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Paris and New Orleans: The Transatlantic Cultural Legacy of Prostitution

Some weeks after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in late August, 2005, *Newsweek* ran an article on this post-hurricane “city starting over,” describing the ambitious “Operation Rebirth” aimed at creating a new “vital center.”¹ A local developer, Pres Kabacoff, spoke about re-creating New Orleans as “an Afro-Caribbean Paris,” tearing down the poor black Iberville housing projects near the tourist haven of the French Quarter in order to “transform Canal St. [sic] into a dense, ‘Parisian’ haven.” The Mayor, Ray Nagin, had unveiled a plan, part of which was to use tax credits to recreate Storyville, not as the notorious prostitution district it had once been, but as a hub of recording studios and a jazz museum.² Turning their backs on a mixed-class, multi-racial, Euro-Caribbean gumbo of citizens, commercial figures (at least in the early post-hurricane period) saw the opportunity to rebuild New Orleans as a largely-Europeanized city of frivolity and consumption – the very things Americans associate with The City of Light.

Parisian-ness is a common point of reference throughout New Orleans’s history, the European ‘Queen of Cities’ idealized as a site of pleasure, romance and exoticism, qualities for which ‘The Big Easy’ has also long been, and wishes to continue to be, associated. The fact that both Paris and New Orleans have paid heavy prices for their international glamour in terms of turbulent, politically and racially eventful histories, is conveniently forgotten in this soft-focus comparison. Also deliberately erased from official histories are the many historical and cultural connections that existed between the thriving sex industries in Paris and its post-colonial city, and the ways women of all classes were controlled in public places.

In the 1890s, New Orleans’s Alderman Sidney Story visited Europe (undoubtedly including Paris) to investigate theories of, and solutions

to, the problem of regulation of prostitution. The result was his 1897 Ordinance, 13,032, that had far-reaching impact:

From and after the first of October, 1897, it shall be unlawful for any prostitute or woman notoriously abandoned to lewdness, to occupy, inhabit, live or sleep in any house, room or closet, situated without the following limits, viz: From the South side of Customhouse Street to the North side of St. Louis Street, and from the lower or wood side of North Basin Street to the lower or wood side of Robertson Street.

The area inside those limits, echoing French guidelines, was a *quartier réservé*, supervised by authorities and hierarchised and compartmentalised. To Alderman Story's horror, it was colloquially dubbed 'Storyville,' flourishing as a centre of prostitution until 1917 when it was abruptly closed under the edicts of the Army and Navy. This ordinance was the climax of a long series of French-inspired laws, codes and ordinances to make prostitutes less visible in the city, the first being the Lorette Ordinance, named after a Parisian slang term for prostitutes soliciting near the Church of Notre Dame de Lorette.

The two cities have a long history of colonial and postcolonial interaction and exchange, and since its foundation in 1717 by Sieur de Bienville, Catholic New Orleans owes its existence, and much of its early style and character, to Paris. Both have been interpellated as cities of sexual pleasure and immorality, sex capitals of their nations. Sexuality itself has often been defined in terms of Frenchness, and both Paris and New Orleans are seen in popular discourses as voluptuously feminine, of loose morals, luring artists, visitors and voyeurs to their charms. In recent years, two historical studies, *Paris Babylon: Grandeur, Decadence and Revolution 1869-1875* (1994) and *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex, Race, and Respectability in New Orleans 1865-1920* (2004) have used the 'Babylon' reference to symbolise two cities which, at particular periods, were both enjoyed and condemned as sites of fleshly delights and corruption, especially associated with the oldest profession.

The Second Empire is defined as the main period of France's Babylon, just as the years of the Storyville experiment define those of America's South, with prostitution central to urban street life and economic health. Both cities experienced an explosion of female display in public places. Second Empire Paris is seen as a city of universal prostitution, with stories circulating about the sexual prowess, wealth and ruthless power of courtesans and kept women. This was especially so after the fall of the Empire when a large number of sala-

cious histories and memoirs were published, describing the decadence of the era to a morally born-again France. Rupert Christiansen says there were so many part-time whores or casuals working around 1870: “statistically . . . any woman you saw walking on the streets was likely to be a streetwalker . . . a *bonne bourgeoise*, veiled, hatted and gloved, carrying a bag of shopping or hailing a cab, might strip down to as ruthless a whore as the most brazen and bosomy of flower-girls” (Christiansen 86). In the new commodity society, women as well as men were displaying themselves on the streets: “. . . all of us are prostitutes, selling ourselves to strangers” (Buck-Morss 37). “[B]otanizing on the asphalt” (Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire* 36), that well-known term of *flânerie*, describes the sensual activity of a leisured male promenader through both cities. The *flâneur*’s dreamlike, anonymous trajectory through the labyrinth of the masses (known best to us from Walter Benjamin via Poe’s “Man of the Crowd” and Baudelaire’s poetry) privileges males within public space and objectifies woman: “[A]ll women who loitered risked being seen as whores, as the term ‘street-walker’ or ‘tramp’ applied to women makes clear” (Buck-Morss 49). And just as Dr Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet’s major study of Parisian prostitution “transformed the prostitute from a *fille de joie* to a member of the urban proletariat . . . from bawd to victim” (Harsin 104), so Benjamin’s prostitute becomes a silent and invisible commodity, her body a kind of mannequin. Clandestine street encounters between loiterers or walkers were sexualised; as Benjamin notes (commenting on Baudelaire’s famous poem, “A une passante”), “The delight of the city-dweller is not so much love at first as love at last sight” (Benjamin, *CB* 45). At stake, then, was the question of how to tell the difference between a public woman and a woman out in public. Yet, as Anthea Callen points out, the proliferation of images of prostitution is notable for “the invisibility of man, as consumer, or as producer of these images; or, indeed, as client.” This “invisible man” is simply taken for granted in all serious discussions of prostitution (Callen 36 and 44); he is voyeur and audience for a theatre of sexuality.³

New Orleans shared this colourful street life from its earliest days. In 1836, James Davidson, a Virginia lawyer, described visiting a city of beautiful quadroons, “fashionable prostitutes” with “gaudy trappings,” and the spectacle of the slave auction (Long 2). Urban life in ‘the American Paris’ was dominated by slavery, prostitution and sex across the colour line and, especially after the Civil War, the city exploited its racialised erotic reputation in order to promote itself as a

Parisian-style tourist destination. But New Orleans, like other American cities experiencing an explosion of commercial sexuality, became uneasy about the proliferation of forms of open prostitution. Ironically, the post-bellum city fathers spent considerable time and energy trying to subdue it and reposition New Orleans as a site of sobriety and restraint (Long 4).

In both nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the street and sexual lives of the two cities were obsessively documented by medical and social commentators, artists and writers, many of whom had national, family or travelling relationships with those in their sister city. In New Orleans, Frenchness itself was a signifier of the tenderloin. ‘French balls’ followed a long tradition of sporting people’s balls since the 1850s, but those in Storyville, advertised with saucy pictures of striped-stockinged girls and gentlemen in hot pursuit, became a notorious tourist attraction in the Mardi Gras season, imitating the elite Carnival rituals. One of the best-known madams, Emma Johnson, was known as “Parisian Queen of America” in her “French Studio” (Rose 82). Photographers flocked to the city to take pornographic “French pictures” (Rose 60), and the notorious “French houses” contained occupants who mimed fellatio with their thumbs to passengers on the day-coach trains arriving in town (thus ensuring the District flagged its wares outside its geographical confines). In a privately printed limited edition of *The Blue Book*, 1936, the pseudonymous author, Semper Idem, who argued that New Orleans and prostitution were “synonymous” and pervasive, described a request by two northern writers that they visit a church for “colored people.” Leaving the church, he claims they were solicited by two Negro girls: “Now after you got salvation, we will show you Heaven. For two bits we will Frenchy you.’ (‘Imagine our horror,’ he piously said).” (Semper Idem 31). Willie Piazza, octoroon madam, had a library in her brothel (“the best in the District”) that contained several works by Alphonse Daudet, said to be her favourite author (Rose 53). Piazza’s career was fancifully described as ending in France where she retired, changed her name, and married a Gallic Nobleman with whom she lived on the Riviera as a dowager; the more mundane truth is that she died in New Orleans of rectal cancer at the age of sixty-seven (Long 223).

Furthermore, the many prominent and successful musicians who played their wild music within Storyville were Creoles of colour – among them, Sidney Bechet, René Baptiste, Mamie Desdoumes, Johnny St Cyr, and Ferdinand Le Menthe (“Jelly Roll Morton”). These

were men and women of French descent and often trained (or children of those trained) at the Paris Conservatoire or in the New Orleans French opera and music classes. As Storyville historian Al Rose reminds us, those early jazz (as well as ragtime and blues) “whorehouse music” performances – with their particular syncopations, timbres and intonations – were regarded as “incorrect” and “disorderly” playing according to European conservatoire standards (Rose 106). This sense of a rule-breaking, unorthodox Frenchness helped contribute to the carnivalesque spirit of the District itself.

As Bill Marshall has noted, there is a rich vein of Francophone literary production in nineteenth-century Louisiana that came from transatlantic passages between the two cities, and much of it concerned the fraught and linked issues of race and sexuality: for instance, Alfred Mercier’s antislavery *L’Habitation Saint’Ybars* (1881) and novel about abortion, *Johnelle* (1891), and Sidonie de la Houssaye’s version of the Evangeline myth and a serialised novel about quadroons, *Les Quarteronnes de la Nouvelle-Orléans* (1894–98). Creole of colour Armand Lanusse, who edited a literary journal and the first poetry collection by African Americans, published at least three pieces condemning the informal prostitution system, *plaçage*, including a wry poem of his own. Many of these writers (such as the celebrated Victor Séjour) were educated and known in Paris, and cultural exchange was rife. There was a healthy readership for Francophone writing in both Louisiana and (to a lesser extent) France, as well as a large French-speaking Louisiana-based audience for all European, but mainly French arts, especially opera, music and theatre. Parisian companies played to enthusiastic audiences at New Orleans’s French Opera House, founded in 1859 as America’s first permanent house, with productions of Parisian-themed works (often on the theme of prostitution) such as Verdi’s *La Traviata*, Puccini’s *La Bohème* and Massenet’s *Manon*. The 1872 visit of Edgar Degas to his family in the city, leading to some haunting drawings of the postbellum city and a possible meeting with the writer, Kate Chopin, is a reminder of the importance of artistic traffic and exchange across the Atlantic.⁴

Throughout the nineteenth century, in Paris and New Orleans, prostitution was neither legal nor illegal – defined as an administrative problem (Paris) or a form of vagrancy or misdemeanour (New Orleans). Women in most western countries, meanwhile, were divided according to Victorian ideologies of women’s separate sphere and the sexual double standard: either sexually repressed and passionless

‘respectable,’ or lustful, available to be bought ‘unrespectable.’ Young single women would go on the game for a while, earning better wages than in factory or service, supported by a ‘sporting’ male subculture. Despite being arrested in many American cities, prostitutes were encouraged into theatres, concert halls and saloons in order to attract patrons. By the late 19th century, prostitution was a multi-million dollar business, while movements linked to ‘moral purity,’ temperance, and women’s societies attempted to close brothels and the whole profession. From 1890 onwards, urban anti-vice crusades increased, with ministers, progressive reformers and federal officials attacking ‘white slavery,’ and proposing protection and prevention programmes. Like Paris, nineteenth-century New Orleans became very much a city of the street, full of spectacular, olfactory and musical delights, a *flâneur*’s heaven. But, as in other European cities, the street became a perilous arena for respectable women. By the late nineteenth century, the prostitutes who had always flourished in New Orleans had become a disturbingly common element of civic life, alarming council leaders with their visibility. Prostitution was more prevalent and visible here than anywhere on the continent, and harlots worked openly in houses, hotels and on the banquettes (sidewalks). By the early 1890s, after several unsuccessful attempts by the police department to enact regulatory ordinances and to provide compulsory medical examination of “all women and girls notoriously abandoned to lewdness” (Asbury 429), there were moral panics that the whole city was likely to become a vast brothel.

Here, the close ties between Paris and New Orleans become most relevant, since France was undergoing similar panics about the post-Second Empire proliferation of prostitution within its capital. American intellectuals, especially the French-speaking Creole community of which Chopin was a part, would have been familiar with Zola’s *Nana* (1880) and with the views of Zola, Dumas fils and others that France’s humiliation in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 had been caused by moral corruption, notably the widespread prostitution which, in Paul de Saint-Victor’s words, led to “energy destroyed . . . strength enervated and spirit debilitated by that laxity of morals.”⁵ They were beginning to share the concerns of the Parisians about the degeneration of civic society, the threat to the family and future of the race (notably through syphilis), the breakdown between class (and in their case, racial) divisions that this cross-class activity involved, and the economic decline heralded by those prostitute ‘*mangeandes*’ osten-

sibly eating up the wealth of the bourgeoisie. Zola's novel served also to remind New Orleanians that the economic success of prostitutes within their city would blur the divisions between 'respectable' and 'fallen' women, especially as his Nana insists on playing a theatrical role as 'respectable' woman rather than the more appropriate courtesan.

The analysis of the problem, initiated in the 1830s by Dr Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet, and followed up by advocates of the 'regulationist' approach to the issue, was a major cause of debate within the Third Republic, reflecting the growth of anxiety about the power of the 'gangrene,' prostitution, to 'engulf' French society and lead to general disorder and social breakdown. The literature of prostitution emphasised the capacity of the oldest profession to weaken moral fibre, paternal authority in the family, challenge political and religious authorities, and spread alcohol-abuse and gambling. The Commune's antiregulationism was blamed for license in the street during the rising, the Saint-Lazare 'saturnalia,' and the myth of prostitute-*pétroleuses* setting light to the police prefecture. Thus solutions to this creeping evil went back to Parent-Duchâtelet's strict forms of regulation: repression, supervision, enclosure and invisibility. His template included notions of an enclosed milieu for prostitutes, one closely supervised by the authorities (as with Foucault's panopticism), and all this within a hierarchised and compartmentalised milieu. As with nuns, the prostitute should work within an enclosed institution of women, a *maison de tolérance* supervised by a *dame de maison*, and she should not enjoy her work.⁶ Echoing this, during America's Progressive Era (1900-1918), a period that almost covers the life of Storyville itself, many American states passed red-light abatement acts, newspapers reported on white slavery, purity crusaders tried to close down brothels, and – urged by vice commissions – cities shut down vice districts.

By the 1920s, flamboyant prostitution had been ostensibly stamped out or at least driven underground (Gilfoyle). Yet, however much reformers wished them to be invisible, "sisters in sin" were to be found everywhere, in books, reports, pornography, fashion and theatre (Johnson 1). "Brothel drama" featuring courtesans from Camille to Anna Christie appeared in dozens of Progressive Era plays, with the prostitute, originating in French fiction and drama, becoming central to American realist theatre (Johnson). In New Orleans's post-Storyville prostitution area, "Tango Belt," known as "Frenchtown," the con-

notations of Frenchness became unwelcome to Canal Street businessmen, who “didn’t want the city’s premier shopping district to resemble a European throwback” (Wiltz 32). Wanting Fifth Avenue instead, they removed the Victorian ironwork balconies and galleries from department store façades. This erasure of physical signifiers of Paris enabled the new puritans to claim they were exorcising a morally-lax Parisian urban culture – literally and metaphorically cleaning up a dirty city.

**The Respectable and the Fallen:
Who and What is a Prostitute?**

So who was a prostitute, and what was her function in fin-de-siècle Parisian and New Orleanian society? Anthea Callen names the prostitute’s key function “to secure the respectability of the bourgeoisie” (Callen 46) through a system of surveillance which suspected all women of potential promiscuity and degeneracy. The issue of ‘respectability’ arose constantly in debates about prostitution in both cities during the late nineteenth century, when it was very loudly condemned but also understood as an important civic business that both serviced male needs and relieved married women (defined in medical and sociological discourses as sexually passive) of burdensome sexual duties. Walter Benjamin asked the question of his contemporaries: “The social play of eroticism turns today on the question: How far can a respectable woman go without losing herself?” and he quotes Ferdinand von Gall on the job of the mid-century Parisian *cocottes* who entered boarding houses at the evening meal “to play the part of girls from good families” in order to raise their price, a trick Benjamin says expressed “less the period’s *pruderie* than its fanatical love of masquerade” (Benjamin, *Arcades* 493). Masquerade, acting, lying, were all qualities of a successful whore, and this capacity to play the role of respectability has been a recurrent trope in her straddling of different boundaries of class and (particularly in New Orleans) race. Social tolerance for prostitution lay in contradictory bourgeois demands that it be invisible to respectable society while at the same time splendidly visible to the secretive punter.

In 2006, there were two further reminders of the complex cultural relationship between Paris and New Orleans, when John Singer Sargent’s painting, *Madame X*, was the centrepiece of the transatlantic exhibition, “Americans in Paris 1860-1900,” and (less spectacularly)

the Italian Giovanni Boldini's ceramic, *Paul Helleu painting Madame Gautreau*, featured in a British Impressionist show.⁷ Madame X was Virginie Gautreau, a voluptuous young French Creole woman from a New Orleans family, married into Parisian society, whose portrait scandalised the 1884 Paris Salon, showing her dressed provocatively in a décolleté dress with a strap dangling from the shoulder, as if she were returning from an adulterous bed. The subsequent scandal halted Sargent's rising Parisian career and irrevocably damaged Gautreau's reputation. The fact that neither was a true Parisian compounded the problem, but the crucial issue – in a republic coming to terms with its own decadent past and present – was the blatant visual confusion between woman of the salon and woman of the streets. Around the turn of the century, both Paris and New Orleans, spectacular cities that boasted women on show in different venues, wrestled with the question of how one could see at a glance who was respectable, who immoral. The salon, street, prostitution district and brothel all featured seductive women on display while city fathers used various ways to ensure differentiation and regulate illicit practices. In later years, Sargent was forced to restore Madame Gautreau's fallen strap to a respectable shoulder, and Storyville was knocked down and erased from city records.

This question of what differentiates 'respectable' from 'immoral' women preoccupied historians, cultural critics and legislators throughout the 19th century. Joseph Roach points out that Storyville was preceded in ante-bellum New Orleans by the slave auction site, the St Louis Hotel, a "homosocial pleasure dome with overlapping commercial and leisure attractions" (Roach 214). Storyville, itself a marketplace, became "an important urban and even civic landmark and nodal point," once again "subsumed into the legitimate economy of the city" through its use of business cards, consumer and tourist guides, and (at its peak) its function as major employer of over a thousand people (225). Parisian prostitution was a boom industry by the 1870s, with many professions – landlords, brothel-owners, doctors, lawyers, police – profiting well by it; in the latter years of the century, New Orleans too benefited financially, both within the city's economy and also (especially following Story's ordinance) in terms of the District's considerable attraction to tourists from the United States and Europe. Embedded as the practice was in all urban structures and groups, abolition was in no-one's interests, hence nineteenth-century Parisian and New Orleanian legislators made so many attempts to

regulate and control it, and to erect barriers between different kinds of women.

The prostitute became “a quintessential object of modernist fascination” (Johnson 1). In theatre and opera, rather than the brothel and opium den, vice was represented in respectable settings – drawing rooms, country estates and department stores (4). Fallen women of various kinds – courtesans, mistresses, a seduced virgin or adulterous wife – were indistinguishable from madams and white slaves in bordellos (4). And all fallen women characters in plays from the late 19th century through the Progressive Era were “understood and punished as prostitutes,” classified as degenerate and “branded by their apparently unavoidable trajectories towards death” (6) – with consumption (*Camille*), suicide (*The House of Mirth*), abandonment (*Mrs Warren’s Profession*). Most popular in New York and New Orleans was *Camille*, or “La Dame aux Camélias,” the whore-with-a-heart-of-gold whose story was fictionalised in 1848 by Alexandre Dumas *fils*. Indeed, the popularity of *Camille* meant that great actresses were compelled to keep playing fallen women, though there was a wider range of such figures reflecting new social realities (the shop girl, madam, lesbian prostitute, etc.) (10) – bearing out Baudelaire’s observation that the prostitute was “an allegory of modernity” and Benjamin’s view that prostitution itself was “the yeast which allows the metropolitan masses to rise” (11).⁸ Other French works about the Parisian underworld acquired popularity during the Progressive Era, leading a journalist to comment, “Our former reticence on matters of sex is giving way to a frankness that would even startle Paris” (quoted Johnson 166).

By the second decade of the twentieth century, however, the “good” prostitute who dies to save others’ respectability was replaced in the popular imagination by “a deadly source of contagion . . . the *prostitute fatale*” (168-69) who did not care about infecting the body politic, using her diseased body defiantly and viciously, like the fictional Nana. Thus began the United States War Department’s Commission on Training Camp Activities, which Timothy J. Gilfoyle called “the most aggressive attack on prostitution in the nation’s history” (quoted Johnson 181). This was part of the action that closed Storyville and temporarily dispersed New Orleans’s prostitutes. It is no coincidence that, in the city of the ‘separate but equal’ 1896 Plessy v Ferguson case, and the 1890s rise of white supremacy and Jim Crow, D. W. Griffith’s film, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) – itself carrying a strong polemic against the degrading power of mixed-race relationships – played

to packed houses in 1917 just as Storyville was under most direct threat for racial mixing (Long 214). Alecia P. Long argues that sex between white men and light-skinned, mixed-race courtesans and prostitutes moved from “a matter of perceived necessity and later preference in the colonial period, to an elite prerogative in the antebellum period, to a legally sanctioned and highly remunerative activity inside Storyville,” followed by final condemnation by city officials as something “debased” and to be cleansed out of the city’s vice district (Long 222).

In terms of female display, New Orleans concert halls differentiated themselves from theatres and the French Opera House, staging mainly prostitute employees and sexually-explicit dances by scantily-clad dancers, classed as “female spectacular performance” (Long 74). In a legal case concerning the Royal Street concert hall, Tivoli Varieties, the geography and economic impact on other businesses of prostitution became a hot issue, and the distinction between ‘respectable’ and ‘fallen’ women in the public areas adjacent to concert saloons became problematic. The presence of fashionable women shopping and frequenting restaurants in the first blocks of Royal Street, also inhabited by concert saloon employees, raised severe problems. By the late 1890s, in an increasingly anonymous, heterogeneous city, all women were participating eagerly in urban life, and working-class women (mainly African American or immigrants) were challenging the notion of public space as male, private/domestic as female. Appearance was no longer a reliable class or occupational indicator, since women began to dress differently as they moved around cities, often adopting the bold, colourful dress style of working, acting and prostitute women. Nevertheless, while all types could move around New Orleans unescorted in daytime, at night a lone promenader was regarded as “at risk or simply risqué.” Female respectability was “always under siege in the increasingly complicated social geography of late-nineteenth-century New Orleans” (Long 68 and 69).

Inevitably, differentiation between classes of women became crucial for the city’s ruling white male élite who wished to reassert control over the city itself. Concert halls were regulated by licence and taxation, and there were moves to “remove and confine” them. The *Daily Picayune* newspaper called in 1892 for separation of neighbourhoods based on social class and kinds of activity, a view that accumulated popularity. The concern of hoteliers and shopkeepers to maintain their own respectable businesses led increasingly to a desire to segregate all

kinds of ‘sinful’ business, from brothels to concert halls – all of which were eventually forced within the boundaries of Storyville itself. At the turn of the century, Long argues, physical segregation was applied to a variety of social problems, including “the spread of disease, race relations, and prostitution” (Long 103); Storyville was created only a year after the Supreme Court Plessy decision, and appeared to conflate many popular opinions about prostitution, race and respectability. Since African Americans were believed by whites to be sexually immoral, the area chosen to situate the two prostitution districts was mainly populated by that race, and as a result the two groups were linked in public imagination as immoral and sensual, lacking the qualities of white middle-class respectability.

Since its early days of respectable *filles à la cassette* sent from France as wives for the early colonists, 1728-1751, and prostitutes deported to the new colony from Parisian brothels and prisons to work and breed, prostitutes enjoyed close family and economic ties with the rest of the city. The lavish splendour of Storyville, and its close cooperation with the police and city council, emphasise the fact that everyone wished to uphold a general air of respectability. Alecia P. Long’s case study of a prominent madam from Storyville – Mary Anna Deubler (better known as Josie Arlington) – shows the lengths to which some successful prostitutes went to retain a high-class public face. Arlington maintained extended family relationships, decorated her brothel apartments with classical images and other signifiers of sophistication and refinement (often in European terms – the Vienna Parlor, for instance), and paid for her beloved niece Anna’s education, first in southern convent schools then – when her cover was blown and following a European grand tour – in the Sacred Heart Convent, Paris. Finally, in an ironic juxtaposition of regulator and regulated, Arlington bought a magnificent home for her on Esplanade Street, near Sidney Story’s former home. Storyville women experienced the same fluidity of class distinction as Second Empire Paris, as well as similar pressures to appear *haute bourgeoise* while simultaneously servicing illicit and corrupt desires across all classes.

Writers love to describe the raunchy history and character of New Orleans’s famous bordellos, and there is a large body of fiction, opera, poetry and visual arts dedicated to them. The cultural appeal of the Storyville period (1897-1917) lies in its quality as spectacle apparently (though not actually) outside the law and historical record within a very spectacular city. The District, this “scarlet thread through

the heart of New Orleans” (Asbury 357) became a popular, ludic and prosperous arena only half-heartedly controlled by undisciplined and corruptible lawmakers. Spectacular display has been central to the cultural development and renown of New Orleans and, for two decades, The District (as it was known) went out of its way to attract prurient and lascivious attention. From the late eighteenth century, when the city was in French hands, social activities were designed to attract spectators and voyeurs – from winter masquerades, opera and fancy-dress balls to the Mardi Gras ‘crewes,’ to Negro assembly, dancing and hoodoo rituals in Congo Square and alongside Lake Pontchartrain, as well as the displays of quadroon beauty at the balls devoted to them.

The public display of female beauty had long been a feature and matter of concern in this somewhat ungovernable city. As early as 1786, the flashy elegance of the mixed-race quadroons was equated with loose morals by Spanish Governor Miró who spoke of their “dependence for a livelihood on incontinence and libertinism” (Asbury 129); apart from threatening to deport them, he declared that “excessive attention to dress” would be “evidence of misconduct.” Thus he forbade plumed headdresses and jewellery, ordering hair to be bound in kerchiefs. These women became crucial in the city’s history of clandestine sexual relations and prostitution, since the ‘Quadroon Ball’ became the recruitment arena for wealthy Frenchmen seeking long-term mistresses (the children of which liaisons complicated the city’s race and class mixture). This practice was the subject of considerable critique within the French-speaking community (for instance, in Francophone Armand Lanusse’s 1845 collection, *Les Cenelles*).⁹ In *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), William Faulkner was to offer his own devastating critique of this practice, when he described quadroons at the ball as “a row of faces like a bazaar of flowers, the supreme apotheosis of chattelry, of human flesh bred of the two races for that sale,”¹⁰ though British actress Fanny Kemble’s *Journal* anticipated Faulkner’s mixed-race character, Charles Bon’s defence of the practice when she saw this “class of unhappy females” protected by slaveowners “benevolently doing their best . . . to raise and improve the degraded race” while the “bastard population” benefited in “their forms and features” from their white progenitors.¹¹ Women on display in later decades included the ‘beer-jerkers’ (waitresses doubling as prostitutes) in concert-saloons of the 1860s, models posing in the saloons and dance-houses, and – from the 1840s to the end of the century – prostitutes in boisterous

brothels who openly displayed their wares throughout the Vieux Caré and outlying residential areas, or (the poorest and most desperate) performed on shed-like ‘cribs’ laid out on the *banquettes*. Marketing was vigorous, using procurement businesses, circulars, and descriptive cards left in saloons, stores and offices.

The colourful displays of the brothels could not disguise the fact that this was also a site of violence, disease and infection, “a veritable cesspool of sin” (Asbury 350). As with the Parisians, New Orleans reformers described prostitution in metaphors of contagion. Alderman Story’s experiment was welcomed as a way of cleaning up and thus saving the city for all its citizens. If he had hoped it would diminish the attraction to visitors and locals alike of fancy brothels and classy harlots, he was to be disappointed: Storyville became this Catholic city’s most colourful and notorious spectacle, focus of its forbidden pleasures and desires where – as Michael Ondaatje put it, “The women wore Gloria de Dijon and Marshall Neil roses and the whores sold ‘Goofer Dust’ and ‘Bend-over Oil.’ Money poured in, slid around.”¹² The area throbbed with parties, balls, “circuses,” theatrical and of course musical performances. Popular musicians cut their teeth there; the songs of Storyville became part of the repertoire of ragtime and jazz musicians. And, while “jass” originated long before 1897, and was played in far more outlets outside the District than within it, this music quickly became described by commentators as “whorehouse music,”¹³ part of the disorderly and evil phenomenon that new regulation had unleashed.

“Papá” Bellocq’s Storyville

Storyville might well have been buried in New Orleans’s murky history, but in recent years it has received a new lease of cultural life through the photographs of E. J. Bellocq, rescued from a junk shop, printed and exhibited by photographer Lee Friedlander, and published by The Museum of Modern Art (Szarkowski). Ironically, considerable attention has been paid to this example of the “invisible man” Anthea Callen identified as the unexamined voyeur of a theatre of sexuality. Between 1910 and 1916, the figure known as “Papá” Bellocq is acknowledged to have produced some haunting representations of New Orleans prostitutes, establishing an apparently respectful and sympathetic relationship with them. French practices of prostitution, erotic and pornographic photography were closely intertwined in Storyville.

Susan Sontag speculates rather fancifully that E. J. Bellocq might have been “a *belle époque* erotomane who had transplanted himself to the humid franco-creole American city to continue his voyeuristic haunting of bordellos” (Sontag 7). There are conflicting stories (but little hard evidence) about who Bellocq was, though it now seems certain he was a New Orleans resident, member of an élite white Catholic Creole family (his mother being a wealthy French merchant’s daughter), and commercial artist. His only plates to survive are those of Storyville, which he kept for his own private consumption and (since many of them have faces scratched out) probably defaced for a number of personal and political reasons.

Since 1970, writers and artists have seen Storyville through Bellocq’s eyes, largely following Al Rose and Sontag’s line that the portraits demonstrate “anti-formulaic, anti-salacious sympathy for ‘fallen’ women” (Bellocq 7), and that there was a serious documentary impulse at the heart of Bellocq’s enterprise. He is compared with Toulouse-Lautrec whose studio was in a brothel and – in Al Rose’s words – he “appeared to see the ladies of the night as human beings” (Rose, *Born in New Orleans* 151). Rose states categorically that Bellocq never patronised the brothels for “tricks,” though Adele, prostitute subject of several photographs, claimed Bellocq spent a period in an “ice house” (venereal diseases hospital, Szarkowski 15). In a city renowned for spectacles, Bellocq’s images – intimate and often unsettling – memorialize an extraordinary part of New Orleans’s history through the direct gazes of the women he photographed. His iconographic Storyville is praised for telling a female story that emerges from those pictures of girls’ and women’s bodies that were central to the harsh sporting life economy.

The contexts of photography itself, and Storyville in particular, are often forgotten in debates about whether Bellocq exploited his subjects and indeed who defaced the prints. Critics tend to discuss the photographs in reified isolation from their mode of production, the history of nineteenth-century European painting of nudes and prostitutes, and pornographic photography, all of which are key to Bellocq’s perspective. In a *New York Review of Books* debate over Bellocq, Joseph L. Ruby challenged the views of Janet Malcolm regarding the physical nature of the photographer (Ruby and Malcolm). Claiming that, in 1970, Szarkowski faced the potential problem of offending public taste with his exhibition of the Storyville photographs, Ruby argues that the myth of a deformed photographer (Bellocq the dwarf

– a tragic artist, powerless and outcast) suited Szarkowski's purposes well, suggesting that Bellocq's interest in his subjects was not sexual but aesthetic: they could be placed within the tradition of the nude, rather than photographic pornography. He suggests – and this is borne out in later research – there is no evidence that Bellocq was physically grotesque (indeed, the comparison with Toulouse-Lautrec may have created this tragic myth). To Ruby, the images are “sexually highly charged” and suggest an informal personal record of sexual relationships, not intended for exhibition or sale – thus not posed in the “artistic” settings characteristic at the time. Malcolm challenged his sexual thesis: “[T]he Storyville prostitutes' look of cheerful insouciance practically spells out the uncomplicated platonic nature of their relationship to the photographer.” Regardless of Bellocq's own intentions and moral position (and the fact that – as John Szarkowski suggests, they may have been a commercial assignment, Szarkowski 13), the way his models are posing, preening, staring, sitting in uncomfortable positions without clothes and displaying their physical wares, is a reminder of the scopophilic self-presentation and erotic poses that were *de rigueur* for the inhabitants of Storyville. Johnny Wiggs, a cornetist and contemporary of Bellocq in New Orleans, interviewed in 1969 by Lee Friedlander, described a saloon on South Rampart Street that had a little room containing “thousands of pictures [which] looked like they were made in France, of fornication and anything related to that in all its possible . . . variations,” while Adele said that lots of “dirty pictures” were taken by other photographers (Bellocq 75 and 79). Bellocq's work was not – as modern critics often imply – unique.

As in Paris, painters and photographers at the time frequently had to use prostitutes as the only women prepared to model naked. Performing sexuality was part and parcel of the women's daily lives; the strip dances, cabarets, circuses and so on meant that they were well accustomed to presenting themselves before the male gaze and – as in Paris – there were many examples of erotic photographs of anonymous nudes (probably also prostitutes). What Abigail Solomon-Godeau has called “the spectacularization of the female body” is linked closely to the rise of commodity culture and the expansion of photography itself (222). Furthermore, in New Orleans, there was a long history of performance, with public and private expressed theatrically – through dance, music, masking, the participatory ‘second line,’ and outdoor festive gatherings. Inhabitants of the tenderloin staged

shows of many kinds, and prostitutes posing for photographs (however willingly or reluctantly) would have constituted part of a routine self-display. It would thus seem over-simplistic for Ruby and Malcolm to argue that the photographs are informal and unposed. While there are several casual poses, many of them offer troubling images of girls and women awkwardly and uncomfortably positioned so as best to display their bodies to the male gaze (called by French critic, Jean Clair, “the erection of the eye,” Solomon-Godeau 230). And it is not subject matter but interpretation that is significant: as many feminist cultural critics have argued, “erotic and pornographic modes of representation are profoundly implicated with the structures of fantasy and thus involve a more or less elaborate *staging* of desire” to be accomplished with strategies of *mise en scène* – tableaux, props, particular gestures, poses or details (Solomon-Godeau 232). Poet Farnham Blair understood the self-determining possibilities of performance when he wrote of “Papá” Bellocq:

preparing a private stage
on which his daughters will come to life
as the women of their own desires (Blair 35)

Since 1970, two collections of Bellocq’s photographs, a film by Louis Malle, *Pretty Baby*, a photo essay by P. J. Boman, Bellocq-inspired photographs by Joel-Peter Witkin, a themed album by musician Robbie Robertson, and poems, novels and biographies by international writers such as Frank Yerby, John Cotton, Michael Ondaatje, Lois Battle, Brooke Bergan, Josh Russell, Peter Everett, Christine Wiltz, David Fulmer, Patrick Neate and Natasha Trethewey, have interrogated the nature of the photographer’s project, and/or the significance of New Orleans’s two-decade experiment in sexual regulation.¹⁴

In 1974, Al Rose’s history, *Storyville, New Orleans*, provided a definitive history, and inspiration for film-maker Louis Malle. In his controversial *Pretty Baby* (1978), the familiar theme of a search for respectability focuses on a child prostitute in a cruelly exploitative brothel, run by a madam who is modelled on Rose’s description of the notorious Emma Johnson. Violet is the twelve-year-old daughter of Hattie, who escapes the brothel for a marriage in St Louis after giving birth and expressing dissatisfaction with the sporting way of life. Hattie describes Violet as being able to “french” though still a virgin and there is a suggestion she “frenches” her mother’s clients. Violet is left behind in the hands of the whores who have taught her the sexual arts,

had her dressed and made up elaborately, and placed on an auction block, her virginity sold to the highest bidder, while Jelly Roll Morton looks on with sour recognition of this practice's role in the city's slavery history. Malle's invented history of E. J. Bellocq makes the photographer capture Violet with his camera, then his heart, until she is saved for respectability by her mother. Malle's transatlantic perspective on this story presents Violet as a Lolita figure who has performed the arts of seduction before understanding their implications, while her childlike curiosity and naïveté make her the victim of sexual exploitation and violence. The film's only overt commentary on the photographer's paedophilia comes in Malle's contribution to the historical puzzle over the scratched-out faces on Bellocq's photographic plates: a churlish Violet defaces them and thus passes judgement on her violator.

Malle's modernist European eye concentrates on the theme of voyeurism and the ways prostitution thrives on peeping and posing (by both the "invisible man" himself and also the children born into the brothel), but it also takes an anachronistically moralistic position on miscegenation. Despite Storyville's being "one of the most racially integrated sites in the South" (Long 6) in a New Orleans which had a long tradition of turning a blind eye to mixed-race sex, Violet's attempt to force a black boy to have sex with her (in grotesque imitation of her elders) is condemned vociferously by the black maid. She apparently speaks for the whole society when chiding the girl for encouraging relations between the races, which she should know are taboo. The French director's brothel of white whores and clients, serviced by quadroon and black servants and voodoo practitioners, as well as the pianist Jelly Roll Morton, simplifies the complex mixtures within the District itself and the history of mixed-race sexualities within New Orleans.

In 2000, British novelist Peter Everett published *Bellocq's Women*, an oblique response to both the 1970 MOMA exhibition and Swarkowski collection and *Pretty Baby* (also with strong echoes of Ondaatje's *Coming Through Slaughter*). With a colder eye than Malle, Everett focuses on the personal and social contexts that may have created the enigmatic figure of Bellocq. Following some of Malle's scenarios, *Bellocq's Women* explores the disturbed psyche of a man from a dysfunctional, broken French Creole home who deals with others', and his own, voyeurism and prurience by capturing what he sees through the camera. Bellocq's French heritage and cultural aspirations are suggested

throughout by the books he gives to, and observes around, those he meets – from Voltaire to George Sand and Guy de Maupassant, and he is described as becoming “more French as he aged” (248). His élite French Creole family, and artistic sensibility, are signalled by the joking reference to a destroyed portrait by Edgar Degas of his mother’s half-sister, and his own arrangement for a photograph of a young girl in the slumped, weary posture of the Degas pastel, “*Les Sylphes*” (Everett 52). This hint at Degas’s visit to New Orleans in 1872, and reference to the artist’s Parisian paintings, serve as reminders of the various kinds of nineteenth-century cultural traffic between Paris and New Orleans, the influence of French painting and illustration on transatlantic (especially erotic) photography, and its role in the construction of Bellocq’s Storyville photographs. And, as is common in many nineteenth-century Parisian and New Orleans narratives, there is a symbiotic relationship between whorehouse and nunnery.

Unlike the soft-centred experiences of Malle’s protagonist, Everett’s Bellocq witnesses, or hears of, the violence of men against women and children, and the murders of prostitutes by abortionists and pimps. He too becomes a woman-murderer when he kills his demented mother, and – unable to confess to his priest brother – remains tortured with a French Creole Catholic’s guilt. As he acknowledges to his friend Chenault, in a deliberate misquotation by French photographer, Henri Cartier-Bresson, “Life [is] but a series of decisive moments,” adding that some were “easy to miss” (247). Photography’s dangerous power meant that the “decisive moments” Cartier-Bresson believed art should capture become explosive when life and art coincide too closely.

Early in the novel, New Orleans – with all its cosmopolitan, culturally rich and sexually and racially relaxed character – is described as a city that “led you to think you could get away with anything” (17), but it is also – according to black maid Louella – “a city where souls get stolen” (87). These two possibilities are echoed in the novel’s final elegiac chapters on the city itself and Bellocq’s sad old age following the closure of Storyville. In an ironic transatlantic contrast, Everett describes a moment of Parisian glory and New Orleanian tragedy in the same year, 1927. The devastating Mississippi flood is contrasted with the triumphant flight and landing in Paris of American aviator Lindbergh. By returning to one of his key transatlantic cultural themes, the writer contrasts American national pride and international celebration, focussed in Paris, with the topographical instability and general decay of New Orleans, whose glory days are seen to

have gone. Bellocq is asked to photograph an aspirant politician who – in classic Louisiana style – is touring flooded areas where people have lost lives and homes, in order to win votes, while convicts dig the levees and a journalist asks where real history is to be found:

“We know the rain fell forty days and forty nights, that what the Bible says; but things are trickier now with flood relief. Who’s to know whose bank the cheques are in? Can I tell you? Why, neither I – nor any man drowning out there in the flood. Yet I’m come to witness and write it into history. And if I do find out the far end of things, then what can I do?” (241-42)

In a passage published some five years before Hurricane Katrina, these words capture a bleak sense of doom about Louisiana, and the role of those observing and representing its history. Bellocq himself wanders the streets where Storyville had stood, noting the torn down mansions and new lodging houses, reminiscing with a stranger about New Orleans’s great musicians and brothels, and observing that – just as the *Blue Book* has become a collector’s item – so Storyville itself (and, by implication, the whole city) has assumed the deadening mantle of ‘heritage.’

By contrast with these male perspectives, two mixed-race women writers (Natasha Trethewey and Brooke Bergan) address Bellocq’s influence by contextualising ‘his women’ themselves and probing the meanings of the District’s racial and gendered composition – though only one uses the transatlantic theme. In her collection, *Storyville* (1993), poet Brooke Bergan uses a variety of literary discourses to focus on those ‘spectacular ladies’ by deconstructing the many romantic legends and half-truths of Storyville, and indeed the city of New Orleans itself, especially in terms of its voices and languages. Her subtitle, “A Hidden Mirror,” alludes to both a clandestine sexualised history of the city’s famous prostitution district and also to her own revelation of the unsavoury truths and contradictions of official or popular versions of a history. This ‘hidden mirror’ partly reflects on her own French Creole family history which consists of official record, rumour and family anecdote, as well as unpalatable or unrevealed material relating partly to mixed-race ancestry. Suggestively, Bergan narrates a woman-centred story of her own female ancestors and the always spoken-for women of Storyville. She recalls the legal constraints and regulations in a city ever-vigilant about its racial mix, however relaxed it may have seemed in the Storyville brothels. “Argument 3” summarises the long history of racial laws in the city, from the French Code Noir, Spanish ordinance about quadroons, the Civil Code Articles

relating to interracial marriage, illegitimacy, adoption and inheritance (all unfavourable to those defined as black and to racial mixture of all kinds), right down to the Louisiana State Legislature's 1970 Act 46 which finally deemed that anyone in the state with less than one-thirtysecond of Negro blood need no longer be classified "colored."

At the heart of the text is a reflection on the French language and cultural history of the Creole élite who established, then gradually lost power, through the nineteenth century, but most shaped the racial and legal framework which made Storyville necessary. Bergan reminds the reader of the city's cultural roots and forms: historical figures and their painters (for example, David's *Madame Récamier*); the history of piracy and carnival; the French opera house and the *Manon* story; the New Orleans house built by Edgar Degas's grandfather. She lists those French terms that differentiated the races in order that white Creoles could retain socio-political hegemony: *Code Noir*, *gens de couleur*, *griffe*, *métis*, *sang-mêlé*. Creole is the "Negro-French" used by immigrants from French slave colonies (Guadaloupe, Martinique) and in its second generation "pidgin." She points out that the "creolization" of French and Negro speech in the pidginization process produced "equal partners linguistically but not socially," with commentators arguing "French was far too complex for these simple savages to learn" (Bergan 85).

For Bergan, the photographer's art of seeing and capturing truth is a selective whitewash: the images of beautiful whores in the Storyville houses omit reference to that which is *not* shown: open cisterns, deadly mosquitoes, girls with the clap, yellow fever and so on. However, she recognises that Bellocq becomes a different kind of artist and truth-teller depending on one's perspective: the French film director (Louis Malle), Sri Lankan novelist (Michael Ondaatje), American photographer (Lee Friedlander) and prostitute (Adele): the "homosexual-pederast-voyeur-pornographer-sentimentalist they want to see." In "Extrapolation 3," she raises questions about the autonomy of the "girls in the houses" – some from very good families (like Josie Anderson). Like Peter Everett and others, she notes the experiential similarities between the New Orleans nun and whore – both closely linked with the city's transatlantic history and both part of all-female communities and spaces which, to some extent, sheltered and nurtured them (and comparisons between whom were made by the early French regulationists and women writers – see, for instance, Kate Chopin's story, "Two Portraits"). She suggests that the game allowed women

money (in the way wives too endured sex for payment), and the pleasure of freedom, “if only / the freedom of choosing one tyranny over another” (Bergan 68). Her feminist gaze interrogates Storyville’s meanings by focussing on the brothel occupants as responsive subjects, recognising ironically her collusion with Bellocq:

while we conspire
 photographer and poet
 through silence or speech
 to tease out beauty

from your ravished stillness. (Bergan 54)

Bergan’s collection recognises the dream-like quality of a city of visual delights, and one of her poems – focussed on Bellocq’s photograph of a masked prostitute – describes an unmasked, anonymous male *flâneur*’s progress through a city of brothels (Storyville itself), an “ice hospital,” sites of slave dancing and voodoo practice, buildings belonging to real and fictional Creoles, a multi-cultural French market, and finally the Mississippi River. She gives voice to the silent unnamed prostitutes gazing out of Bellocq’s pictures, and draws an implicit comparison with the now-silenced voices of unrecorded musicians such as Buddy Bolden (88). Going against the critical orthodoxy about these women willingly engaging with the photographer, in “Plate 15: Girl Disdainful,” she describes the female subject “turn[ing] her face away from the masked eye,” giving her the defiant, sulky words, “I have done what you asked” (Bergan 41), while in “Plate 18: Cover Girl,”

the large, pale eyes
 accuse, resigned
 and unforgiving (Bergan 52)

One of her speaking subjects is an ex-prostitute who left town and married in 1919, two years after the District’s closure, and whose husband knew nothing of her previous career; she maintains contact only with the madam Gertrude Dix Anderson, and returns (as people did) for Carnival. This is a reminder of the perilous mobility between respectable society and the underworld, and the many racial and class shifts involved in the city’s tenderloin history.

Coda

In her study, *The Great Southern Babylon*, Alecia P. Long refutes conventional historical wisdom regarding European influences on the development of Storyville. She claims that prostitution regulation was already a national concern in American cities, and she provides examples of other cities' red-light zones and laws in order to demolish most arguments for New Orleans and Storyville exceptionalism. But she underplays the many historical, cultural and linguistic connections between the two cities in terms of definitions of sexuality itself, and especially the demarcation and control of 'respectable' (sexless) women and women of the night of all races (in the southern mind dangerously allied to sexually voracious black men and women). The *filles à la cassette*, the *St Domingue* uprising, the quadron ball, the Creole family and artistic (especially musical) links with Paris, the French language itself in literature, street names and socio-cultural practices, were all still alive in New Orleans imaginations by the turn of the century – both despite and because of waning French influence. The many connotations of prostitution – be it clandestine or open – moved between the two cities, and New Orleans's erotic Catholic culture sat ostentatiously in a puritan Protestant nation that poured in to participate or condemn. It is no surprise that – in considering the rebuilding after the 2005 disaster – New Orleans's leaders were tempted to market it again as a Parisian-style centre of hedonism. The site of Storyville was destroyed in the 1930s by embarrassed reformers and profit-hungry city fathers, who constructed the Iberville projects on the land. In recent decades, those projects became an unpolicable, drug- and crime-ridden area inhabited by poor blacks who were seen as a major threat to the safety of the neighbouring tourist area, the aptly-named French Quarter (*Vieux Carré*). The post-Katrina developers' plans signal the erasure of yet another layer of the city's heterogeneous multi-cultural and mixed-class history. The cynical racial subtext of this, in terms of once again cleaning up a 'dirty' city, is clear to see.

Notes

- ¹ *Newsweek* 3 October 2005: 38.
- ² Jamie Wilson, "New Orleans residents given four Months to Receive Neighbourhoods," *Guardian Unlimited* 12 January 2006 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,1684315,00.html>>.
- ³ Edmund White found this to be true more than a century later. In *The Flâneur: A Stroll through the Paradoxes of Paris* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), he opined, "Americans consider the sidewalk an anonymous backstage space, whereas for the French it is the stage itself" (45).
- ⁴ See Christopher Benfey, *Degas in New Orleans: Encounters in the Creole World of Kate Chopin and George Washington Cable* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) and Emily Toth, *Unveiling Kate Chopin* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999).
- ⁵ Quoted in George Herbert, introduction, Emile Zola, *Nana* (London: Penguin, 1972) 7.
- ⁶ See Alain Corbin, "The Regulationist Argument," *Prostitution*, ed. Roger Matthews and Maggie O'Neill (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate Dartmouth, 2003) 3-38.
- ⁷ *Americans in Paris 1860-1900*, the National Gallery, London, 22 February – 21 May 2006, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 25 June – 24 September 2006, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 17 October 2006 – 28 January 2007; *Vive la Parisienne: Women through the Eyes of the Impressionists*, Compton Verney, 30 September – 10 December 2006.
- ⁸ It is significant that the African American writer, Alice Dunbar, used the Camille motif ironically in her story of a New Orleans nun, "Sister Josepha," in *The Goodness of St Rocque* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1899) 155-72.
- ⁹ Armand Lanusse, "Epigramme," *Creole Echoes: The Francophone Poetry of Nineteenth-Century Louisiana* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004) 95.
- ¹⁰ William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936, London: Vintage, 2005) 112.
- ¹¹ Frances Anne Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839*, ed. John A. Scott (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1984) 9-10.
- ¹² Michael Ondaatje, *Coming through Slaughter* (London: Marion Boyars, 1979) 9.
- ¹³ Al Rose, *Storyville, New Orleans: Being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the Notorious Red-Light District* (London and Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1974) 106.
- ¹⁴ Susan Sontag, op. cit.; John Szarkowski, ed., *Bellocq: Storyville Portraits* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1970); Louis Malle, *Pretty Baby* (dir. Louis Malle, 1978); P. J. Boman, *Muse: Desire and Severance* (Zurich and New York: Edition Stemmler, 2001); Robbie Robertson, *Storyville* (David Geffen Company, 1991); Frank Yerby, *The Girl from Storyville* (London: Heinemann, 1972); John Cotton, *The Storyville Portraits* (West Kirby: Headland Publications, 1984); Lois Battle, *Storyville* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1993, dedicated to Bellocq); Brooke Bergan, *Storyville: A Hidden Mirror* (Rhode Island: Asphodel, 1994); Josh Russell, *Yellow Jack* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1999); Peter Everett, *Bellocq's Women* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000); Christine Wiltz, *The Last Madam: A Life in the New Orleans Underworld* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2000); David Fulmer,

Chasing the Devil's Tale: A Mystery of Storyville, New Orleans (Scottsdale, NZ: Poisoned Pen Press, 2001); Patrick Neate, *Twelve Bar Blues* (New York: Viking, 2001); Natasha Trethewey, *Belloq's Ophelia* (Saint Paul, Minn: Graywolf Press, 2002).

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