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An Infectious Vessel: The Nineteenth-Century Prostitute Undressed

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**An Infectious Vessel: The Nineteenth-Century Prostitute
Undressed**

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Abstract

This dissertation serves as a literary ‘undressing’ of the nineteenth-century prostitute. It examines representations of the prostitute as both a physical and moral vessel of infection. To do so, the dissertation analyses representations from the common streetwalker to the prestigious courtesan, in both French and English novels including: *Nana* and *L’Assommoir* by Emile Zola, *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens, *The Crimson Petal and the White* by Michel Faber, *Mary Barton* by Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mrs Warren’s Profession* by George Bernard Shaw and *La Dame aux Camelias* by Alexandre Dumas *Fils*. The work analyses and deconstructs stereotypical depictions of the prostitute. It also examines societal anxieties concerning the prostitute’s status as an infectious vessel and source of contamination. Additionally, the work incorporates and examines artistic interpretations of the prostitute by French and English artists. The dissertation uses the aforementioned depictions to analyse how manipulation of external appearance disguised the prostitute’s true ‘infectious’ status. The work ascertains that clothing, body and behaviour were deliberately ‘dressed’ by the prostitute to convey respectability and morality. The dissertation establishes that this masquerade enabled the prostitute to avoid societal detection, condemnation and criminalization. It reveals that the prostitute was able to and did avoid any traits that revealed her true status. The work demonstrates that through the adoption of disguise, the prostitute was able to infiltrate and infect rigid social hierarchies. It analyses how societal corruption was made possible by deliberate adjustments to appearance and behaviour. The dissertation establishes that the prostitute could successfully mislead and corrupt ‘respectable’ society through a calculated guise of moral decency.

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Introduction

An Infectious Vessel in Nineteenth-Century Society

Throughout the nineteenth century, prostitutes were continually viewed ‘as sources of moral and physical pollution’¹ who contaminated society. As vessels of physical infection, they were primarily blamed for the spread of venereal diseases in both England and France. By 1864, English societal anxieties concerning the ‘infectious’ prostitute resulted in the introduction of the Contagious Diseases Acts. The Act enforced the ‘sanitary surveillance’² of all lower-class women. Initially instigated in ‘eleven garrison and dock towns in England and Ireland’³, the Act attempted to control the spread of venereal diseases between prostitutes, soldiers and sailors. In ‘1867, [...] doctors and civilian authorities tried to extend the acts to northern cities.’⁴ The Acts were then extended and adjusted in 1866 and 1869. As a whole, the Acts gave plain-clothes policemen the authority to detain any woman they believed to be a prostitute. Police accusations were rapidly and haphazardly formed as they largely centred upon general appearance such as clothing choice, the visible body and behaviour in public. An arrest could even be made based on the woman’s mere presence in society. Based on a charge in 1887, a judge warned the accused that ‘no respectable woman would be found walking on Regent Street at 9:00 in the evening.’⁵ Once accused, the woman would be immediately coerced into a signing a confession admitting prostitution. Those who refused faced a public trial which involved a fervent defence of any prior sexual

¹ Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, class, and the state* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 71.

² Peter Baldwin, *Contagion and the State in Europe: 1830-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 369.

³ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, p. 76.

⁴ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, p. 72.

⁵ Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago, 1992), p. 128.

conduct, whether for monetary gain or otherwise. Such trials could be detrimental to the women's future if falsely accused, as such public condemnation would be ruinous to their standing in respectable society. Once the confession was signed, whether under duress or not, the indicted would then be subjected to an extremely invasive, internal examination to determine signs of venereal disease. If medical officials believed they had located symptoms, the accused would then be legally imprisoned in a Lock Hospital for up to nine months or until the 'infection' cleared.

Similarly, French laws also detained the prostitute as a vessel of physical infection. In Paris in 1802, Napoleon enforced the mandatory examination of all public prostitutes for venereal disease. To ensure that prostitutes were being examined, 'the police began to keep an inscription list.'⁶ The list recorded all public prostitutes and was regularly checked to ensure the habitual examinations had taken place. Known prostitutes were expected to report to the police on a voluntary basis to undergo such internal inspections. If symptoms were located, the prostitute would be removed to a prison hospital for an indeterminable period until declared free of infection. As many women sought to evade legal confirmation of their prostitute status, they avoided registration. However, police were then granted rights to catalogue and charge any woman they believed to be a prostitute. In 1810, any woman the police had registered faced mandatory examinations. Women were accused 'on the basis of a vice squad patrolman's complaint'⁷. Unlike English laws, they would be charged 'without a normal hearing [or] the right to defend themselves with legal counsel and witnesses'⁸. Once

⁶ Jill Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/shcgi/t/text/text-idx?c=acls;idno=heb04506> [accessed 3 August 2017], p. xvi.

⁷ Baldwin, *Contagion and the State in Europe*, p. 366.

⁸ Baldwin, *Contagion and the State in Europe*, p. 366.

registered, prostitutes ‘were medically inspected at regular intervals, sometimes at their dwellings, most often at stations run by police’⁹.

Although French and English laws targeted the prostitute as a physically diseased vessel, they were also accused of moral contagion. Walkowitz notes: ‘[P]rostitutes [...] were members of the social “residuum”, the casual labouring poor who inhabited the “nether regions” of society.’¹⁰ However, as purchasable entities, prostitutes had the ability to infiltrate and infect social hierarchies, as their services were not limited to members of a specific class. The ambiguous position of the prostitute raised alarm concerning the moral contamination of upper-class society. In this sense, prostitutes were stigmatized due to their degraded, lower-class origins, viewed as infectiously corruptive to ‘respectable’ sensibilities. They were distinguished as vessels of dangerous immorality, capable of contaminating ‘moral’ men and women. Attwood asserts that ‘[p]rostitutes were a form of sexual transgression that endangered the respectable women in her vicinity; [...] that influenced young, impressionable women.’¹¹ The prostitute was considered so morally infectious that even close proximity could threaten the virtue of the decent woman.

As the prostitute posed such a physical and moral threat to respectable society, English cases of false police accusations were considered largely inconsequential. Arrests of non-prostitutes were viewed as a minor inconvenience to the individual, in comparison to the importance of societal wellbeing. However, the case of ‘Elizabeth Cass, a respectable milliner’¹² unleashed public outrage towards the Contagious

⁹ Baldwin, *Contagion and the State in Europe*, p. 367.

¹⁰ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, p. 3.

¹¹ Nina Attwood, *The Prostitute’s Body: Rewriting Prostitution in Victorian Britain* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), p. 6.

¹² Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 128.

Diseases Acts. Cass ‘was falsely arrested’¹³ and detained as prostitute for allegedly ‘streetwalking on Regent Street.’¹⁴ Walkowitz notes that ‘a large section of the daily press took up Miss Cass’s cause’¹⁵, as a respectable woman who had been unfairly contaminated with the taint of prostitution. Her case underlines that in terms of police forming their accusations, prostitutes and non-prostitutes lacked sufficient distinction. If a respectable woman could be so easily accused, it suggested that exterior appearance was not a reliable indicator of prostitute status. Ultimately, this dissertation will seek to resolve whether this lack of sufficient distinction was deliberate on the prostitute’s part or not. Biddle-Perry asserts that during the nineteenth century, ‘[b]odies, movements and clothes [were] all employed to convey character, social position and, most important, emotion and morality.’¹⁶ In this sense, outer appearance including clothing, the body and behaviour were all interpreted as indicators and extensions of personal morality. Consequently, this dissertation will analyse how the exterior of the prostitute in the form of clothing, the body and behaviour could be manipulated and disguised. It will evaluate to what extent these external attributes and characteristics could be interpreted as sources of infection towards members of society.

A collection of nineteenth-century English and French texts will be employed to undertake and inform this study. The broad variety utilised will enable an extensive examination through the hierarchies of the prostitute, from the common streetwalker to the prestigious courtesan. *L’Assommoir* (1877) and *Nana* (1880) by Emile Zola will be examined, specifically the prostitute’s Nana and Satin, with reference to ex-prostitute

¹³ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 128.

¹⁴ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 128.

¹⁵ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 128.

¹⁶ Geraldine Biddle-Perry and Sarah Cheang (eds), *Hair: Styling, Culture and Fashion* (Oxford: Berg, 2008), p. 194.

Irma. As a Naturalist, Zola had ‘an unidealised and comprehensive portrayal of reality’¹⁷, which meant a preoccupation with accurately presenting the minutiae of everyday life. Consequently, Zola displayed ‘a new explicitness in the depiction of sexuality’¹⁸, which will be invaluable to this Pan-European study of the infectious vessel. *La Dame aux Camelias* by Alexandre Dumas *fils* will present a second opportunity to examine a French courtesan through the character of Marguerite. Her appearance in this dissertation will add prominence to the study as Dumas based her character on his relationship with renowned courtesan, Marie Duplessis. The English texts used will enable a comparative study of the stereotypical prostitute from the early nineteenth-century. This will include Nancy and Bet in *Oliver Twist* (1838) by Charles Dickens, as well as the streetwalker Esther in *Mary Barton* (1848) by Elizabeth Gaskell. The character Mrs Warren, with occasional reference to Aunt Liz, will be analysed from the play *Mrs Warren’s Profession* (1893) by George Bernard Shaw. The play provides a late nineteenth-century insight into attitudes towards the prostitute. Furthermore, the preface to the play includes Shaw’s ironic *Author’s Apology* (1902) which explicitly references the status of prostitutes as infectious vessels due to the Contagious Diseases Acts. Finally, the prostitutes’ Sugar and Caroline will be reviewed from *The Crimson Petal and The White* (2002) by Michel Faber. As a Neo-Victorian text the novel can be ‘more frank than Victorian fiction’¹⁹ as it explicitly deals with subject matter ‘that would have been considered taboo’²⁰ by nineteenth-century authors. The text provides a

¹⁷ Brian Nelson, *Zola and the Bourgeoisie: A Study of Themes and Techniques in “Les Rougon-Macquart”* (London: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1983), p. 48.

¹⁸ Brian Nelson, *The Cambridge Introduction to French Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 139.

¹⁹ Louisa Hadley, *Neo-Victorian Fiction and Historical Narrative: The Victorians and Us* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 47.

²⁰ Hadley, *Neo-Victorian Fiction and Historical Narrative*, p. 47.

stark insight into the realities of the prostitute's ostracized position as a contagious vessel. Although the texts differ substantially in publication date, they enable a thorough investigation into the prostitute's position throughout the century. To enrich the study, nineteenth-century French and English artistic interpretations of the prostitute will be examined throughout. This will enable an analysis of how visual representations of the prostitute, as an infectious vessel, contaminated both French and English perspectives.

Chapter one will draw attention to the link between prostitution, infection and clothing. It explores and consequently reveals how the prostitute's clothing was morally infectious and deleterious towards society. With reference and analysis of prevalent stereotypes, it will explore how the mobility of fashion led to cases of both unintentional and deliberate mistaken identity.

Chapter two 'undresses' the prostitute through analysis of the body. It analyses societal representations, stereotypes and consequent criminalization of the prostitute as a physically diseased vessel. The chapter then examines how like clothing, the 'infectious' body could be manipulated and disguised. It argues that the body could be interpreted as a source of moral infection towards society as it could mislead and thus corrupt others.

Chapter three moves away from the corporeal focus, instead it examines the general behaviour of the prostitute including manners and gestures. As with clothing and the body, an argument will be formed that the prostitute's behaviour could be 'dressed'. It will analyse how the prostitute's behaviour was infectious toward society. Ultimately, the dissertation will identify how the prostitute was deliberately contaminating society through their infectious clothing, body and behaviour.

Chapter 1

The Infectious Vessel: A Prostitute's Dress

Nineteenth-century society in England and France viewed clothing as synonymous with the wearer's identity. Nead argues that 'the language of clothes was also a moral and sexual language.'²¹ The actions of the police enforcing the Contagious Diseases Act (1864) support this notion as they were visually analysing clothing for signs 'of sexual dissipation.'²² Pearson notes that 'inevitably [the police] made mistakes-even arresting virgins and respectable middle-class mothers.'²³ It raises the issue that the clothing of prostitutes and non-prostitutes lacked sufficient distinction. This could be attributed to significant developments in the clothing industry mid-century. Byrde asserts that, '[m]echanization in the textile industry brought a wider range of materials at more affordable prices,'²⁴ which enabled mass production of clothing. Consequently, clothing became cheaper which made fashion more accessible to women from varying classes. Fashion could thus be 'filtered down to a wide number of wearers'²⁵ as lower-class women could finally imitate upper-class style. The invention of aniline dyes introduced striking colours into clothing. Such 'dazzling hues [...] became particularly fashionable in Britain during the 1850s and 1860s.'²⁶

Typically, prostitutes had worn bright colours to attract customers. Later, as

²¹ Professor Lynda Nead, 'Fashion and Visual Culture in the 19th Century: Women in Red', <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/women-in-red> [accessed 16 March 2017]

²² Rosy Aindow, *Dress and Identity in British Literary Culture, 1870-1914* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 70.

²³ Michael Pearson, *The Age of Consent: Victorian Prostitution and Its Enemies* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1972), p. 62.

²⁴ Penelope Byrde, *Nineteenth-Century Fashion* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1992), p. 22.

²⁵ Byrde, *Nineteenth-Century Fashion*, p. 22.

²⁶ Lucy Johnston, *Nineteenth-Century Fashion in Detail* (London: V & A Publications, 2005), p. 122.

vivid colours in dress became fashionable and more accessible, it was increasingly difficult for police to distinguish ‘the virtuous woman from her unpure sister.’²⁷ The threat of mistaken identity was satirized by the nineteenth-century English artist, C.J. Culliford’s ‘Scene in Regent Street’ (Figure One). A clergyman mistakes a young woman for a prostitute, ‘a social evil’, due to the excessive nature of her fashionable attire. Nineteenth-century stereotypes presented prostitute clothing as ‘excessive finery’²⁸, often featuring ‘a bonnet [...] preferably decorated with a feather.’²⁹ In *L’Assommoir*, Nana’s status as prostitute is identified by her mother through her newly acquired, stereotypical clothing: ‘dresses with trains and hats covered in feathers’³⁰. In *Mrs Warren’s Profession*, the first introduction to Mrs Warren draws attention to her lack of respectability through her clothing: ‘[showily dressed in a brilliant hat and a gay blouse fitting tightly over her bust and flanked by fashionable sleeves]’³¹. Her clothing is provocative due to the eye-catching nature of her ‘brilliant hat’ (Shaw, Act 1, p. 1788), combined with the tight-fitting ‘gay blouse’ (Shaw, Act 1, p. 1788), which draws attention to her ample figure. By incorporating stereotypical items of prostitute clothing, such as the ‘brilliant hat’ (Shaw, Act 1, p. 1788), Shaw is able to allude to Mrs Warren’s true profession. Like Nana and Mrs Warren, the woman (Figure One) perfectly encapsulates the prostitute stereotype, due to her elaborate dress and feathered bonnet. The image underlines the notion that as popular fashions began to collide with

²⁷ Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), p. 131.

²⁸ Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality*, p. 127.

²⁹ Nead, ‘Fashion and Visual Culture in the 19th Century: Women in red’, <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/women-in-red> [accessed 26 July 2017]

³⁰ Emile Zola, *L’Assommoir*, translated by Margaret Mauldon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 385. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

³¹ George Bernard Shaw, *Mrs Warren’s Profession*, in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol. E, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), Act 1, p. 1788. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

prominent stereotypes; it became increasingly difficult for dress to distinguish true ‘moral’ status.



32 [C. J. Culliford], *Scene in Regent Street. Philanthropic Divine: 'May I beg you to accept this good little book. Take it home and read it attentively. I am sure it will benefit you.'* Lady: 'Bless me, Sir, you're mistaken. I am not a social evil, I am only waiting for a bus.' Coloured lithograph, c.1865. Private Collection.

C. J. Culliford, *Scene in Regent Street* (1865) (Figure One)³²

Similarly in *Oliver Twist*, Dickens hints at Bet's profession by incorporating such well-known stereotypes in his clothing descriptions. Bet was 'gaily [...] attired'³³ in a 'red gown [and] green boots' (Dickens, p. 97). Aindow asserts: 'The ultimate expression of the vulgarity of bright colours was in the clothing of the prostitute, brightness being a means of attracting attention to the body.'³⁴ By dressing Bet in the bright tones of red and green, Dickens manipulates the concept of prostitutes using loud colours to gain recognition in public. Furthermore, Bet's outer appearance also

³² Figure One, <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/women-in-red>

³³ Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, ed. Kathleen Tillotson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 97. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

³⁴ Aindow, *Dress and Identity in British Literary Culture, 1870-1914*, p. 96.

highlights her lack of conventional respectability. Richmond argues that: ‘Hair [...] could be a source of great pride and make a significant contribution to respectable appearance.’³⁵ Summers adds that respectable ‘women wore their hair ‘up’ outside of the bedroom.’³⁶ Bet’s lack of respectability is exposed by her improperly dressed hair as she appears publically with ‘yellow-curl papers’ (Dickens, p. 97). As ‘[a] woman’s hair [was] often seen as an indicator of her morality’³⁷, Bet’s ‘immoral’ status as prostitute is confirmed by her hair as she appears in a state of undress in front of men.

Furthermore, nineteenth-century texts depict women’s very interest in fashion as a dangerous precursor to prostitution. In *Mary Barton*, John Barton states: ‘[y]ou see Esther spent her money in dress, thinking to set off her pretty face’³⁸. Her actions are disparaged by John’s assertion: ‘I see what you’ll end at with your artificials, and your fly away veils, [...] you’ll be a street-walker’ (Gaskell, p. 6). Esther’s interest in ‘artificials’ (Gaskell, p. 6) is used by John to highlight improper moral laxity which he predicts will result in prostitution. Esther’s vanity is thus used by Gaskell to track her progression from a heightened interest in fashion to prostitution. Esther’s interest in adornment is used to suggest a dangerous lack of respectability as John raises issue with her attempts to draw attention to her body. Discourse on female vanity as a precursor to prostitution was rife throughout the century. Male critics imposed restrictions on the extent ‘respectable’ women could portray an interest in fashion. Summers highlights the views of ‘John Mather Austin, [a] mid-century author’³⁹ who referred to fashion as a

³⁵ Vivienne Richmond, *Clothing the Poor in Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 143.

³⁶ Leigh Summers, *Bound to Please: A History of the Victorian Corset* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), p. 201.

³⁷ Biddle-Perry, *Hair*, p. 193.

³⁸ Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, ed. Edgar Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 6. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

³⁹ Summers, *Bound to Please*, p. 21.

‘particularly dangerous folly.’⁴⁰ He repeatedly ‘warned young women [...] not to disregard fashion, nor to plunge into its extremes.’⁴¹ Ultimately, male critics made the boundaries of vanity both strict and indistinct. Interest in fashion was paramount to respectability whilst being excessively elaborate was criticized and related to moral downfall and prostitution.

Moreover, Rounding adds: ‘It was [...] believed that women were propelled into prostitution by vanity and the desire of being finely dressed...particularly in Paris, where simplicity in dress is actually a subject of reproach’⁴². Alexandre Parent-Duchatelet, a nineteenth-century hygienist and commentator, particularly attributed ‘vanity and the desire for the glitter of luxurious clothes’⁴³ as ‘one of the most active causes of prostitution.’⁴⁴ In *La Dame aux Camelias*, French courtesan Marguerite explicitly reveals that ‘vanity, and the idea of having gowns [...] lure [women]’⁴⁵ into prostitution. Similarly, *L’Assommoir* highlights Parisian Nana’s increased vanity and ‘desire of being finely dressed’⁴⁶ at an early age. Zola reveals ‘Nana had become very vain’ (*L’Assommoir*, p. 349), beginning to ‘[bring] ribbons home from the workshop and getting herself up in dirty dresses covered with bows and rosettes’ (*L’Assommoir*, p. 349). Zola underlines the impropriety of Nana’s increasing vanity and avoidance of ‘simplicity in dress.’⁴⁷ The text reveals that her sudden concentration on physical appearance led to improper social conduct. Zola reveals that Nana manipulates her

⁴⁰ Summers, *Bound to Please*, p. 21.

⁴¹ Summers, *Bound to Please*, p. 21.

⁴² Virginia Rounding, *Grandes Horizontales: The Lives and Legends of Four Nineteenth-Century Courtesans* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), p. 24.

⁴³ Shannon Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 51.

⁴⁴ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 51.

⁴⁵ Alexandre Dumas Fils, *La Dame aux Camelias*, translated by David Coward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 80. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

⁴⁶ Rounding, *Grandes Horizontales*, p. 24.

⁴⁷ Rounding, *Grandes Horizontales*, p. 24.

clothing to draw attention to her figure, whilst consciously ‘swaggering about and enjoying the stares and the compliments’ (*L’Assommoir*, p. 352). *Mary Barton*, *La Dame aux Camelias* and *L’Assommoir* underline a Pan-European association of female vanity and interest in fashion with immoral conduct leading to prostitution. In this sense, fashionable dress serves as a separate entity which can be interpreted as morally infectious towards young women, who become immorally consumed with bodily adornment.

Furthermore, the very women who created such bodily adornments were viewed as morally infectious towards respectable women, as they were tarnished with labels of prostitution. In both England and France, there were continual ‘allegations of immorality among dressmakers.’⁴⁸ Walkley asserts: ‘The marked connection between needlework and prostitution was often a matter of sheer necessity.’⁴⁹ Typically, seamstresses were often lower or middle-class women who desperately needed an income. As dressmaking required extremely long hours and awarded very little pay, many seamstresses were forced to supplement their wages with periods of prostitution. Furthermore, women who worked in clothing shops also faced accusations of moral corruption. Walkley notes that shop girls were usually chosen for their ‘[g]ood looks’⁵⁰ as they were used to entice customers, both female and male, into the business. In *Mary Barton*, it is noted that Mary could have easily worked in a clothing shop as ‘her beauty would have made her desirable as a show-woman’ (Gaskell, p. 27). Throughout the century, women who worked outside the protected, domestic sphere were viewed as liable to moral degradation. Furthermore, ‘employers were well aware that their girls

⁴⁸ Christina Walkley, *The Ghost in the Looking Glass: A Victorian Seamstress* (London: Peter Owen Limited, 1981), p. 18.

⁴⁹ Walkley, *The Ghost in the Looking Glass*, p. 81.

⁵⁰ Walkley, *The Ghost in the Looking Glass*, p. 88

had the opportunity to become involved with men.⁵¹ However, such involvement often led to moral ruin and dismissal, which resulted in a need for income and consequent prostitution. The association of prostitution with shop girls is portrayed in the French artist's, James Tissot, painting 'The Shop Girl' (Figure Two). The image depicts a ribbon shop selling colourful clothing adornments. A fashionably dressed woman can be seen gazing intently out of the window with her arms raised above her head. The positioning of her arms causes the bodice of her dress to cling to her frame, which draws attention to her figure. Outside the shop, a gentleman peers fixedly at the young shop girl, rather than the ribbons, in a state of open desire. On the shop floor, a pink ribbon can be seen haphazardly forming the shape of a heart. Tissot's placement of the heart on the floor incites notions of a debased, perhaps degraded, love or desire. Placement of the heart and the overtly sexual gaze from the male consumer implies that like the ribbons, the shop girl is a commodity which can be illicitly purchased. The very creation and trade of clothing was viewed as morally infectious towards 'respectable' women, due to frequent associations of prostitution with seamstresses and shop girls. In particular, shop girls were being viewed as purchasable commodities.

⁵¹ Walkley, *The Ghost in the Looking Glass*, p. 87.



James Tissot, *The Shop Girl* (1883-1885) (Figure Two)⁵²

As the very creation of clothing and dress in general were being read as extensions of prostitution, clothing can thus be interpreted as a further vessel of infection. Byrde asserts that ‘French fashion [...] was a dominant influence’⁵³ on English clothing. Not only was female interest in dress associated with prostitution but the fashion trend-setters of the period were often courtesans. Summers notes: ‘[T]he Victorian press was peppered with accounts of what prostitutes and courtesans wore.’⁵⁴ Consequently, the infectious nature of courtesan fashion is revealed to have contaminated the everyday literature of the period. Holden notes that Zola deliberately studied the press for information about well-known courtesans, ‘particularly Blanche d’Antigny, whom he was to take as his principal model for Nana, and Cora Pearl.’⁵⁵ As a French and English courtesan respectively, both women were celebrated by upper-class society for their status as fashion trend-setters. Zola explicitly portrays this notion

⁵² Figure Two, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Shop_Girl_\(Tissot\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Shop_Girl_(Tissot))

⁵³ Byrde, *Nineteenth-Century Fashion*, p. 22.

⁵⁴ Summers, *Bound to Please*, p. 22.

⁵⁵ George Holden (ed.), *Introduction*, in Emile Zola, *Nana* (London: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 9.

through the character of Nana, who becomes ‘a woman of fashion’⁵⁶. As her wealth and fame accumulate, ‘[h]er photographs were displayed in shop-windows, and her remarks were quoted in the papers’ (*Nana*, p. 311). Nana becomes a commodity to upper-class society as her appearance becomes something to aspire to and emulate; Nana ‘set the fashion, and great ladies imitated her’ (*Nana*, p. 311). Her style was even replicated by ‘rich merchants’ wives [who] copied her hats’ (*Nana*, p. 430). Her dress becomes infectious as her style is being reproduced by ‘moral’ society, in the form of married women. Courtesan fashions thus became contagious as they had the ability to infiltrate rigid social hierarchies due to replication.

Such replication of courtesan fashion was corrupting reputable women who faced the risk of moral, mistaken identity. Courtesans particularly set the trend for extravagant corsets, which were often brightly coloured and finished with details such as lace, silks and embroidery. Traditionally, women had worn plain and neutral fabric corsets as they were cheaper to purchase. Summers notes ‘[b]y the 1880s few publications were without corset advertisements of some kind.’⁵⁷ Consequently, courtesan fashions were infectious to women through the everyday literature they were perusing, which inevitably led to replication in their own dress. The elaborate corset which was initially eroticized by courtesans was being recreated by male designers. One such designer was Charles Worth, who was renowned for the colourful and elaborate corsets he created for his clientele, the belles of French society, ranging from courtesans to upper-class married women. In both France and England, ‘men undeniably dominated the corset patents and the corset industry in general.’⁵⁸ Summer argues that

⁵⁶ Emile Zola, *Nana*, ed. George Holden (London: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 311. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

⁵⁷ Summers, *Bound to Please*, p. 124.

⁵⁸ Summers, *Bound to Please*, p. 30.

corset fashion can be interpreted ‘as evidence of male wish fulfilment.’⁵⁹ Male designers were reproducing corsets based on the fashions of desirable courtesans, before marketing such trends towards ‘respectable’ women. The overtly sexualized trends of the courtesan had thus infiltrated external and intimate fashion. Underneath layers of ‘respectable’ clothing, upper-class women had been infected by courtesan trends through their most intimate means of dress, their underwear. Due to mass production and consequent accessibility, fashionable corsets could be purchased by a wider variety of female consumer due to cheaper prices. Alternatively, women from the lower classes were frequently replicating such fashions by making their own. Summers notes: ‘[m]aterials required to make the garments, including whalebone pre-cut [...], buckram, and the required corsetry thread called staysilk, were all commonly available from haberdashers.’⁶⁰ By purchasing cheap, base materials, women could then add as many elaborate adornments to their corset as they could afford. Overall, male designers, corset advertisements and the availability of cheap materials all contributed to enabling the constant replication of prostitute fashions.

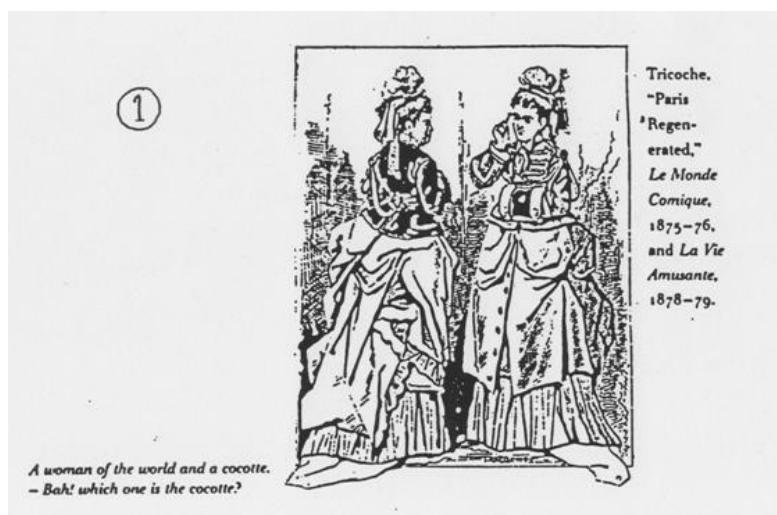
External fashion replication leading to mistaken identity was a prevalent issue in both England and France. In a cartoon (Figure Three) completed for ‘Le Monde Comique’ in 1875-1876, the notion of insufficient distinction is satirized. The image portrays two women who are identically dressed whilst the caption sardonically reads ‘A woman of the world and a cocotte-Bah! Which one is the cocotte?’ Ribeiro argues that nineteenth century convention dictated that respectable and moral women ‘[avoided] excessive finery.’⁶¹ However, both the ‘cocotte’ and ‘woman of the world’

⁵⁹ Summers, *Bound to Please*, p. 181.

⁶⁰ Summers, *Bound to Please*, p. 11.

⁶¹ Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality*, p. 127.

are elaborately dressed complete with ornate bonnets and streamers. Bonnet streamers became particularly fashionable during the 1850s, consisting of lace or ribbon which would playfully hang down the back of the dress. Such fashions were used to convey personal wealth. The length of the bonnet streamer revealed how much the wearer could spend on frivolous purchases, as the streamers purpose was solely aesthetic. The bonnets were also widely referred to as ‘follow-me-lads’ as streamers were used by prostitutes to attract and entice the opposite sex. However, in the image below (Figure Three) both of the women’s bonnets are dressed with streamers. Their fashion highlights the underlying threat of clothing as morally infectious, as the respectable woman can no longer be identified from her immoral counterpart.



Le Monde Comique, *A woman of the world and a cocotte* (1875-1876) (Figure Three)⁶²

It is clear that such emulation of prostitute fashion was disrupting nineteenth-century stereotypes. In both artwork and literature of the period, prostitutes were presented as ragged streetwalkers with dirty and torn clothing. In *Mary Barton*, John

⁶² Figure Three, <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/fashion-and-visual-culture-in-the-19th-century-the-girl-of-the-period>

instantly recognizes Esther's true profession due to 'her faded finery' (Gaskell, p. 143). The phrase 'faded finery' (Gaskell, p. 143) indicates her status as prostitute, as it highlights decay but also suggests an illicit past which afforded such 'finery' (Gaskell, p. 143). Like many of her contemporaries Gaskell employs clothing to expose Esther's rise and fall of fortunes as well as the shattering of her morality. Ribeiro asserts: 'Morality was equated with cleanliness of attire (soiled and tawdry dress was a sign of a depraved woman)'⁶³. The stained and 'tawdry'⁶⁴ condition of Esther's clothing immediately portrays her as 'a depraved woman'⁶⁵ and ragged streetwalker. Moreover, the fabric of both her dress and shawl are highly unsuitable for a respectable woman during such harsh weather. Her light 'muslin gown' (Gaskell, p. 143) and thin, silky 'barege shawl' (Gaskell, p. 143) were 'soiled'⁶⁶ as they were 'soaking wet' (Gaskell, p. 143). The spoiled condition of her dress is used to indicate personal ruin, as dirty clothing was used to represent moral degradation.

Similarly in *Oliver Twist*, Dickens draws attention to the 'untidy' (Dickens, p. 68) nature of Nancy and Bet's clothing. The stereotypical prostitute as a ragged streetwalker no longer cared nor could afford to look after her personal appearance. By drawing attention to their unkempt exterior, Dickens is able to imply their status as prostitutes without being explicit. The image of the unsuitably dressed prostitute is executed in a satirical sketch (Figure Four) by John Leech completed for Punch Magazine in 1857. The image portrays two streetwalkers who are both inappropriately dressed for the weather. Like Esther, the clothing of the female on the right encapsulates the concept of the ragged streetwalker with dirty and torn clothing. On the left, the

⁶³ Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality*, p. 127.

⁶⁴ Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality*, p. 127.

⁶⁵ Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality*, p. 127.

⁶⁶ Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality*, p. 127.

prostitute appears in her ‘faded finery’ (Gaskell, p. 143); the added detailing of lace on the skirt and the gaudy, elaborate bonnet are not only stereotypical but reminiscent of the adornments Nana added to her clothing to draw attention to her body.



John Leech, *The Great Social Evil Time: Midnight. A Sketch not a Hundred Miles from the Haymarket* (1857) (Figure Four)⁶⁷

Although stereotypes of prostitutes as ragged streetwalkers thrived throughout the period, the Contagious Diseases Act (1864) particularly exposed mounting concern surrounding mistaken identity. Summers argues in England, ‘[b]y the 1870s women’s clothing was characterized by [...] decorative detail [as] gowns became sumptuous visual orgies of ribbons, bows, ruffles, lace, flowers, fur and feathers.’⁶⁸ As bright

⁶⁷ Figure Four, <http://www.victorianweb.org/periodicals/punch/49.html>

⁶⁸ Summers, *Bound to Please*, p. 68.

colours and extravagant adornments became fashionable, prostitutes could no longer be identified by the colourful and elaborate nature of their clothing. Similarly in France during the 1870s, writer Maxine Du Camp commented: ‘one does not know today whether honest women are dressing like prostitutes, or prostitutes are dressed like honest women.’⁶⁹ In both France and England, fashions were blurring distinctions between prostitutes and respectable women. This notion is captured by French artist, Louis Anquetin’s 1889-1893, ‘Woman at the Champs-Elysees by Night’ (Figure Five). The ‘excessive finery’⁷⁰ and ‘decorative [details]’⁷¹ of the woman’s dress are reminiscent of stereotypical prostitute clothing as well as the elaborate trends of Paris fashion during the 1870s-80s. The woman resembles a prostitute due to her elaborate bonnet dressed with bright flowers and black feathers. Stereotypically, prostitute dress often featured an extravagant ‘bonnet [...] decorated with a feather.’⁷² The decorative trimmings of fur and feathers to the opulent shawl once more align the clothing with extravagant prostitute trends. However, the veil casts ambiguity over her true identity. The veil could be interpreted as a fashionable accessory or as an active attempt to disguise her prostitute status to avoid police detection. Her prostitute status could be confirmed by her location; she appears alone, elaborately dressed, under the streetlights at night; a common haunt for Parisian streetwalkers. Additionally, the presence of a male wantonly gazing at her in the background appears to imply her illicit profession. Despite the above, her prostitute status remains ambiguous. The clothing alone cannot be sufficiently used to identify her true status. Ultimately, her position is entirely

⁶⁹ Maxine Du Camp, *Paris: ses organs, ses fonctions et sa vie jusqu'en 1870* (Monaco: G. Rondeau, 1993), p. 351.

⁷⁰ Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality*, p. 127.

⁷¹ Summers, *Bound to Please*, p. 68.

⁷² Nead, ‘Fashion and Visual Culture in the 19th Century: Women in red’, <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/women-in-red> [accessed 5 August 2017]

indistinct. The fact she is alone could be arbitrary, whilst the title of the piece vaguely refers to her as ‘Woman.’



Louis Anquetin, *Woman at the Champs-Élysées by Night* (1889-1893) (Figure Five)⁷³

Such vague distinctions in fashionable clothing meant that prostitutes could deliberately disguise their true status. Robert Wilson, a nineteenth-century commentator who opposed the Contagious Diseases Acts, claimed prostitutes were actively manipulating their dress to avoid detection. He argued that the Acts forced prostitutes to ‘dress as ordinary well-behaved women.’⁷⁴ Aindow asserts: ‘Clothing by its very nature is ambiguous. It can be taken off, removed, or used as a form of disguise. Ultimately it can be employed as a means of subverting identity.’⁷⁵ Like Wilson’s assertion, once

⁷³Figure Five,

<http://impressionistgallery.co.uk/artists/Artists/abc/Auquetin/pictures/Woman%20at%20the%20Champs%20night,%201889-1893.jpg>

⁷⁴ Robert Wilson, *Prostitution Suppressible And Resistance To The Contagious Diseases Women’s Acts: A Duty* (1871) (London: S. W. Partridge & CO, 1871), p. 19.

⁷⁵ Aindow, *Dress and Identity in British Literary Culture, 1870-1914*, p.8

Nana becomes a courtesan she deliberately masquerades her identity through manipulation of clothing. At the races, she wears a 'white satin dress with white satin sleeves' (*Nana*, p. 346). Warwick argues that 'dress presents us with a scenario where virtually everything is of the order of connotation'⁷⁶. Nana's clothing denotes respectability as white dresses attach associations of innocence and purity. White dresses were also 'generally regarded as correct, elegant and refined.'⁷⁷ By wearing white, she is exhibiting her wealth, as the upkeep of white fabric was extremely expensive. Her outfit also indicates wealth as it was finished in the 'colours of the Vandevres stable' (*Nana*, p. 345). Once more, Nana becomes a commodity as she associates herself with the wealth of Vandevres and his stable. Through this connection, she also associates herself with the high-society racing trade and the exchange of money through betting. By doing so, Nana deliberately distances herself from her own courtesan trade which also involves monetary exchange. Nana's clothing is infectious as she is able to present herself as wealthy and respectable. Consequently, this meant that upper-class society could no longer immediately identify prostitutes, like Nana, through their clothing.

Nana's outfit at the races is reminiscent of the clothing in Henri Gervex's 'Madame Valtesse de la Bigne' completed in 1879 (Figure Six). Like Nana, the model for the painting was a renowned fashion trendsetter and popular French courtesan, Valtesse de la Bigne. The delicate colour combination of white against the sky blue detailing present Valtesse as a respectable upper-class woman, due to her strict avoidance of the loud colours commonly associated with prostitutes. The amount of

⁷⁶ Alexandra Warwick and Dani Cavallaro, *Fashioning The Frame: Boundaries, Dress and the Body* (Oxford: Berg, 1998), p. 37.

⁷⁷ Byrde, *Nineteenth-Century Fashion*, p. 23.

added, extravagant trimmings on the dress, including lace, flowers, ruffles and bows, denote wealth due to their sheer, fashionable volume. However, dress can only be manipulated to disguise identity to a certain extent. Throughout the painting, certain details in outer appearance hint at the model's true status as a courtesan. Ofek argues that respectable women's 'hands, [...] were always covered, gloved, delicate and white.'⁷⁸ Although Valtesse appears outside with traditional, fashionable accessories including a delicate bonnet and parasol, her 'respectable' image is severely tainted by her lack of gloves. Additionally, Ofek underlines that 'Victorian ladies had to accept the cultural expectation that hair should not be dishevelled.'⁷⁹ Valtesse's lack of respectability is captured through her 'dishevelled'⁸⁰ hair, which she wears undressed down her back. Biddle-Perry asserts that nineteenth-century 'hair can be considered as an extension of the body [...] requiring controlling measures to discipline the overly sexual nature of cascading hair, and thus the unruly body'⁸¹. As Valtesse has not attempted to tame her own 'cascading hair'⁸², this suggests an immoral, 'unruly body'⁸³. In this sense, her hair becomes morally infectious towards society as it invites attention. The overtly sensual nature of her flowing hair denotes sexual availability, which underlines her true status as a courtesan.

⁷⁸ Galia Ofek, *Representations of Hair in Victorian Literature and Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 2-3.

⁷⁹ Ofek, *Representations of Hair in Victorian Literature and Culture*, p. 34.

⁸⁰ Ofek, *Representations of Hair in Victorian Literature and Culture*, p. 34.

⁸¹ Biddle-Perry, *Hair*, p. 208.

⁸² Biddle-Perry, *Hair*, p. 208.

⁸³ Biddle-Perry, *Hair*, p. 208.



Henri Gervex, *Madame Valtresse de la Bigne* (1879) (Figure Six)⁸⁴

Similarly, Nana's dress can be viewed as morally infectious towards society as it seduces the viewer by drawing attention to her figure. As her dress 'fitted closely to her body' (*Nana*, p. 345), it '[outlined] her thighs in a very bold fashion for this period of ballooning skirts' (*Nana*, pp. 345-346). Her clothing is suggestive of the Regency Style fashionable in England during the early 1800s. With Regency style, there arose a seductive sense of fluidity and nakedness, as skirts clung to the hips and legs. During Nana's period, the early 1870s, French fashion dictated that skirts were made using heavy materials. Consequently, Nana makes an anti-fashion statement by choosing to wear a light and clinging fabric instead of the conventional 'ballooning skirts' (*Nana*, p. 346). Giorcelli argues that 'clothing is performative, always involving acts of self-display.'⁸⁵ Nana has successfully performed the role of respectability as 'people had

⁸⁴ Figure Six,

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Henri_Gervex_Portrait_Mlle_Valtesse_de_la_Bigne.jpg

⁸⁵ Cristina Giorcelli and Paula Rabinowitz (eds), *Fashioning the Nineteenth-Century: Habits of Being*, 3 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), p. 3.

rushed to see her, as if a queen were passing' (*Nana*, p. 345). The use of the word 'queen' (*Nana*, p. 345) suggests specific overtones of wealth and respectability, rather than prostitution.

Similarly in the *La Dame aux Camelias*, the clothing of Marguerite also denotes wealth and respectability rather than prostitution. Marguerite 'was elegantly dressed; she wore a muslin dress with full panels, a square Indian shawl embroidered at the corners with gold thread and silk flowers' (Dumas, p. 43). Marguerite's elegance is underlined by her refined attentions to fashion trends of the period. During the first half of the century, Indian shawls were extremely fashionable and coveted in France. Her shawl also relays wealth, as Indian shawls were made using cashmere, an expensive, imported material. Marguerite also wears 'a single bracelet, one of those thick gold chains which were then just beginning to be fashionable' (Dumas, p. 43). Her choice of bracelet underlines her wealth not only because it was 'thick gold' (Dumas, p. 43) but because it reveals that she was financially able to remain at the forefront of fashion trends. The overall effect of her appearance is that Marguerite was 'regal in her beauty' (Dumas, p. 43). Like Nana, Marguerite is able to manipulate her clothing to perform the role of a respectable, fashionable and wealthy upper-class woman.

In *The Crimson Petal and The White*, Caroline and Sugar also attempt to convey respectability through the manipulation of clothing. Caroline deliberately '[arranges] her shawl'⁸⁶ and '[smooths] down the front of her dress' (Faber, p. 17) to '[resemble] a respectably well-to-do woman' (Faber, p. 17). By replication of upper-class fashion, Caroline is actively disguising her true status to infiltrate social hierarchies and attract a higher class of clientele. Sugar goes even further than Caroline in a bid to distinguish

⁸⁶ Michel Faber, *The Crimson Petal and The White* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2002), p. 17. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

herself above other prostitutes by purchasing a better quality of dress: '[H]er policy is to save every sixpence until she can afford something that looks as though the finest lady's dress-maker might have made it especially for her' (Faber, p. 35). Her clothing is morally infectious towards society as it does disguise her true identity as a prostitute. Richmond states that clothing 'denoted conformity or differentiation, conferred or withheld respectability [...] and could be the key to advancement or degradation.'⁸⁷ Sugar's clothing does 'confer [...] respectability'⁸⁸ as her appearance is so convincing that it caused a shopkeeper to be 'rather obsequious to her' (Faber, p. 27) as he '[mistook] her for a lady' (Faber, p. 27). Additionally, Sugar also distinguishes herself from other prostitutes through understated clothing. She wears an unassuming 'dark green' (Faber, p. 98) dress and 'simple bonnet' (Faber, p. 98). By wearing a darker tone, she distances herself from the stereotypical prostitute dressed in bright colours. In comparison to Sugar's modest outfit and 'avoidance of excessive finery'⁸⁹, three nearby prostitutes are brash in their choice of clothing, as they wear 'too-elaborate bonnets' (Faber, p. 94) and have 'too many bows on their dresses' (Faber, p. 94). Moreover, Sugar attempts to disguise her identity as the 'filmy grey veil that hangs' (Faber, p. 98) from her bonnet literally obscures her face. Warwick states that 'veils intensify the enigmatic character of clothes.'⁹⁰ This applies to Sugar as her veil acts as a barrier to her true self. However, an act of nature reinforces Sugar's identity as prostitute. Due to a sudden downpour, her dress clings to her body so that 'she wears her attire like a second skin' (Faber, p. 100). Her drenched clothing draws attention to her figure, which diminishes her attempts at respectability. The rain also soils Sugar's dress with 'a long

⁸⁷ Richmond, *Clothing the Poor in Nineteenth-Century England*, p. 3.

⁸⁸ Richmond, *Clothing the Poor in Nineteenth-Century England*, p. 3.

⁸⁹ Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality*, p. 127.

⁹⁰ Warwick, *Fashioning The Frame*, p. 128.

stain of wetness all down her back, shaped like a tongue or an arrowhead, pointing down towards her skirts' (Faber, p. 98). Nature appears to have decorated her attire with crude reminders of her profession, as the stains direct attention towards parts of her body available for sale. Due to this act, Sugar's spoiled clothing embodies stereotypical depictions of the streetwalker in stained and dirty clothing. Warwick argues dress 'frames, separates and sanitizes the body, by giving its fluid outline a definite, culturally acceptable shape'⁹¹. Nana, Marguerite, Caroline and Sugar all manipulate clothing to disguise their roles as prostitutes, so that they may present themselves in a 'culturally acceptable shape'⁹². This results in their clothing becoming infectious to society, as they are able to mislead and thus corrupt others.

⁹¹ Warwick, *Fashioning The Frame*, p. 41.

⁹² Warwick, *Fashioning The Frame*, p. 41.

Chapter 2

Physical Contagion: The Prostitute's Body

In terms of societal interpretations of dress, the most intimate layer of clothing was arguably the flesh. In England and France, the prostitute's most personal attire, the body, was continually examined for signs of physical infection. Consequently, the prostitute was repeatedly targeted and criminalized as a diseased vessel. Both French and English laws subjected the prostitute body to invasive, internal examinations to determine symptoms of venereal disease. In France, if registered prostitutes failed to appear for regular inspections they could be arrested. They would then be held in a detention facility until examined. To an extent, the French government appeared to be regulating the prostitute body. Baldwin argues under the regulatory system, 'prostitution was not illegal [...] but those who sold sex without being registered were liable to punishment.'⁹³ In this sense, the French government tolerated the prostitute as long as they were not medically diagnosed as a diseased source. Furthermore, despite many Parisian women prostituting themselves on a short-term basis, it was extremely difficult to be removed from the official register. Although '[women] had the right to renounce prostitution and request [their] name be expunged [...], removal from the list could be held up for several months to a year.'⁹⁴ The French government imposed strict definitions on the curability of prostitutes. Even if cured of physical infection, prostitutes were still criminalized as 'incurable' vessels of moral contagion, hence their identification and immortalization on the official register.

⁹³ Baldwin, *Contagion and the State in Europe*, p. 363.

⁹⁴ Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, p. 24.

Likewise, the undiagnosed English prostitute body was not to be tolerated in society. Once accused any woman ‘who refused examination or treatment’⁹⁵ or ‘[left] the hospital early [...] could be imprisoned.’⁹⁶ Bell argues that the Acts ‘produced the prostitute body as the site of disease and pollution.’⁹⁷ Both French and English laws diagnosed and criminalized the ‘accused’ body as a contaminated source. Women’s bodies had to be diagnosed as either contaminated or safe, as they were unable to return to ‘respectable’ society unless they had been categorized. Ultimately, from the moment of accusation the female body became morally and physically infectious, whether prostitute or not.

However, such criminalization specifically targeted a distinct class of female. Only women from the lower-classes faced accusations and compulsory registration. Upper-class prostitutes, the courtesans, were largely excluded from the diseased narrative. In 1817, Parisian police arrested sixty upper-class prostitutes ‘and forced them to submit to venereal examinations’⁹⁸ however this ‘procedure [...] led to so many complaints from their protectors that the attempt was dropped.’⁹⁹ Harsin adds: ‘[I]n 1830 Prefect Jean-Claude Mangin attempted to make a distinction once again, dividing all prostitutes into two classes and setting separate times for their examinations.’¹⁰⁰ The separation of classes proved unsuccessful as courtesans were continually protected by upper-class clientele. Ultimately, male clientele were refusing to be tarnished with accusations of physical infection through association. By refusing to accept that courtesans could be labelled as physically infectious, men were thus extracting

⁹⁵ Baldwin, *Contagion and the State in Europe*, p. 372.

⁹⁶ Baldwin, *Contagion and the State in Europe*, p. 372.

⁹⁷ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 55.

⁹⁸ Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, p. 17.

⁹⁹ Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, p. 17.

¹⁰⁰ Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, p. 18.

themselves from any consequent verbal contamination. They were distinguishing courtesans from their lower-class, diseased counterparts. By doing so, they were avoiding moral contagion by only mixing with the perceived, ‘non-diseased’ class of prostitute. Consequently, ‘courtesans remained unpoliced for the rest of the century.’¹⁰¹ As diseased vessels, courtesans could chiefly disregard medical thus societal condemnation. If they chose to disguise physical symptoms of venereal disease, it was for the benefit of attracting clientele, rather than to fool medical officials.

In comparison, lower-class ‘[p]rostitutes, who had no incentive to be found diseased, hospitalized and deprived of their livelihood, dissimulated to hide symptoms.’¹⁰² Manipulated like an additional layer of clothing, lower-class prostitutes deliberately disguised the true ‘contagious’ status of their bodies. Harsin notes in Paris in 1821, records ‘showed that prostitutes tended to flood the dispensary at the end of each month.’¹⁰³ This swamping was because physical ‘symptoms masked by rice powder, were more likely to pass through undetected when the doctors were rushed.’¹⁰⁴ With the aid of cosmetics, prostitutes were able to ‘dress’ their infected bodies to fit a more ‘culturally acceptable shape’¹⁰⁵: a ‘shape’¹⁰⁶ which was not persecuted as detrimental to societal health. Despite such efforts, Bell indicated that the French and English ‘medical profession [were] unable accurately to diagnose contagious disease.’¹⁰⁷ She adds that ‘any ulceration [or] vaginal discharge [was] considered unsafe’¹⁰⁸ and could result in detainment in a ‘lock ward.’¹⁰⁹ Ultimately, male, medical

¹⁰¹ Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, p. 18.

¹⁰² Baldwin, *Contagion and the State in Europe*, p. 374.

¹⁰³ Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, p. 16.

¹⁰⁴ Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, p. 16.

¹⁰⁵ Warwick, *Fashioning The Frame*, p. 41.

¹⁰⁶ Warwick, *Fashioning The Frame*, p. 41.

¹⁰⁷ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 58.

¹⁰⁸ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 59.

¹⁰⁹ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 59.

officials attained the authority to diagnose any female, physical abnormalities as deviant, and thus harmful to 'respectable' society. The 'culturally acceptable shape'¹¹⁰ prostitutes aimed to fulfil was thus indistinct. Regardless of venereal disease, the lower-class female body was persecuted as a dangerous, infectious vessel prone to corrupt and contaminate society.

As a whole, prostitutes were besieged as a distinct, 'diseased' class. Bell argues: 'The prostitute body was mapped [...] as a distinct body, and the "prostitute" was actively produced as a marginalized social-sexual identity.'¹¹¹ By verbal extraction and exclusion from 'respectable' society, prostitutes were exclusively labelled as physical and moral pollutants. By only allocating blame to the female body, this excluded and 'sanitized' male clientele of their share in the spreading of disease. Such distinctions underline the gendered Pan-European discourse on physical contagion. Bell asserts: 'The nineteenth-century [...] body of knowledge [...] was produced by the hegemonic male voice: the doctor, the lawyer, the judge, the policeman, the administrator.'¹¹² The 'hegemonic male voice'¹¹³ is reminiscent of the strict, male discourse on conventional, feminine fashions. Like the male designers who physically transformed the female form, the prostitute's body was verbally sculpted by masculine discourse on feminine contagion. Males were given the authority to verbally condemn and free women of infection in England and France. Due to regulations in Paris in 1843, a woman could be arrested as prostitute primarily based 'on the word of a man who claimed she had been soliciting him.'¹¹⁴ In *Nana*, Satin also notes that the police were 'defended and

¹¹⁰ Warwick, *Fashioning The Frame*, p. 41.

¹¹¹ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 40.

¹¹² Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 42.

¹¹³ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 42.

¹¹⁴ Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, p. 31.

rewarded, even when they had taken a respectable girl among the rest' (*Nana*, p. 274). Likewise, Bell cites the English case of Harriet Hicks who had been detained in a Lock Hospital due to an ulcer, mistaken for venereal disease. Hicks was finally 'discharged on the evidence of a man she had lived with for six years'¹¹⁵ who declared 'that he had not been diseased.'¹¹⁶ The aforementioned cases underline that male agency was prioritised over actual prostitute status and female physical infection. It highlights a gendered preference as Hicks's freedom was solely reliant on her male partner's lack of contamination. In 'The Author's Apology' (1902) regarding *Mrs Warren's Profession*, George Bernard Shaw noted: 'Nothing would please our sanctimonious British public more than to throw the whole guilt of Mrs Warren's profession on Mrs Warren herself.'¹¹⁷ He argues strongly against such gendered misappropriation of blame: 'Nor am I prepared to accept the verdict of the medical gentlemen who would compulsorily sanitise and register Mrs Warren, whilst leaving Mrs Warren's patrons [...] free to destroy her health and anybody else's without fear of reprisals.'¹¹⁸ Shaw's statement criticizes the conventional 'hegemonic male voice'¹¹⁹ of the Contagious Diseases Acts. He repositions labels of infection to also include male clientele. Shaw disagrees that Mrs Warren, as prostitute, was the sole spreader of infection. By suggesting that her 'patrons [were] free to destroy her health'¹²⁰, Shaw unconventionally implies that Mrs Warren might not be the primary source of disease. However, he argues that the medical voice would exclusively condemn Mrs Warren as the primary location of contagion. His

¹¹⁵ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 58.

¹¹⁶ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 58.

¹¹⁷ George Bernard Shaw, 'The Author's Apology', <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1097/1097-h/1097-h.html> [accessed 3 August 2017]

¹¹⁸ Shaw, 'The Author's Apology', <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1097/1097-h/1097-h.html> [accessed 3 August 2017]

¹¹⁹ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 42.

¹²⁰ Shaw, 'The Author's Apology', <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1097/1097-h/1097-h.html> [accessed 3 August 2017]

statement highlights that convention relinquished men from any moral or physical responsibility by exclusively blaming the prostitute body.

The regularity of such gendered conventions meant that prostitutes were often referred to as ‘filthy [...], vehicles of disease [and] masses of rotteness.’¹²¹ Such phrases immediately attached connotations of decay and disease to the prostitute body. Correspondingly, a key figure in early Parisian prostitution law was the hygienist, Alexandre Parent-Duchatelet. In reference to his involvement, Duchatelet noted:

If I have been able...to penetrate into the sewers, to handle putrid matter, [...] in a sense to live in the midst of the most abject and disgusting products [...], why would I blush to enter a sewer of another type (a sewer more impure, I swear, than all the others.¹²²

His statement not only links prostitutes to sewerage, but also claims they were far more tainted and ‘impure’¹²³ than regular filth. The word ‘impure’¹²⁴ suggests something that is both harmful and sinful. Use of such a phrase implies that prostitutes were detrimentally contagious, both morally and physically. Similarly, Dr. John Barr who worked at an English Lock Hospital generalized prostitutes as putrid vessels of physical disease in 1871: ‘[T]hey were very dirty, in fact, filthy; they were covered with vermin, [...] and all of them very badly diseased.’¹²⁵ The term ‘all of them’¹²⁶ reveals Barr’s sweeping categorization of prostitutes as an unclean and contaminated set. The language of sanitation and hygiene employed by both men desexualizes the prostitute body. They were tainting a figure of desire and pleasure with a discourse of disease and impurity. Ultimately, Barr and Duchatelet were sculpting the female form; verbally fashioning the

¹²¹ Attwood, *The Prostitute’s Body*, p. 50.

¹²² Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 47.

¹²³ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 47.

¹²⁴ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 47.

¹²⁵ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 59.

¹²⁶ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 59.

prostitute's body as a filthy vessel of venereal disease.

Consequently, such discourse produced a stereotype of the prostitute's body as lower-class, dirty and diseased. Attwood argues: '[T]he harsh language of disease and contagion [...] resulted in the portrayal of these women as morally 'loose' [and] dirty.'¹²⁷ Like interpretations of clothing, the body was read as an indicator of personal morality. Walkowitz adds: 'Victorians expected to see the vices and virtues of femininity written on the body.'¹²⁸ Nineteenth-century stereotypes thus dictated that prostitute 'vices'¹²⁹ could be easily identified by physical signifiers, such as a filthy or diseased appearance. Felicien Rops, a Belgium artist who spent the majority of his life in Paris, caricatured such an image in his painting 'La Parodie Humaine' in 1878 (Figure Seven). The skeletal figure of Death masquerades as a dirty and emaciated prostitute, attempting to entice a male client. The painting symbolizes the prostitute's status as a fatal vessel of venereal disease. Like the 'filthy'¹³⁰ prostitute in the painting, Duchatelet argued that '[a] distinctive character of prostitutes [was] a remarkable negligence regarding cleanliness.'¹³¹ The dishevelled, unclean and diseased appearance of the prostitute body could thus be used to indicate their immoral, contagious status.

¹²⁷ Attwood, *The Prostitute's Body*, p. 49.

¹²⁸ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 50.

¹²⁹ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 50.

¹³⁰ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 59.

¹³¹ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 48.



Félicien Rops, *La parodie humaine* (1878) (Figure Seven)¹³²

Such stereotypes infected both literature and artwork. After becoming a streetwalker, Nana's immorality is portrayed by her filthy apparel. She was 'sometimes so dirty you wouldn't touch her with a pair of tongs' (*L'Assommoir*, p. 384). Similarly, Esther is characterised through her altered visage which contrasted dramatically from 'old recollections of her [...] fresh dazzling beauty' (Gaskell, p. 280). The notion that Esther's beauty used to be 'fresh' (Gaskell, p. 280) suggests a prior cleanliness and purity which has since disappeared. Her ravaged body denotes the effects of physical disease due to her 'thinly-covered bones and pale lips' (Gaskell, p. 280). Her bodily description implies death and decay which enables societal identification of the prostitute. Similarly, Sugar's damaged body stereotypically indicates her prostitute

¹³² Figure Seven, <http://blogs.bl.uk/european/2014/10/f%C3%A9licien-rops-baudelaire-and-skeleton-passions.html>

position as she is ‘stick-thin, flat-chested and bony like a consumptive young man’ (Faber, p. 26). Sugar’s resemblance to a wasting illness such as consumption enables societal recognition of the diseased, prostitute stereotype. Such identification was a regular occurrence for Sugar, as male clientele continually used sanitary language to refer to ‘her body as a cesspool of filth’ (Faber, 296). To an extent, Nancy also fulfils diseased stereotypes. Her physical appearance noticeably declines in accordance with her morality. Once ‘stout and hearty’ (Dickens, p. 68), Nancy eventually appears both ‘pale and reduced’ (Dickens, p. 307). Her physical ruin is captured in a commissioned illustration by Sol Eytinge Junior (Figure Eight), completed in 1867. Eytinge captures Dr. Barr’s image of the ‘filthy’¹³³ prostitute, as Nancy appears emaciated with dirty hands and face. Furthermore, she fulfils stereotypes of ‘the unkempt tresses of the hypersexed prostitute’¹³⁴. As previously noted with Bet, undressed hair was read as an indicator of immorality. Consequently, Nancy’s dishevelled hair reaffirms her immoral, prostitute status.



¹³³ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 59.

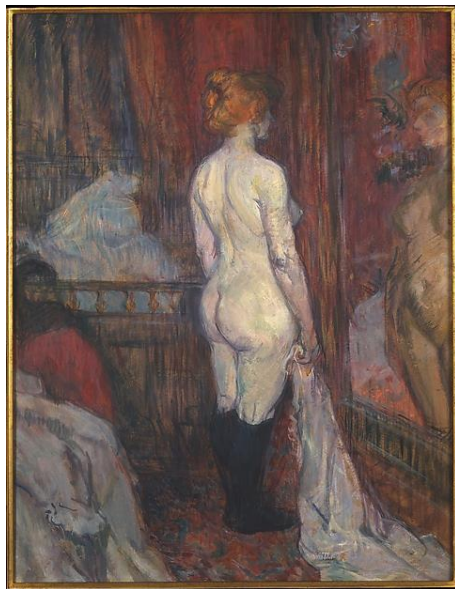
¹³⁴ Ariel Beaujot, *Victorian Fashion Accessories* (London: Berg, 2012), p. 139.

Sol Eytinge Junior, *Bill Sikes and Nancy* (1867) (Figure Eight)¹³⁵

Like the depictions of Esther and Nancy, Dickens generically characterises the prostitute body through physical decline. He reaffirms stereotypes that prostitution led to premature ‘fading’ (Dickens, p. 199) of ‘early freshness’ (Dickens, p. 199). He adds that particularly depraved women had ‘every mark and stamp of their sex utterly beaten out, [...] presenting but one loathsome blank of profligacy and crime’ (Dickens, p. 199). The description given adheres to the moralistic language applied by Duchatelet. Likewise, Dickens desexualises the prostitute by exclusively underlining their status as corruptive, infectious vessels. Consequently, Dickens strips away any remaining connotations of desire. Instead, he argues that the physical effects of prostitution undressed the body, revealing a ravaged carcass of sexless immorality. The male voice removing the prostitute’s attempted discourse of desire was also prevalent in nineteenth-century artwork. French artist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec presents an unapologetic and bold prostitute body in his 1897 painting ‘Woman before a Mirror’ (Figure Nine). The prostitute stands erect whilst staring blankly at her naked self. She appears to be confrontationally appraising the defects and values of her own flesh. The woman is not desirably romanticized by posed seduction. Instead, Lautrec presents the prostitute body as undesirably honest in an unconscious moment of physical and inner reflection. In his earlier painting, ‘Femme tirant son bas’ (Figure Ten), Lautrec captures the minutiae of everyday brothel life. The image is innately practical, as the prostitute bends uncomfortably to put on her stocking. Once more, Lautrec presents a practical rather

¹³⁵ Figure Eight, <http://www.victorianweb.org/art/illustration/eytinge/188.html>

than provocative portrayal. The frankness of stance strips any connotations of seduction from the body, thus removing any associations of illicit desire.



Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Woman before a Mirror* (1897) (Figure Nine)¹³⁶



Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Femme tirant son bas* (1894) (Figure Ten)¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Figure Nine, <https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/2003.20.15/>

¹³⁷ Figure Ten, http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/index-of-works/resultat-collection.html?no_cache=1&zoom=1&tx_damzoom_pi1%5Bzoom%5D=0&tx_damzoom_pi1%5BxmlI

Whilst the ‘hegemonic male voice’¹³⁸ was attempting to dispel the discourse of desire by stereotypes and medical condemnation, prostitutes were manipulating their bodies to attract and seduce. As with clothing, the body could be manipulated ‘as a form of disguise’¹³⁹. Rounding notes that prostitutes ‘were continually devising ways of disguising any tell-tale symptoms of disease.’¹⁴⁰ As previously noted, Parisian prostitutes disguised symptoms by using ‘rice powder’¹⁴¹. During the nineteenth century, rice powder was also used to provide a flawless, porcelain finish to the body. As an actress and courtesan, Nana used powder publically and privately to achieve such an effect. Georges notes that he was ‘all white from rubbing against Nana’ (*Nana*, p. 100). He laughingly comments that ‘Anybody’d think it was sugar’ (*Nana*, p. 100). Throughout the century, sugar was an expensive delicacy which few could afford. The comparison of Nana’s powdered frame to sugar relates her body to a sweet, expensive commodity. Consequently, the use of cosmetics has masqueraded Nana’s body as a desirable, savoured luxury rather than an infectious vessel.

Similarly, Sugar avoids societal detection by deliberately concealing and preventing aesthetic blemishes. In comparison to Caroline with her unhygienic ‘black tooth’ (Faber, p. 16), Sugar ‘applies tooth powder [...] after each meal, and rinses it with a watery liquid that she buys in a bottle’ (Faber, p. 34). Additionally, she constantly bathes using ‘aromatic suds’ (Faber, p. 285) which enticingly perfume her body. By actively purchasing items to disguise her true status as ‘filthy’¹⁴² prostitute, Sugar’s

d%5D=000722&tx_damzoom_pi1%5Bback%5D=en%2Fcollections%2Findex-of-works%2Fresultat-collection.html%3Fno_cache%3D1%26zsz%3D9

¹³⁸ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 42.

¹³⁹ Aindow, *Dress and Identity in British Literary Culture, 1870-1914*, p. 8.

¹⁴⁰ Rounding, *Grandes Horizontales*, p. 14.

¹⁴¹ Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, p. 16.

¹⁴² Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 59.

cleanliness distances her from the diseased stereotypes. Her attentions to sanitary detail distinguish Sugar from other prostitutes, as William ‘appraises her fresh face’ (Faber, p. 248). In this sense, it is Nana’s and Sugar’s attempts to conceal their ‘infectious’ status that makes their bodies morally contagious. As they actively evade diseased stereotypes, society can no longer use well-known physical indicators, such as general dirtiness, to identify the prostitute. They became morally infectious as their camouflaged bodies can circulate in society undetected. As they physically mislead others, their bodies are no longer reliable extensions of their own immorality and corruption.

The prostitute body could also be naturally misleading. Due to diseased stereotypes, clean and attractive prostitutes could easily integrate into ‘respectable’ society. In *Nana*, Satin avoids immediate detection due to her ‘virginal face [and] velvety eyes which were soft and innocent’ (*Nana*, pp. 42-43). Her ‘virginal’ (*Nana*, p. 42) appearance denotes purity and respectable femininity rather than diseased degradation. Similarly, Sugar’s countenance not only disguises her true status but also attracts clientele: ‘There is no rarer treasure in Sugar’s profession than a virginal-looking girl who can surrender to a deluge of ordure and rise up smelling like roses, [...] her smile white as absolution’ (Faber, p. 35). Her innocent appearance both attracts and satiates her male clientele. Her prostitute ‘vices’¹⁴³ are not ‘written on [her] body’¹⁴⁴, as she physically appears virtuous. The notion that her ‘smile [is] white as absolution’ (Faber, p. 35) implies that her visage visually reconciles men for the immoral acts they have committed with her. Sugar’s body thus becomes morally contagious toward society as it misleads and attracts others, whom she can then ‘corrupt’. Likewise, Marguerite’s appearance misleads upper-class society as ‘it was impossible to behold

¹⁴³ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 50.

¹⁴⁴ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 50.

[a] beauty more captivating' (Dumas, p. 8). In contrast to repugnant stereotypes, Marguerite's beauty implies ideological femininity and respectability, rather than degradation. Ultimately, Satin, Nana, Sugar and Marguerite covertly betray diseased stereotypes. Their misleading appearances allow them to move unidentified and undetected by society, making their physical appearance morally contagious.

Despite such physical deceptions, literature and artwork employed subtle physical signifiers to expose the prostitute. In 1893, physician Cesare Lombroso recorded several features of the prostitute body. He moved away from 'dirty'¹⁴⁵ stereotypes and instead cited subtle, congenital defects. He argued that such flaws revealed the prostitute's true degenerative state. Earlier in the century in 1842, French writer Alphonse Esquiros had similarly defined prostitute signifiers: '[T]heir chest is wide and generous, their pelvis ample, their flesh abundant and firm to the touch; their face radiates highly developed sensual energies; the large and devouring mouth, the flaring nostrils.'¹⁴⁶ Lautrec's naked prostitutes (Figure Nine and Ten) serve as painterly embodiments of such descriptions. Both women have 'generous'¹⁴⁷ bosoms, betraying no observable symptoms of venereal disease. Likewise, their 'flesh [appears] abundant'¹⁴⁸ and 'their pelvis ample'¹⁴⁹ as they look plump and healthy. In his findings, Lombroso also claimed that hair colour could be examined to covertly expose the prostitute. He noted 'the predominance of blond and red hair among women offenders against chastity.'¹⁵⁰ Lautrec's prostitutes fulfil this subtle signifier as they have red and

¹⁴⁵ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 59.

¹⁴⁶ Rounding, *Grandes Horizontales*, p. 26.

¹⁴⁷ Rounding, *Grandes Horizontales*, p. 26.

¹⁴⁸ Rounding, *Grandes Horizontales*, p. 26.

¹⁴⁹ Rounding, *Grandes Horizontales*, p. 26.

¹⁵⁰ Cesare Lombroso and Guglielmo Ferrero, *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*, translated by Nicole Hahn Rafter and Mary Gibson (Durham: Durham University Press, 2004), pp. 123-124.

blond hair respectively. Additionally, Lombroso argued that it was not until old age that true degeneration was revealed: ‘When youth vanishes, [...] the wrinkles deepen, becoming like scars, and the once pleasant face fully reveals the degenerative type into which it was born.’¹⁵¹ The dressed woman featured in ‘Femme tirant son bas’ (Figure Ten) embodies Lombroso’s aged prostitute. Her ravaged body with sagging breasts and deepened wrinkles betrays her true ‘degenerative type’¹⁵². She casts a sinister character due to her ‘large and devouring mouth’¹⁵³ painted bright red with lipstick. King notes that ‘until the late nineteenth century lip colouring remained a practice reserved for performers and prostitutes’¹⁵⁴. Like other bodily indicators, bright lipstick could subtly expose prostitute status.

The physical indicators of the prostitute such as heaving bosoms, red cheeks and ‘flaring nostrils’¹⁵⁵ became well-known to society. Consequently, Dickens was able to hint at Nancy’s and Bet’s true status through their plump physiques and red cheeks as ‘they had a great deal of colour in their faces; and looked quite stout’ (Dickens, p. 68). Similarly, Marguerite’s status is relayed by ‘the pink flush of [her] cheeks’ (Dumas, p. 8) and her ‘nostrils slightly flared in a passionate aspiration towards sensuality’ (Dumas, p. 8). In this sense, even Marguerite’s nostrils indicate her profession as they expose her innate, desirable sexuality. Likewise, Zola hints at Nana’s prostitute status by revealing she had ‘solid loins and [...] firm bosom’ (*Nana*, p. 223). Zola also confirms Nana’s

¹⁵¹ Lombroso and Ferrero, *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*, p. 143.

¹⁵² Lombroso and Ferrero, *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*, p. 143.

¹⁵³ Rounding, *Grandes Horizontales*, p. 26.

¹⁵⁴ Poppy King, *The A-Z of Lipstick* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016)

<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=06JSDQAAQBAJ&pg=PT61&lpg=PT61&dq=lipstick+prostitutes+nineteenth+century&source=bl&ots=AkYkQomzZH&sig=ChPJY9qVks0YzuZPiDmqXiI2M&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiy0rLOzcfWAhVkcMAKHbSVAO0Q6AEIcTAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false> [accessed 10 August 2017]

¹⁵⁵ Rounding, *Grandes Horizontales*, p. 26.

degenerative state by referencing her ‘mole, with [...] curly hairs on it’ (*Nana*, p. 81). Lombroso even referenced Zola, when he argued that ‘hair moles must be added to the signs of degeneration in women.’¹⁵⁶ Consequently, Nana’s small mole indicates her degraded origins. In comparison, Sugar’s body also betrays subtle indicators of her degradation. Beaujot asserts that during the nineteenth century, ‘hands were a manifestation of class and gender written on the body.’¹⁵⁷ She adds that respectable women had ‘delicate white hands’¹⁵⁸. Sugar’s lower-class, prostitute origins and immorality are thus hinted at by her ‘cracked and flaking fingers’ (Faber, p. 43).

However, prostitutes could manipulate the presentation of their body to diminish the significance of such physical signifiers. Finch argues that ‘a clothed condition is the body’s public guise and nakedness its private “truth”’¹⁵⁹. However, the prostitute’s ‘private truth’¹⁶⁰ was one which could be manipulated to incite desire and lust, thus concealing immoral status. Consequently, the body could be interpreted as the most significant piece of clothing the prostitute could wear. Correspondingly, Nana’s flesh is continually compared to sensuous fabrics. Thompson argues that ‘[d]uring Nana’s extravagant dinner party, flesh is mistaken for fabric in the eyes of the inebriated guests.’¹⁶¹ The likeness of Nana’s flesh to fabric incites a frenzied lust in Steiner who ‘could see a patch of delicate, satiny skin which drove him crazy’ (*Nana*, p. 121). The notion that her skin is like satin suggests Nana’s flesh maintains a luxurious, glossy finish. Furthermore, Zola notes that her ‘reddish down [...] turned her skin into velvet’

¹⁵⁶ Lombroso and Ferrero, *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*, p. 131.

¹⁵⁷ Beaujot, *Victorian Fashion Accessories*, p. 31.

¹⁵⁸ Beaujot, *Victorian Fashion Accessories*, p. 31.

¹⁵⁹ Casey Finch, “‘Hooked and Buttoned’: Victorian Underwear and Representations of the Female Body”, *Victorian Studies*, 34 (1991), 337-363 (p. 339)

¹⁶⁰ Finch, ‘Hooked and Buttoned’, p. 339.

¹⁶¹ Hannah Thompson, *Naturalism Redressed: Identity and Clothing in the Novels of Emile Zola* (Legenda: Oxford, 2004), p. 50.

(*Nana*, pp. 222-223). The relation of her flesh to such a sensuous and physically stimulating material implies that likewise, Nana's skin invited the touch. In this sense, Nana's most seductive outfit is her nakedness. Despite having no theatrical talents, she uses her nakedness to prevail over a theatre audience: '[S]he thrust out one hip [...], bent backwards, so that her breasts were shown to good advantage [...]. Applause burst forth on all sides' (*Nana*, p. 33). She uses her body to perform a seductive narrative, by physically showcasing her desirability. Zola adds that Nana 'was sure of the sovereign power of her flesh' (*Nana*, p. 44). The phrase 'sovereign power' (*Nana*, p. 44) underlines the superlative authority that Nana's body maintained. She reverses conventional gender dynamics as she 'remained victorious by virtue of her marble flesh' (*Nana*, p. 46). Her body reigns supreme over the men in the audience, as she renders them powerlessly vulnerable with just the slightest of movements: '[W]ith a twitch of her little finger she could stir men's flesh' (*Nana*, p. 46). Nana's body is morally contagious as she manipulates her figure so that it may only be interpreted as a desirable object, rather than a diseased vessel.

Furthermore, Nana's flesh indicates her degeneracy as the hair on her body 'looked like an animal's fleece' (*Nana*, p. 33) whilst her 'mane [...] covered her back with the fell of a lioness' (*Nana*, p. 223). Described as 'the Golden Beast' (*Nana*, p. 223) Nana's hairiness ultimately hints at her true atavistic state. Despite this, her bestial appearance only evokes a fervent lust from the theatre audience as 'applause became positively frantic' (*Nana*, p. 33) when confronted with her body. Similarly, Sugar's bodily likeness to a predatory animal incites lust. Her upper-class client William notes: 'Her skin is like nothing he's ever seen [...] Tiger stripes. Swirling geometric patterns of peeling dryness alternating with reddened flesh' (Faber, p. 173). Like Nana's audience,

William overlooks Sugar's prostitute status as he is enthralled by the carnality of her bestial flesh. Her general cleanliness has successfully disguised her degraded status so that her body can only be interpreted through a discourse of desire. Consequently, William is unable to interpret her 'peeling dryness' (Faber, p. 173) as an indicator of physical or moral disease. Instead, he reads her flesh as 'beguiling, a fitting mark of her animal nature' (Faber, p. 173).

Despite such disguise and manipulation, as a vessel of moral and physical contagion, the prostitute body was ultimately not allowed to survive in literature. As a whole, prostitutes could not escape legal, medical and societal condemnation. In both French and English literature, as unregulated vessels of infection capable of contaminating 'respectable' society, the prostitute body was either punished or destroyed. At the end of the novel *Nana*'s beauty, which she used to mislead, corrupt and ruin male clientele, is dramatically destroyed. Her body eventually portrays the extreme symptoms of her inner degradation and 'rottenness'¹⁶². Attwood asserts that '[m]ale authors used the language and imagery of infectious disease, biological rot, animality and carnality'¹⁶³ to describe the prostitute body. In death, Zola employs the 'imagery of [...] biological rot'¹⁶⁴ to depict *Nana*'s ruined visage. She is completely deformed and reduced to 'a heap of pus and blood, a shovelful of putrid flesh' (*Nana*, p. 470). In regards to *Nana*'s deformed appearance, Zola notes: 'It was as if the poison she had picked up in the gutters, [...] that ferment with which she had poisoned a whole people, had now risen to her face and rotted it' (*Nana*, p. 470). In this sense, *Nana*'s appalling death serves as retribution for her moral corruption of 'a whole people' (*Nana*,

¹⁶² Attwood, *The Prostitute's Body*, p. 50.

¹⁶³ Attwood, *The Prostitute's Body*, p. 50.

¹⁶⁴ Attwood, *The Prostitute's Body*, p. 50.

p. 470). In death, society can safely distinguish and categorize Nana as a contagious vessel due to her visibly deformed and diseased state. Marguerite is similarly punished as she suffers an agonizing illness which renders her incapable of movement. She even notes that her extreme suffering is reprisal for her prostitute profession: 'I never knew how much pain our bodies can give us. Oh! my past life! I am now paying for it twice over!' (Dumas, p. 192). Likewise, Nancy is brutally beaten to death so that her body is reduced to a distorted mass of 'mere flesh and blood' (Dickens, p. 384). Her death has completely stripped Nancy of her prostitute status. Any remaining narratives of desire that her body could have provoked have been destroyed. Her body has thus been stripped of all femininity as she remains a sexless corpse.

Similarly, Esther suffers painfully in both life and death. She embodies diseased narratives as she was continually 'laid up [...] with spitting of blood' (Gaskell, pp.190-191) and a 'hard, raking cough' (Gaskell, p. 282). Her death serves as punishment for the immorality of her drunken, prostitute existence. Her remorseful devastation is captured as '[s]he cried feebly and sadly as long as she had any strength to cry, and then she died' (Gaskell, p. 463). Her death is both physically and emotionally painful as she mourns her moral downfall. Nead asserts that '[t]hrough death, the prostitute-the social outcast could find salvation with Christ which comfortably removed any responsibility or guilt from respectable society.'¹⁶⁵ In this sense, the death of the polluted prostitute body morally and physically 'sanitized' society of all blame. Her fate was no longer a burden as the prostitute was abandoned to reconcile her deviancies with God. As a distinct 'social-sexual identity'¹⁶⁶, the prostitute was ultimately penalized for their

¹⁶⁵ Lynda Nead, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 139.

¹⁶⁶ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 40.

evasion and defiance of conventional, feminine ideals. In his Author's Apology, Shaw notes that 'members of Mrs Warren's profession shall be tolerated [...] only when they [...] die of consumption to the sympathetic tears of the whole audience, or step into the next room to commit suicide.'¹⁶⁷ In life and death, the prostitute body is successfully 'marginalized'¹⁶⁸ as they are entirely ostracized from 'respectable', moral society.

¹⁶⁷ Shaw, 'The Author's Apology', <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1097/1097-h/1097-h.html> [accessed 3 August 2017]

¹⁶⁸ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 40.

Chapter 3

Moral Contamination: A Prostitute's Behaviour

As with clothing and the body, behaviour, manners and gestures were read as indicators and extensions of personal morality. In this sense, society expected the prostitute's character to expose their degradation. During the nineteenth century, 'women were obliged to conform to the prescribed patterns of acceptable female behaviour'¹⁶⁹. Such conventions idealized morally 'decent' women as '[s]ubmissive, innocent, pure, gentle, self-sacrificing, patient, sensible, [...] modest, quiet, and altruistic.'¹⁷⁰ Zedner argues that 'criminal women represented the very negation of the ideal of femininity.'¹⁷¹ Due to continual criminalization, prostitutes were socially regarded as the antithesis of moral respectability and thus conventional femininity. Consequently, behavioural stereotypes were created which once more ostracized the prostitute as a distinct 'social-sexual identity.'¹⁷² Unlike dress and bodily characteristics, behavioural stereotypes covered all hierarchies of prostitution, extending from the ragged streetwalker to the prestigious courtesan. Their generic, uncivilized conduct was viewed as testament to their own degenerative origins; whether they had penetrated the upper-class ranks of prostitution or not.

Furthermore, the 'hegemonic male voice'¹⁷³ which transformed the feminine

¹⁶⁹ Lucia Zedner, *Women, Crime, And Custody in Victorian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.12.

¹⁷⁰ Zedner, *Women, Crime, And Custody in Victorian England*, p. 15.

¹⁷¹ Zedner, *Women, Crime, And Custody in Victorian England*, p. 19

¹⁷² Bell, *Reading, Writing & Reviewing the Prostitute Body*, p. 40.

¹⁷³ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 42.

form and verbally sculpted the diseased body, likewise morally fashioned the prostitute's conduct. Once again, hygienist Alexandre Parent-Duchatelet and physician Cesare Lombroso were leading authorities on the prostitute. Commentating from opposite scales of the century, both men recorded certain stereotypical behaviours. Matus notes that such 'pathologising of the prostitute suggested a woman distinguished from the bourgeois by her unruly desires.'¹⁷⁴ Accordingly, the stereotypical prostitute was individualized as a creature of depraved excess, in temperament, frivolity and gluttony. Similar to their elaborateness in dress, the prostitute was characterised by the extremities of their extravagant behaviour. Lombroso argued that prostitutes were 'extraordinary gluttons [...] drawn to strong liquor'¹⁷⁵. Like the deliberate vulgarity of their eye-catching dress, Lombroso noted that '[I]ack of modesty [was] the most salient trait of these unfortunates.'¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, he adds that 'the prostitute's dearest [love] [was] laziness. Insensible to boredom, they spend entire days in homes or brothels, stretched out on the bed or seated.'¹⁷⁷ In comparison, Duchatelet established 'anger to be frequent among these women.'¹⁷⁸ Similarly, Dr. Barr generalized prostitutes as 'bad-tempered and ill-behaved'¹⁷⁹ claiming 'many were apt to show their temper very rapidly, [...] using a good deal of bad language.'¹⁸⁰ Another leading characteristic was unintelligence as '[t]he prostitute was supposed to be immature and rather child-like.'¹⁸¹ As prostitute behaviour defied ideological, feminine conventions, they were repeatedly criminalized as a distinct class in a bid to classify their disruptive sexuality. Ultimately,

¹⁷⁴ Jill L. Matus, *Unstable Bodies: Victorian Representations of Sexuality and Maternity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 122.

¹⁷⁵ Lombroso and Ferrero, *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*, p. 218.

¹⁷⁶ Lombroso and Ferrero, *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*, p. 215.

¹⁷⁷ Lombroso and Ferrero, *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*, p. 218.

¹⁷⁸ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 49.

¹⁷⁹ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 59.

¹⁸⁰ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 59.

¹⁸¹ Rounding, *Grandes Horizontales*, p. 57.

the prostitute was labelled as vulgar, gluttonous, lazy, unintelligent, frivolous and juvenile.

Throughout the century, such distinctive stereotypes were prevalent in both England and France. English artist Fred Barnard captured the typecast prostitute in his 1876 wood engraving 'The Prisoner's Van' (Figure Eleven), completed for Dickens's 'Sketches by Boz.' The image depicts two young prostitute sisters who are being detained by the police. In the background, one of the sisters mourns the loss of her freedom. In the centre of the image, the other sister stands brazenly in front of the crowd. She physically embodies the stereotypical streetwalker due to her 'soiled and tawdry dress'¹⁸² combined with her 'unkempt tresses'¹⁸³. However, she also personifies the characteristics of the common prostitute. She appears 'ill-behaved'¹⁸⁴ as she laughingly confronts those around her, revealing no signs of expected remorse for her immoral profession. She fulfils Lombroso's notion that '[l]ack of modesty [was] the most salient trait of these unfortunates.'¹⁸⁵ She unreservedly and deliberately captures the attentions of the crowd. Her dress, physicality and shameless behaviour make her easily identifiable as a prostitute to society.

¹⁸² Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality*, p. 127.

¹⁸³ Beaujot, *Victorian Fashion Accessories*, p. 139.

¹⁸⁴ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 59.

¹⁸⁵ Lombroso and Ferrero, *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*, p. 215.



Fred Barnard, *The Prisoner's Van* (1876) (Figure Eleven)¹⁸⁶

Due to notoriety of these characteristics, it was supposed that the prostitute would be easily distinguishable from respectable women. The coarse vulgarity and lack of conventional, feminine etiquette implied that they could easily be separated from their 'gentle'¹⁸⁷ and 'modest'¹⁸⁸ counterparts. Prostitutes were ostracized as infectious vessels as it was feared that such immoral traits would infiltrate and corrupt the hierarchies of respectable society. Reliance on such recognizable characteristics suggested that prostitutes could be easily avoided. The stereotypical traits of the prostitute were frequently reiterated in literature and artwork. Nana embodies such characteristics throughout the various stages of her profession, from common streetwalker to esteemed courtesan. Her frivolity is demonstrated through her '[I]ack of modesty'¹⁸⁹ as she became 'the centre of attraction in all the local dance-halls' (*L'Assommoir*, p. 383). She deliberately draws attention to her figure as 'she rounded

¹⁸⁶ Figure Eleven, <http://www.victorianweb.org/gender/prostitution3.html>

¹⁸⁷ Zedner, *Women, Crime, And Custody in Victorian England*, p. 15.

¹⁸⁸ Zedner, *Women, Crime, And Custody in Victorian England*, p. 15.

¹⁸⁹ Lombroso and Ferrero, *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*, p. 215.

her behind and gave it little jiggles to make it more appealing' (*L'Assommoir*, p. 282). Nana's lack of conventional, feminine etiquette means that she unreservedly manipulates her body to evoke desire. Her unrestrained actions are conscious attempts to attract then gratify her audience: 'People had gathered round in a circle and were clapping her; and, well away now, she hauled up her skirts to her knees' (*L'Assommoir*, p. 381).

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's 1890 painting 'At the Moulin Rouge: The Dance' (Figure Twelve) is reminiscent of Nana's licentious performance. Rounding argues that the prostitute was renowned for 'her love of dancing'¹⁹⁰. In the image, the prostitute can be seen immodestly exposing her legs as she unreservedly dances the can-can with a gentleman. The dancing has attracted attention as other men stare intently at her in the background. In the foreground, a respectable woman stands rigidly as she regards the scene with open distaste. Although, it could be questioned as to why a respectable woman would even appear at the Moulin Rouge, the painting does frame nineteenth-century discourse on moral contagion. Such close proximity enables the abandoned actions of the prostitute to enthrall the men around her. Despite overcrowding in the rest of the room, Lautrec appears to have deliberately cleared the foreground of the painting. In this open space, the bright tones of the prostitute's red tights and the vivid pink of the respectable woman's dress become equal focal points. Rounding argues that society sought to protect the virtuous woman, 'not only because she might be shocked at witnessing depravity but, even worse, because she was likely to be tempted into abandoning virtue herself.'¹⁹¹ In this sense, the close proximity of the two women captures underlying societal anxieties. The respectable woman could be corrupted by

¹⁹⁰ Rounding, *Grandes Horizontales*, p. 24.

¹⁹¹ Rounding, *Grandes Horizontales*, pp. 27-28.

the prostitute's frivolity and likewise be drawn to dancing, thus 'abandoning virtue herself.'¹⁹²



Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *At the Moulin Rouge: The Dance* (1890) (Figure Twelve)¹⁹³

Nana also fulfils prostitute stereotypes due to the vulgarity of her 'foul language' (*Nana*, p. 65). Her relapse into coarse dialect distresses her maid as 'her mistress was not rising above her origins as quickly as she had hoped' (*Nana*, p. 65). Her maid suggests that streetwalker beginnings could be disguised by propriety of speech. However, Nana's vulgar parlance only serves to reiterate her depraved origins. Furthermore, Rounding adds that stereotypically the prostitute had 'rejected work in favour of pleasure.'¹⁹⁴ Upon returning to flower-making after a brief period as a prostitute, Nana had 'lost the knack of making stalks and felt she was suffocating' (*L'Assommoir*, p. 383). Her short foray into a wanton lifestyle had transformed Nana as she became mentally incapable of returning to the rigidities of moral, menial labour. Her feelings became overpowering so she rapidly returned to the lax lifestyle prostitution offered. Like Nana, the lower-class prostitute Satin has a stereotypical tendency towards laziness. She was continually in a 'languid condition' (*Nana*, p. 254)

¹⁹² Rounding, *Grandes Horizontales*, p. 28.

¹⁹³ Figure Twelve, <http://www.theartstory.org/artist-toulouse-lautrec-henri-artworks.htm>

¹⁹⁴ Rounding, *Grandes Horizontales*, p. 23.

as ‘Nana nearly always found her in bed’ (*Nana*, p. 254). Additionally, Nana’s desire for an idle, pleasurable existence is attributed to her ‘bird-brain’ (*Nana*, p. 314) and ‘childish caprices’ (*Nana*, p. 215). In this sense, she is both ‘immature and rather child-like’¹⁹⁵. As her rank increases to courtesan, she becomes childishly frivolous in both temperament and expenditure. Lombroso recorded ‘the unrestrained greed which [marked] even the most intelligent of born prostitutes.’¹⁹⁶ In accordance to Lombroso’s notions, Nana is unable to ‘see any very expensive object without wanting to possess it’ (*Nana*, p. 410). Her ‘wasteful whims’ (*Nana*, p. 315) have not altered ‘any more than when she had been a street-urchin’ (*Nana*, p. 215). Despite mixing with the echelons of society, Nana’s behaviour has not outgrown her lower-class, streetwalker origins. Instead, her stereotypical traits have infiltrated upper-class society as she manipulates her clientele to pay for her extravagant purchases. Her impulses are morally infectious toward society as men degrade and ruin themselves to fund her lifestyle: ‘[M]en were swallowed up-their possessions, their bodies, their very names’ (*Nana*, p. 410). The notion that she ‘[swallows] up [...] [men’s] very names’ (*Nana*, p. 410) implies she consumes their status which debases their respectability in society.

Through *Nana*, Zola demonstrates the anxiety surrounding prostitutes as vessels of moral contagion. During the early stages of Nana’s downfall, parents forbid their daughters to associate with her for fear of corruption: ‘[T]he Boches had forbidden Pauline to go near that tart’ (*L’Assommoir*, p. 385). Once a courtesan, her moral contagion is captured in an article in the ‘Figaro’ which labels Nana ‘The Golden Fly’ (*Nana*, p. 221). It comments that ‘the rottenness that was allowed to ferment among the lower classes was rising to the surface and rotting the aristocracy’ (*Nana*, p. 221)

¹⁹⁵ Rounding, *Grandes Horizontales*, p. 57.

¹⁹⁶ Lombroso and Ferrero, *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*, p. 215.

through Nana. The article employs the language of sanitation typically applied to the prostitute body, to define Nana's outer and inner 'rotteness' (*Nana*, p. 221). Likened to a fly, Nana is described as 'buzzing, dancing and glittering like a precious stone [...] poisoning [...] men, [...] simply by settling on them' (*Nana*, p. 221). In this analogy, Nana embodies the frivolity of the typecast prostitute by the careless and frolicsome manner in which she '[buzzes and dances]' (*Nana*, p. 221), haphazardly ruining men. The notion that she '[glitters] like a precious stone' (*Nana*, p. 221) indicates her external manipulation as she appears as a desirable, expensive commodity to society despite her true infectious status.

Moreover, Zola reiterates the notion that moral decay arose from lower-class prostitutes. Like Nana, the women are characteristically vulgar due to 'their imprudent stares and foul language' (*Nana*, p. 213). By committing such indecent actions, the women can easily be identified as prostitutes. Just by close proximity to the women, two nearby 'men bowed their heads, [...] feeling sullied and soiled by these trollops' (*Nana*, p. 213). Their very nearness evoked feelings of moral contamination. Similarly, Caroline revealed the negativity her vulgar manners, including her speech, provoked from upper-class clientele after their carnal needs had been satiated: 'My, but don't they take offence at me coarse tongue! And me slattern's walk!' (Faber, p. 484). She notes that whilst she 'can catch em while their cock's stiff, they're in [her] power' (Faber, p. 484). In this sense, diseased narratives are momentarily dispelled by the 'male voice'¹⁹⁷ due to the desire Caroline's body incites. After 'brief' lapses of moral judgement 'the hegemonic male voice'¹⁹⁸ identifies such stereotypical traits and condemns Caroline. It is only once their desires have been spent that her male clientele

¹⁹⁷ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 42.

¹⁹⁸ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 42.

fully recognize the vulgarity of her coarse manners through her crude speech and walk. Subsequently, Caroline is ostracized as a source of moral infection who is deliberately trying to contaminate upper-class respectability. Langford references a Swedish commentator who was similarly ‘distressed by the shamelessness of London’s lowest streetwalkers.’¹⁹⁹ In 1809, Erik Geijer claimed that ‘[t]he English could not practice vice with decency.’²⁰⁰ As Geijer’s assertion illustrates, the prostitute’s indecorous public behaviour could immediately expose their streetwalker status. However, his statement also provides another example of male discourse indistinctly sculpting the acceptability of prostitute’s behaviour. He does not raise issue with ‘vice’²⁰¹ but with the indecent manner in which it was conducted. He regulates the prostitute body as long as prostitute behaviour does not offend public sensibility.

Both Sugar and Caroline expose their degraded status when they indecorously devour cake in the street. They embody Lombroso’s ‘extraordinary gluttons’²⁰² when they select ‘the stickiest, sweetest, creamiest cakes on show’ (Faber, p. 31). The women eat ‘with their heads thrown back and licking flecks of cream off their gloves’ (Faber, p. 33). As previously noted, ‘soiled and tawdry dress was a sign of a depraved woman’²⁰³. Their ‘soiled’²⁰⁴ gloves covered with cream not only illustrate their degraded origins but also their ruined chances of ever entering respectable society. Faber notes: ‘By the standards of respectability, they might as well be licking at gobs of ejaculate’ (Faber, p. 33). Furthermore, their ‘[l]ack of modesty’²⁰⁵ regarding behavioural propriety exposes

¹⁹⁹ Paul Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners And Character 1650-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 169.

²⁰⁰ Langford, *Englishness Identified*, p. 169.

²⁰¹ Langford, *Englishness Identified*, p. 169.

²⁰² Lombroso and Ferrero, *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*, p. 218.

²⁰³ Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality*, p. 127.

²⁰⁴ Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality*, p. 127.

²⁰⁵ Lombroso and Ferrero, *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*, p. 215.

their prostitute status, as ‘decent [women] would eat cake only on a plate in a hotel, or at least in a department store’ (Faber, p. 33). In terms of societal stereotypes, gluttony would conventionally expose the prostitute in both a public and private setting.

Similarly, French courtesan Marguerite appals her male guest as he was shocked to see a ‘beautiful creature of twenty drink, talk like a stevedore, and laugh all the louder as what was said became more shocking’ (Dumas, p. 64). Although her youthful beauty naturally masquerades her degradation, her uncouth behaviour betrays her true profession. Her vulgar language, heavy drinking and knowing conduct all fulfil stereotypes of indecent prostitute manners. Ultimately, her ‘unruly desires’²⁰⁶ portray her immorality as she ‘never [missed] a party or a ball or an orgy’ (Dumas, p. 189). Her excessively extravagant behaviour was allegedly based on French courtesan, Marie Duplessis. Rounding asserts that Marie was notorious for her liveliness, continually ‘drinking too much champagne’²⁰⁷ and spending money ‘in a constant trickle on clothes, food, drink and all kinds of luxuries.’²⁰⁸ The stereotype of the gluttonous and excessive prostitute was embodied in Lautrec’s 1899 painting entitled ‘In a Private Dining Room (At the Rat Mort) (Figure Thirteen). The image supposedly features Lucy Jourdain, a late nineteenth-century courtesan. Lucy fulfils the exterior traits of the prostitute due to her attire and body. Her red lipstick and extravagant dress are reminiscent of the ‘excessive finery’²⁰⁹ commonly seen on the streetwalker. Furthermore, her body fulfils Lombroso’s theories of the plump and attractive courtesan. In terms of improper conduct, Zedner notes that ‘[p]rostitution was [...] linked with drunkenness.’²¹⁰

²⁰⁶ Matus, *Unstable Bodies*, p. 122.

²⁰⁷ Rounding, *Grandes Horizontales*, p. 39.

²⁰⁸ Rounding, *Grandes Horizontales*, p. 47.

²⁰⁹ Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality*, p. 127.

²¹⁰ Zedner, *Women, Crime, And Custody in Victorian England*, p. 60.

Correspondingly, Lucy's gluttonous character is portrayed through her general stoutness and drunken expression, with squinting eyes and voracious, contented smile. The appearance of two glasses of champagne and an abundant fruit bowl only add to the excessive nature of the scene. Meanwhile, the shadow that falls across her face creates an unhealthy hue, suggesting both extreme feasting and 'drunkenness.'²¹¹



Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *In a Private Dining Room (At the Rat Mort)* (1899) (Figure Thirteen)²¹²

Like Marguerite, Marie and Lucy, Esther also fulfils the drunken prostitute stereotype. Her profession fuels her fervent desire to drink: 'I must have drink. Such as live like me could not bear life, if they did not drink' (Gaskell, p. 192). Esther's coarse dialect also fulfils typical traits of the uneducated prostitute. The colloquial phrase '[s]uch as live like me' (Gaskell, p. 192) would be considered vulgar in comparison to the refined diction of respectable society. Consequently, her common phrasing aligns her with the uncouth, lower-class streetwalker. The vulgar speech of the common

²¹¹ Zedner, *Women, Crime, And Custody in Victorian England*, p. 60.

²¹² Figure Thirteen,
<http://nga.gov.au?Exhibition/TOULOUSE/Default.cfm?IRN=218188&MnuID=3&ViewID=2>

prostitute was satirized by John Leech in his cartoon ‘The Great Social Evil Time’, (Figure Fourteen) previously observed in Chapter One. A prostitute informally addresses the other: ‘AH! FANNY! HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN GAY!’ Nead notes that Leech’s ‘caption plays on the meanings of the word ‘gay’, referring in this period both to happiness and to prostitution.’²¹³ The slang term shared between the two streetwalkers indicates their degraded societal position. Their informal public exchange underlines a lack of conventional, feminine refinement which was viewed as paramount to a moral standing in society. Conventional ideology also dictated that moral women should be ‘sensible’²¹⁴. Esther notes that the depravity of her social position was worsened by her inability to sensibly manage money, instead ‘[spending] it on dress and on eating’ (Gaskell, p. 188). John Barton asserts that it was such prior frivolity, ‘[h]er giddiness, her lightness of conduct’ (Gaskell, p. 22) which led to her downfall in the first place. Furthermore, like the esteemed courtesans Nana and Marie Duplessis, lower-class Esther exhibits the ‘unrestrained greed’²¹⁵ apparent in all levels of prostitute. Similar to Caroline, Esther is ostracized by society as she is identified as a moral pollutant. The language of physical disease is applied to her moral contagion as she is compared to a leper: ‘Hers is the leper-sin, and all stand aloof dreading to be counted unclean’ (Gaskell, p. 185). Her immorality is as visible to society as the physical infectiousness of the leper, hence consequent avoidance. Societal treatment of Esther highlights that anxiety led to avoidance as close proximity to the prostitute was viewed

²¹³ Nead, ‘Fashion and Visual Culture in the 19th Century: Women in Red’, <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/women-in-red> [accessed 4 August 2017]

²¹⁴ Zedner, *Women, Crime, And Custody in Victorian England*, p. 15.

²¹⁵ Lombroso and Ferrero, *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*, p. 215.

as detrimental to personal morality. Ultimately, her fulfilment of behavioural stereotypes allows society to instantly recognize her prostitute status.



THE GREAT SOCIAL EVIL.

TIME:—Midnight. A Sketch not a Hundred Miles from the Haymarket.
Bella. "AH! FANNY! HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN *Gay*!"

John Leech, *The Great Social Evil Time: Midnight. A Sketch not a Hundred Miles from the Haymarket* (1857) (Figure Fourteen)²¹⁶

Similar to Gaskell's depiction of Esther, Dickens also employs stereotypical characteristics to indicate Nancy's prostitute status. She fulfils Barr's generalization that prostitutes were naturally 'bad-tempered and ill-behaved'²¹⁷. Consumed by her 'strong passions' (Dickens, p. 126), she reveals a stereotypical preference for both alcohol and violence. The intensity of her 'passions' (Dickens, p. 126) cause Nancy to violently rush at Fagan during 'a transport of frenzy' (Dickens, p. 128). Fagan notes that her volatile

²¹⁶ Figure Fourteen, <http://www.victorianweb.org/periodicals/punch/49.html>

²¹⁷ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 59.

temper was fuelled by ‘drunkenness’²¹⁸ as she was often ‘a trifle in liquor’ (Dickens, p. 202). Her drunken, explosive behaviour enables society to easily categorize her as a common streetwalker. Her manners serve as the antithesis of the ideals of the ‘gentle’²¹⁹, moral woman.

Like Nancy, Mrs Warren also defies conventional, feminine ideals due to her ‘unruly desires’²²⁰. Although Warren chastises her daughter’s suitor for his boisterous behaviour, she then succumbs to temptation and ‘[kisses him]’ (Shaw, Act 2, p. 1795). Her imprudent actions evoke immediate frustration as she was ‘[out of patience with herself]’ (Shaw, Act 2, p. 1795). Despite such emotions, her actions conform to stereotypes of the immoral, uninhibited prostitute. Furthermore, her degraded status can also be realized through the vulgarity of ‘[her natural tongue]’ (Shaw, Act 2, p. 1804) which still maintained a distinct ‘[echo of the slums]’ (Shaw, Act 4, p. 1828). Her speech can thus be interpreted by society to indicate her lowly, degraded origins.

Avoidance of such stereotypes meant that prostitutes could disguise their moral degradation and deprived origins. As with clothing and the body, the manners, gestures and dialect of the prostitute could all be ‘dressed’ to convey a masquerade of moral respectability. By shunning the well-known traits of the common streetwalker, prostitutes could advantageously mislead society. Through behavioural manipulation, prostitutes were able to avoid legal, medical and societal condemnation. Fear of such persecution was actively causing the prostitute to disguise her true status. Like his assertions on dress, nineteenth-century commentator Robert Wilson claimed that fear of detection led to ‘secret [prostitutes]’²²¹. He argued that the Contagious Diseases Act

²¹⁸ Zedner, *Women, Crime, And Custody in Victorian England*, p. 60.

²¹⁹ Zedner, *Women, Crime, And Custody in Victorian England*, p. 15.

²²⁰ Matus, *Unstable Bodies*, p. 122.

²²¹ Wilson, *Prostitution Suppressible And Resistance To The Contagious Diseases Women’s Acts*, p. 20.

(1864) caused increased moral contamination as prostitutes were ‘driven to unsuspected quarters of the town’²²². By residing in reputable areas, the prostitute could avoid detection by mimicking the everyday behaviours of moral women. Langford highlights that ‘[i]t was pointed out that whores were naturally, and often by profession, actresses. A demure prostitute was [thus] mimicking the froideur of her less corrupted countrywoman.’²²³ Wilson claimed that such convincing performances meant that the prostitute could ‘[lodge] in decent districts-she associates, eats, and sleeps with virtuous, unfallen girls, [...] and gradually her contaminating power, like a moral infection, spreads over the entire neighbourhood.’²²⁴ Prostitute behaviour became contagious when disguised as it enabled unforeseen moral corruption. A police report from ‘Hastings & St Leonards News’ in 1856 revealed that prostitutes were actively disguising their behaviour. After being questioned by a police sergeant for their dealings with two prostitutes, ‘young men claimed to be ignorant of the women’s occupation, the latter being “well-dressed and well-behaved.”’²²⁵ By manipulating dress and manners, the prostitutes evaded societal detection. Not conforming to stereotypes of the vulgar, ‘ill-behaved’²²⁶ prostitute enabled women to covertly attract their male clientele. By camouflaging their prostitute identity, their disguised behaviour became morally infectious toward society. By the time the men realised the women’s true status, they had already been morally polluted as they faced societal condemnation for their involvement with such women.

By altering behaviour, manners and gestures, prostitutes were able to attract a

²²² Wilson, *Prostitution Suppressible And Resistance To The Contagious Diseases Women’s Acts*, p. 20.

²²³ Langford, *Englishness Identified*, p. 169.

²²⁴ Wilson, *Prostitution Suppressible And Resistance To The Contagious Diseases Women’s Acts*, p. 20.

²²⁵ Helena Wojtczak, ‘Prostitution in Victorian Hastings’, <http://www.victorianweb.org/gender/wojtczak/pros.html> [accessed 6 August 2017]

²²⁶ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 59.

wider range of clientele, avoid police detection and infiltrate the upper-classes. As 'respectable' society continually employed coarse stereotypes, deliberate behavioural adjustments by the prostitute disguised the extent of their degraded status. Caroline notes that on a daily basis, the common prostitute was forced to manipulate their behaviour: '[T]hey have to be careful to avoid any word or gesture that might hinder the fickle swell of men's pride' (Faber, p. 31). In this sense, even the minutiae of the prostitute's daily performance had to be carefully planned and structured. Their behaviour was continually tailored to fit the required needs of the vacillating male client. Caroline claims that successful tailoring could lead to the elevation of status however to do so 'a woman [needed] graces and 'complishments' (Faber, p. 484). To infiltrate the upper-classes, a garb of elegant refinement had to be worn.

Similar to her deliberate understated fashions, Sugar 'dresses' her conduct by putting on a facade of respectability. Just as her avoidance of loud colours, Sugar distinguishes herself from other prostitutes by avoiding vulgarity. As a characteristic of the common streetwalker was a 'child-like'²²⁷ demeanour combined with general unintelligence, Sugar deliberately educates herself to elevate her position: 'Not only is Sugar *able* to read and write, she actually enjoys it' (Faber, p. 34). Just by this learned adjustment alone, Sugar has distanced herself from other prostitutes. Furthermore, in contrast to the coarse and colloquial diction of the common streetwalker, Sugar attentively punctuates her speech with 'sweet fancy vowels and scrupulous consonants' (Faber, p. 27). Her refined articulation only enhances her apparel of propriety. Like her physical attentions to sanitary detail, her consideration of conduct was equally as assiduous. Similar to the way she deliberately purchased a better quality of dress, Sugar

²²⁷ Rounding, *Grandes Horizontales*, p. 57.

emulates the levels of refinement seen in ‘respectable’ women. Her upper-class client William notes that Sugar ‘[had] an amazing knowledge of literature’ (Faber, p. 102) whilst ‘her French accent is not at all bad: better than most’ (Faber, p. 234). The extent of her manipulation is thus captured as she is even suitably proficient in the French language. William further comments: ‘From the waist up, she’s as *soignée* as any lady he knows’ (Faber, p. 234). The overall effect of her personal presentation, including her learned attributes, is that Sugar ‘radiates surprisingly good breeding’ (Faber, p. 99). She successfully misleads William as he differentiates Sugar from common prostitutes. Her unconventional level of refinement incites both admiration and compassion: ‘The stab of sympathy he feels for Sugar he could never feel for the [...] shabby trollops who accost him in alleyways; those creatures are indivisible from the muck that surrounds them, like rats’ (Faber, p. 118). Sugar escapes William’s ‘insanitary’ condemnation due to her contrived respectability. William is so trusting of Sugar’s guise that he elevates her position from common prostitute to kept mistress to private governess. Sugar resides in his family home and is entrusted with the instruction of his young and susceptible daughter. Sanders argues that the patriarch’s main duty was to be ‘the all-powerful protector’²²⁸ of his family. William’s duty was to shield his wife and daughter from the ills and immoralities of society. However, he is so enamoured by Sugar’s facade of respectability that he endangers the very moral fabric of his home. Sugar has thus infiltrated the most intimate space of ‘respectable’ society, as she has successfully invaded the sanctity of the domestic sphere. In this sense, her behaviour is infectious not only to William but also to his household. Furthermore, her deliberately modest dress and engineered mild manners also enables successful public integration. She moves

²²⁸ Valerie Sanders, *The Tragi-Comedy of Victorian Fatherhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 196.

undetected among morally-upright, upper-class women who ‘accept [Sugar] unquestioningly’ (Faber, p. 365). Due to the reputable propriety of her manners, Sugar is also distinguished by ‘shop-walkers [who] flock around her, begging to assist’ (Faber, p. 365). The self she presents to society ultimately ‘dresses’ and disguises her prostitute status.

Similarly, Mrs Warren observed that her sister Liz adopted such strategies to infiltrate the echelons of society. As equally noted by Caroline, Mrs Warren claims that ‘all we had was our appearance and our turn for pleasing men’ (Shaw, Act 2, p. 1806). In this sense, the external presentation of the prostitute was enough to elevate their standing in society. Like Sugar, Liz deliberately disguised her lower-class, streetwalker origins by cultivating her manners and gestures. Mrs Warren asserts: ‘But then Liz was such a perfect lady! She had the true instinct of it!’ (Shaw, Act 2, p. 1807). The notion that Liz had an ‘instinct’ (Shaw, Act 2, p. 1807) implies a learnt mimicry, employed to disguise her depravity. Ultimately, Liz had effectively camouflaged her degraded status to the extent that society regarded her as ‘one of the most respectable ladies’ (Shaw, Act 2, p. 1805). Her polished manners portray a sense of moral propriety as she is even entrusted with the care of young, impressionable women, as she ‘[c]haperones girls at the country ball’ (Shaw, Act 2, p. 1805).

Akin to Aunt Liz, Nana recognizes the societal distinction lavished on ex-prostitute Irma, who had become a figurehead of respectability in her community. Irma’s manners were so regally refined that ‘[s]he gave the impression of a powerful queen, loaded with years and honours’ (*Nana*, p. 205). Irma has so successfully camouflaged her prostitute origins that it does not appear remiss to compare her to a pinnacle of decent society; a Queen. The extent in which her revered position is

accepted by society is illustrated by the treatment she receives from her immediate community: '[A]ll the inhabitants of Chamont bowed respectfully to her' (*Nana*, p. 205). Her elegant refinement not only elevates her position but she reigns morally supreme over others, as her very presence incites reverence.

Upon viewing the illustrious treatment Irma incites, Nana begins to tailor her own vulgar behaviour. During the early stages of her prostitute career, Nana employs her limited talents as an actress to 'put on her royal airs and graces' (*Nana*, p. 65) with 'studied politeness' (*Nana*, p. 65). However, this affected manner becomes increasingly refined alongside her progression to prestigious courtesan. Consequently, her manipulated manners only betray 'an aristocratic refinement' (*Nana*, p. 311) as '[s]he had the supple grace of a serpent' (*Nana*, p. 311). The comparison of Nana's conduct to a snake, a predatory reptile whose bite is often fatal, implies the danger her guise poses to society. Like the covert movements of the snake, Nana's 'dressed' manners could surreptitiously slip unidentified through the hierarchies of society. Furthermore, the very comparison of Nana to a snake indicates the threat her behaviour poses to societal morality. The image of Nana as a 'serpent' (*Nana*, p. 311) instantaneously conjures biblical references to the Devil. As the Devil disguised his evil through the guise of a snake, Nana likewise masquerades her moral contagion through mimicking the nuances of the refined, upper-class woman. In this sense, the comparison suggests that Nana's contrived behaviour is as dangerously corruptive to society as the Devil was viewed to Adam and Eve.

By wearing the guise of decency, prostitutes were attempting to emanate conventional, feminine ideals. The prostitute was criminalized as the antithesis of the respectable woman, consequently reproduction of conventional ideology suggested

morality rather than inner degradation. Marguerite distanced herself from the stereotypes of the immoral and 'ill-behaved'²²⁹ prostitute due to her '[c]harm [and] sweetness' (Dumas, p. 96). Such personable attributes align Marguerite with 'the prescribed patterns of acceptable female behaviour.'²³⁰ Her 'sweetness' (Dumas, p. 96) implies that she is 'innocent, pure [and] gentle'²³¹, all of which are characteristics of the idealized woman. Her outward demeanour attracts a wider range of clientele as she is treated sympathetically in comparison to the stereotypically selfish courtesans. As noted with Sugar, Marguerite also maintained 'an air of distinction rare in women of her kind' (Dumas, p. 7). As the basis of Marguerite's character, courtesan Marie Duplessis actively sought to evoke such distinction. She deliberately refined her manners and gestures to ensure that she appeared 'respectable' to upper-class society. Despite her uneducated, lower-class origins, like Sugar, she 'improved her writing and reading skills, [and] amassed a library.'²³² Furthermore, she 'took lessons in deportment and decorum and became skilled in the art of conversation.'²³³ Ultimately, both Marie and Sugar learnt the required skills needed to successfully integrate into decent society. Their manners were thus infectious as they were able to disguise their lower-class, prostitute status. Sugar was able to do so by independent self-study whilst Marie simply undertook a variety of etiquette lessons. Overall, by 'dressing' their manners and gestures in a guise of respectability, Sugar, Aunt Liz, Irma, Nana, Marguerite and Marie were all able to mislead and consequently corrupt upper-class society.

²²⁹ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 59.

²³⁰ Zedner, *Women, Crime, And Custody in Victorian England*, p. 12.

²³¹ Zedner, *Women, Crime, And Custody in Victorian England*, p. 15.

²³² Rounding, *Grandes Horizontales*, p. 36.

²³³ Rounding, *Grandes Horizontales*, p. 37.

Conclusion

During the nineteenth-century, external appearance was used as a reliable indicator of personal identity. In both England and France, an individual's 'look' supposedly divulged their class status, respectability and personal morality. In this sense, choice of clothing, the body and general behaviour were all interpreted as trustworthy extensions of true character. As a result, it was widely believed that the prostitute should have been easily distinguishable from respectable society. Criminalized and persecuted as 'sources of moral and physical pollution'²³⁴, prostitutes were exclusively categorized as dangerous vessels of venereal diseases and immorality. However, this dissertation has ascertained that external manipulation in the form of clothing, body and behaviour avoided such categorization and criminalization. Ultimately, the external guise of the prostitute became an overlooked source of infection toward society.

Chapter one emphasized the link between prostitution, infection and clothing by drawing attention to cases of mistaken identity. It established that French and English police were haphazardly analysing clothing as a means of identifying the prostitute. However, the methods of classification underlined that prostitutes and 'decent' women lacked sufficient distinction. The chapter attributed such cases to the mobility of fashion during the nineteenth century. Mid-century developments in the clothing industry, such as mechanization and the introduction of aniline dyes, led to cases of both intentional and unintentional mistaken identity. Lower prices led to a greater accessibility which

²³⁴ Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, p. 71.

resulted in a wider participation in fashion from all classes. Members of the lower classes were finally able to partake in the trends of the moment. However, fashion trends collided with prevalent stereotypes of prostitute dress. Society conventionally recognized the prostitute by bright colours, elaborate vulgarity and even specific items of clothing, all used to attract attention to the body. As a result, literature and artwork incorporated such clothing traits to reaffirm prostitute status. The elaborate, extravagant and colourful dress of Bet, Mrs Warren and Nana ultimately served to identify their true profession.

Moreover, women's very interest in fashion was labelled as a dangerous precursor to prostitution. Nineteenth-century discourse used vanity to track the progression from a heightened interest in fashion to moral ruin. The chapter revealed that a personal fixation on dress underpinned an immoral lack of respectability. Vanity was thus employed to suggest the origins of the prostitute's initial downfall as evidenced by Esther, Marguerite and Nana. Such cases highlighted the Pan-European assertion that vanity and fascination with dress led to prostitution. Consequently, the very creators and traders of such 'artificials' (Gaskell, p. 6), including seamstresses and shop-girls, were tainted by association. As a whole, clothing was infectious as it corrupted and tarnished women who society believed were immorally consumed with fashionable adornments. The chapter argued that dress in general was an additional vessel of infection. It explored how trends set by French courtesans were being replicated by high society women. Newspaper accounts, male designers and corset advertisements all contributed to this phenomenon. Accessibility meant that high society replication was then copied by the lower-classes. Prostitute trends were contagious as they had the proven ability to infiltrate rigid social hierarchies, infecting

all classes on their immoral journey. Replication of prostitute fashion corrupted reputable women who faced the risk of moral, mistaken identity. Clothing could not be used to distinguish the prostitute from her respectable counterpart, such as the upper-class, married woman. Unintentional emulation of prostitute dress disrupted stereotypes of the ragged streetwalker with dirty and torn clothing, embodied by Esther, Nancy and Bet. The Contagious Diseases Acts and French prostitution laws triggered concerns that such stereotypes were no longer valid. Moreover, prostitutes like Nana, Marguerite, Caroline and Sugar were deliberately manipulating clothing to disguise their true status, by distancing themselves from such prevalent stereotypes. Avoidance of bright colours, elaborate adornments and ragged garments deliberately misled society. The chapter established that clothing was morally infectious and deleterious as it was used by the prostitute to mislead and corrupt others. The contamination of society could not have taken place had the prostitute remained easily identifiable through her clothing.

Chapter two ‘undressed’ the prostitute by examining the infectious nature of the body. French and English laws targeted and criminalized the prostitute as a vessel of physical contagion. They were subjected to invasive, internal examinations, with the threat of detainment in a lock ward or prison hospital. Societal convention diagnosed the prostitute body as detrimentally diseased; medical officials only allowed prostitutes to return to the general public once they had been declared free of infection. Once accused, the female body was labelled as morally and physically infectious whether prostitute or not. Such persecution specifically targeted the lower-class, female body. French attempts to criminalize the courtesan body in 1817 proved unsuccessful. As a result, courtesans were largely excluded from the diseased, prostitute narrative. In comparison, lower-class French and English women faced constant accusations and

compulsory registration. To avoid detection, societal condemnation and legal confirmation of their 'immoral' activity, lower-class prostitutes were forced to disguise the true 'contagious' state of their bodies. Manipulated like an additional layer of clothing, the body was 'dressed' to camouflage disease, as evidenced by the French use of rice powder. Despite such disguises, medical officials were ultimately unclear of the definite symptoms of venereal disease. As a result, any female, physical abnormalities were diagnosed as deviant and harmful to societal wellbeing. Regardless of actual infection, the lower-class prostitute was condemned as a physically contagious vessel prone to corrupt and contaminate others. The chapter established that prostitutes were ostracized as a distinct, 'diseased' class. The exclusive allocation of blame to the female, prostitute body decidedly excluded and 'sanitized' male clientele of their part in spreading disease, as highlighted by George Bernard Shaw in his 'Author's Apology' (1902). It ascertained that the Pan-European discourse on physical contagion was gender biased. Not only was the prostitute body verbally sculpted by male discourse but male agency was prioritised over female, physical infection; this was explicit in the investigation into the case of Harriet Hicks. Furthermore, the language of sanitation and hygiene applied to the prostitute by Alexandre Parent-Duchatelet and Dr. Barr served to desexualize the body. Both men were intentionally tainting a conduit of desire and pleasure with a discourse of diseased decay and impurity. Such insanitary verbal sculpting contributed to the prevalent stereotype of the prostitute body. Literature and artwork reaffirmed the typecasting of the 'filthy'²³⁵ streetwalker, evidenced by the descriptions of Nana, Esther, Sugar and Nancy.

Consequently, to avoid enforced medical examinations, prostitutes were

²³⁵ Bell, Reading, *Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 59.

manipulating their bodies to attract and seduce, rather than evoke the discourse of disease. The prostitute body served ‘as a form of disguise’²³⁶ as it was ‘dressed’ to portray respectability, whilst covertly inciting desire and lust. Nana and Sugar particularly distanced themselves from prevalent stereotypes by the use of cosmetics. Furthermore, Satin, Sugar and Marguerite illustrated that the prostitute body could also be naturally misleading. Attention to sanitary detail and cleanliness did enable the prostitute to infiltrate and integrate into ‘respectable’ society. A misleading appearance allowed the prostitute to move unidentified and undetected which made physical appearance morally infectious towards others. However, literature and artwork employed subtle physical indicators to expose the prostitute. Cesare Lombroso and Alphonse Esquiros particularly noted several natural features of the prostitute body, such as heaving bosoms, red cheeks and ‘flaring nostrils’²³⁷. Artist Henri de Toulouse Lautrec and authors including Dickens, Zola, Dumas and Faber, indicated prostitute status by the incorporation of such physical traits. Ultimately, the body was the most significant piece of clothing the prostitute could wear as it could camouflage signs of corruption and immorality. The prostitute body was being disguised for the exclusive portrayal of desirability. However, as a diseased vessel of moral and physical contagion the prostitute body was not allowed to survive in literature. As unregulated vessels of infection capable of contaminating ‘respectable’ society, the prostitute body was punished and destroyed, evidenced by the deaths of Nana, Nancy, Marguerite and Esther. Ultimately, prostitutes could not escape legal, medical and societal condemnation.

The final chapter revealed that it was not only the corporeal exterior of the

²³⁶ Aindow, *Dress and Identity in British Literary Culture, 1870-1914*, p. 8.

²³⁷ Rounding, *Grandes Horizontales*, p. 26.

prostitute that was infectious to society. As with clothing and the body, the behaviour, manners and gestures of the prostitute were read as extensions of personal morality. Consequently, the prostitute was stereotyped as the antithesis of the respectable woman. Societal convention viewed the conduct of the prostitute as generic, whether she was a lower-class streetwalker or a prestigious courtesan. Once again, the ‘male voice’²³⁸ of Duchatelet and Lombroso sculpted the discourse on the prostitute’s conduct. Throughout the century, stereotypes of the prostitute’s behaviour infected literature and artwork. The prostitute was recognized by her gluttony, vulgarity and coarseness. Societal conviction that immoral traits could infiltrate the upper-classes led to the prostitute being ostracized. As evidenced by the treatment of Nana and Esther, even close proximity to the prostitute was presented as detrimental to personal morality. Fulfilment of stereotypical traits, apparent through the behaviour of Marguerite, Esther, Nana and Nancy, meant that prostitutes could be easily marginalized by society. Consequently, active avoidance of such characteristics enabled prostitutes to disguise their moral degradation and depravity. As with clothing and the body, the behaviour of the prostitute was ‘dressed’ to convey respectability. Disguised behaviour was infectious to society as it camouflaged the prostitute’s identity, which enabled unforeseen moral corruption. As a result, Caroline, Sugar, Nana, Irma, Aunt Liz and Marguerite are able to circumnavigate their depraved origins. By a calculated guise of refinement and etiquette, prostitutes were able to replicate the ideals of conventional femininity. By ‘dressing’ their manners and gestures in a masquerade of respectability Sugar, Aunt Liz, Irma, Nana and Marguerite were able to mislead and consequently corrupt upper-class society.

²³⁸ Bell, *Reading, Writing & Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, p. 42.

As previously stated, Biddle-Perry asserts that during the nineteenth century '[b]odies, movements and clothes [were] all employed to convey character, social position and, most important, emotion and morality.'²³⁹ The dissertation has ascertained that such conventions led to the creation and employment of prostitute stereotypes in England and France. The work has established that typecasting of the prostitute's clothing, body and behaviour was prevalent throughout literature and artwork of the period. The prostitute was relentlessly pursued as an immoral and diseased vessel of infection. The clarity of society's categorization had actually provided the prostitute with the means to avoid detection and condemnation. The dissertation has recognized that prostitute was able to and did avoid any traits that revealed her true, degraded status. Ultimately, the prostitute 'dressed' her external appearance in a disguise that ensured her integration into the very society that had criminalized her. It was at this point that the prostitute's threatening status as an infectious vessel was actualized. She had successfully misled 'respectable' society and was now free to spread her moral and physical disease.

²³⁹ Biddle-Perry, *Hair*, p. 194.

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