

A Space In Between: Material Enclosures for the Women of New Orleans, 1850-1870

A southern belle in a hooped skirt, seated within a veranda of iron lace is a popular image of historic New Orleans. Often promoted by the tourism industry, this imagined past has been part of New Orleans popular history for quite some time. For example in the 1940s, the Kansas City Southern Railway System (KCS) utilized the romanticism of the Crescent City for its own profit by creating the “Southern Belle” line.¹ The Southern Belle was a passenger train that commuted between Kansas City and New Orleans.² One of the KCS advertisements (fig.1) effectively demonstrates the railway’s appropriation of the city’s antebellum past. To promote its “streamlined hospitality” The ad depicts a lady in an ample belle-shaped dress standing behind a balcony’s iron tracery as she waves her welcome to the modern train passing by. Such nostalgia for the “golden years” of New Orleans has distorted our historic understanding of the everyday realities for women living in this city during the nineteenth-century. Indeed, the cultural space that these New Orleans women occupied is more difficult to grasp than its illusion.

The idealization of nineteenth-century life for women in the Crescent City obscures the political turmoil and cultural upheaval that engulfed New Orleans between 1850 and 1870. Within a span of twenty years, New Orleans underwent dramatic changes from antebellum prosperity as a newly American city to the turmoil of the Civil War, the abolition of slavery, and the racial conflicts of the Reconstruction era. Amidst this social discord, both New Orleans’ elite and

bourgeoisie worked to maintain traditional gender boundaries, seeking to create some form of cultural stability.

This thesis will be a case study of nineteenth-century New Orleanians' use of iron balconies and crinoline cages to create feminized spaces as they grappled with an evolving social order and the blurring of public and private space in the city. Simultaneously, women employed these metallic material enclosures to protect their femininity from incursions by those of other races and classes while also seeking to overturn cultural mores and to grasp more social and economic power the urban environment. The similar function of iron balconies and crinoline cages as enclosures of feminine space provides an unusual intersection between architecture and fashion which can broaden our historical understanding of women's experience in a nineteenth-century urban center. A variety of forms of evidence will be examined in this thesis namely material, visual, and textual: the built environment, including balconies, building designs, and public squares; paintings, satirical prints, and cartoons; physical evidence including women's costume such as crinoline cages; documentary sources, including diaries, letters, and advertisements. Through a close examination of crinoline cages and iron balconies, this thesis will explore how critical conflicts of Victorian America - class, race, and gender- were negotiated using material artifacts in the context of New Orleans.

Chapter 1

Between Public and Private Spheres: Establishing Feminized Space

Introduction

The Kansas City Southern Railway (KCS) was certainly not the first to create an image of a nineteenth-century woman in New Orleans surrounded by hoops and iron. In the 1872 painting of *Woman Seated on the Balcony* (fig.2), Edgar Degas depicts an upper-class woman of New Orleans as she sits leisurely on her balcony. Like the creator of the Southern Belle line advertisement, the French painter Degas was also somewhat of an outsider temporarily in America to visit his relatives. However, unlike the twentieth-century KCS illustrator, the Frenchman Degas did directly observe the daily activities of New Orleans women, in particular his female Creole cousins with whom he was staying. In fact, the sitter in *Woman Seated on the Balcony* was Degas' cousin, Mathilde Musson.³ Mathilde is represented wearing a fashionable dress of the period that required a type of crinoline cage worn underneath to provide fullness in the skirt. Further in the distance, Degas renders the delicate tracings of an ornamental iron railing. The balcony's iron fence delineates the parameters of the woman's space in much the same way that the unseen hooped skirt demarcates the physical space around Mathilde's person. Although seemingly disparate objects, cast iron balconies and crinoline cages were both forms of material enclosures that became a significant means to shape a lady's surroundings into an appropriate feminine space. Particularly when the separate spheres of public and private life overlapped, these material enclosures provided a framework that safely distanced a lady from social incursions during a time when New Orleans was experiencing dramatic changes. The widespread use of both cast iron balconies and

crinoline cages by New Orleanian society demonstrates the cultural need to establish a unique type of feminized space that was situated in between public and private life.⁴

Redefining a Creole City as an American Metropolis

At the time Degas painted *Woman Seated on the Balcony*, New Orleans was in a state of cultural flux adjusting to the numerous newcomers to the city. In the mid nineteenth century New Orleans was comprised of an array of groups as the poem by Colonel Hames R. Creecy written in vividly conveys:

“Have you ever been in New Orleans? If not you’d better go,
It’s a nation of a queer place; day and night a show!
Frenchmen, Spaniards, West Indians, Creoles, Mustees,
Yankees, Kentuckians, Tennesseans, lawyers and trustees,
Clergymen, priests, friars, nuns, women of all stains;
Negroes in purple and fine linen, and slaves in rags and chains.
Ships, arks, steamboats, robbers, pirates, alligators,
Assassins, gamblers, drunkards, and cotton speculators;
Sailors, soldiers, pretty girls, and ugly fortune-tellers;
Pimps, imps, shrimps, and all sorts of dirty fellows;
White men with black wives, et vice versa too.
A progeny of all colors - an infernal motley crew!
Yellow Fever in February – muddy streets all the year;
Many things to hope for, and a dev’lish sight to fear!”⁵

Motley indeed was a common adjective for contemporaries and historians alike when describing New Orleans’ antebellum years.⁶ Creecy’s poem aptly evokes the ethnic and racial tapestry of the city’s population during the nineteenth century. This heterogeneous quality caused many onlookers to view the port city as having a sense of otherness quite unlike any other American metropolis.⁷

The uniqueness of the Crescent city in the nineteenth century, including its ethnography, is no surprise considering its colonial background and recent statehood in 1812.⁸ Before the United States purchased the territory of Louisiana in 1803, New Orleans was viewed as a colonial backwater traded back and forth between France and Spain.⁹ Yet this “backwater” rapidly became a prominent port city during a century that would have the greatest impact on the cultural and urban fabric of the Crescent city. Within a span of sixty years, New Orleans experienced its golden era of prosperity becoming the financial center of the Mississippi valley and an important capital for American commerce.¹⁰ The rapid growth of the city is apparent when considering that in 1803 there were approximately 8,000 residents whereas by 1860 there were nearly 175,000.¹¹ Between 1830 and 1860 the city’s population grew by 366 percent.¹² Immigration was the major factor in the growth and burgeoning diversity of the urban population, who hailed not only from abroad but also from the new motherland, the United States.¹³

Although a newly American city, New Orleans maintained its Creole heritage causing much friction between the Anglo American newcomers and the well-established Creole community - including those of black, white, and mixed racial ancestry – who continued to claim ties to France. The term “Creole” has a variety of definitions from indicating a person of European descent born in the French and Spanish colonies of America to a person of mixed black and white ancestry born in Louisiana. A better way to define “Creole” for a nineteenth-century context is the self-identification of those people descended from Louisiana’s diverse colonial settlers who distinguished themselves from their new Anglo American and European

immigrant neighbors primarily by being Francophone and Catholic.¹⁴ Nevertheless, over the nineteenth century the Catholic Creole culture of colonial New Orleans slowly adopted the dominant Victorian ideology that emanated from the northeastern United States and Great Britain.

However, Anglo Americans were not the only group adding diversity to the city. Poor European immigrants especially from Germany and Ireland arrived by the thousands comprising the bulk of the working class. “Kaintuck” boatmen frequented the city for pleasure, and African American slaves were a constant presence as New Orleans featured one of the largest slave markets in the South.¹⁵ Ironically, along with its enslaved African American population, New Orleans was the city with the largest population of free people of color.¹⁶ The number of free people of color increased dramatically in the first half of nineteenth century. Some escaped from plantations, still others sued for freedom and masters emancipated others.¹⁷ Also, refugees from Saint Domingue were still trickling in from the Caribbean further contributing to the city’s reputation as a safe haven for free people of color or *gens de couleur libre*.¹⁸ Despite the cultural variety found in New Orleans during the antebellum period, it was not a melting pot. Rather, the mixing of cultural backgrounds was more like a gumbo in which there was some fusion creating new traditions, but there were nevertheless chunks of separateness that tended to rub against each other.

After the dramatic urban expansion of the 1830s and 1840s, nineteenth-century residents of New Orleans spent the remaining decades attempting to define and solidify social boundaries in terms of race, class, and gender. In fact, the segregation of race, body, and space was a constant worry for Crescent city

dwellers.¹⁹ This “pattern of segregation” as historians have labeled it was most visible in defining neighborhood divisions. Between 1836 and 1852, New Orleans was divided into three municipalities, which were self-governing.²⁰ The first known as Faubourg St. Marie, which included the French Quarter and Esplanade Avenue, was occupied by the French Creole middle and upper classes; the second municipality, known more commonly today as the Garden District, was composed mainly of Anglo American elite and bourgeoisie; and lastly, the residents of the third municipality, which included the neighborhoods of Faubourg Marigny and the Bywater, was the working class comprising a mix of free people of color and immigrant laborers.²¹ During a time when Victorian culture was obsessed with separating and demarcating boundaries among classes and between genders, New Orleans was one of the many “untidy” urban centers whose social geography caused social anxiety.²² Ethnic and racial differences had a major influence on the structure of New Orleans society while another major concern was defining gender roles.²³

The reality of so many different types of people mixing together in one city encouraged a strong desire among the upper classes to both protect the “endangered ladies” from the urban chaos and to differentiate them from the “dangerous women” of the poor and working classes.²⁴ The cult of domesticity, which was a phenomenon that peaked in the mid nineteenth century, influenced the expectations of what a well-behaved American lady would act like. Domestic ideology stated that a woman embodied the family’s morality and therefore her proper place was within the home.²⁵ In particular, the notion of the “angel” in the house became commonplace and described the ideal lady who displayed the four virtues of true womanhood as the

historian Welter has noted: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.²⁶ Further, periodicals of the day, such as the widely circulated *Lady's Godey's Book*, reinforced the fact that the role of a respectable woman was in the home.

Along with the nineteenth-century fascination with classifying gender types, Victorians also believed in the separation of gendered spheres between public and private life. The public terrain was considered a male domain, and the home was viewed as a woman's territory, and was even described as the "empire of the mother."²⁷ Women, especially those deemed ladies, were viewed as delicate creatures who did not have the strength to defend themselves against the verbal or physical offense that could be encountered in a crowded city like New Orleans.²⁸ In reality, New Orleans women were not completely sequestered to the home and were a presence in the public spaces of the city.²⁹ In the decades before New Orleans became a city affected by Victorian attitudes, women freely moved in the public sphere without fear of negative repercussions.³⁰ However, when New Orleans became a major urban American center, a woman in public assumed the risk of tainting her status. In these moments when the public and private sphere overlapped, enclosures like the balcony and the crinoline cage created a sense of being at a safe distance from such danger. In fact, the autonomy of space around a woman which these enclosures provided can be described as "feminized space."³¹ Within this feminized space, a woman's femininity was protected and remained untarnished by the surrounding masculine environment. This creation of feminized space in both architecture and fashion provided a lady in the newly American New Orleans with the means to participate beyond the domestic haven of the home.

Balconies in Transition

Visitors to New Orleans often noted the constant presence of women on the ubiquitous cast iron balconies. Julian Ralph noted in his *Southern Scenes and Sketches* (1845) that “the galleries are loaded with women in soft colors mainly white” resembling Grace King’s remembrances of women on the balcony.³² Born into a wealthy New Orleanian family, the author Grace King often wrote about women’s life in the city especially in her work *Balcony Stories* (1892). One of King’s strongest memories of growing up in the Crescent city was the gathering of ladies on the balcony:

“There is much of life passed on the balcony in a country where the summer unrolls in six moon-lengths... And in that country the women love to sit and talk together of summer nights, on balconies, in their vague loose, white garments, - men are not balcony sitters, -... And the children inside, waking to go from one sleep into another, hear the low, soft mother-voices on the balcony, talking about this person and that, old times, old friends, old experiences; and it seems to them, hovering a moment in wakefulness, that there is no end of the world or time, or of mother knowledge...”³³

Since the cast iron balcony was an extension of the home, the space it enclosed was appealing for a lady in mid-nineteenth century New Orleans and provided a woman with a sense of safety and enclosure in its space while being situated at the potentially dangerous threshold between public and private life.³⁴

Degas must have also noticed Creole women’s habit of lingering on the balconies. While painting *Woman Seated on the Balcony* and other scenes of New Orleans in 1872, Degas lived with his extended family in a house located at 2306 Esplanade Avenue, a neighborhood known for its bourgeois residents of Creole descent.³⁵ The home where the Musson family resided was one of the first houses

built along Esplanade Avenue. The original owner, architect Benjamin Rodriguez, built the house as a showcase home for the up and coming bourgeois neighborhood. In 1860, Rodriguez put the house up for public auction, which required a visual representation for the notarial records. In Marie Adrien Persac's (1823-1873) depiction (fig.3), the white house is in pristine condition and includes a gallery on the upper level, which Rodriguez requested at the time of its construction to be of the "best style."³⁶ About a decade later, Degas visually documents this particular gallery in *Woman Seated on the Balcony* confirming the balcony's aesthetic potential and suitability as a feminine setting.

Along Esplanade Avenue and St. Charles Avenue, there was a plethora of this particular kind of balcony: the cast iron veranda. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the cast iron veranda became a widely popular form of balcony for homes in New Orleans. The concept of the veranda as a type of balcony has its origins in warm-climate cultures, like New Orleans and the nearby Caribbean islands. The term veranda is used to describe sheltered space located on a building's exterior often on the upper level, which functions as a connection between indoor and outdoor life.³⁷ A practical space, verandas are a means of cooling both the building and its residents by providing shade from the sun and a space for ventilation. The veranda was often used as an informal space for relaxation, respite, and social gathering as evoked in *Woman on a Seated Balcony*.³⁸ In Caribbean countries like Jamaica and Haiti, the veranda was the most elaborate aspect of a home's exterior and thus residents applied a variety of decoration to it including ornate carving.³⁹

Although verandas were originally made out of wood in the eighteenth century, the form translated well into cast iron, with the lacelike quality of the ironwork echoing the Caribbean version of woodcarvings. While the tradition of iron balconies in New Orleans during the eighteenth century carried into the nineteenth century, both the material and the maker changed as a result of the Americanization of the city during the era of industrialization. Cast iron was a significant building material during the Industrial Revolution in both America and Europe, transforming not only ornamental work but also building's structure.⁴⁰ When compared to its wrought counterpart, cast iron was inexpensive and easier to produce because it required less manual work since the iron was poured into molds that could be repeatedly used.⁴¹ Foundry workers carved the pattern into a wood mold, which would then be pressed into a flask filled with moist sand leaving an impression; molten iron would then be poured into the impression and once the iron set, the flask would be opened.⁴² In fact, there were several sets of cast iron patterns repeated throughout the residential areas of the city from St. Charles Avenue, where the wealthy Anglo cotton barons lived, to Esplanade Avenue where, as previously mentioned, the Creole elite lived. In fact, the surviving verandas along Esplanade Avenue demonstrate how many upper-class Creole families updated their homes' facade by replacing the old wrought iron balconies with new cast iron verandas (fig.4 and fig.5) For example, the Barnett family who owned a three-story house in 1859 at 600 Esplanade Avenue hired the architect and builder Elijah Cox "to alter and enlarge the building on Esplanade" with a "verandah over the banquette on cast iron columns."⁴³

Trade catalogues greatly contributed to the widespread adoption of cast iron balconies and verandas. A few pattern guides for verandas from the period survive including some from New Orleans foundries. In the catalogues of Hinderer's Iron Works, each booklet contains a section dedicated to a variety of veranda railings as well as a whole page devoted to a special veranda prototype.⁴⁴ Another good example of local pattern guides comes from Luther Homes, who was a New Orleans proprietor of an iron business that was active from 1842 to 1881.⁴⁵ Homes promoted his foundry through a showroom off St Charles Avenue, the neighborhood where the wealthy Anglo-Americans resided;⁴⁶ he also consistently advertised his iron works in local newspapers such as the *New Orleans Daily Creole*.⁴⁷ Homes even drew architectural sketches of ornate verandas to show to prospective clients (fig.6).

This architectural print exemplifies the common design for the majority of verandas in the Crescent City with its plethora of naturalistic motifs and scrollwork. Since many foundries used the same stylistic patterns, it is often difficult to determine who created what from the surviving ironwork. Nonetheless, what is evident from viewing images and pattern guides of these verandas is the preference for nature as ornament. Indeed the stylistic coherence among all the verandas that were produced mid nineteenth century reveals a desire to make the literal framework around the balcony space of the home seem "natural." With the artifice of floral decoration the balcony becomes naturalized for a woman, and becomes part of her home.

Skirting Around

Crinoline cages provided not only a means to achieve fashionable distension of one's skirts, but also the ability of its wearer to establish and maintain feminized

space around her person. Visually crinoline cages are a very industrial looking object that is composed of graduated steel hoops attached to vertical cloth tapes that are sewn into the waistband.⁴⁸ The metallic, beehive-looking cage was crucial to achieving the desired female silhouette of the period without the bulkiness of petticoats, and it provided better mobility. This freedom of movement applied not only to a woman's legs but also to her ability to enter public life while maintaining her status as a lady.

With the proliferation of women's magazines such as *Lady Godey's Book*, fashion trends were quickly disseminated as exemplified by the widespread adoption of crinoline cages by the bourgeoisie and wealthy women of Europe and America within the last years of the 1850s. When crinoline first came into vogue in the American South, its primary use was one of the many markers of social difference between women of different classes.⁴⁹ Similar to many urban centers during the nineteenth century, class level was worn on one's sleeve in New Orleans and in some cases, over one's crinoline. Visual cues, especially clothing, were needed in order to maintain a hierarchical society.⁵⁰ The urban environment of the Crescent city was a changing landscape with a wide range of people in terms of class and ethnicity including a spectrum of women that either did or did not conform to the feminine ideal of a lady. During such times, visual distinction takes on greater meaning and becomes a major means in which the upper echelons of society self-identify.⁵¹ In the context of mid nineteenth-century New Orleans, the wearing of crinoline cages was one of the ways to identify the wearer as having the reputation of a lady. Thus, to see

a woman in public wearing a dress whose silhouette required crinoline underneath signified that in the private sphere she was the “angel” in the house.

Like many objects that are put into daily use, crinoline is a rare survivor of history. The artifacts that do exist today are often bent out of shape, the metal rusted, or the fabric attachments torn. Such is the case for the crinoline examples in the Louisiana State Museum costume collection, which are so delicate that they cannot be examined.⁵² Finding a surviving crinoline example with a New Orleans provenance is an almost impossible task, which is ironic since the image of the Southern belle in New Orleans is so often associated with a hoop skirt. Fortunately, the crinoline cage was a mass-produced product of the Industrial Age so that each kind of this undergarment resembles another with slight variation; this fact applies for each fad that the crinoline cage underwent from the circular shape of the late 1850s to the dome-like shape of the 1860s and finally the elliptical shape of the later 1870s. Since no examples of crinoline with a direct New Orleans provenance can be provided, we must rely on evidence from other sources including the Metropolitan Museum of Art. When not worn, the crinoline cage collapses flatly into a series of concentric circles of steel (fig.7). However when in use, the crinoline is transformed into an object that is almost sculptural taking up ample space (fig.8) The function of crinoline is echoed in its skeleton-like appearance in that it is a framework for many layers of garments, acting as a kind of architectural structure to a woman’s dress.

On Jan 24th 1864, *The Daily Picayune* attempted to describe the latest Parisian mode of fashionable dressing:

“The petticoat, worn over the crinoline is made in two parts; viz., an upper piece, but slightly full, so cut as to form a point behind; this upper piece comes down to the knee. To this upper piece is sewed a deep flounce, falling very near the ground; nearly plain in front, and growing gradually fuller towards the back.... The frills, starched and fluted, are not only extremely pretty, but serve to support the edge of the dress, and to keep it from drawing in below the crinoline.”⁵³

The local newspaper’s reporting of the Parisian style of dressing for ladies indicates the attention given to how women fashion themselves according to their social status as a lady. Bodies and clothes are constantly redefining each other by simultaneously forging and deny aspects of selfhood.⁵⁴ When the crinoline cage became a phenomenon of women’s fashion in the mid nineteenth century, this foundation garment became an important garment that women used to lay claim to the identity of a lady and consequently, others demonstrated their respect by maintaining their physical distance necessitated by the crinoline cage.

In a drawing titled *Woman Holding Up A Skirt* (fig.9), the lady depicted demonstrates the exact opposite of the expectation that a crinoline undergarment should be concealed from onlookers. Rather than representing the lady within the public setting, the artist chose a moment of transition from a private to public world as indicated by her accoutrements. As the title suggests, the woman’s lifting of her skirt reveals a portion of the crinoline cage worn underneath her dress. Such a scene must have taken place in a private setting since it was a very unladylike gesture to lift one’s skirts so that others could see the layers of garments underneath. Another indication that this image’s setting is a moment of transition from the private to public sphere is the observance of the figure in the right margin offering the lady a parasol for her journey.⁵⁵ Thus, this sketch further provokes one to consider the relationship

between dress and the status of the lady. In particular, the phenomenon of the crinoline cage coincides with the height of concern surrounding the protection of Victorian femininity.

In New Orleans, a lady could purchase a crinoline cage from one of the many stores in the city's shopping districts. Chartres Street and Canal Street were especially well known for their dry goods stores that carried luxury items.⁵⁶ As the century progressed, Canal Street became the center for shopping and promenading for women with leisure time.⁵⁷ Many of the new buildings along Canal Street incorporated cast iron galleries into their structures echoing the private dwellings of their customers. In addition to their protective function, as when located in a domestic setting, the iron galleries found along Canal Street also provided those shopping and promenading with shelter from the sun and rain.⁵⁸ One shop in particular, owned by Madame Olympe, was a favorite haunt for the fashionable ladies of New Orleans.⁵⁹ Professionally known as Madame Olympe, the French native Olympe Boisse was the premiere *modiste* in the city and regularly traveled to Paris to keep up with the latest trends.⁶⁰ Madame Olympe, who had inherited the dress shop from A. Mace in 1853, began to design expensive dresses inspired by the latest Parisian fashion houses such as the couture designers Worth and Pingat.⁶¹ By 1858, Madame Olympe expanded her business to include lace and other women's accessories.⁶² Although there is no direct mention of crinoline being sold at Madame Olympe's shop, it is very likely that she would have sold such a foundation garment crucial for the latest fashion of distended skirts.

Despite her reputation as the owner of the best dress shop in the American South, Madame Olympe remains a mystery to costume scholars.⁶³ There are very few surviving garments sold by Madame Olympe; in fact, only two full dresses are known to exist one of which is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met) and the other example is at the Fashion Institute Design Museum (FIDM) in Los Angeles. The Met example (fig.10) is a pink silk dress from 1865 whose simplicity showcases the popular silhouette of the period with the wide flare of the skirt creating a bell shape. The FIDM gown (fig.11) is a black silk faille two-piece from 1866 with gold brocade swags and floral sprays along the hems; the large circumference of fabric and secondary ornamentation of this dress is structurally achievable thanks to the crinoline cage support that would have been worn underneath.⁶⁴ Indeed both ensembles would have required a crinoline cage as one of the many layers of dress in order to obtain the desired look. The surviving garments, with the “Olympe” label sewn inside, are of high quality and made of expensive fabrics indicating that the consumers of Madame Olympe fashions often were member of upper class.⁶⁵ Elizabeth Custer reminisced in her memoir *Tenting on the Plains* (1887) about one of her visits to New Orleans mentioning “a disastrous lingering one day in the beguiling shop of Madam Olympe, the reigning milliner...”⁶⁶ Many women’s decadent shopping habits at the Madame Olympe store caused more than one husband to lash out at the proprietress calling her an “old imp.”⁶⁷ Thanks to dress shops like Madame Olympe’s, New Orleans gained a reputation as the fashion center of the South rivaling its counterparts in the North like New York and Philadelphia.

Being able to purchase a crinoline cage by itself was a status marker. However, another way to convey status was the scale and quality of the hoopskirt. The scale of the crinoline cage was proportionate to the status level of the wearer; the larger the circumference, the more fabric was required for the skirt and thus indicated a lifestyle that could afford the expense. In the case of the consumers of Madame Olympe dresses, these women could not only purchase extra material but also the fabric would be of the highest quality and would therefore display her high status among the urban milieu.

In contrast to the purchasing habits of the New Orleans bourgeoisie and elite when it came to crinoline cages, those of the lower classes mimicked the fashion for hoopskirts through more economic means. For instance, the enslaved population emulated the steel structure of crinoline's dome shape with the natural material of grapevines. Former slave Robert Shepherd recalled how "Slave 'omans had new calico dresses what dey wore wid hoop skirts day made out of grapevines."⁶⁸ Domestic servants, free and enslaved, were especially successful in achieving a close resemblance to the upper class style of dress. Wanting their servants to reflect the sophistication of their masters, domestics received secondhand clothing from their mistresses. Frederick Douglas once recalled the "scarcely worn silk" worn by African-American maids.⁶⁹ Therefore, it would not be surprising if some of these maids also received well-worn crinoline cages their mistresses had discarded. Through emulating the fashion for hoopskirts by either making a cheaper version or receiving a worn out one, women in the lower classes laid claim to a feminized space that engendered respect from their contemporaries. In a New Orleans environment

where social treatment relied heavily on one's dress, women in the lower classes attempted to identify with the respectable type of femininity that wearing of a crinoline cage implied.

Crinoline Cage: A Moveable Balcony

Balconies provided spatial extensions of the feminine sphere of the home into the public world; similarly, crinoline cages provided a feminized space for women to occupy in the ambiguously gendered areas of daily life. If one were to consider both the house and wearer as types of cultural bodies,⁷⁰ then the balcony and crinoline were types of surrounding frameworks that extended their space while maintaining a necessary boundary of distance. One could even argue that the crinoline cage functioned as a kind of moveable balcony providing the autonomy and protection of private space while engaging in public life. The crinoline's hoops, like the railings of a balcony, established boundaries around a woman's person so others could not trespass upon her personal space or be in too close proximity.⁷¹ Thus, the function of the crinoline as a moveable balcony was that of female agency.

The paradoxical nature of the crinoline as both a form of enclosure and a means of empowerment is evident when looking at contemporary satirical depictions of crinoline especially those from *Punch*, a British periodical with an Atlantic readership.⁷² The satirists at *Punch* were keen observers of the new phenomena of crinoline cages. In June, 25, 1856, *Punch* expressed their anxiety about the new fashion trend:

“Public attention is being painfully called to the state of isolation in which

fashionable females are placed by the extraordinary amount of crinoline which they wear about them, and which renders it impossible for any one to approach within some feet of them...We cannot understand the cause which induces the ladies of present day to raise up such a barrier around them as to compel everybody to keep at a respectful distance, and to place themselves, as it were, in a state of blockade.⁷³

Punch also published a cartoon *Dress and Lady* (fig.12) in an attempt to dissect a woman dressed in crinoline as if she were a biological specimen.⁷⁴ The image divides the body and setting between public and private life. The section of the lady at the park shows the usual way in which a male observer would perceive crinoline as both a spectacle and a concealer; however, in the private space of the bedroom which is depicted on the right half of the image, all is revealed showing the skeleton like structure of the crinoline cage.

The notion of a male voyeur is present not only in *Dress and Lady* but also in the sketch *Woman Holding Up Skirt*. Created by male artists and consequently outsiders to the art of dressing for women, both images attempt to capture moments revealing what lies beneath the voluminous skirts of their female counterparts. Such interest indicates the effectiveness of the crinoline cage in obscuring a male observer's ability to discern the movement of the female body thereby keeping him both at a respectable distance and intrigued. In fact, this mystery surrounding a lady is quite similar to the veil of the cast iron veranda between a woman and the outside world.

Punch was not the only magazine to exaggerate the wearing of the crinoline cage with its wide circumference. For instance, *A Splendid Spread* by George Cruickshank from *Comic Almanac* (fig.13) illustrates a formal gathering in which the men are unable to offer food or drink to a crinoline clad lady. The aid of a long-

handled tray known as a baker's peel is needed because of the great expanse of the ladies' crinoline.⁷⁵ Despite the visual hyperboles in these cartoons, their underlying interest in the crinoline's potential to take up space and consequent objection to this mode of dress indicates that a lady wearing crinoline was an act of assertion rather than passivity. By wearing a crinoline cage, a lady expanded personal space and consequently infringed on the male territory of the public sphere.⁷⁶

Some scholars of costume history have argued that the crinoline cage, like the corset, was an instrument of oppression in a patriarchal society. For example, historian Rachel Weathers argued that crinoline was the ideal costume for the "Angel of the House" keeping her physically sheltered and thereby reinforcing passivity, vulnerability, and chastity.⁷⁷ After all, she had been wearing similar clothing for some time. Rather, crinoline cages provided domesticated ladies liberation from the bulkiness and discomfort of many layers of petticoats while simultaneously creating a means to participate in public life without endangering their femininity or risking their status

Conclusion

Between 1850 and 1870, iron balconies and crinoline cages established physical and social boundaries of feminized space for the women of New Orleans. During a time of social upheaval, these objects provided a form of domestic enclosure in between the public and private spheres. While initially these objects were intended to protect their femininity from the incursions of other classes and races, many women used the same materials to challenge social boundaries. The following chapters will

further elucidate how material enclosures in architecture and clothing worked together to create feminized spaces in mid-nineteenth century New Orleans. Chapter 2 will be a case study of the patronage of townhouses in the French Quarter by Baroness Pontalba who developed a kind of feminized space that was modeled by others; Chapter 3 will explore the use of crinoline cages and iron enclosures in the public sphere before, during, and after the Civil War; finally, the Epilogue will discuss how crinoline cages and iron balconies are used in creating nostalgia for historic New Orleans in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Chapter 2

A Place of One's Own: The Patronage of Baroness Pontalba

Introduction

Since its completion in 1851, the Pontalba Buildings have served as a cultural landmark for the French Quarter (fig. 14). Artists, historians, and tourists alike have admired the two red brick buildings, which flank either side of the Square, once known as the Place d'Armes. Despite the romantic mood of the Pontalba Buildings, they are actually quite functional consisting of sixteen townhouses with commercial space on the ground level. But what lures visitors to the buildings are the cast iron galleries and the intriguing lady who commissioned them. Often described as iron lace, the ornate pattern of the ironwork framing the balcony repeats the monogram of "AP", the initials of its patron, Baroness Micaela Almonester de Pontalba (1795-1874). The Baroness' patronage of these cast iron galleries, which surround the exterior of the buildings like a second skin, serves as a unique example of female agency in nineteenth-century New Orleans. One of the first residents of the Pontalba

Buildings was the singer Jenny Lind and her use of the balcony demonstrates its potential to conflate the public and private spheres of urban life. Using her wealth and privilege as a means to create a feminized space, the Baroness Pontalba challenged gender boundaries by being a very active and assertive patron while maintaining her reputation as a crinoline-wearing lady.

Challenging Gender Boundaries

Baroness Pontalba's parents were active building patrons creating private residences in the heart of the French Quarter that were close in physical proximity to the political and religious centers of New Orleans. The home her mother commissioned, the Castillon mansion, was subsequently transformed into a hotel whose guests included the famous architect, Benjamin H. Latrobe. Latrobe was impressed with the hotel's exterior architecture describing it "entirely French," a description that was echoed in later years for Pontalba's galleries made with the new material of cast iron.⁷⁸ In fact, Latrobe believed that the Crescent City was rapidly turning into an American metropolis in which the balcony form was the only surviving architectural feature of its French colonial past: "The only French circumstance which they retain is the balcony in the upper story, which, although generally too elevated for the protection of the passenger, is a means of shade as far as it goes."⁷⁹ Latrobe's observation about New Orleans balconies is from a male perspective at street level; it would be interesting to find comments from a perspective within the balcony, an experience that was more common for ladies.

Unfortunately, the Castillon mansion does not survive since a fire in the French Quarter destroyed it in the late 1830s. However, a watercolor sketch by G. W. Sully in 1836 depicts the mansion to the left of the Place d'Armes and includes the "French" feature of balconies (fig.15). The sketch also demonstrates the centrality of the Castillon mansion near the Cabildo and St. Louis Cathedral, and the location for the future site of the Pontalba Buildings. Having been raised by parents who were patrons of domestic architecture, it is no wonder that after gaining full control of her inheritance, Baroness Pontalba, built a place tailored to her desire in the same location where her father and mother once built homes.

As a married woman, Micaela Pontalba resided in France at her father-in-law's estate known as Chateau Mont-l'Évêque. It was an oppressive and isolated patriarchal environment for Madame Pontalba as the Pontalba men constrained her independence, dictated her living quarters, and effectively limited her physical movements. Micaela was given the third best chamber of the chateau, which was in great contrast to the separate wing she was to have all to herself in the Castillon mansion. During Micaela Pontalba's pregnancies, she was confined to the rooms of Mont-l'Évêque and was not allowed any visitors including her mother who lived in Paris. As the historian Christiana Vella has mentioned in her biography of *Intimate Enemies: The Two Worlds of the Baroness Pontalba*, it will never be determined whether Micaela Pontalba was isolated in the chateau against her will, but it mostly likely affected her later desire to be emancipated from married life. Micaela Pontalba did, however, attempt to make Mont-l'Évêque her home. After being granted permission, Madame Pontalba's transformed one of the large rooms of the chateau

into a theatre, which could be considered her first attempt at creating a domestic space of her own; yet the theatre was dismantled a few years later at her husband's request.⁸⁰

Madame Pontalba constantly tried to persuade Celestin Pontalba to set up a separate residence in Paris, independent of the extended family. In one of their many domestic court cases, Celestin commented: "Soon it was no longer sufficient for Mme de Pontalba to have become the idol of her husband's paternal household. She wanted to become the sovereign mistress over one adorned with her own livery."⁸¹ Celestin Pontalba seemed to reason that his wife's desire to establish her own household was based on the need to decorate. More likely Micaela wanted to define the use of spaces in a home on her own terms.

From among the properties she owned in Louisiana, the divorced Micaela chose to devise a building scheme for the acres surrounding the Place d'Armes. In contrast to Mont-l'Évêque, the design of townhouses would not be located in a rural town, but in the heart of the city. Ladies residing in the apartments would never be isolated since they could engage with the public world without ever leaving the building through the space of the iron galleries. Thus, at some level the Pontalba apartments were built by Madame Pontalba as an act of female agency in response to her lack of adequate feminized space at Mont-l'Évêque.

Building a multi-use property in the French Quarter on the scale of the Pontalba Buildings was a unique accomplishment for a Creole lady in nineteenth century New Orleans. On many levels it defied the social conventions of the day. It

was unusual for a woman to own property independent of her husband; but under the Napoleonic Code that governed New Orleans, it was possible.⁸² In addition to acquiring property through inheritance, Madame Pontalba also inherited the financial means to fund the building project. She also had the business savvy to negotiate and oversee the building's construction, a rare feat for a woman of her time. Finally, she had the foresight to build an income producing property thereby securing a lifetime of financial freedom and independence. Micaela Pontalba was in fact a female agent in the predominately male world of real estate and architecture.

A Masculine Woman

Contemporaries and historians alike have interpreted Micaela Pontalba's behavior for nineteenth-century New Orleans as unorthodox.⁹⁹ Indeed, Baroness Pontalba's passion for architecture rather than dress earned her a reputation as a masculine woman by both her contemporaries and later scholars. Further, Madame Pontalba was not considered attractive in physical appearance. When Celestin and Micaela were married in the St. Louis Cathedral, onlookers described the groom as handsome and the bride only as rich.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, as a young lady Micaela did dress in fashionable garments since a woman's dress was a major signifier of status and respectability. A portrait of Micaela as a teenager demonstrates concerted effort to portray femininity (fig.16). The dress depicted has a softening effect through the use of voluminous white fabric and pink ribbons. The manner in which Micaela was adorned in this formal portrait conveyed her as both feminine and refined.

Madame Pontalba's became less focused on personal fashion as she aged, which was partly due to the disfigurement of her body from gunshot wounds. After a firearm altercation with her father-in-law shot her, the Baroness' chest and hand were severely damaged. Although the chest disfiguration could not be seen while dressed, her left hand with its scarring and missing finger remained visible. A Daguerreotype from 1849 (fig.17) demonstrates how Madame Pontalba dealt with this new physicality. In her pose, Micaela discreetly positions her hand so that it is partly hidden by the folds of her skirt, a gesture that is a common feature in all of the depictions of the Baroness as an older woman. In the photograph, her dress is plain and appears to be made of a solid fabric with no pattern. As indicated by the silhouette and folds of the fabric, Baroness Pontalba must be wearing crinoline underneath. Indeed an inventory after her death included one well-worn crinoline cage.¹⁰¹ As indicated by the photograph and surviving inventory, the mature Madame Pontalba complied with the social expectation of the period by wearing a hoop skirt but made minimal effort to accessorize. The newspaper *The Daily Delta* interpreted her style of dressing in a positive light:

“She was a fine looking middle-aged lady, with a bright eye, intelligent expression, vivacious manner and energetic movements. From her frank and unostentatious style one would have taken her for one of those energetic ladies who, thrown upon their own resources and compelled to lay aside much of their feminine reserve and shrinking delicacy, devote themselves industriously and energetically to the support of their dependent families.”¹⁰²

Interestingly, the author of this newspaper article commented that Baroness Pontalba's efforts in architecture were still rooted in the domestic; after all, they argue, she was exerting herself in the public world of building for the sake of her children.

During the construction of the Pontalba Buildings, eyewitnesses claimed to have seen the Baroness dressed in men's pantaloons so that she could climb the ladders and inspect the progress being made.¹⁰³ If Micaela did wear pantaloons, it would have been perceived as a very radical gesture atypical of an elite Creole lady. However, the suggested pantaloons worn by the Baroness may have actually been bloomers. The wearing of bloomers, which acted as an alternative to a crinoline and skirt, was a short-lived trend in women's fashion. The wearing of bloomers would have been consistent with Micaela's challenging of gender norms, and thus it is not unlikely that she was seen publicly without a hoopskirt. Whether rumor or truth, this story reinforces Madame Pontalba's reputation as an unconventional woman whose sense of fashion -whether it was plain fabric or pantaloons- went against popular belief of appropriate dress for a wealthy lady.

Despite the different opinions to describe Baroness Pontalba's character, the consensus is that she was a strong-willed woman. Her lack of enthusiasm for fashion and her passion for architecture contradicted gender norms of the period since a lady's expected primary means of self-expression was through dress. Nonetheless, Madame Pontalba did adhere to the social code of wearing crinoline in order to maintain her status as a lady. Although Micaela may have pushed the social boundaries by choosing to focus on the adornment of buildings rather than personal dress, she nevertheless accepted the need to wear a hoopskirt, as it was a major indicator of feminine respectability in New Orleans society.

Architectural Minds

The architectural drawings for the townhouses of the Pontalba Buildings, which were prepared in either New York or Paris, revealed that Parisian urban spaces were clearly the major influence for Madame Pontalba's vision for the project.¹⁰⁴ It has been suggested that the main inspirations specifically were the Place des Vosages and the Palais Royal; both places had a garden square in the center with surrounding residential and commercial buildings. These urban spaces were a successful integration of private and public life that included a safe environment for women to shop and promenade without fear of harm or disapproval. An engraving of the Palais Royal (fig.19) in an 1863 guidebook demonstrates the resemblance of this site with buildings flanking either side of a square to that of the Pontalba Buildings.

Along with wanting to improve her private property near the Place d'Armes, Micaela also wanted to renovate the Square itself. On August 18, 1846, Madame Pontalba's agent LeBreton proposed a plan to the City Council on her behalf to transform the square from a place where vagabonds lingered to a space suitable for ladies to promenade.¹⁰⁵ Baroness Pontalba even offered to finance the renovation with the condition that she would be relieved of paying city property taxes for a twenty-year period. The City Council was not impressed with Madame Pontalba's offer, yet it was impacted enough to take it upon itself to revitalize the square renaming it Jackson Square in honor of the new statue placed in its center. The square's transformation included decorative cast-iron fencing, which complemented the nearby ironwork of the Pontalba galleries with its similar bronze color and floral ornamentation. Although Micaela may not have succeeded in gaining control of the design of Jackson Square, she did encourage its beautification so that it

complemented the aesthetics of her own buildings. The Square was now a pleasant view from the galleries of the Pontalba Buildings and provided a nearby place where ladies residing in the townhouses would feel safe enough to promenade, almost as if it were another type of balcony framed in iron as will be further discussed in chapter three.

The main reason the Pontalba Buildings had such an impact on local architecture was due to its cast iron verandas. The economical Baroness could afford to use so much ironwork for her balconies was because cast iron was inexpensive when compared to its wrought iron counterpart. Ornamental wrought iron required intense handwork by craftsmen who had to hammer out every scroll and flourish in the pattern. In contrast, cast ironwork was created by pouring the metal into molds and could be reused several times. All the raw iron material had to be imported into the city, but it is unclear whether all of the casting for the veranda occurred in New Orleans or somewhere else along the East Coast. While in New Orleans, Micaela used the surname Almonester-Pontalba in all her formal dealings, reminding locals of her New Orleanian elite heritage. Instead of simply using standard ironwork patterns from the trade catalogues for the Pontalba buildings, Madame Pontalba decided to include a custom design of her “AP” initials (fig.20). Micaela’s son Gaston was responsible for the design as indicated by his surviving sketchbooks, which show attempts to create a harmonious monogram within a heart-shaped cartouche.¹⁰⁶ The final monogram design was then given to a local manufacturer, Waldemar Appolonius Talen, who carved out a wooden mold to be used in making the railings.¹⁰⁷ However, the concept for the decorative ironwork with its “AP”

monogram was clearly that of Baroness Pontalba. With the “AP” monogram set in the cast ironwork, Micaela Pontalba left an indelible mark that communicated to all that she now had a mind and a place of her own.

Madame Pontalba’s dealings as a patron further encouraged the view that her masculine behavior was atypical of a wealthy Creole lady. Yet the Baroness’ insistence in being involved in the building process resulted in a unique balcony form that immediately became popular among the middle and upper class - the cast iron veranda. The creation of the balcony space that was enveloped in lacelike cast ironwork made quite literally a mark on New Orleans architecture. This form of balcony provided a lady both privacy and access to the outside world. As exemplified in the repeated “AP” monogram, Baroness Pontalba made it known that the verandas were not only of her design, but these feminized spaces were patronized by an elite Creole woman.

Jenny Lind’s Visit to New Orleans

“I want to be near trees; and water; and a Cathedral.”-Jenny Lind 1849

The famous singer Jenny Lind must have been pleased with her views from the iron balconies of the Pontalba Buildings which included the trees shading the Place d’Armes, the sight of the Mississippi River, and the nearby St Louis Cathedral. Known as the “Swedish Nightingale,” Jenny Lind was a popular opera and concert singer throughout Europe and America in the mid-nineteenth century. Lind had been performing in London with favorable reviews when P.T. Barnum suggested she partner with him on an American tour. Jenny Lind arrived in New York the autumn of 1850 to great acclaim. Like the public in New York, the people of New Orleans were

excited to have the famous singer perform in their local theaters. Madame Pontalba was especially pleased since Jenny Lind and her entourage were to live in the recently finished apartments of the Upper Building during their stay in the Crescent City. Madame Pontalba understood that Jenny Lind's residence in the building was an excellent promotional tool to advertise the fashionable apartments for rent located on what had been quickly deemed "Pontalba Row." In return, Jenny Lind too was well served by the Pontalba Apartments, particularly its iron balcony, which was the only other space besides the theatre stage where she interacted with her adoring public.

Around three in the afternoon on February 7, 1851, the steamship *Falcon* docked in the Place d'Armes wharf where an enthusiastic crowd numbering in the thousands was waiting to catch a glimpse of the celebrity. Charles Rosenberg, one of the people travelling with Jenny Lind, described the multitude as "thumping, pushing and elbowing in the most enthusiastic and uncourteous of manners."¹¹⁶ In fact, Lind was afraid to leave the ship and fled to the cabin until the unruly masses disappeared. The mob-like quality of the crowd partly explains why Jenny Lind later chose the iron veranda of the Pontalba Building as her platform for safely engaging with the general public of New Orleans since the height of the second floor and the physical boundary of sturdy metalwork provided barriers against intrusive behavior. Rather than dispersing, the crowd simply migrated to the streets around the Pontalba Apartments waiting for Jenny Lind's arrival by carriage. Even ladies could be seen waving their handkerchiefs from the balconies near the Place d'Armes, some of which were rented for the day.¹¹⁷ While most likely women composed part of the rowdy group, local

newspapers like *The Daily Picayune* made a distinction between the populace below and ladies of higher status who needed the safe space of a balcony.¹¹⁸

To distract the crowd from the Nightingale, Barnum concocted a ruse of appearances. First, a veiled woman arrived in a stylish carriage, and she turned out to be none other than Lind's maid. Then Barnum arrived in a second carriage escorting a woman on his arm who was later discovered to be Barnum's wife. Each female visitor appeared on the Pontalba balcony, and although the crowd was aware of the deception, they nevertheless loudly applauded.¹¹⁹ Even Madame Pontalba joined in the mischief as noted in *The Daily Picayune*: "An immense cheer went up when old Mme Pontalba good naturedly presented herself on the balcony, when Jenny was called out, and smiled and bowed her thanks to the laughing multitude."¹²⁰ Hoping not to attract attention, Jenny Lind finally arrived at Pontalba Row in a non-descript carriage. Yet the crowd quickly discerned that the new arrival was the famous singer and called for her to also make an appearance on the balcony. Lind, who had thus far avoided the rowdy public, obliged and briefly stood on the balcony waving her handkerchief and smiling. Thus, the Pontalba balcony quickly became a stage of sorts where the ladies residing in the apartment could be on public display.

For the duration of her stay in New Orleans, Lind adopted the space of the Pontalba balcony as her secondary forum for performing for the public. Rather than providing entertainment by singing as she did on a theatre stage, Lind's role on the balcony was simply to be seen. Rosenberg commented that along with P.T. Barnum, Lind was viewed as an "object of Southern curiosity," and the balcony provided a suitable space for public scrutiny.¹²¹ Lind's use of the balcony provides an interesting

comparison to the caged bird metaphor that was a popular Victorian association for ladies in both literature and the visual arts. For instance, in Kate Chopin's novel *The Awakening* (1899), the protagonist Edna Pontellier's entrapment in domestic life is symbolized by her pet parrot that flutters in its cage. Also, Walter Deverell's painting titled, *The Pet* of 1852 (fig.21) visually relates the space inhabited by the caged canary to the limited area that its female owner is free to roam as she stands on the house's threshold.¹²² In regards to Lind herself, the music coversheet for "The Geeting to America," (fig.22) a song especially written for her, can be interpreted as having cage-like framing: the decorative framework composed of scrolls, clouds, and classical figures strangely provides the silhouette of a birdcage around the centrally placed figure of Jenny Lind. With the popular Victorian notion of ladies as caged birds and the fact that Lind was already known as the Swedish Nightingale, one can imagine how easily the ornate cast-iron of the Pontalba balcony could be related to the metalwork of a birdcage. Within which, the Swedish Nightingale displayed herself to the public who viewed her as an exotic object, much like a tropical parrot or canary. Thus, the great songbird Jenny Lind found the perfect place to perch in New Orleans among the Pontalba balcony's decorative ironwork.

One of the most memorable of Lind's appearances on the Pontalba balcony was during the Firemen Association's parade on March 4, 1851. Celebrating their fourteenth anniversary, the firemen decided to pay tribute to the Nightingale, especially since she made a charitable donation to the association of one thousand dollars. The route of the parade's procession was redirected to travel down Chartres Street and pause beneath the balconies of the Pontalba Upper Building. There was a

cacophony of sounds and colors as an estimated 2,500 firemen paraded down the street; brass bands played and fire engines were bedecked with flowers while ribbons of red, white, and blue fluttered in the wind.¹²³ Along with the Nightingale, many ladies watched the festivity from balconies, as they did when Lind arrived in the city. Surviving prints and illustrations of the period indicate that during times of civic celebration, bourgeois women were segregated to the perimeters of the balcony staying close to the domestic sphere.

As the procession reached Pontalba Row, there was a pause in the fanfare as the Grand Marshall Harry Bier rode on horseback to Lind's balcony.¹²⁴ The fire Marshall presented the singer with a bouquet of local flowers. The fireman's solicitude was more reminiscent of one of Lind's romantic operas than a diplomatic gesture of gratitude. Rosenberg recalled Lind's graciousness: "...the members of each company raising their hats as they passed, and receiving a variety of courtseys from the Nightingale, who, it struck me, must have been rather tired with this part of the ceremony. Nevertheless, it was one of the penalties of popularity, and, as I should presume, carries with it as much pleasure as it does fatigue."¹²⁵

Besides the strenuous activity of curtsying for almost an hour,¹²⁶ one also has to consider that Lind bowed while wearing a full skirt including crinoline. In fact, Lind was known to wear the haute couture dresses of Charles Frederick Worth, a designer who was known for using an abundance of fabric that required a foundation garment made of steel.¹²⁷ Lind's role in the "ceremony" indeed required effort to maintain etiquette appropriate of both a lady and an entertainer. Such treatment had been foreshadowed by London's *Punch* in 1850 in which the satire depicts Jenny

Lind being crowned by uncouth Americans who toss bouquet of flowers at her feet, which eerily parallels the theatricality of the Fireman Association's parade. Along with the crucial backdrop of the balcony, the Nightingale's lady-like behavior and fashionable dress contributed to a successful social performance in which Lind acted out the persona of femininity, an embodiment that the Crescent City so much desired from her.

Besides catching a glimpse of the Nightingale on the balcony, there were other ways of participating in the "Jenny Lind Craze." Souvenirs of all sorts were being sold in the French Quarter from prints and engravings sold at J.C Morgan's Literary Depot to Daguerreotypes for sale at J.B. Steel's New Orleans Stationer's Warehouse; a hungry admirer could even purchase Jenny Lind sausages.¹²⁸ Examples of Daguerreotype, such as the one titled *The Swedish Nightingale* (fig.23), exemplifies the kind of images of Lind that were consumed not just in New Orleans but throughout America. Taken by a friend during Lind's time in New York, the photograph depicts the singer, who is fashionably dressed but modestly covered, in a common pose for the portrait of a Victorian lady. Demure with hands folded across a full skirt and eyes gazing upwards, the circulation of *The Swedish Nightingale* reinforces the notion that Lind represented a feminine ideal. Based on depictions of dress and deportment, the popular imagery of Jenny Lind was in sync with her choice of residence at the Pontalba Buildings and her decision to stay ensconced in the iron framework of the balcony.

Lind's social interactions with the elite of New Orleans also contributed to her reputation of being more of a bourgeois lady than a professional singer. Governor

Joseph Walker along with his wife and two daughters visited Lind at her Pontalba residence. Walker later described how his two young girls sang for Ms. Lind who praised them yet “urged them to preserve the native modesty and the simplicity of their characters, as more valuable than even talent and genius.”¹²⁹ Such advice, which was later printed in the *Daily Delta*, must have appealed to Victorian sensibilities that a woman’s value was her docile nature.

Even Lind’s plans for her departure from New Orleans was interpreted by local newspapers as further indication of her moral character. The singer’s refusal to leave on the steamship *Magnolia* on a Sunday was interpreted by the *Crescent* as her observance of the Sabbath: “Miss Lind is entitled to the thanks of all religious persons for this strict, observance of the commandment, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” At this moment her conduct attracts very general observation and the effect of her example will be felt far and wide....”¹³⁰ Some historians have suggested that Lind merely wanted to avoid the large crowd which was present at her arrival since the majority of people did not work on Sunday.¹³¹ However, the newspapers were most likely accurate that Lind’s reasoning was due to her religious devotion. Lind was known to attend church daily, and she once stated “I have always put God first...I play for Jesus Christ.”¹³² In the eyes of the New Orleans public, the Swedish Nightingale had all the attributes of the ideal lady: modest, moral, fashionable, and she could sing too.

Although Lind departed from New Orleans March 10, 1851, the “Jenny Lind Craze” had not quite ended. Madame Pontalba, being the enterprising person she was, auctioned off all the furniture in Jenny Lind’s apartments. In fact, before the singer’s

arrival, Madame Pontalba allowed people to view Lind's accommodations for a fee.¹³³ Only a few days after Lind had left the city, Madame Pontalba reserved a docked boat for the auction where her agents sold the furniture for a sum total of \$3,060.50.¹³⁴ While the Nightingale was still in the public's mind, Madame Pontalba also utilized Lind's association with her apartments to advertise apartments for rent in the local newspapers.¹³⁵ Especially since the yellow fever came to the city later that summer, Madame Pontalba benefited from the notoriety surrounding her apartments and their elegant balconies as almost every townhome was occupied by the end of spring of 1851.

With her appearances on the Pontalba balcony, the Swedish Nightingale's visit to New Orleans certainly made a lasting impression on the cultural memory of the city. Both Jenny Lind and Madame Pontalba benefited from the singer's residing in the Upper Building. Lind maintained her reputation as an elegant and upright lady by living in the most fashionable place of the season while Madame Pontalba successfully promoted her new apartments to prospective renters. As demonstrated by Lind's use of the balcony, the iron galleries enveloping the buildings' façade provided a safe environment that successfully allowed residing ladies to participate in public life while staying within the domestic sphere. For Jenny Lind, the balcony functioned as an intermediary space between public and private life, allowing her to perform her role as a feminine ideal without going to the theatre.

Conclusion

Baroness Pontalba employed both iron balconies and crinoline cages as a means to establish a self-identity that was independent from her experiences in

married life. Rather than accepting the traditional function of these material enclosures as forms of protection, Madame Pontalba challenged the status quo of feminized space in the cultural environment of antebellum New Orleans. Her unique design for cast iron verandas was an architectural acknowledgment of the importance of the balcony space for ladies at home and became a type of feminized space that was emulated throughout the city by the bourgeoisie. In contrast, the Baroness's tolerance of wearing crinoline, and occasionally rejecting the fashion for pantaloons, was another way of challenging gender norms in the public sphere while maintaining her status as a respectable lady. Micaela Pontalba is unique in her manipulation of these materials that were used to construct feminized space and transforming them into tools of personal expression.

Chapter 3

Taking to the Streets: Women in the Public Sphere

Introduction

With mid nineteenth-century New Orleans in a state of cultural flux, the Creole and Anglo-American elite attempted to impose a rigid hierarchical social order. Through enacting laws, constructing public sites, and using material enclosures, members of the upper echelons of society attempted to maintain social exclusivity while simultaneously regulating gender and racial interactions. Of particular interest was the great importance placed on the segregation of different types of women from the “endangered” bourgeois ladies to the “dangerous” public women who labored in the streets whether they were vendors or prostitutes. This segregation also extended itself to ethnicity and even within race itself such as the delineations between free women of color and those enslaved. One way in which

these feminine boundaries manifested themselves in the public sphere of the Crescent city was through the material enclosures of iron railings and crinoline cages. As the century progressed, these materials of hoops and iron reflected larger social changes; they were transformed from tools of regulation during the antebellum period to weapons of political dissidence during the Civil War era; after emancipation, African-American women employed them as a means to achieve social acceptance. As women became more accustomed to participating in the public sphere, they used the very materials that were intended to regulate their femininity to push the boundaries of feminine space.

Danger and Filth: The Streets of New Orleans

The Victorian concern for the protection of ladies in the public realm was not without justification. The street was a masculine sphere, which a woman who was deemed a lady entered at her own risk. By mid century, the streets of New Orleans were filled with filth and violence. Unlike other major American cities, where city leaders introduced infrastructures for sanitation, as early as the 1750s New Orleans had no sewage system, leaving garbage, debris, and even the corpses of stray animals to decay in the open until collected by the occasional wagon that carried it out of the city. Although the city council prohibited the practice of throwing clop water off balconies, city residents still had to be wary of debris falling from overhead as well as mud and waste underfoot, as seasonal rains caused the sidewalks, known as banquettes, to be constantly muddy.¹³⁶ Not only was nineteenth-century New Orleans a dirty place, it was also one of the most violent cities in the United States.¹³⁷

Considered to be the dueling capital of the South, city residents became accustomed to the public use of weapons with knife fights and shootouts a common occurrence.¹³⁸

Elite New Orleanians like their counterparts in the Eastern United States and Europe considered the domestic sphere to be a feminine domain; the street was not.¹³⁹ In the context of nineteenth century New Orleans, the public terrain of the Crescent city was gendered male both in daily use and through larger gender ideologies. Men of all races and ethnicities could expect to walk on city streets alone, or in groups, without raising comment. Moreover white male leaders of government and city institutions presided over the urban landscape and attempted to define its use. The street was a white male space in an increasingly plebian place.¹⁴⁰

By definition, public space is an ambiguous territory, which in theory is open to all and thus the social mixing of different classes, races, and gender can occur.¹⁴¹ New Orleans' streets were contested zones where black men, white women, and mixed race men and women negotiated space and gender ideology alike. Women could not be entirely eliminated from public view or sequestered inside the city's houses. Yet, women's presence in public was very much a concern for those white elites involved in creating an urban landscape. They fought to ensure that women's conduct, and movement were carefully monitored to maintain public decorum.¹⁴² The emergence of public space for women in nineteenth-century New Orleans further complicated the defining of categories for proper and improper women.¹⁴³ Along with the group of ladies who leisurely perused the squares, there was a multiplicity of other women present in the streets, along the levees, and at the markets.¹⁴⁴ A

woman's position heavily depended on the public perception of her sexual propriety and social respectability.¹⁴⁵

Jackson Square: A Feminized Space in the Public Landscape

Since New Orleanians equated the public realm with a male domain, urban planners and developers treated women as a type of "other" carving specific sites out of the urban landscape to separate elite white women from other members of the public.¹⁴⁶ While public spaces such as the avenues' neutral ground and department stores like Madame Olympe's were open to women, the majority of other commercial spaces like saloons, civic buildings and slave markets were not as they were restricted by social codes of gender. With the increasing presence of women of leisure present in the streets, more public sites were remade into appropriate feminine spaces for women. These sites were often architecturally bounded, and the material enclosures of iron and crinoline cages used at the home could also be found here. Promenading in public spaces became a particularly popular activity for ladies, causing civic leaders to revitalize sites like Jackson Square.¹⁴⁷ The 1851 lithograph conveys the urban idyll that Jackson Square was to provide for those who were deemed genteel (fig.24). The scene presented to the viewer is calm and orderly lacking the visual suggestion of the cacophony of sights, sounds, and smells that usually pervaded the streets.

In his reminiscences about the antebellum years in New Orleans, lawyer/amateur historian Henry Castellanos recalled the iron fence of Jackson Square which divided those promenading in the square from the bustling activity of urban life: "I can reassure my readers that those days were happier far than ones, in this

particular, at least, that citizens could gather together in social entertainments and exchange the amenities of life in peace and amity, free from the intrusion of drunken hoodlums or Workhouse rowdies.”¹⁴⁸ Thus, the square not only provided a safe haven for ladies but also a physical divide between the classes in public.

Originally named the Place d’Armes, both the Spanish and French governments had used Jackson Square for military drills, parades, and public ceremonies during the colonial period.¹⁴⁹ However, by the 1840s, the site had fallen into disrepair and become an eyesore.¹⁵⁰ As mentioned previously, Baroness Pontalba was the first to initiate beautification of the square in an attempt to complement her newly erected apartment buildings, which flanked either side of the open garden space. Although Baroness Pontalba’s plans in 1846 to transform the square were rejected by the city council, the committee did acknowledge the need for its improvement.¹⁵¹ By 1851, Jackson Square was freshly landscaped a cast iron fence was placed around its perimeter. The city council commissioned the overseer Pilie to incorporate a cast iron fence that was both ornamental and functional.¹⁵² The fence was a physical manifestation of an unspoken code of social exclusivity dictating that only members of the upper class may enter the space within the ornate iron boundary.

Promenading is defined as a leisurely walk taken in a public place to meet and be seen by others.¹⁵³ Historically, promenading had its roots in Baroque Europe, especially France, where men and women of the French court, and eventually the bourgeoisie, took leisurely walks in newly created parks and gardens seeking both to see and be seen. Given the decision of the New Orleans bourgeois residents to closely ally themselves with French culture, it is not surprising that they fully

embraced promenading as a new public ritual of sociability.¹⁵⁴ A woman who promenaded solidified her status as a lady by being able to stroll with appropriate behavior and dress.¹⁵⁵ The costume for promenading in mid nineteenth-century New Orleans included the crinoline cage worn underneath the skirt and often a parasol in hand.¹⁵⁶

The crinoline cage provided a feminized space for the most important component of the promenade, the body.¹⁵⁷ The natural form of a woman's body remained invisible to the onlooker with hoop and skirt concealing the legs.¹⁵⁸ Being in perpetual motion was another means to provide distance and establish an autonomous space around the promenading woman; when encountering another acquaintance, be it male or female, the two would walk in company rather than stop and talk.¹⁵⁹ Such segregation of the body and control of movement established distance between the woman and her urban surroundings thereby protecting her ladyhood from endangerment.¹⁶⁰

As mentioned in the first chapter, the crinoline cage was like a moveable balcony that could be taken into the public realm safeguarding the wearer from the social ills of urban life. The wearing of a crinoline cage provided her an autonomous, private space to carry with her wherever she traversed.¹⁶¹ Not only was the lady protected by her dress, the public square also provided a type of refuge that evoked the cast iron balcony found at home. The cast iron fence included in the creation a public space like Jackson Square paralleled the cast iron boundary found around the homes of the very people who promenaded in the square. Both the iron-fenced square and the cast iron balcony established feminized spaces to be used by women. The

public square, a feminized space carved out of the public terrain, was in a sense a very large balcony. Like the cast iron balcony of one's home, the fenced-in square by social convention excluded lower class members of society from trespassing into a lady's sphere. Thus, these metallic enclosures in its many forms all shared similar function namely forming a boundary to control a feminized space thereby also creating an autonomous area within which a lady might freely roam. While the crinoline cage carried the lady during the in-between moments on the street, the public square provided the ultimate haven, outside the domestic realm itself, for respectable femininity. In order to establish privacy in a public setting, women essentially wrapped themselves in a screen of social protection by wearing a crinoline skirt and situating themselves in an exclusive fenced-in square.¹⁶²

Public Women: From Vendors to Prostitutes

But what about those women who stood on the other side of the cast-iron line? After all, ladies were far from the only type of women found on New Orleans' busy streets; in fact, many women made their livelihoods by occupying public space, whether a maid having to run daily errands in the market, or a vendor whose place of work was the street itself. These "public women" did not conform to the ideal type of womanhood, yet they comprised the majority of the female population of New Orleans.¹⁶³ Free women of color and recent immigrants were often members of the working class laboring as washerwomen, laundresses, cooks, merchants, chambermaids, seamstresses, peddlers, sick nurses, house servants, etc. Many of these jobs do not lend themselves to the wearing of large hoopskirts. Nor did these women have the opportunity to participate in a promenade. Although women of the lower

classes were often deemed “dangerous women,” they in fact faced a higher risk of peril since they were socially unprotected. One indication of which was the lack of protection provided by the material enclosures that those considered ladies surrounded themselves with.¹⁶⁴

Female vendors were a constant presence in the urban public. On Sunday afternoons around Jackson Square, there were many free women of color located just outside the square’s cast iron perimeters selling goods from their makeshift stands.¹⁶⁵ Free women of color often chose to become vendors since there was little opportunity for them to become domestic wives as there were fewer men of their own class.¹⁶⁶ Also, the Napoleonic code governing New Orleans permitted women the sole ownership of property, which meant they could own wares, stands, and profits in their own right.¹⁶⁷ Although these female vendors were often in close proximity to the feminized space of the public square, they were situated outside the protection offered by the cast iron enclosure. Also their dress lacked a wide crinoline skirt, which served to demarcate individual space. Surviving depictions of free women of color do not show the voluminous bell-shape silhouette. In fact, little is known about the dress consumption among African-American women in nineteenth-century New Orleans or whether free women of color shopped in the same department stores as white women.¹⁶⁸

The watercolor titled *Woman Selling Fruits and Vegetables* (fig.25) depicts a female peddler in Bermuda during the nineteenth century, and evokes the common scene also found in the streets and market places of New Orleans. Under her makeshift shade, the woman wearing a *tignon* transacts business at street level with

no barrier between herself and strangers. In contrast to the decorative fabric donned by a hooped dress lady, African-American women often conveyed their cultural identity with the *tignon*, a headdress made of brightly patterned fabric that helped distinguished their female identity from others.¹⁶⁹ With permission from their owners, enslaved women coming to town from plantations/farms could also be found peddling goods; the city government even designated a specific site where enslaved women could sell their produce, which included vegetables, bread, gumbo, and other delicacies.¹⁷⁰ Rose Nicaud, an enslaved woman, was one of the first known coffee vendors in New Orleans and even bought her freedom from her revenue. Initially, she pushed a portable cart around on Sundays, and later when she became more successful, Nicaud built a permanent stand in the market.¹⁷¹

In addition to carving out public squares, male civic servants also attempted to segregate another type of women, the prostitute, from the rest of the city. Interestingly, although prostitutes were at the other end of the Victorian spectrum of femininity, they shared similar experiences of gender regulation with ladies. As respectability became a priority for a successful Victorian metropolis, elite New Orleanians attempted to make prostitution less visible in the streets, which was no small feat for a city known for its sexual vices. In 1857, the city council passed the Lorette Ordinance requiring prostitutes to vacate single-story buildings and ground-floor residences of multi-story buildings; the ordinance also forbade street level solicitation and indecent dress.¹⁷² Another statute, added in 1866, declared, “it shall be unlawful for any woman or girl, notoriously abandoned for lewdness, to occupy, inhabit, live or sleep in private dwellings of their own choosing.”¹⁷³ While city

leaders attempted to distance ladies from the public for their own safety, they sought to keep prostitutes at a distance due to their potential to corrupt others. Thus, residential segregation applied not only to race but to occupation as well with prostitution confined to the upper stories of houses in certain areas of the city.¹⁷⁴

Attempts by prostitutes to gain customers from the balconies above their lodgings became common practice. In the vice districts known for prostitution, such as the Gasquet Street, giving a new meaning to “see and be seen.”¹⁷⁵ Although there are very few surviving description of the balconies used by prostitutes, they are not described as providing the screen of privacy that a veranda creates; rather the balcony provided a viewing platform so that potential customers from the streets could be enticed. One zone of prostitution was located next to a train station and evokes a very different image than the one suggested by the Kansas City Southern railway ad of the “Southern Belle.”¹⁷⁶ Regulations of these different types of women such as a lady or prostitute highlight the importance of class when imposing order in New Orleans society.¹⁷⁷

Ain’t I a Lady: African American Women Struggle to Claim Feminine Space

Enslaved women were another group highly visible in New Orleans’ public sphere. With New Orleans as the largest slave market in the Gulf region, there were several spaces devoted to the auctioning of slaves including the Rotunda at the St. Louis Hotel located several blocks away from Jackson Square.¹⁷⁸ The most common image used by historians to represent New Orleans’ slave auctions during the nineteenth century is the *Sale of estates, pictures, and slaves in the Rotunda, New Orleans* (fig.26) by William Henry Brooke (1772-1860). Brooke shows several

auctions taking place within the monumental setting of the Rotunda. Among the property being sold at the auction are people, specifically African-Americans, who are depicted in the center wearing little clothing in contrast to the surrounding clothed white figures. Although Brooke accurately communicates the treatment of slaves as property, his representation is nevertheless deceptive.¹⁷⁹ The Rotunda was actually known for parading the slaves for sale in extravagant dress.¹⁸⁰ One can easily imagine the enslaved women, especially those considered “fancy girls” with light-colored skin, in fashionable dresses with wide hoopskirts adding to the theatrical spectacle and encouraging high bids as the illustration from the play *The Octoroon* suggests (fig.27).¹⁸¹ Thus, an enslaved woman’s experience with a hoopskirt in an auction context was in keeping with the function of feminine display, yet unlike free women, the enslaved wearer was truly in a crinoline *cage* that provided no protection from intrusion of space and body.

For enslaved women, iron enclosures must have carried strong resonances not to freedom but rather to restriction. In stark contrast to the iron lacework of a balcony or the delicate tracing of a square’s fence, an enslaved woman encountered the material of iron in a far more oppressive context through objects such as shackles and iron collars. In particular, use of the iron collar was a method of punishment, which could be seen in the urban public. Attached to the base of the iron collar were often rods of iron that jutted out making the wearing of it of uncomfortable by restricting movement of the head and publicly degrading the wearer. An example of an iron collar survives in the Massachusetts Historical Society collection (fig.29); the collar was reportedly cut from the neck of a young New Orleans slave runaway who had

attempted to escape from her mistress. A Union soldier Captain S. Read reportedly removed the collar and brought it back as a token of time spent in war.¹⁸² Described as an iron yoke slave collar, this metallic structure created a physical and social boundary similar to the material enclosures of balconies and hoopskirts used by free women to establish feminized space. However, the iron collar did not provide an autonomous space, a fact that is relayed by the close proximity between metal and flesh. While certainly far removed from the iron collars masters used to restrict slaves' movement the crinoline cage if donned by slaves, also represented a similar feeling of coercion.

The famous abolitionist and suffragist Sojourner Truth (1797-1883) delivered a speech in 1851 at the Women's Rights Convention in Ohio that vocalized the challenges faced by African-American women to be treated with dignity: "That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman?"¹⁸³ The choice of the word 'woman' in Sojourner Truth's rhetorical question of "Ain't I a woman?" could easily be replaced with 'lady.' Indeed the difficulty for an African-American woman to be perceived as a lady was a prominent and controversial issue in New Orleans just after the Civil War had ended in 1865.

The Emancipation Act added to the Louisiana Constitution in 1864 officially ended slavery, yet racial bias remained.¹⁸⁴ Thousands of recently liberated African-Americans migrated to the Crescent city. In fact, New Orleans had become a Mecca for emancipated plantation slaves.¹⁸⁵ In addition to the change in demography,

emancipation affected New Orleans society economically and socially. For slave owners, liberation of their “property” calculated to approximately a loss of \$500 million.¹⁸⁶ And since African-Americans were no longer considered valuable property, violence against them grew.¹⁸⁷ Emancipation also lowered the status of free people of color, ending the tripartite system that had been part of New Orleans social structure since colonial times. Like many Southern cities after the war, postbellum society in New Orleans became increasingly polarized between black and white.¹⁸⁸

Due to the downgrading of status for many formerly free African-Americans, many mulatto women who had the status of free before the war attempted to pass as white in the Reconstruction era. New Orleanians had long referred to people of color trying to pass as white as “losing one’s boundaries.”¹⁸⁹ Attempting to change one’s racial status was not the only way African American women laid claim to the identity of ladies. Many African American women utilized dress and the act of promenading to solidify their desired status of respectable femininity. A series of watercolors by Edouard Marquis includes several depictions of Creole women of color promenading in the Crescent city soon after the end of the Civil War. For example, the image entitled *Creole Woman with Maid* (fig.29) depicts two African American women of different social rank. The class difference is indicated by dress and skin tone; the Creole lady with a lighter complexion (standing in the foreground) wears a fuller, more elaborate skirt. The darker skin maid behind her wears an apron and less voluminous dress, common working gear for many lower class New Orleanians. African American women (many of them of mixed raced descent) of the middle class could now promenade, however the majority of the newly emancipated remained in

the lower classes as servants. Interestingly, unlike the image of white women promenading in Jackson Square, *Creole Woman with Maid* has no discernable setting. While the a lack of background may be explained by the nature of the watercolor sketch, the absence of setting is appropriate as African-American women were exploring unknown territory in a city that was redefining racial and gender boundaries both in the public and private spheres.

In some ways, postbellum New Orleans with the pressure of a slow economic recovery became an even more tense and dangerous city than it had been before the war.¹⁹⁰ In other ways, however, the city remained the same with the white male oligarchy still ruling local government and trying to pass “Black Codes,” which were versions of old slave codes that restricted African Americans’ movement and behavior.¹⁹¹ During the last quarter of the nineteenth-century, racial conflict grew as increasing numbers of African American men and women attempted to assert their political freedom and social status. Artists and cultural commentators lavished additional attention on African-American women who violated the city’s unwritten, but still understood, sumptuary laws.¹⁹² A cartoon from 1882 entitled, *A Colored Lady of New Orleans* (fig.30) demonstrates the inability of African-American women to achieve social acceptance as ladies despite their embrace of the same material enclosures of femininity that white women had employed for decades. In New Orleans’ postwar society gender was increasingly trumped by race. In the cartoon, the woman’s “blackness” is underscored by her pale surroundings in comparison to her darker face. Despite wearing the most fashionable silhouette of the 1880s (which no longer included a wide hoopskirt), she nevertheless has an outsider status in the

whitewashed square. With loss of benefits from the tripartite caste system of the antebellum period and the growing racial animosity of the Reconstruction era, middle class African American women struggled to be acknowledged as proper ladies worthy of the feminized space that material enclosures endowed. In fact, with the end of the “golden age” of New Orleans, iron balconies and crinoline cages gradually lost their ability to provide feminized space for the women of New Orleans much to the disappointment of women of color who could now openly proclaim, “Ain’t I a lady?”

Hoopla on the Balcony and Crinoline Disobedience

After the Union captured the port city of New Orleans in late April of 1862, General Benjamin Butler arrived in a city that was filled with strife, filth, and women. Due to the Union blockade of the Mississippi River several months earlier, trade in New Orleans ground to a halt resulting in an economy so stagnant that many residents had fallen into poverty. Since the majority of men were away, fighting in the war along the East coast, most of the city’s occupants were women. The few men still left in New Orleans were either elderly or were recent immigrants with no interest in the Confederate cause.¹⁹³ Thus, it was left to the ladies of New Orleans to demonstrate the city’s opposition to Union occupation. However, the social codes of femininity in the nineteenth century limited women’s ability to voice their dissidence in public. Unable to resist occupation with violence or with outright disobedience (as men or lower class women might) New Orleans’ elite white women transformed the materials of their femininity, such as crinoline skirts and iron balconies, into weapons of political activism. General Butler quickly discovered a surprising foe in the ladies

of New Orleans who deemed him a “Beast” and his soldiers unworthy of their respect.¹⁹⁴

Upon taking the position as military governor, Butler immediately received complaints from soldiers about the conduct of women sympathetic to the Confederate cause. The most common grievance was that when a soldier was about to pass a lady on the sidewalk, she would make a great act of gathering her crinoline skirts for fear that her dress might be contaminated by contact with the “Yankee enemy;” the woman would then move off the sidewalk and proceed to walk in the carriage way.¹⁹⁵ Butler mentioned that many of these young and attractive dissenters seemed to have the appearance and decorum of a lady until they encountered a Union soldier.¹⁹⁶ At times they even transgressed normal feminine behavior to adopt activities deemed rude or barbaric. For instance, one officer was so offended by a woman spitting at him that he told the General that he wanted to return North saying, “I want to go home. I came here to fight enemies of the country, not to be insulted and disgusted.”¹⁹⁷ Without resorting violence, the ladies successfully made the Union troops feel unwelcome in the city with their ungentle behavior.¹⁹⁸ They effectively used their crinoline cages to take possession of New Orleans’s typically “male” city streets and as a weapon against what they perceived as Northern aggression.

Formerly a lawyer in Massachusetts, Benjamin Butler (1818-1893) became a general during the Civil War and was appointed military governor of New Orleans immediately after Union troops had conquered the city on April 25, 1862. While the local women saw him as a Yankee beast, Butler viewed New Orleans as an untamed city.¹⁹⁹ In his autobiography, Butler described the filth of the streets with all sorts of

matter rotting and no means of disposing sewage; meanwhile, the female passerbys showed equal disgust at the Union soldiers as if they themselves were the filth polluting the city.²⁰⁰ In Butler's opinion, the upper echelons of Southern society were responsible for the secession from the United States while the lower classes had little involvement in the war.²⁰¹ Butler's plan for winning over the city's population further alienated him from the ladies of New Orleans since not only was the General a Unionist, but he aligned himself with the common man over the interests of the elite.

General Butler was not the only person who was surprised to find his enemies in New Orleans were not Confederate soldiers but rather ladies. Union troops were shocked by the behavior of the women they encountered in New Orleans's streets. The soldiers were prepared for conflict with other men, yet the city's businessmen showed little resistance since many decided that earning money was more important than conveying their political dislike by eschewing Union business.²⁰² In contrast, the ladies of the middle and upper classes, who were not under the pressure of making a livelihood, openly demonstrated their disgust by movement, gesture, and word. The soldiers were dumbfounded as how to act during a time of war when perceptions of femininity were already blurred and even more so when the women in question were no longer behaving in a "ladylike" manner.

Even Butler himself experienced the spurn of the Confederate belles who employed not just their skirts but also their balconies. While riding through the streets, Butler passed a balcony filled with women who immediately showed their disapproval of him by turning around in a dramatic fashion with their skirts swirling. As he recalled:

“There were five or six women leaning over a balcony on one occasion when I was riding along quite near it, with one officer only between me and the balcony.” I was face to the front, and of course people turned out to see me more or less as I went through the streets. Just as we were passing the balcony, with something between a shriek and a sneer, the women all whirled around back to with a flirt, which threw out their skirts in a regular circle like the pirouette of a dancer. I turned around to my aid, saying in full voice: “Those women evidently know which end of them looks the best.” That closed that exhibition.”²⁰³

Although Butler penned this description many years after the incident, the General vividly remembered the movement of the crinoline, a gesture that caught his attention as being both feminine and dissident.

As Butler’s anecdote suggests, the Union troops in New Orleans tolerated the women’s antics in the public sphere. Yet that changed when high-ranking Officer Farragut and Colonel Deming were mistreated. Farragut and Deming were passing under a balcony on a main street when a downpour of dirty water fell on them. The woman on the balcony who threw the water wounded the men’s masculine pride while simultaneously disrespecting their military status. After this particular incident, Butler took legal action in an attempt to end the ladies’ insults. Just after two weeks of occupation, Butler faced the dilemma of retaining Union dignity without encouraging harm to the ladies of New Orleans. His solution was General Order No.

28:

“As the Officers and Soldiers of the United States have been subject to repeated insults from the women calling themselves ladies of New Orleans, in return for the most scrupulous non-interference and courtesy on our part, it is ordered that hereafter when any Female shall, by word, gesture or movement, insult or show contempt for an officer or soldier of the United States, she shall be regarded and held liable to be treated as a woman of the town plying her avocations.”²⁰⁴

With this proclamation, Butler struck at the vulnerability of nineteenth-century sensibilities toward femininity.²⁰⁵ He threatened the New Orleans ladies who protested in the streets and on the balconies with the loss of their respectable feminine status. The protesting ladies were threatened with the punishment of being grouped with public women, even making a veiled suggestion that they could be regarded as prostitutes.²⁰⁶

What commonly became known as the Woman's Order provoked a strong reaction in the United States and also abroad. The Confederacy circulated the Order as propaganda inflaming the Southern sense of chivalry among its soldiers.²⁰⁷ Members of Great Britain's parliament were shocked by Butler's actions. As Lord Palmerston stated in the House of Commons: "A Englishman must blush to think such an act had been committed by a man belonging to the Anglo-Saxon race."²⁰⁸ With Victorian England as the epicenter of the concept of feminine domesticity, it is no surprise that the British were offended by a legal ruling that made demeaning a lady upholding one's duty.

However, many cartoonists and critical commentators in the Northeast took the side of the Union. A *Harper's Weekly* cartoon published on July 12, 1862, (fig.31) argues that the Order was an effective and necessary means of civilizing the uncouth women of New Orleans. The cartoon is divided into two images of an encounter between two women and a Union Soldier on the streets of New Orleans, representing the cause and the effect of the Woman's Order. The image on the left depicts the offending ladies, in which the feminine accoutrements of parasols and full hoopskirts indicate their elite status. The image on the right represents the impact of Butler's

proclamation on the behavior of female Confederate sympathizers. Now, the with their parasols up and crinoline skirts arranged in a more orderly fashion, demonstrate restraint and politeness to the Union soldier as he tips his hat in due respect almost as if they are caught in a moment of promenade.

Butler in his autobiography prided himself on the success of the order: “All the ladies in New Orleans forbore to insult the troops because they didn’t want to be deemed common women, and all the common women forbore to insult our troops because they wanted to be deemed ladies, and of those two classes were all the women secessionists of the city.”²⁰⁹ The actual impact on the behavior of the protesting women of New Orleans is difficult to ascertain. However, it is clear that as the Civil War brought women closer to political action, and they re-evaluated their society and their position within it, turning to the material goods that they had used to assert their own feminine place within the public sphere toward political action.²¹⁰

For example, Sarah Morgan was a young woman whose diary accounts of New Orleans during the Civil War provides insight into the challenges of maintaining feminized space in a city whose political and social boundaries were constantly shifting. In August of 1862, Sarah Morgan along with her mother and sisters entered the military zone of New Orleans by ship and submitted their luggage to be searched for contraband. Sarah Morgan was mortified at the thought of her diary being found by the soldiers and persuaded her sister Miriam to conceal her most private possession within her crinoline cage. Sarah wrote in the very journal that was hidden in the hoopskirt: “Being unwilling for any Christian to see such a book as this, I passed a piece of tape through the centre leaves, and made Miriam tie it under her

hoops.”²¹¹ At the time, Sarah Morgan was unable to wear a crinoline cage due to a riding accident that left her temporarily unable to walk. Since Sarah had no ability to create a private sphere around her own person, she relied on her sister’s use of costume to maintain her privacy. Even during a time of war when personal possessions and property were exposed to inspection, many women like Sarah Morgan transformed their feminized space provided by the crinoline cage into an area of concealment upon which no respectable soldier would trespass.

The Civil War transformed New Orleans not only into a war zone but a city dominated by women. Women with the status of lady especially took the opportunity to assert themselves politically in the public sphere by utilizing the very material enclosures that helped communicate their social positions as weapons of femininity. Through acts of crinoline disobedience and hoopla on iron balconies, the women of New Orleans let their presence and disapproval be known to the new Yankee male arrivals in the Crescent city.

Conclusion

During the antebellum era in New Orleans, iron balconies and hoopskirts initially functioned as a feminized space that aided in the regulation of different types of women present in the urban landscape; however, these metallic enclosures gradually transformed into the means to push gender boundaries in the public realm, a development that was spurred on by the events of the Civil War and Emancipation. Hoops and iron provided many women a way to assert their own politics while still claiming the status of respectable femininity. With their wide crinoline skirts and cast iron surroundings, some women participated in the promenade in the square while

others demonstrated political dissidence on the sidewalk. African-American women especially experienced a changing relationship with these material enclosures. Before the Civil War, both free and enslaved women of color were accustomed to an “in between” status. Yet, they faced an even more ambiguous social situation during the postbellum years when iron balconies and hoopskirts were becoming a less relevant form to establish oneself as a lady. As the latter half of the nineteenth century progressed, the crinoline and iron boundaries used by women to establish feminized space also helped them transition from being the “other” in the public sphere into one of the many claiming space in the streets of New Orleans.

Epilogue

Remembering and Misremembering Hoopskirts and Iron Lace

Towards the end of the nineteenth century with the arrival of the “New Woman,” the wearing of crinoline quickly disappeared and the need to restrain the movement of women through the use of cast iron balconies and railings likewise faded.²¹² Changes in social mores and ideas of womanhood in American society impacted the material culture of dress and architecture. Fashion no longer required foundation garments like the hoopskirt, which became viewed as restrictive of movement and out-of-style. As the twentieth century progressed, women were also more present within the workforce and the public sphere in general thereby no longer requiring the feminized space of the iron balcony as a means to negotiate the divided spheres of public and domestic life. Gradually with the emergence of the new woman and the modern city material enclosures made of hoops and cast iron shifted from

establishing feminized space for nineteenth-century women of New Orleans to evoking nostalgia the memory of the city itself during its “golden era.”

As the twentieth century progressed, tourists and residents alike increasingly associated the crinoline cage with elite white Southern ladies while the cast iron balcony was romanticized into delicate lace that framed a bygone time. These associations not only romantically transformed mid-century New Orleans into a place dominated by hoop skirted belles ensconced within iron lace verandas, but they also contributed to the widespread mythologizing of the complex race relations and heightened gender conflicts of the antebellum South. Diverse products ranging from twentieth century tourist pamphlets to twenty-first century dolls demonstrate how the crinoline cage and the cast iron balcony continue to be cultural cues that influence not only our understanding of femininity in mid nineteenth century New Orleans but also to shape impressions of the city’s character and of female identity more broadly.

Heritage Tourism:

During the interwar years of the twentieth century, the city of New Orleans underwent economic depression and massive social changes, which impacted the condition and demographics of sectors of the city formerly inhabited by elites. In particular, the French Quarter, which included the Pontalba Buildings and Jackson Square fell into disrepair. No longer a thriving economic district, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the French Quarter was in physical decay. The bourgeoisie had migrated out of the French Quarter while poor African Americans, recent immigrants, and prostitutes moved into the cheaper housing.²¹³ The historic area gained a

reputation for revelry, and vice with Bourbon Street becoming the main zone for bars and nightclubs. With Bourbon Street as the central entertainment sector the French Quarter acquired a less respectable reputation where femininity was of the more the illicit kind including dancing girls and prostitutes. When Oliver La Farge visited New Orleans during the 1920s, his observations were strikingly similar to the ethnic tapestry that characterized the city almost a century before: “The population included Negroes, Creoles, and Cajuns, an occasional Malay drifted in from Barataria marshes, Italians Greeks, Jews...and a great many Latin Americans. There were sailors of all kinds, antique dealers, second-hand dealers, speakeasies galore, a fair variety of criminals, both white and coloured nuns...and whole blocks of prostitutes.”²¹⁴

As they had in the nineteenth century, New Orleans’s elites attempted to regulate the urban landscape, including areas now frequented by bawdy women. Diversity in the Crescent city continued to exist, the elite were still trying to regulate the urban landscape, including its feminized spaces. The difference between the nineteenth century and the twentieth, however, was that in the latter it was predominantly upper class women rather than the male establishment imposed their vision of a conservative and race-based femininity onto the historic district. While the Baroness Pontalba represented a unique exception for her role in shaping the Crescent city’s architecture and public spaces, in the early twentieth century, a number of women became involved with the city’s architecture. In the early twentieth century, female preservationists, including Elizabeth Werlein and Helen Schertz, desired to fight back against the night clubs and to transform the French Quarter into a place where respectable women could feel at ease and remember the city’s history

in a romantic setting.²¹⁵ They desired to create a wholesome setting for women, families, and refined public events.²¹⁶ The white upper elite began to view the French Quarter as the home of their white Creole wealthy ancestors with lingering elegance instead of the locus for trash, poverty, and ethnic groups that were the sectors' current reality.²¹⁷

Local socialites maneuvered themselves into the politics of the historic district with an aim to reinvigorate the area by glorifying nineteenth-century domesticity. In the guide *The Wrought Iron Railing of Le Vieux Carre New Orleans*, Werlein highlighted the cast iron balconies as part of the Quarter's lure while Schertz established the annual Spring Fiesta in 1937 to celebrate an idealized nineteenth-century womanhood.²¹⁸ Local socialites even began purchasing property in the quarter and worked on improving its aesthetic appearance. Flo Field, a local writer and tour guide, described what a critical role cast iron balconies played in establishing a nostalgic setting: "It is a few moments before the Present dies away on a balcony, an iron grill..."²¹⁹ In the hands of these female preservationists, ironwork balconies became mnemonic devices that allowed them to conjure up visions of an idealized past. These women's efforts to transform the French Quarter forever affected how locals and tourists alike view this part of the city as a feminine space created by and for upper class women with Royal Street as the hub of nostalgia and an important counter to the troublesome Bourbon Street.²²⁰

By the end of the 1940s, the French Quarter acquired a favored status over any other section of the city.²²¹ Certain selections of material culture, including cast iron balconies and hoopskirts, overshadowed other narratives of social relations,

sometimes equating actual objects to romanticized subjects.²²² As upper class white women shaped public memory of historic New Orleans, their romanticized interpretation of the city during the nineteenth-century prioritized the white experience. Their nostalgic view of the past was quickly commoditized and found appeal among national tourists. Vintage postcards and posters for travel promoted the feminine character of the antiquated city, and several postcards from the 1940s describe the ubiquitous balconies as “lacework in iron” that are “embroidered on many of the old buildings;” such flowery language molded an outsider’s impression of the city as a romantic refuge, relying on the association with finely wrought textiles (lace and embroidered fabric) to heighten the association with refined women.²²³ The rendering of cast iron as lace also appears in the KCS ad in which the representation of the balcony’s delicate tracery is more similar to the belle’s frilled dress rather than the metallic train. Even the hotels in the downtown area, starting with Le Downtowner du Vieux Carre, were willing to participate in creating the reputation of a Southern city filled with iron lace by replicating it on the facades of their own contemporary iron galleries, which were often described as “sugar cake imitations” of the nineteenth-century originals.²²⁴ Even today brochures promoting New Orleans are filled with hoop skirted tour guides and silhouettes of cast iron tracery. While these pamphlets may seem ephemeral, they in fact sell an abridged version of the region’s past, and the majority of tourists readily consume them.²²⁵

Belle versus Mammy

On March 22, 1953 readers of the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* opened their newspapers to discover an article entitled, “There will always be a Southern Belle.” Indeed the notion of a beautiful lady, key in the construction of the South’s identity, was especially promoted in New Orleans after World War II.²²⁶ The lady, always racially white, was a central figure in the aggrandizement of nineteenth-century revisionist versions of the Old South, which region became feminized in relation to the North.²²⁷ As a symbol of southern gentility, the “lady” was hyper-feminized as indicated by her extravagant dress, which included a wide belle-shaped skirt.²²⁸ This interpretation of the Southern belle was not only a key component to New Orleans’ historic identity, but as previously noted, it was also an excellent tool for promoting tourism. In fact, a procession of women dressed in large hoop skirts walked through Jackson Squares in memory of their “belle” ancestors who promenaded in the same square before as part of the Spring Fiesta, an annual historical festival that was established in 1936 as a means to lure tourists to the city and for elite locals to glorify the antebellum past.²²⁹ The Spring Fiesta emphasizes and celebrates the romantic femininity of an idealized nineteenth-century past where the “spirit of the old South” is “brought to life again” along a sixty-five mile floral trail. The Spring Fiesta is still popular today and is in fact the third most popular tourist event in New Orleans after Mardi Gras and Jazz Fest.²³⁰ There is a noticeably all-white participation in this spring festival. A photograph of a white woman from the 1968 Spring Fiesta (fig.32) captures the recurring image of the hoop-skirted belle standing within a cast iron veranda. The photograph is reminiscent of the KCS ad and even parallels the moment

a century before when Jenny Lind appeared on the Pontalba balcony, as a performance of nineteenth-century femininity. Now recreated as part of New Orleans' cultural heritage industry, offering modern women a fantasy of southern life.

In contrast to the celebration of the white belle, at the other end of the spectrum industrialists and those in New Orleans' tourist industry promoted the stereotype of the black mammy, most famously Aunt Jemima. Developed by the Pearl Milling Company as a trademark for a pancake mix, Aunt Jemima was the most widely recognized mammy figure in twentieth-century America. Debuted at the Chicago's world fair in 1893, Aunt Jemima's fictitious narrative even included a childhood spent in New Orleans.²³¹ Nancy Green, a former slave from Kentucky who was the first person to play the Aunt Jemima character, wore a costume that was intended to evoke the antebellum era.²³² Her clothes were typical of a nineteenth-century African American domestic including a bright colored headscarf (but not a big hoop skirt).²³³ Indeed, Aunt Jemima's appearance is reminiscent of African American women peddlers in New Orleans during the nineteenth century. It was not until a century later in 1994 that Aunt Jemima's characteristic headscarf was replaced with curly hair, signaling a growing awareness of the representation of African American women in American consumption.²³⁴ As part of antebellum revisionist mythology, the mammy figures served as a foil to the belle. While a white woman embodied feminine Southern beauty as a belle, a black woman embodied the unfeminine and desexualized as a mammy; unlike the belle, the mammy was never described as a lady.²³⁵

With the widespread dissemination of mammy images in popular culture, the most wildly recognizable representation of African American woman by mid twentieth century was a mammy in her uniform of a headscarf and simple dress.²³⁶ In the twentieth century, local white women in New Orleans only occasionally wore the belle costume to celebrate the imagined antebellum past, but several African American woman wore the Mammy attire daily while selling pralines and even mammy dolls to tourists. In a photo from the 1930s (fig.33) one woman is shown doing exactly that as she sits in the street selling mammy dolls and pralines. The modern vendor's attire parallels the mammy dolls on sale with the headscarf and white apron, clothing that is suggestive of a domestic worker and in contrast to the formal ball gown worn by participants in the Spring Fiesta. Often tourists did not read the mammy-like costume worn by African American tradeswomen as an evocation of free people of color but rather as the city's enslaved population of the past. Such stereotyping of antebellum women for a tourist audience in New Orleans' historic district highlighted the continued racial line that divided gentility and femininity.

Creole Disney

The reputation of the historic district of New Orleans as a tourist fantasy gained such national attention that Walt Disney decided to create his own New Orleans Square in his California amusement park. In 1966 Disneyland unveiled a three-quarter replica of the historic district that paid homage to the city's famous iron lace architecture and the popular image of the hoop-skirted belle (fig.34).²³⁷ Disney's New Orleans Square was cleaner and shinier than the original with no concern over the decay of iron balconies; in fact, many civic leaders and politicians preferred the

Disney version to the original.²³⁸ The Disney version was a microcosm of New Orleans nostalgia filled with balconies, vendors, and people dressed as ladies and gentlemen from a bygone era. This Creole “Disneyfication” further encouraged the modern perception of nineteenth-century New Orleans with the swaying of crinoline beauties who lived in a domestic setting of iron lace. While Disneyland’s New Orleans Square idealized the image of a privileged white lady during the golden era, it omitted the experiences of other kinds of women in the same urban environment. By the end of the twentieth century, the American public’s understanding of historic New Orleans, with the aid of Disney, was more of an imagined place where nostalgia overrode historical accuracy with a hybrid of Creole culture and tourist fantasy centered on the city’s distinctive streetscape and the wide skirts of its white women.²³⁹ Indeed, the Neo-Creole had arrived.²⁴⁰

About thirty years later in 2009, Disney returned to New Orleans as a perfect setting for a new and seemingly more racially sensitive imagined past when the Crescent city became the background for an animated feature film entitled, *Princess and the Frog*. This movie is not only one of the few Disney fairytale movies set in the United States but also it included Disney’s first African American princess, Tiana.²⁴¹ Considering the lingering significance of racial segregation and economic disparity, 1920s Jim Crow New Orleans was an unexpected choice as backdrop for a black princess.²⁴² In fact such a social context clashes with the racially tolerant cast of characters, as Disney once again set about to transform the city’s complicated racially diverse history into a nostalgic myth.²⁴³ In Disney’s new New Orleans, all are color-blind including the characters Tiana and Charlotte.²⁴⁴ Both characters appear in the

movie wearing large ball gown dresses with wide skirts, suggesting the hoop-skirted belle that has become a recognizable motif of the Southern nostalgia.²⁴⁵ During the moment of magical transformation when Tiana kisses the prince frog, the animators considered the setting of a wide balcony trimmed with the silhouette of iron tracery (fig.35). Tiana's bearing is dignified and regal thereby challenging the mammy stereotype. The black silhouette of the ironwork contrasts with the urban background and is reminiscent of Arnold Genthe's 1920s photograph of the Pontalba veranda. The choice of a balcony setting for an African American female character encourages new associations in popular culture between femininity and New Orleans. In contrast, Charlotte is a satirical representation of white southern femininity since she views herself as a delicate princess, but who is in actuality far from submissive or demure. These characterizations are a reversal of long established stereotypes of the mythologized New Orleans. Thus, seemingly innocent films like *Princess and Frog* can be deeply ideological and affect understanding of the relationship between femininity and New Orleans culture.²⁴⁶

Creole American Girls

The most recent twenty-first century interpretation of the nineteenth-century New Orleans material culture of cast iron and crinoline can also be found in goods produced for children: the American Girl doll. In 2011, the American Girl Company launched a pair of dolls whose fictional stories are set in antebellum New Orleans. Established in 1986, the American Girl Company strives to, "celebrate girls and all that they can be"²⁴⁷ through the presentation of an array of characters drawn from different epochs in American history, ranging from an American Indian of the 1760s

named Kaya to a groovy girl of the 1970s named Julie. Each character's story is told through a six-book collection that teaches, as the company describes, "gentle life lessons."²⁴⁸ These collections provide a fun and engaging way to educate young girls about changing roles of women in history based on the social, racial, and cultural context of the period. The two New Orleans dolls are Cecile, a wealthy free person of color, and Marie-Grace, a white Creole who recently returned to live in the city. The related merchandise for Cecile and Marie-Grace includes doll clothing, miniature furniture, and a series books. It is worth noting that the American Girl Company felt the need to have not one but two dolls to represent New Orleans, one white and one black, both of which were intended to personify the antebellum South.²⁴⁹

Choosing New Orleans as representative of the entirety of the antebellum South, as the American Girl Company has selected to do, is misleading. New Orleans' tripartite racial system was not seen elsewhere in the region, nor was there another urban area with such a large population of people of free color. However, New Orleans was a setting where American Girl could communicate parallel stories of black and white childhood in the Old South without a plantation context but rather a place where there was large population of free people of color. The creation of the Cecile character points toward a larger change in ideas about how African American women should be represented in popular culture.²⁵⁰ In contrast to the mammy figures that dominated characterization of African-American women in the twentieth century, Cecile is a free girl of color who exemplifies qualities more closely aligned with a southern belle. In the book *Meet Marie-Grace*, for example, Marie-Grace runs errands unaccompanied which Cecile, a young lady, would never be allowed to do. In

fact, Cecile is more culturally sophisticated and wealthier than Marie-Grace. While Marie-Grace has an Irish immigrant maid, Cecile has a black maid, who wears a *tignon*, and is treated like one of the family.²⁵¹ While the narratives for each doll acknowledge the presence of well-to-do free people of color in nineteenth-century New Orleans, they do not reflect the historical reality for the majority of female African Americans in the city. The black experience that the American Girl Company has selected to portray is quite privileged, and a rarity, as most were African American women in the city were domestics or working class. In addition the books in the series eclipse the complexity of race relations in favor of simple messages of goodwill, Cecile and Marie-Grace become good friends, a highly questionable relationship in New Orleans' segregated society. Since the contemporary girls who read these books and play with the corresponding dolls are learning concepts of ethnicity and identity, it appears that the company has selected to influence current attitudes towards race at the expense of historical accuracy.²⁵² However, since the American Girl Company claims to provide children with historic realism, one questions how idealized their narratives should be.²⁵³

Prominent among the accessories that can be purchased for the Cecile and Marie-Grace dolls are items that evoke the material enclosures of nineteenth-century New Orleans femininity including: a crinoline cage, parasol, and cast iron garden furniture. Customers posting on the American Girl website note how much they like the crinoline accessory, in particular (fig.36). Pleased with its seeming realism and femininity (it features a frilly pink bow), they comment that it looks like a miniature historic example. However, American Girl's interpretation of crinoline is not entirely

accurate. The doll costume designers felt need to make the utilitarian crinoline cage made of steel and cotton “prettier” by using a fabric that evokes pink satin as well as adding ruffles and ribbons. The adornment of the doll’s hoopskirt is not found on surviving examples of crinoline cages, as demonstrated by the examples from the Met, but rather such embellishment are more suggestive of the details found on a dress worn over the undergarment. Also, it is that unlikely that young girls wore crinoline at such an early age and were more likely dressed in pantaloons.

In its current summer 2012 catalogue, the American Girl Company also advertises a limited edition courtyard set for the New Orleans dolls. The set includes “cast iron” furniture made of plastic and a lacy parasol (fig.37). Since an iron balcony does not translate well into toy form, the next best thing is “cast iron” garden furniture which recalls the balcony and its exterior setting. The selection of accessories in the courtyard set follows the tradition of relating these objects, even in minute form, to notions of nineteenth-century femininity in the Crescent city. The fact that these are included as accoutrements for historically accurate New Orleans girl characters reveals the continued relevance of these materials in the shaping of feminine identities both past and present. As the girls of today consume these dolls the narratives of femininity contribute to their own concepts of self. While children entertainment industries, like the American Girl Company, are contributing to a significant cultural shift to include a black perspective in understanding women’s history nineteenth-century New Orleans, nuances in the conflict between gender, race, and class continue to be downplayed while gentility and its frivolity are promoted.

Conclusion

Contemporary Americans still have a long way to go in capturing a more truthful notion of nineteenth-century New Orleans. The nostalgia surrounding iron lace, hoop skirted belles, and headscarf-wearing mammies that was promoted by local preservationists in the 1920s continues to impact current perception of historic New Orleans. However, in the last few years, attempts have been made in transforming the popular image of historic New Orleans, particular in relation to the representation of African American women. Children's consumption of New Orleans through the Disney's movie *Princess and the Frog* and the American Girl dolls Cecile and Marie-Grace indicate that crinoline cages and iron balconies continue to be used to convey notions of femininity in nineteenth-century New Orleans. It is unlikely that the image of a Crescent City filled with hoop-skirted women and iron balconies will disappear from popular imagination. But hopefully our contemporary understanding of iron balconies and crinoline cages will one day include the complex cultural spaces that New Orleans women negotiated during the nineteenth century, using these material objects themselves a space in between.

Endnotes

- ¹ Kansas City Southern Historical Society, “Southern Belle,” *KCS Website*. <http://www.kcshs.org> (accessed Jan 12, 2012).
- ² Ibid.
- ³ John Rewald and James B. Byrns and Jean Sutherland Boggs, *Edgar Degas: His Family and Friends in New Orleans* (New Orleans: Isaac Delgado Museum of Art, 1965), 17.
- ⁴ See Joan Scott, *Gender and The Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
- ⁵ James R. Creecy, *Scenes in the South* (Washington, D.C.: Thomas McGill, 1860), 275.
- ⁶ Thomas Ruy Smith, *Southern Queen: New Orleans in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 21.
- ⁷ Ibid., 3.
- ⁸ Bennett H. Hall, *Louisiana: A History* (Wheeling IL: Harland Davidson, Inc., 2008), 123.
- ⁹ Mark A. Rees, *Archaeology of Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 291. See also Thomas Ruy Smith, *Southern Queen: New Orleans in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 13.
- ¹⁰ Mark A. Rees, , 161.
- ¹¹ Ibid., 291.
- ¹² Elizabeth Fussell, “Constructing New Orleans, Constructing Race: A Population History of New Orleans,” *Journal of American History* 94 (2007): 850.
- ¹³ Ibid., 849.
- ¹⁴ Mark A. Rees, 161
- ¹⁵ Bennett H. Hall, *Louisiana: A History* (Wheeling IL: Harland Davidson, Inc., 2008), 161.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., 177.
- ¹⁷ Thomas Ruy Smith, 3.
- ¹⁸ Now known as Haiti, Saint Domingue’s slave rebellion from 1794 to 1804 caused tens of thousands Creoles to flee the Caribbean and move to New Orleans. See Elizabeth Fussell, 849. See also Arnold Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon eds. *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 103-111. See also Mark A. Rees, *Archaeology of Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 291.
- ¹⁹ Mary P. Ryan, *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City during the Nineteenth Century* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 35.
- ²⁰ Thomas Ruy Smith, 77.
- ²¹ “New Orleans Ward Boundaries, 1805-1880,” New Orleans Public Library, Louisiana Division, <http://nutrias.org/facts/wards.htm> and Ned Hemard “The Three Municipalities” New Orleans Bar Association (2009).
- ²² Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. New York: Praeger, 1966), 4. French philosopher Michel Foucault argued that regulating sexuality was a major concern for Victorian societies. As analyzed by Foucault, social attitudes towards sexuality in the nineteenth century paradoxically both permitted and constrained the activities of individual members based on their biological

sex. See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol.1*, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: The Orion Press, 1964), 211-231.

²³ Mark A. Rees, 292.

²⁴ Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public, Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press), p.73. Also see Elizabeth Langland, *Nobody's Angels: Middle-Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 35.

²⁵ Glenna Matthews, *Just a Housewife: The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 36. Also see Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics 1830-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 14-17.

²⁶ Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (1966): 151.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁸ Dell Upton, *Another City: Urban Life and Urban Spaces in the New American Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 316-318.

²⁹ Especially if they were laborers traveling to work or peddlers of wares on the squares

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 322.

³¹ My use of the term "feminized space" is influenced by Daniel Scott Smith's phrase of "domestic feminism" in which nineteenth-century women utilized their domestic reputation to enhance their position in family and society and thereby created a sense of autonomy around themselves. See Daniel Scott Smith, "Family Limitations, Sexual Control, and Domestic Feminism in Victorian America" in M. Hartman and L. Banner eds., *Clio's Consciousness Raised* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974): 119-136. Another influence is the work of Griselda Pollock especially her concept of the "ideal divide: in which she states that nineteenth-century society separated men and women into separate spheres of public and private life for the sake of social socialbility. See Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 68. Also see Joan Scott, *Gender and The Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

³² Julian Ralph *Dixie or Southern Scenes and Sketches*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1896, 56.

³³ Grace Elizabeth King, *Balcony Stories* (New York: The Century Co., 1892), 1-2.

³⁴ Very little has been written about the role of balconies as a significant site of cultural space, particularly in the United States. However, a recent study in 2001 examined the importance of the balcony for the women of Cyprus, who treasure this space which is attached to the home yet allows engagement with public life. The Cypriot women's preference for the balcony in modern times parallels with nineteenth-century New Orleans focus on the veranda as a space for women. Eastern Mediterranean University. "The Changing Role of Cypriot Women in Residential Exterior Spaces" (Famagusta: Cyprus, 2001) <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/The+changing+role+of+Cypriot+women+in+urban+residential+exterior...-a095807501> (accessed November 13, 2011).

³⁵ Unfortunately for architectural historians, the antebellum mansion was divided in half during the 1920s and separated a few yards apart in order to make two residences. One part of the mansion survives today as the Degas House.

³⁶ H. Parrot Bacott, Barbara Bacott, Sally Reeves, John Magill, and John H. Lawrence. *Marie Adrien Persac: Louisiana Artist*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 204.

³⁷ Joan D. Van Andel, *Caribbean Traditional Architecture* (Leiden, Netherlands: Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology, 1985), 27.

³⁸ Michael Connors, *Caribbean Houses: History, Style, and Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 2009), 28.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁴⁰ Margot Gayle and David W. Look, *Metals in America's Historic Buildings: Uses and Preservation Treatments* (Washington DC: Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, 1980), 42.

⁴¹ Wrought iron is a malleable substance that may be shaped by hammering, stretching, or rolling. In contrast, cast iron is a brittle substance that fractures easily upon impact and must be painted in order to prevent rusting. The material is melted in a furnace and the molten iron poured in to a prepared mold. After cooling and finishing, the iron is ready for use. Cast iron was especially suitable for the complex and naturalistic patterns often found in Victorian designs. With cast iron, many pieces can be cast from the same pattern making it easier for repetitive designs to be manufactured. The product is more susceptible to rust than wrought iron and should be painted for protection. See Ann M. Masson and Lydia H. Schmalz, *Cast Iron and the Crescent City* (New Orleans: Landmark Society, 1995), 5.

⁴² Margot Gayle and Carol Gayle, *Cast-Iron Architecture in America: The Significance of James Bogardus* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1998), 14.

⁴³ Mary Louise Christovich, Sally Evans and Roulhac Toledano, *New Orleans Architecture Volume V: The Esplanade Ridge*. Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 1977), 27.

⁴⁴ *General Catalogue of Hinderer's Iron Fence Works* (T. Fitzwilliam & Co., Steam Printers: 1885) New Orleans Historic Collection, 39.

⁴⁵ Keli Rylance, "New Orleans Business Archive: Luther Homes" (Tulane University Southeast Architecture Website, May 2009) <http://southeasternarchitecture.blogspot.com/2009/05/new-orleans-business-archive-luther.html> (accessed October 13, 2011).

⁴⁶ Frederick S. Starr, *Southern Comfort: The Garden District of New Orleans* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 45.

⁴⁷ *New Orleans Daily Creole*, Oct. 11, 1856 and *Daily Picayune* Mar. 30, 1854.

⁴⁸ Anita Stamper and Jill Condra, *Clothing through American History: The Civil War through Gilded Age, 1861-1899*. Denver: Greenwood, 2011 110-111.

⁴⁹ Susan Hiner, *Accessories to Modernity: Fashion and the Feminine in Nineteenth-Century France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 11. Hiner discusses how fashion accessories were mechanism for class distinction.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² In fact the condition of the crinoline examples ranging from the 1870s to the 1890s is in such a poor state that they are too fragile to examine or handle. (Wayne Phillips, Louisiana State Museum Costume Curator, October 2011).

⁵³ *Daily Picayune*, “Paris Fashions” (Jan 24 1864).

⁵⁴ Jessica Munns and Penny Richards eds., *The Clothes That Wear Us: Essays on Dressing and Transgressing in Eighteenth Century Culture* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999), 9.

⁵⁵ Incidentally the parasol, like the crinoline, is another fashion accessory that provides a sense of enclosure, which protects one’s femininity. In fact, both the crinoline cage and parasol are similar in structure with their hemispherical shape created through a metal framework that is covered in fabric.

⁵⁶ H. Parrot Bacott,, Barbara Bacott, Sally Reeves, John Magill, and John H. Lawrence, 102.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ A *modiste* produces, designs or deals in women’s fashions ed Hemard, “Paris Fashions” in *New Orleans Bar Association Nostalgia* section (New Orleans: 2011), np. Also, “Dress, Evening Mme. Olympe” <http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/80095754> (accessed Jan 13, 2012)

⁶¹ Rachel Harris “Meet Madame Olympe” <http://blog.fidmmuseum.org/museum/2009/07/meet-madame-olymp> (2009). Kevin James is a curator at FIDM who has been researching Madame Olympe, conversation Jan 13, 2012. Also, “Madame Olympe Evening Dress,” *Metropolitan Museum of Art Collection*, <http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/80095754?rpp=60&pg=1&ao=on&ft=dresses&deptids=8&when=A.D.+1800-1900&pos=40> (accessed Jan 10, 2012), np.

⁶² Rachel Harris, np.

⁶³ Ned Hemard, “Paris Fashions” in *New Orleans Bar Association* (New Orleans: 2011), np.

⁶⁴ Rachel Harris, np.

⁶⁵ Also designed and sold own garments being one of the first, if not the first in America to have labels in her garments. Ned Hemard, np.

⁶⁶ Elizabeth Bacon Custer, *Tenting on the Plains* (London: Sampson Low, Searle & Rivington, 1888).

⁶⁷ Ned Hemard, np.

⁶⁸ Robert Shepherd from Georgia in “*New Raimments of Self:*” *African American Clothing in the Antebellum South* by Helen Bradley Foster (New York: Berg, 1997), 137.

⁶⁹ Frederick Douglas in “*New Raimments of Self:*” by Helen Bradley Foster (New York: Berg, 1997), 138.

⁷⁰ Mark Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001).

⁷¹ This ample space surrounding the lady provided a feminized space to occupy and thus enabled her to safely negotiate the ambiguous terrain of public life; whether it was receiving visitors from the outside world in her home or traversing the streets to promenade in the park, or even to attend a different sort of performance such as the theater.

⁷² Julia Thomas, *Pictorial Victorians: The Inscriptions of Values in Word and Image* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), 78.

⁷³ “A Good Dress for the Ladies,” *Punch* (June 25, 1856), 258.

⁷⁴ Julia Thomas, *Pictorial Victorians: The Inscriptions of Values in Word and Image* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), 89.

⁷⁵ W. H. Chesson, *George Cruikshank* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1908), 32.

⁷⁶ Julia Thomas, 81.

⁷⁷ Margaretta F. Watson, *Collecting the Pre-Raphaelites: The Anglo-American Enchantment* (London: Ashgate, 1997), 95-108.

⁷⁸ Samuel Wilson Jr. ed., *Impression Respection New Orleans by Benjamin Henry Boneval Latrobe: Diary and Sketches 1818-1820*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1951, 167.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 210.

⁸⁰ Renè Marquis de Belleval, *Souvenirs de ma Jeunesse* (Paris 1895) in *Intimate Enemies: The Two Worlds of the Baroness de Pontalba*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 125.

⁸¹ *Pontalba vs. Pontalba*, Docket 2856, Louisiana Supreme Court Records (Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans). 80.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 115, 129.

⁹⁹ Even as an historical figure Baroness Pontalba’s behavior is controversial among scholars. Early twentieth-century historians such as Leonard Huber and Samuel Wilson Jr. are critical of Micaela’s personality describing her as “a fascinating and exasperating woman who changed the face of the center of New Orleans.”⁹⁹ In their book, *Baroness Pontalba’s Buildings and the Remarkable Woman who Built Them*, Huber and Wilson characterize Micaela as “a strong-willed self-indulgent heiress,” and the Pontalba men were victim to an ill-behaved Creole. A more recent architectural historian, Nathaniel Banks, also views Madame Pontalba as the source of mishap: “Tempestuous, imperious, and mercenary; she so antagonized her father-in-law that he shot her in the chest and then killed himself.” Later in the twentieth century, feminists have come to the defense of Baroness Pontalba describing her as a “brilliant human being” who was struggling against a patriarchal system and who would not be perceived as being overtly aggressive if she were a man. In the historical art exhibit *Relinquishing the Past*, Baraba Allen and Linda Frese created a series of text and image montages as a means to convey the complexities of Micaela’s identity. In these montages, the Pontalba Buildings were viewed as an act of emancipation. More recently, biographer Christiana Vella extensively researched all primary evidence concerning Madame Pontalba’s life and therefore presents a more factually accurate view of the circumstances that influenced the Baroness to become an active patron of architecture. Vella concludes that though Micaela Pontalba was certainly not a docile person, neither was she a tyrant.

¹⁰⁰ *Le Montieur de la Louisiane*, 26 Oct. 1811.

¹⁰¹ Christina Vella, 326-7. Vella discusses inventory but does not cite original source

¹⁰² *Daily Delta*, Dec. 8, 1850.

¹⁰³ Hilary Irvin, “Pontalba Buildings.” *KnowLA Encyclopedia of Louisiana* (accessed September 2, 2011).

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- ¹⁰⁴ Transcript of the Testimony in the Case of Samuel L. Stewart vs. Mrs. A. Pontalba No. 4193. Filed December 20, 1851, Second District Court. New Orleans Public Library.
- ¹⁰⁵ Christina Vella, 273.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 287. Vella mentions that monogram designs were included in Gaston's sketchbooks but does not cite the reference. However, several of Gaston's sketches are in the Louisiana State Museum's archives.
- ¹⁰⁷ Ann M. Masson and Lydia H. Schmalz, 17.
- ¹¹⁶ Charles G. Rosenberg, *Jenny Lind in America* (New York, 1851), 141.
- ¹¹⁷ *The Daily Picayune*, Feb. 8, 1851.
- ¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁹ *Daily Delta*, Feb. 8, 1851.
- ¹²⁰ *The Daily Picayune*, Feb. 8 1851 p2
- ¹²¹ Charles G. Rosenberg, 140.
- ¹²² Elaine Shefer, "Deverell, Rosetti, Siddal, and The Bird in the Cage," *The Art Bulletin* 67 (1985): 437.
- ¹²³ *New Orleans Bee*, Mar. 5, 1851.
- ¹²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹²⁵ Charles G. Rosenberg, 155.
- ¹²⁶ According to the *New Orleans Bee* (Mar. 5, 1851), Jenny Lind was bowing to the fireman for three-fourths of an hour.
- ¹²⁷ Jessa Krick, "Charles Frederick Worth (1826–1895) and The House of Worth," *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004) http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/wrth/hd_wrth.htm (accessed Feb 2, 2012).
- ¹²⁸ Keith Hambrick, "The Swedish Nightingale in New Orleans: Jenny Lind's Visit of 1851," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 22 (1981): 392.
- ¹²⁹ *Daily Delta*, Feb. 19, 1851.
- ¹³⁰ *The Daily Crescent*, Mar. 9, 1851.
- ¹³¹ W. Porter Ware and Thaddeus C. Lockard, Jr., *P.T. Barnum Presents Jenny Lind" The American Tour of the Swedish Nightingale* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 70.
- ¹³² Edward Wagenknecht, *Jenny Lind*. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1931), 153.
- ¹³³ *The Daily Crescent*, Feb. 6 1851.
- ¹³⁴ W. Porter Ware and Thaddeus C. Lockard, Jr., 70.
- ¹³⁵ *The Daily Delta*, Mar. 13/18/19, 1851.
- ¹³⁶ Judith K Schafer, *Becoming Free, Remaining Free: Manumission and Enslavement in New Orleans, 1846-1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), xvii.
- ¹³⁷ Dennis C. Rousey, "Cops and Guns: Use of Deadly Force in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans," *The American Journal of Legal History* 28 (1984): 47
- ¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.
- ¹³⁹ Upton, Dell, 313.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 316.
- ¹⁴¹ Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public*, 59.

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- ¹⁴² Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Pained Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 114-115.
- ¹⁴³ Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public, Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press), 108.
- ¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 63-64.
- ¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 173.
- ¹⁴⁶ Dell Upton, 322-323.
- ¹⁴⁷ Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public*, 71.
- ¹⁴⁸ Henry C. Castellanos, 143-146.
- ¹⁴⁹ Lake Douglas, *Public Spaces, Private Gardens: A History of Designed Landscapes in New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 16.
- ¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.
- ¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 18. Also, Leonard V. Huber and Samuel Wilson, Jr., 64.
- ¹⁵² Lake Douglas, 19.
- ¹⁵³ Oxford English Dcitionar, Defitintion of Proemanding, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/152405?rskey=Yv7BJQ&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid> (accessed February 2, 2012).
- ¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 209.
- ¹⁵⁵ David Scobey, "The Anatomy of the Promenade: The Politics of Bourgeois Sociability in Nineteenth Century New York," *Social History* 17 (1992): 203.
- ¹⁵⁶ Women's crinoline skirts helped prevent incursions of their femininity by providing a distance around their person and therefore indicated a status of untouchability.
- ¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 217.
- ¹⁵⁸ The parasol was another fashionable accessory that screened the body particularly the upper half and whose structure was similar to a crinoline, being both made of metal and fabric.
- ¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 215.
- ¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 202.
- ¹⁶¹ Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 223.
- ¹⁶² Upton, Dell, 317
- ¹⁶³ Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public*, 73.
- ¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.
- ¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.
- ¹⁶⁶ Daniel E. Walker, *No More, No More: Slavery and Cultural Resistance in Havana and New Orleans*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 64.
- ¹⁶⁷ Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public*, 56.
- ¹⁶⁸ Although there is little information about African American consumerism in nineteenth-century New Orleans, Sophie White is a historian who has focused her research on the consumerism of goods in eighteenth-century Louisiana particularly that of clothing. In her research, she discusses how African Americans, especially slaves, used clothing to assert identity and promote economic agency. See Sophie White "Geographies of slave consumption: French colonial Louisiana and a world of goods," *Winterthur Portfolio* 45: 229.

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- ¹⁶⁹ Many accounts mention African-American women wearing *tignons* including: Grace King, *New Orleans: The Place and People* (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1895), 84, 334. Also see Sybil Kein, *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 138.
- ¹⁷⁰ Bennett H. Hall, 180.
- ¹⁷¹ Café Rose Nicaud. "The Story of Rose Nicaud," <http://caferosenicaud.com> (accessed February 2, 2012). Also, Sybil Kein, *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 219.
- ¹⁷² New Orleans Digest of Ordinances (New Orleans Public Library, 1866), 274. See Alecia Long, *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex, Race, and Respectability in New Orleans: 1865-1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 3.
- ¹⁷³ Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public*, 89.
- ¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 108.
- ¹⁷⁵ Alecia Long, 12, 28.
- ¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷⁷ Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public*, 89.
- ¹⁷⁸ Alecia Long, 1.
- ¹⁷⁹ In fact, it is very questionable as to whether William Henry Brooke ever visited New Orleans making one question how he came to depict such a scene. Thus far, the answer to Brooke's interpretation of the slave market in New Orleans remains shrouded in historical mystery.
- ¹⁸⁰ Daniel E. Walker, 64.
- ¹⁸¹ Thomas Ruy Smith, 97.
- ¹⁸² "Iron yoke slave collar," Massachusetts Historical Society masshist.org/database/1688use-onview-id (accessed February 16, 2012).
- ¹⁸³ Excerpt from Sojourner Truth's speech of "Ain't I a Woman?" at the Women's Rights Convention Akron, Ohio, 1851. Recorded by Frances Gage, *The History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 1 (1881), 531.
- ¹⁸⁴ Judith K. Schafer, *Becoming Free, Remaining Free: Manumission and Enslavement in New Orleans, 1846-1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press), xxiv.
- ¹⁸⁵ Helen Taylor, *Gender, Race and Region in the Writings of Grace King, Ruth McEnery Stuart, and Kate Chopin* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 1989), 4.
- ¹⁸⁶ Bennett Hall, *Louisiana: A History* (Wheeling IL: Harland Davidson, Inc., 2008), 210.
- ¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 211.
- ¹⁸⁸ Judith K. Schafer, 165.
- ¹⁸⁹ Shirley Elizabeth Thompson, *Exiles at Home: The Struggle to Become American in New Orleans*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 2. Also see Sybil Kein, *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 296.
- ¹⁹⁰ Helen Taylor, 4.
- ¹⁹¹ Bennett Hall, 212.
- ¹⁹² Drew Gilpin Faust, 223.
- ¹⁹³ James O. Lang, "Gloom Envelops New Orleans: April 24 to May 2, 1862," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 1 (1960): 283.

¹⁹⁴ Benjamin Butler was oftend described as the “Beast” by the women in New Orleans, a nickname that continues to be used to this day. See Hans Louis Trefousse, *Ben Butler: The South Called Him BEAST!* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1957).

¹⁹⁵ Benjamin Butler, *Autobiography and Personal Reminiscences of Major-General Benjamin F. Butler* (Boston: A.M. Thayer & Co., 1892), 415.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 418.

¹⁹⁸ Karen Halttunen, 114-117. Halttunen discusses the importance of physical self-restraint for a lady was doubly important in the public sphere when even adjusting one’s collar was a sign of ill-breeding.

¹⁹⁹ Benjamin Butler, 374.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 400. Butler had prior experience in dealing with Confederate cities, most notably Baltimore, and believed himself well prepared to handle New Orleans. He planned to woo the lower classes to the Union cause by employing them to improve the urban infrastructure and demonstrating elite southerners’ lack of concern for those in the lowest social classes.

²⁰¹ Hans Louis Trefousse, 120.

²⁰² Hans Louis Trefousse, 110.

²⁰³ Benjamin Butler, 416.

²⁰⁴ Microfilm of Butler’s Proclamation, *His outrageous insult to the women of New Orleans! Southern Men, avenge their wrongs!!!* May 15, 1862 (Tulane University Library).

²⁰⁵ Hans Louis Trefousse, 111.

²⁰⁶ Michael D. Pierson, “He helped the Poor and Snubbed the Rich: Benjamin F. Butler and Class Politics in Lowell and New Orleans,” *Massachusetts Historical Review* 7 (2005): 61.

²⁰⁷ Robert Werlich, “Beast” *Butler: The incredible career of Major General Benjamin Franklin Butler*. Washington D.C.: Quaker Press, 1962), 39.

²⁰⁸ Thomas Curson Hansard, *Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 167 (London: 1889) 533, 611.

²⁰⁹ Benjamin Butler, 419.

²¹⁰ Helen Taylor, 13.

²¹¹ Sarah Morgan, Charles East, ed. *The Civil War Diary of Sarah Morgan*. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1991), 101. Also see Sullivan, Walter, ed. *The War the Women Lived: Female Voices from the Confederate South*. Nashville: J.S. Sander & Company, 1995, 69.

²¹² Martha H. Patterson, *Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895-1915* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 44.

²¹³ Anthony Stanonis, *Creating the Big Easy: New Orleans and the Emergence of Modern Tourism, 1918-1945* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 145.

²¹⁴ Oliver La Farge, *Raw Material* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1945) 117.

²¹⁵ Anthony Stanonis, 45.

²¹⁶ J. Marl Souther, *New Orleans on Parade: Tourism and the Transformation of the Crescent City* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 50.

²¹⁷ Anthony Stanonis, 148.

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- ²¹⁸ Ibid., 149.
- ²¹⁹ Flo Field in Anthony Stanonis, 164.
- ²²⁰ Anthony Stanonis, 142-143.
- ²²¹ Jonathan Mark Souther, 806.
- ²²² Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 42.
- ²²³ Tina Skinner and Mary L. Martin, *Greetings from New Orleans: A History in Postcards* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer, 2006), 32, 56.
- ²²⁴ Jonathan Mark Souther, 56, 75.
- ²²⁵ Catherine Bishir, "Landmarks of Power: Building a Southern Past, 1855-1915," *Southern Cultures* (1993): 20.
- ²²⁶ Tara McPherson, 40.
- ²²⁷ Ibid., 19.
- ²²⁸ Ibid.
- ²²⁹ Sourther, 40.
- ²³⁰ Sourther 43,
- ²³¹ Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 61.
- ²³² Ibid.
- ²³³ Ibid., 6.
- ²³⁴ Ibid., 58.
- ²³⁵ Tara McPherson, 52.
- ²³⁶ Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, 2.
- ²³⁷ Jonathan Mark Souther, 61.
- ²³⁸ Ibid., 804.
- ²³⁹ Ibid., 62.
- ²⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ²⁴¹ King, Richard C. and Carmen R Lugo-Lugo and Mary R Bloodsworth-Lugo, eds. *Animating Difference: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Contemporary Films for Children*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2011, 156. Also it is interesting to note that original name for the Princess and Frog protagonist was "Maddy" but the creators were worried about adult audience's associations of the word with "mammy." See Neal A.Lester, "Disney's *The Princess and the Frog*: The Pride, the Pressure, and the Politics of Being a First," *The Journal of American Culture* 33 (2010): 297.
- ²⁴² King, Richard C. and Carmen R Lugo-Lugo and Mary R Bloodsworth-Lugo, eds. *Animating Difference: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Contemporary Films for Children*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2011, 160.
- ²⁴³ Ibid., 163.
- ²⁴⁴ Neal A.Lester, "Disney's *The Princess and the Frog*: The Pride, the Pressure, and the Politics of Being a First," *The Journal of American Culture* 33 (2010): 301.
- ²⁴⁵ Ibid., 302.
- ²⁴⁶ Carolina Acosta-Alzuru and Peggy J. Kreshel, "I'm an American Girl... Whatever That Means" : Consuming Pleasant Company's American Girl Identity," *Journal of Communication* (2002): 141. Also, Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie: Race,*

Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 81.

²⁴⁷ “American Girl | American Girl characters,” np,

<http://www.americangirl.com/corp/corporate.php?section=about&id=10>.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Carolina Acosta-Alzuru and Peggy J. Kreshel, 147.

²⁵⁰ Until recently, Addy was for many years the only African American doll in the collection representing the Civil War period. Interestingly in the summer 2012 American Girl Catalogue, Addy is no longer available for purchase while Cecile is.

²⁵¹ See Denise Lewis Patricl, *Cecile and Marie-Grace Book Series* (Middleton, WI: American Girl Publishing, Inc. 2011).

²⁵² Carolina Acosta-Alzuru and Peggy J. Kreshel, 151.

²⁵³ Ibid., 140.