorian Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011).

39. David Bowman, ‘Strange and vanished flesh’ (25 January 2002), Salon.com, http://www.salon.com/2002/01/25/bellocq/.

40. In Louis Malle's *Pretty Baby* Madam Nell calls Bellocq an ‘invert’: see Polly Platt, *Pretty Baby* Screenplay (1978), http://www.script-o-rama.com/movie_scripts/p/pretty-baby-script-transcript-brooke.html (May 2018). ‘Invert’ was a term for homosexuals taken from sexologist Havelock Ellis's late nineteenth-century work. His full *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* are online at URL: http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/author/2654.

41. Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1993), p. 1042.

42. Ibid., p. 1048.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid., p. 1059.

47. Ibid., p. 1044.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid.
52. Ibid., p. 1048.
53. Ibid.
54. Reiter, p. 59.
55. Doyle, p. 1048.
56. Pamela Arceneaux, in discussion with the author, 24 May 2016.
57. Doyle, p. 1058.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid., p. 1057.
60. Rex Rose, 'The last days of Ernest J. Bellocq,' *Exquisite Corpse: A Journal of Letters and Life*, Issue 10 (Fall 2001), http://www.corpse.org/archives/issue_10/gallery/bellocq/index.htm.
61. Al Rose's influential *Storyville, New Orleans, Being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the Notorious Red-Light District* (University of Alabama Press, 1974), has few citations (though it does have a bibliography) – and as Pamela Arceneaux pointed out, some of what he believed to be genuine primary source material (namely a Blue Book, in this instance) was a hoax. His son, Rex Rose, has tried to rectify the discrepancies about Bellocq in his own biographical essay on the photographer, which uses archival sources mostly from the state of Louisiana and the city of New Orleans. See 'The Last Days of Ernest J. Bellocq'.
62. John Szarkowski, 'Bellocq', in *E.J. Bellocq: Storyville Portraits – Photographs from the New Orleans Red-Light District, circa 1912*, John Szarkowski (ed.) (New York: Random House, 1996), p. 6.
63. Szarkowski, pp. 7–18.
64. Adele, as quoted in Szarkowski, p. 15.
65. Landau, p. 139. Today, the photographs are in the Kinsey Institute Archives in Bloomington, Indiana. Along with this series, she notes there are several of White posing with a (white) man dressed as a sailor.
66. Szarkowski, p. 13.
67. Natasha Trethewey uses the portraits as the inspiration for her poetic narrator in *Bellocq's Ophelia* (Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf Press, 2002) and Louis Malle infamously cast a 12-year-old Brooke Shields as 'Violet' in *Pretty Baby* (1978) – in which she recreated one of Bellocq's portraits of a young, nude woman on a wicker chaise lounge.
68. Karl Beckson, 'Prostitutes on the Promenade,' in *London in the 1890s: A Cultural History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1992), p. 120.
69. Laura Ormiston Chant, quoted in Beckson, p. 120.
70. Ryan Cordell, Lecture, University of East Anglia, 11 May 2016.
71. Josie Washburn, *The Underground Sewer: A Prostitute Reflects on Life in the Trade* (Winnipeg, MB: Bison Books, 1997), p. 30.
72. Krist, p. 229.
73. Ibid.
74. This is Washburn's term for prostitution as a business or job; she uses it both in the full title of her autobiography and in the text, which suggests that she wanted to maintain some sense of social gentility for her readership. It is not a neutral choice, but it does emphasize the idea of prostitution as work more than a personal moral failing on the woman's part.
75. Washburn, pp. 29–30.

76. Beckson, p. 111 and Gilfoyle p. 287.
77. Gilfoyle, p. 287.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid., p. 289.
80. Beckson, p. 111.
81. Asbury gives us perhaps the earliest contemporary history of vice in New Orleans. See also: Thomas Ruys Smith, *Southern Queen: New Orleans in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Continuum, 2011), and Alecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex, Race, and Respectability in New Orleans, 1865–1920* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana University Press, 2004). They elaborate in many fashions upon tension between citizens, reformers, and vice. This is true of many other scholars, including Court Carney, Emily Epstein Landau, and Emily Clark, among others, so it hardly seems possible to study New Orleans at the turn of the century without acknowledging the many struggles that often resulted in hostile exchanges and bloody crimes.
82. *The Times-Picayune*, 31 May 1914.
83. Ibid.
84. *The Times-Picayune*, 4 June 1914.
85. Ibid.
86. Ibid.
87. *The Los Angeles Herald*, 28 January 1910.
88. 'Carrie Nation to Bring Her Hatchet to this City – she says New Orleans is wicked City and needs Reforming – passes through on Way East,' *The New Orleans Item*, 12 May 1907.
89. Ibid.
90. Szarkowski, pp. 16–17.
91. Email from Steven Maklansky to Laura Thomson in *A Thoroughly Modern Man: EJ Bellocq and the Creation of a Modernist Myth*, pp. 32–5.
92. Ibid.
93. Chelsea Nichols, 'Defacement: E.J. Bellocq and the Storyville Prostitutes,' Submission for *Edgar Wynd Journal*, 2002, https://www.academia.edu/2318743/Defacement_E._J._Bellocq_and_the_Storyville_Prostitutes, p. 2.
94. The 'gaze' has a long, complex use in feminist visual and film theory, as well as art history. Here, I have referred to Margaret Olin's essay 'Gaze' to frame my ideas. See Margaret Olin, 'Gaze,' in *Critical Terms for Art History*, Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (eds) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 208–19.
95. See Taschen's *1000 Nudes: A History of Erotic Photography from 1839–1939* for countless examples of this, as well as the photograph of Bellocq's desk.
96. Nichols, p. 2.
97. Olin, p. 214.
98. Ibid.
99. Ibid.
100. Michael Ondaatje, *Coming through Slaughter* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), p. 53.
101. Rose.

102. For example, there is 'Adele' to consider. Further, several years ago I was under the impression that one of Bellocq's portraits was of Lulu White, but Pamela Arceneaux mentioned that White claimed a photograph of one of her 'girls' in her own souvenir booklet was herself. This, along with White's arrest records from the New Orleans Police Department, made me reconsider whether the Bellocq portrait is of White at all. Rose's 'Man About Town,' meanwhile, leads readers to believe her skin is very dark, not that either he or Rose is necessarily the most reliable of narrators. I defer to Emily Epstein Landau's extensive research on Lulu White rather than the more lurid accounts of her. (And according to Arceneaux, Lulu White's descriptions of herself seem to change at least twice in her own guidebooks.)
103. Wiggs, as quoted in Szarkowski, p. 12.
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid.
106. Ibid.
107. Szarkowski, p. 13.
108. Doyle, p. 1048.
109. Anwer, p. 434.
110. Ibid.
111. Walkowitz, p. 69.
112. Doyle, 'A Scandal in Bohemia,' originally published in *The Strand* (July 1891) or alternatively available in any of our contemporary editions of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. See also Arthur Conan Doyle, 'A Scandal in Bohemia,' in *Favourite Sherlock Holmes Stories – Selected by the Author* (London: Atlantic Books, 2009), pp. 106–32.
113. Walkowitz, p. 69.
114. Poe.

4 The 'Paris-ification' of New Orleanian Vice

1. Billy Struve, *Blue Book*, 1909, The Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, LA.
2. Emily Epstein Landau points out how intrinsic this was to New Orleans's sex tourism: Emma Johnson 'claimed to be the 'Parisian Queen' and […] later called her Storyville bordello the "French Studio,"' while Lulu White, who would also become a Storyville madam, made use of the fact that 'sex shows involving Great Danes were popular in Paris' when she posed for a series of pornographic photographs 'with a large dog' sometime in the late nineteenth century. See *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Louisiana State University Press, 2013), p. 139.
3. Paul Woolf, 'Prostitutes, Paris, and Poe: The Sexual Economy of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue,"' *Clues: A Journal of Detection* 25/1 (2006), p. 15.
4. Ibid.
5. Nathaniel Parker Willis, *The Rag-Bag: A Collection of Ephemera* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1855), p. 47.
6. Woolf, p. 18.
7. Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue,' *Graham's Magazine*, April 1841.
8. Woolf, p. 10.

9. See Jamie Stoops, 'Class and Gender of the Pornography Trade in Late Nineteenth-Century Britain,' *The Historical Journal* 58/1 (March 2015), pp. 137–56 and Michael Millner 'The Senses of Reading Badly: The Examples of Antebellum "Obscene Reading,"' *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 57/3 (2011), pp. 274–313.
10. *The Mascot*, 21 May 1892.
11. Woolf, p. 10.
12. See Steven Maklansky to Laura Thomson in *A Thoroughly Modern Man: EJ Bellocq and the Creation of a Modernist Myth*, MA thesis, University of Sussex, Brighton, 2005, p. 35, where he describes what he believes to be the genesis of this comparison.
13. See Rex Rose, 'The last days of Ernest J. Bellocq,' *Exquisite Corpse: A Journal of Letters and Life*, Issue 10 (Fall 2001), http://www.corpse.org/archives/issue_10/gallery/bellocq/index.htm and Christian Waguespack, *Reframing E.J. Bellocq: A Vernacular Reading of the Storyville Portraits*, MA thesis, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, 2015.
14. *Toulouse-Lautrec: Paris & the Moulin Rouge*, National Gallery of Australia, Exhibition, 14 December 2012–2 April 2013, https://trove.nla.gov.au/work/176095156?q&versionId=191793123.
15. Reizenstein's notes on Creoles throughout the novel make it clear that the term's colloquial use in New Orleans was related to its etymology, which originates from the Spanish verb 'criar' ('to raise'). Therefore he applies the term to those whom the larger American public would not necessarily think of as 'Creole,' such as New Orleans born German-Americans who were raised in New Orleans. My focus, though, is on the stereotypical Creole woman of color as she was imagined in popular culture. See Ludwig von Reizenstein, *The Mysteries of New Orleans* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).
16. Timothy Walker, 'Prophetic Chronotope and the Sexual Revolution in Baron Ludwig von Reizenstein's *Mysteries of New Orleans*.' MA thesis, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA, 2015.
17. Leslie Choquette, 'Degenerate or Degendered? Images of Prostitution and Homosexuality in the French Third Republic', *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 23/2 (Spring 1997), pp. 207–19.
18. Elizabeth Erbeznik, 'Workers and Wives as Legible Types in Eugene Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris*,' *Nineteenth Century French Studies*, 41/1 (Fall 2012), p. 67.
19. Ibid.
20. Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray, 'The Mysteries of New England; Eugène Sue's American "Imitators," 1844,' *Nineteenth Century Contexts* 22/3 (2000), pp. 457–8.
21. Louis James, 'From Egan to Reynolds: The shaping of urban 'Mysteries' in England and France, 1821–48,' *European Journal of English Studies* 14/2 (2010), p. 100.
22. Ryan Cordell, Lecture, University of East Anglia, Norwich, 11 May 2016.
23. For a good account of *argot's* place in popular culture, including in Hugo's *Les Misérables*, see Pascale Gaitet, 'From the Criminal's to the People's: The Evolution of Argot and Popular Language in the Nineteenth Century,' *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 19/2 (Winter 1991), pp. 231–46.
24. Erbeznik, pp. 67–8.
25. Even 'Fleur-de-Marie' is *argot* for 'virgin.' Likewise, *La Goualeuse* is slang for '*la chanteuse*,' a female – generally a cabaret or nightclub – singer, and refers to Fleur-de-Marie's beautiful, beguiling voice and her love of singing.

26. Eugene Sue, *The Mysteries of Paris* (1842–3), https://archive.org/details/mysteriesparis00suegoog.
27. Moya Bailey coined this term, which refers to the intersection of racism and misogyny that specifically impacts black women.
28. Steven Rowan, introduction to Ludwig von Reizenstein*, The Mysteries of New Orleans* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), p. xxvii.
29. Ibid., p. xxx.
30. Ibid. Rowan also asserts that Reizenstein looked to the Marquis de Sade as an aesthetic inspiration, so insinuations of sadomasochism in the text are not at all accidental. Though it does not figure into Orleana and Claudine's representation, it makes an appearance in other characters, as well as in the dynamics between Parasina and her 'sex slaves.'
31. Reizenstein, p. 11.
32. Ibid., p. 47.
33. Sara James, 'Detecting Paris: the character of the city in Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* (1842–1843),' *Modern & Contemporary France* 8/3 (2000), p. 305.
34. Reizenstein, p. 47.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., p. 50.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., p. 52.
40. Ibid.
41. Her surname and exact origin have been disputed. But because of what is known about Jeanne, several of Baudelaire's poems in *Les Fleurs du mal* believed to be about or inspired by her, including: 'Sed non satiata,' 'Le balcon,' 'Parfum exotique,' 'Un charogne,' and 'Le serpent qui danse.' These range in their sentiments from frustrated to loving, but are unified by their erotic and sensual language. She relocated to Paris from Haiti in 1842. See Beatrice Louise Stith, *The Influence of Jeanne Duval on the Poetry of Baudelaire* MA thesis, Atlanta University, Atlanta, GA, 1943, and Rebecca Munford, 'Re-Presenting Charles Baudelaire/Re-Presencing Jeanne Duval: Transformations of the Muse in Angela Carter's "Black Venus",' *Forum Modern Language Studies* 40/1 (January 2004), pp. 1–13.
42. Jerold Siegal, 'Chapter 4: The Poet as Dandy and Bohemian: Baudelaire,' *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life 1830–1930* (New York: Viking, 1986), pp. 97–125; p. 110.
43. Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil* (Fresno: Academy Library Guild, 1954).
44. Ibid.
45. Al Rose, *Storyville, New Orleans, Being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the Notorious Red-light District* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1974), p. 154.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Here I also want to highlight how black women and women of color were represented with specific, 'supernatural' terms (e.g., 'monstrosity' or 'witch') that evoked simultaneous awe and

terror – and how their physical appearance (their color) rarely went unaddressed. Also, the chain of command of a dark woman in power over a lighter-skinned woman is repeated – with the darker woman possibly being beautiful (Parasina is described as a beauty; Lulu White is not), but always being domineering. As I have said, I remain skeptical of some of the information Rose presents as genuine. In the case of the 'Man About Town' and his remembrances, there are many similarities between his account and novels like *My Secret Life, Nana*, and the 'whore biographies' that Michael Millner mentions in his research on the nineteenth-century pornography trade. These include the 'Man About Town's' clinical description of sexual acts, his insistence that he is a connoisseur of international 'whorehouses,' the way that he contradicts himself several times, and his relish for explicit language. However, my suspicion only underscores the point that Storyville was not somehow sealed off from mass culture – it was part of it. Our perceptions of the Storyville Portraits have been shaped by our ideas of the 1900s brothel, as well as the 'men about town' who frequented them.

51. Rose, p. 154.
52. Choquette, p. 210; p. 220; p. 222.
53. The theater was widely understood to be a venue where one could solicit sex workers by this time. See Woolf, Choquette, and Millner.
54. See Steven Wilson, 'Nana, Prostitution and the Textual Foundations of Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames*,' *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 41/1 (2012) pp. 91–104, and Choquette.
55. *Daily Advocate*, 14 September 1897, as well as the *The Times-Picayune*, 19 March 1902 and 13 December 1910.
56. 'Green Room Gossip of Plays and the Players,' a column, ran in the *Daily* and *Times-Picayune* and reported on plays in New Orleans and abroad – many of the companies from Paris and London came to New Orleans.
57. 'Gossip Of Europe' was an example of another *The Times-Picayune* column that was devoted to news from Europe (very often Paris) and it often mentioned Zola; it also reported on theater plays.
58. Collectively, they included many mentions of novels – often borrowed from other newspapers – as well as reviews and pieces on authors. Though I cite examples to do with New Orleans newspapers, there are many more casual mentions, reviews, and advertisements. (They are also sometimes recycled or only slightly modified from other newspapers or magazines.) These indicate how much of a transatlantic, popular culture phenomenon these two characters – especially Trilby – were: but as Avis Berman notes, our awareness of how much of an impact *Trilby* had is oddly limited, given its scope. See Avis Berman, 'George du Maurier's *Trilby* whipped up a worldwide storm.' (*Smithsonian Magazine*, 1993, URL: http://www.trilbyfl.com/Trilby/book/smithsonian.htm.) My overall understanding of how nineteenth- and early twentieth-century newspapers shared information and articles (sometimes modifying them according to regional tastes) via a vast, complex network was immeasurably improved by Ryan Cordell's research on this subject and a lecture he gave for the department of American Studies at the University of East Anglia on 11 May 2016.
59. 'Woman's Work and World,' *The Times-Picayune*, running column.
60. Berman.
61. 'Trilby Glee,' *The Daily Picayune*, 2 July 1895.
62. See Millner and McColl, in particular.
63. 'Even Du Maurier shrinks from revealing too much about her,' writes Hilary Grimes, and the narrator 'suggest[s] instead that "I have found it impossible so to tell her history as to make it

quite fit and proper reading" […]' See Grimes, 'Power in Flux: Mesmerism, Mesmeric Manuals and Du Maurier's *Trilby*,' *Gothic Studies* 10/2 (November 2008) p. 70.

64. Reizenstein, pp. 13–18.
65. 'Wistful And Sweet Are These Dainty Female Feet of the Stage,' *The Times-Picayune*, 24 February 1895.
66. Ibid.
67. 'Green Room Players,' *The Times-Picayune*, c. 1907 (n.d.) and 'Wistful And Sweet Are These Dainty Female Feet of the Stage,' *The Times-Picayune*, 24 February 1895.
68. Gary Krist, *Empire of Sin: A Story of Sex, Jazz, Murder and the Battle for New Orleans* (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2014), p. 133.
69. Ibid.
70. Thomas Ruys Smith, *Southern Queen: New Orleans in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Continuum, 2011), p. 159.
71. Ibid.
72. Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (Chicago: Herbert S. Stone & Company, 1899) p. 23.
73. Christopher Benfey, *Degas in New Orleans* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), p. 240.
74. Michèle Plott, 'The Rules of the Game: Respectability, Sexuality, and the *Femme Mondaine* in Late-Nineteenth-Century Paris,' *French Historical Studies* 25/3 (Summer 2002), p. 532.
75. Ibid., p. 536.
76. Chopin, p. 23.
77. Nicole Willson, *Cryptic Secrets: Phantoms of the Haitian Revolution in the American Imaginary*, PhD thesis, University of East Anglia, Norwich, 2017, p. 140.
78. Plott, p. 354.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid., pp. 531–2. Plott's footnote elaborates: 'The individual women discussed in this article were, for the most part, members of the Parisian elite. While their politics ranged from Bonapartist to avowedly Republican, all were upper middle class or even aristocratic, at least nominally Roman Catholic, and well connected within their own particular circle of high society. However, there is evidence that some of the trends described here did filter down to the more middling levels of the bourgeoisie by 1900. For example, many early twentieth-century readers of the newspaper *Le matin* shared with these elite women the expectation of romance and sexual pleasure in marriage and the sense that this expectation was a modern one.'
81. Chopin, p. 23.
82. David Fitelson, 'Stephen Crane's Maggie and Darwinsim,' in Stephen Crane, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets (A Story of New York)* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1979), p. 109. Fitelson writes, 'In reading the novel, one discovers that Crane is presenting characters whose lives are rigidly circumscribed by what appear to be inexorable laws. These are unenchanted lives. Their fundamental condition is violence.'
83. Olmstead, as quoted by Smith, pp. 93–4.
84. Plott, p. 534.
85. Bruce Boyd Raeburn, 'Stars of David and Sons of Sicily: Constellations Beyond the Canon in Early New Orleans Jazz,' *Jazz Perspectives*, 3/2 (2009), p. 125.

86. Alan Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll: The Fortunes of Jelly Roll Morton, New Orleans Creole and 'Inventor of Jazz'* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1950), p. 102.
87. Plott, p. 535. Plott's very thorough footnotes demonstrate the massive, transatlantic extent of this phenomenon. There were many French-language 'scientific,' nominally sociological works on adultery and criminality, as well as an abundance of marriage and sex manuals, which confirms the power these themes had over the middle-class and elite *fin de siècle* public.
88. Smith, 127.
89. Ralph Keeler, as quoted by Smith, p. 127.
90. Lulu White, *New Mahogany Hall*, 1898–1899, The Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, LA.
91. William Peniston, 'Pederasts, Prostitutes, and Pickpockets in Paris of the 1870s,' *Journal of Homosexuality* 41/3 (2002), p. 169.
92. Benfey, p. 105.
93. Emile Zola, *L'Assommoir: Nouvelle édition augmentée* (Paris: Arvensa Editions, 2014), p. 299.
94. Crane, p. 42.
95. Bernheimer, p. 95.
96. Smith, p. 93.
97. Parent-Duchâtelet, a medical doctor, was a prominent hygienist who advocated for the legal registration of prostitutes in Paris. See *De la prostitution dans la ville de Paris: considérée sous le rapport de l'hygiène publique, de la morale et de l'administration…; suivi d'un Précis hygiénique, statistique et administratif sur la prostitution dans les principales villes de l'Europe* (Paris: J.-B. Baillière et fils, 1857).
98. Bernheimer, p. 94.
99. Ibid., p. 93.
100. As quoted by Bernheimer, p. 93.
101. Smith, p. 92.
102. Bernheimer, p. 94.
103. Smith, p. 93.
104. Reconstruction-era popular culture is not the only place we can see evidence of this tendency to romanticize New Orleans as somewhere 'other' or 'Old World;' it appears in *The Mascot*, the Storyville Blue Books, and even novels such as Chopin's *The Awakening*. Still, even years after the Civil War ended there was a spate of literature and illustrations that, as Smith says of Grace King's writing, 'Amplif[ied] the city's exotic otherness' (Smith, p. 128).
105. Wilson, p. 91.
106. Émile Zola, *Nana* (Paris: Hayrapetyan Brothers, 1933), p. 420.
107. Felix Jahyer, as quoted in 'Various Authors on Manet's *Olympia*,' *Art in Theory* (Malden: Blackwell, 2011), called Manet 'the apostle of the ugly and repulsive' after Manet debuted *Olympia*, but this was not far from common public sentiment about the painting. Meurent, interestingly, was also a painter in her own right, as well as being an artists' model.
108. Vicki Goldberg, 'So at Ease with Life on the Edge,' *New York Times*, 6 January 2002.
109. Susan Sontag, introduction to *E.J. Bellocq: Storyville Portraits, Photographs from the New Orleans Red-Light District, Circa 1912*, ed. John Szarkowski (New York: Random House, 1996).

110. Herbert Asbury, *The Gangs of New Orleans: An Informal History of the French Quarter Underworld* (London: Arrow, 2004), p. 433.
111. Smith, p. 93.
112. Ibid.
113. Rowan, p. xxx.
114. James, p. 306.

Conclusion

1. Toni Morrison, *Jazz* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), p. 220.
2. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Vintage Classics, 1993), p. 57.
3. Norman Klein, *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory* (London: Verso, 2008).
4. Daniel Hurewitz, *Bohemian Los Angeles and the Making of Modern Politics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007).
5. Hurewitz, p. 13.
6. Thomas Ruys Smith, *Southern Queen: New Orleans in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Continuum, 2011), p. 184.
7. Patrick Brantlinger, 'What Is "Sensational" About the "Sensation Novel"?' *Nineteenth Century Fiction* 37/1 (June 1982), p. 6.
8. Ibid.
9. Rex Rose, 'The last days of Ernest J. Bellocq,' *Exquisite Corpse: A Journal of Letters and Life*, Issue 10 (Fall 2001), http://www.corpse.org/archives/issue_10/gallery/bellocq/index.htm.
10. John Szarkowski (ed.), *E.J. Bellocq: Storyville Portraits – Photographs from the New Orleans Red-Light District, circa 1912* (New York: Random House, 1996), p. 10.
11. Paul Smith, '*Le Peintre de la vie moderne* and *le peintre de la vie ancienne*,' in *Impressions of French modernity: art and literature in France, 1850–1900* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 79.
12. William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (New York: Vintage International, 2012), p. 73.
13. Ibid.
14. Pittard, p. 83.
15. Walter Benjamin, 'Paris: Capital of the Nineteenth Century,' in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writing*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), p. 155.
16. Rose.
17. Sontag.
18. Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Man of the Crowd' (1840), http://poestories.com/read/manofthecrowd.

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