these fictive dead kin. It is this recognition of the social forces at work in patinated buildings and oft-told stories that has helped me understand why so many of my interviews are peopled by ghosts. New Orleans is a "house society," or one in which inheritance of both material and immaterial wealth flows through the house rather than through blood descent, facilitating social bonds of totemic kinship, adoption, and flexible rules of endogamy. I do not mean to imply that this makes for one big, happy family. Some New Orleanians, like J.J. and Marie, have little access to this wealth except at the general level of the neighborhood. But I suspect they understand the terms of their own exclusion.

Although more articulate than most about the aesthetic of patina, Jack probably did not have Emile Durkheim in mind when he invoked *mana*. The anthropological resonance is therefore all the more powerful. In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim lays out his theory of *mana*, or the totemic principle, as an impersonal force detected by actors in many societies. It is an energy that fuels magic and in most religions becomes personified as a god. For Durkheim, this force represents the solidarity-building power of society itself, a projection of the principles that unite individuals into a workable collective. *Mana* is society abstracted. And it can be poured into palpable forms like sculptures, heirloom paraphernalia, boats, and human bodies. For Jack, the old buildings of New Orleans have *mana*. Their layers of paint embody mysterious social force. Old houses are totems that connect him to others, both to the dead who left their marks and to the living who can share his intimate knowledge of how to read the traces. Just as Jack sees Durkheim's mana, Durkheim would have seen Jack's patina. The French sociologist recognized that "time itself increases and reinforces the sacredness of things."[37] In our heavily secularized society, we seem to be returning to a form so elementary it verges on the profane—everyday objects and their ghosts.

CHAPTER 4

"French" Things

> She is a lady with a past who is looking out for a future. —Storyville gossip column in the *New Orleans Mascot*, October 1896

As we screened and bagged artifacts from our excavation units at the site of Rising Sun Hotel in the winter of 2005, we began to notice that we were finding more than the usual number of ceramic sherds from a type locally called "faience rouge pot." These small, cylindrical pots made in France stand out among the bits of flat, white, British-made plates and teacups. The old-fashioned tin-enamel glaze is tinted *Clinique* green or powder blue on the outside and milk white on the inside. A heavy round base helps stabilize the pot so one can run two fingers through its contents without knocking it over (fig. 4.1). The pot's identification as a rouge container comes from word of mouth. In Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, identical pots appear under the simple heading "ointment jars." Some New Orleanians curate them as heirlooms from their grandmothers or great-grandmothers, and the local understanding of their original use has entered the informal training of Louisiana archaeologists, who regularly list "faience rouge pots" in their technical reports.[1]

For many outside observers, this high number of rouge pots offered sufficient proof to implicate the site as the original blues-song brothel, House of the Rising Sun—an excited forensics of New Orleans's renowned sexual license. The title of a front-page article in the *Los Angeles Times* about the excavation reads: "New Orleans Legend May Prove to Be Reputable: The Rising Sun Has Long Been a House of Musical Inspiration. It Could Soon Have a Real Address." The article goes on to say:

> The simple folk song in a minor key always spoke to the sultry allure of this city from its first words, an opening line seared into one generation after another: "There is a house in New Orleans they call the Rising Sun."

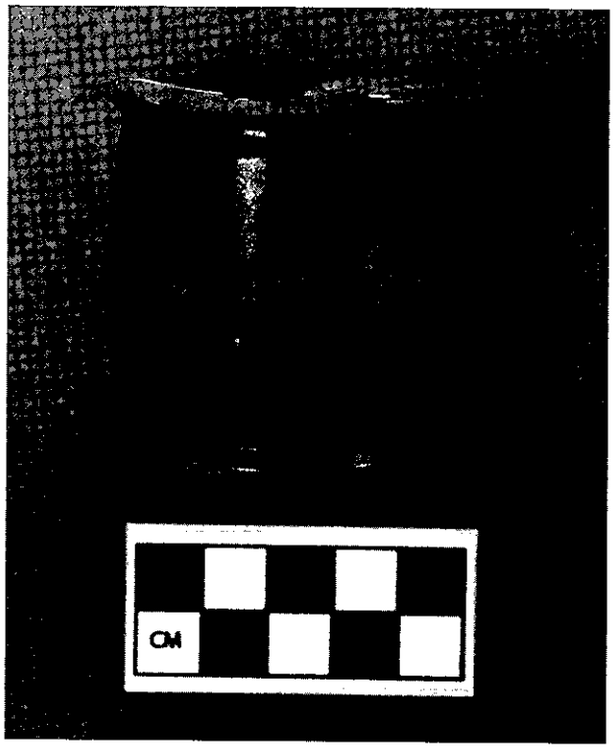

FIGURE 4.1. Faience rouge pot recovered from an archaeological site in New Orleans.

> No one has figured out—and many have tried—if the song depicts an actual bordello, and, if it does, where the real Rising Sun was. But a collection of pottery shards pulled from the ruddy soil of the French Quarter could prove to be the key that would unlock that beloved mystery.[2]

This desire to fix a historical mystery in space and make it tactile helps us understand the attraction of patina. The look of age is not unconnected to its sultry allure. New Orleans succeeds in making history sexy, not simply through recreating stories and stage sets of its legendary licentiousness, but by regularly insinuating that its "antiquity" equates with worldly experience and an intimate knowledge of the sensual that can be gained only through a long life. New Orleans is Old World, and an older woman.

The figuring of New Orleans as a woman dates back to the French period, with the abandoned and dying professional mistress and con artist Manon Lescaut, depicted in Abbé Prévost's popular early novel. Later, the same Victorian writers who antiqued New Orleans did their part to

sexualize it. Hearn once described New Orleans from the point of view of the Devil, who had come to the southern city on a weekend break from a winter working in Chicago. The Devil was paying a visit to an old lover. Hearn's account mingles the good patina of faded beauty with the bad patina of mold and decay associated with unkempt morality:

> The Devil could not suppress a sigh of regret as he gazed with far-reaching eyes along the old-fashioned streets of the city, whose gables were bronzed by the first yellow glow of sunrise. "Ah!" he exclaimed, "is this, indeed, the great City of Pleasure . . . the fair capital which once seemed to slumber in enchanted sunlight, and to exhale a perfume of luxury even as the palaces of the old Caesars? Her streets are surely green with grass; her palaces are gray with mould; and her glory is departed from her. And perhaps her good old sins have also departed with her glory."[3]

Hearn's invocation of classical history underlines the orientalist principle behind the discursive and material package of New Orleans's patina aesthetic. The architecture and artifacts of the city express this tangle of the exotic, the erotic, and the antique. A generation later, the young William Faulkner echoed Hearn:

> Outside the window, New Orleans, the vieux carré, brooded in a faintly tarnished languor like an aging yet still beautiful courtesan in a smokefilled room, avid yet weary too of ardent ways. . . . This unevenly boarded floor, these rough stained walls broken by high small practically useless windows beautifully set, these crouching lintels cutting the immaculate ruined pitch of walls which had housed slaves long ago. . . . And outside, above rooftops becoming slowly violet, summer lay supine, unchaste with decay.[4]

A few pages later, he introduces Mrs. Maurier, the older, effusive hostess who clearly stands in for a major element of New Orleans society: "Her glance held a decayed coquetry."[5]

In these representations, the sketches are double-edged. The authors acknowledge an allure to the aging courtesan in her graciousness and "good old sins" but also offer a soft moral critique of her ruination. This negative patina resonates in the etymology of the word *brothel*; the Oxford English Dictionary reads: "Brothel. root: *to go to ruin*, from Old English brēothan, *to decay*."

In this chapter, I go deeper into how small objects evoke, seduce, and bind. They emanate a profane mana of their own, in which the emphasis is sometimes very much on the *profane*. An associative trilogy between

Frenchness, sexuality, and antiquity suffuses not just the representations of New Orleans, but sensual experiences of it and its souvenirs. We can take the word *souvenir* both in its French sense as memories of experience and in the English sense as objects that project both backward and forward in time. Tourist souvenirs materialize a temporally brief encounter with a different place while they promise the ability to recount that experience for as long as memory serves.

Doing a genealogy of "orientalism down south" requires paralleling the story of How New Orleans Became Old with a story about How New Orleans Became French. Frenchness packages an assemblage of representations and desires. This phenomenon is illustrated quite literally through *packaging*—select pieces of material culture, such as the faience rouge pots, that cite and reproduce New Orleans's shared fictive ancestry as well as its exoticism. In this chapter, I will offer the examples of cosmetic jars, wine bottles, and perfume. The port's hospitality economy has, since the early colonial period, helped create a sensorium that at first profited from a kind of nostalgia in its original meaning as homesickness. Over time, this sensorium began to do more complicated things as it attracted outsiders with a lust for the unusual, eventually encouraging the development of New Orleans's famous brothels. Interestingly, these houses were no less "antiqued" than uptown mansions. Here the focus zooms in on the role that small objects play in enhancing the imaginative mediation of experience—and of the past, present, and future.

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said describes a Western intellectual project from the eighteenth century to the present that focuses on the Middle East with an effort to describe, catalog, romanticize, and memorialize its difference. Writers, philologists, archaeologists, and colonial functionaries elaborated what they saw as the region's antiquity, backwardness, and sensuality. In doing so, they underwrote the imperial projects of Napoleon and Queen Victoria. Said's ideas have traveled. Many now recognize that the cultural phenomena and sociopolitical dynamics he observed have operated in other arenas (architecture and urban planning, music, and later cinema) and in other regions—in the Americas, in eastern Europe, in eastern Asia, and in Africa. Said's insights have exploded beyond their original scope because, "in an age of Western-dominated modernity, every nation creates its own Orient." The disposition of Anglo-America toward the South in general in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and New Orleans in particular, provides a strong case of such a parallel.[6]

Consciously deploying the feminist terminology of "the Other," Said's comments on the gender politics of imperial culture were few but pointed in *Orientalism*. In later work, he recognized not only that "the Orient

was routinely described as feminine," but that masculine competition and male-female relations reproduced the inequalities of colonialism in intimate settings. This dynamic reveals itself baldly in sexual fantasies on the literary plane and sexual economies on the structural plane.[7]

According to Said, Gustave Flaubert, who visited Egypt in 1849–50, represents a romantic type of orientalist who deliberately resisted the academic tendency to "get lost in archaeology," by which he meant a "regimented antiquarianism by which the exotic and the strange would get formulated into lexicons, codes, and finally clichés." Instead, Flaubert exemplified an approach that savored and reproduced the exotic, making it so sensually overdetermined that it resisted rational classification.[8]

In contrast to our contemporary world's association of sexuality with youth and the naked body, colonial sexuality and colonial economies were often infused with a patina aesthetic that evoked connotations of age and extrasomatic material signifiers. Orientalism, in fact, is inescapably about time. It amounts to a strategy for temporally "othering" regions and peoples that a political center is simultaneously attempting to bring under spatial control. Epistemologically, orientalism makes it possible to segregate diverse populations (by religion, ethnicity, language, race, etc.) as developmentally backward, denying them "co-evalness," to use Johann Fabian's term, so as to maintain difference as a basis for inequality. Otherwise, assimilation and spatial integration could undermine the very social hierarchy that imperialism was designed to benefit. *La différence* of the Other has at least as much to do with her place on a timescale as her place on a map.[9]

By "antiquing" colonial zones, metropolitan powers could incorporate them through acts of romance and preservation and thus stop or delay their participation in projects of modernity that might result in legitimate claims to social equality and political autonomy. This antiquarian approach to colonial acquisitions operated as much upon materials as upon discourse, not only in acts of archaeological exploration and classification that Flaubert dryly commented upon in Egypt, but also in efforts to describe and preserve the medinas or vieux carrés of colonial towns. The French Quarter has been romanticized and preserved in much the same way, and for many of the same reasons, as an Arab medina in one of France's North African possessions valued by orientalist travelers for the twists and turns of their streets, for their charming crumbling ruins, and for their colorful sights, sounds, and smells. Frozen antiquity promises a more sensual life than the "drab bourgeois world" of the commodified center. It excites the visual, olfactory, gustatory, and aural senses primarily through ethnicized, hand-crafted, or hand-me-down material culture. *Things* also accent the

haptic experience of the exotic, through the accessories and space devoted to activities such as dancing, eating, drinking, grooming, greeting, and sex. We must scrape away at the patina aesthetic in order to understand the market magic that such places work upon the (masculine) visitor, resident, and consumer. In fact, without material culture, desire for more intangible things—belonging, achievement, love—would be impossible to construct.[10]

GOOD TIMES

There is a house in New Orleans
they call the Rising Sun.
It's been the ruin of many a poor girl,
and me, O God, for one. . . .
Going back to New Orleans,
my race is almost run.
Going back to spend the rest of my days
beneath that Rising Sun.

A recording of this old folk song appeared in the 1930s, performed by a Tennessee banjo player. Alan Lomax states that it probably descends from an English ballad and could be heard in the repertoire of white Kentuckians in the early twentieth century. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, "Rising Sun" was a popular motif in English-speaking port towns, especially as a name for male meeting places such as taverns and coffee houses. The phrase may have had particular meaning for sailors or for those in the habit of entertaining themselves until sunrise. The popularity of the song has inspired many earlier searches for the "real" Rising Sun in New Orleans, although few have gone back as far as the early antebellum period. If they had, they would also have found that in 1808 a ship of the same name docked in the port and that in 1838 there was a Rising Sun coffeehouse operating on Decatur Street. The lyrics also seem to fit as a reference to the New Orleans Women's Prison, which is said to have featured a rising-sŭn motif over its main gate. In short, there have been many Rising Suns, even in New Orleans.[11]

But it is precisely in the character of the establishments that attracted this title that we find an important undercurrent to the sexualized aura of patina: the gender dynamics of the Atlantic world and its port cities. In New Orleans, as in its sister cities, large numbers of male travelers stopped

in to refresh themselves and partake of food, drink, commodities, and general hospitality as respite from the hard work and brutal dynamics of their largely homosocial world on board ship, in military garrisons, and in the trading hinterlands. A major feature that distinguished the lifeworld in ports of call was the presence of women as residents, merchants, landladies, and hostesses. In the French colonial period, a majority of New Orleans women operated as heads of their own households and proprietors of their own businesses.[12] The feminine character of port cities did not escape the notice of male adventurers, whether or not local hospitality extended to sexual favors or prostitution. That this line could slip in the public imagination, or in the concrete realities of the local economy, is not a large surprise, but understanding how orientalist aesthetics and colonial economies intertwined remains a largely uncharted project. The eroticization of places like New Orleans did not simply produce a marketplace of floating representations. Such imaginative values were moored in the material transactions between men and women in colonial economies. Although the anthropology and history of tourism, particularly of sex tourism, does acknowledge the association of the aesthetics of "the exotic" with the crude realities of demand economies, they overwhelmingly point to the rise of advertising and mass consumption in the late nineteenth century as the period during which tourism as we know it was invented.[13] Examining the longer durée of colonial travel and hospitality—and the allure of antiquity—helps us see a deeper social stratigraphy to phenomena such as the baring of breasts on Bourbon Street during today's Mardi Gras.

Visitors have been coming to New Orleans to enjoy its pleasures since the early French period. The colonial capital served as a site of rest and recreation for deerskin trappers, soldiers, and sailors. While early reports focused on the familiar French delicacies available in the city's many inns and taverns, by the territorial period (1804–15), travelers' accounts emphasized the old-fashioned and exotic aesthetic of its markets and landscape. In the early nineteenth century, a large sector of the city lived off the hospitality trades, helping produce an economically vibrant small-business community that particularly benefited women and free people of color. The moral anxiety produced by this hospitality economy was also becoming well versed. In the early antebellum period, commentators frequently gave New Orleans names such as "the modern Sodom" or a "splendid Bedlam of a city."[14] The city thrived because of its strategic position at the gateway of the Caribbean and the Mississippi interior and attracted more travelers than its accommodations could handle prior to the Civil War. As mass transportation shifted to the rail system in the mid-nineteenth century, New Orleanians became anxious about their dependence upon the

travel economy. In the late Victorian period, hotel owners and restaurateurs began to adopt new advertising media and marketing techniques to target potential investors and high-spending vacationers.

The Pitot House stands as a grand old dame of a West Indies plantation house overlooking breezy Bayou St. John, the peaceful waterway that once connected the bay called Lake Pontchartrain to the Mississippi, and a major transportation route from prehistoric times through the antebellum period. Today the structure houses a museum that affords the visitor a rare opportunity to see the inside of an archetypical elite Creole residence maintained in the colonial style.

The large landscaped yard in which the house sits was the focus of archaeological explorations in 2005. In those shovel tests, we found evidence of three major uses of the site: surface trash left by recent visitors and wedding guests at the Pitot House; extensive evidence of a late-nineteenth-to-early-twentieth-century streetcar line; and the shadowy edge of a much earlier structure and occupation in the form of a brick column support and brick floor, scattered with the remains of two-hundred-year old stoneware beer bottles. This earliest component corresponded to the Tivoli Gardens, an "amusement park" dating to 1808 where men and women met for weekly outdoor dancing and, apparently, beer drinking. We had found a buried remnant of New Orleans's first "good time" district.[15]

The crossroads of Bayou St. John hosted a concentration of taverns, restaurants, and beer gardens like Tivoli from the colonial period through the early twentieth century. At the time of the Louisiana Purchase, Samuel Kohn (later a part owner in the Tivoli Gardens) was running a well-known "house of entertainment" just up the bayou where, his advertisement announced, "the best of liquors will be provided—separate rooms may be had for private parties, and every care and attention will be observed to render the house agreeable to those who may visit it." This language resembles euphemisms used by known Storyville brothel operators in advertisements one hundred years later that included frequent references to "attentive service" and the availability either of private rooms or of "ladies rooms."[16]

These establishments appear to have been well known by word of mouth, to the extent that their names or addresses were left out of newspaper advertisements. The ads simply informed customers of recent improvements, food specials, theatrical or musical presentations, or a scheduled ball, such as the one placed by Mr. Gautier in 1808, which directs customers simply to "the usual Ball room." Another typical ad, taken out by Monsieur Fourcade upon his reopening of the United States Hotel on Bayou St. John, announces a special oyster and turtle soup dinner and emphasizes that his staff speak both French and English. Further, the house, "already so well known" had been updated with new furnishings. The appeal continued: "The billiard tables have been put in the best condition. The bar-room will be furnished with every kind of cordials, syrops, bitters, and wines of the best vintages. . . . Zeal and activity will reign throughout."[17]

These establishments developed out of roadhouses and country estate hospitality dating back to the French period and its itinerant population of colonial travelers. Smugglers especially preferred the bayou route into town. Travel writer Pierre Caillot mentions a brewery on the outskirts of town in 1730 that had "the air of the roadhouses [*guinguettes*] of Paris where a swarm of people come to divert themselves; there are also in the town many taverns and cabarets, where one is not only well served but can also be fleeced." As in Paris, the roadhouse on the outskirts of town served not only as a convenience for travelers but as a place away from family and neighbors for those wanting to carouse without judgment. These were not places where gentlemen generally spent the night, however. Caillot stayed in a New Orleans inn in the French Quarter for most of his time in the colony. French soldier Dumont de Montigny roomed at a guesthouse run by a wigmaker after coming downriver from the Yazoo Post in Indian country in the 1720s: "It was thus to this town that I came in search of my health," which by his own account consisted of prodigious amounts of alcohol.[18]

One reason that New Orleans attracted so many soldiers, traders, and woodsmen in the colonial period was that the *eau de vie* (brandy or any distilled liquor) cost half as much as it did at the outlying posts. The cheap local varieties consisted of corn liquor and a crude rum known as *tafia*, described as "made with the scum of sugar." Dumont punctuated his days with a "coup de l'eau de vie," and he clearly spent many hours carousing with friends in cabarets. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, coureurs de bois (Canadian or métis trappers) who dealt in salted buffalo meat and bear oil, lived in town a few months each year starting in the spring, occupying makeshift cabins in the backstreets and happily spending their earnings until the autumn hunt called them back to the woods. During the St. Anthony's Garden excavation, one of the earliest components (1730s-50s) we uncovered was a previously unknown outdoor market where these frequent visitors and their American Indian partners traded their goods to townies, leaving a scatter of fire rings, animal bones, lead shot, hide scrapers, and hundreds of colorful seed beads that had fallen off their deerskin clothing. The market's spatial centrality and early date underscores the force of the traveling trades in making the city.[19]

Caillot's account indicates that the larger homes in the Bayou St. John area on the edge of town formed a center of more upscale entertainment. With jovial detail, he provides our earliest account of a Mardi Gras celebration held in the city. He devotes several pages to describing how he passed two or three nights during carnival season in 1730 masking, singing, and reveling. He heralds the sensuous pleasures of the colony and the ways in which French drinks and delicacies were enjoyed on special occasions in New Orleans. He says, "In effect, I began that evening to taste the first pleasures in the colonies." The height of the celebrations occurred at the home of Madame Rivard on the bayou, where he fell in love with the young Mademoiselle Carrière. They ate, drank, and stayed up the entire night singing and dancing. His account elaborates the role that French imports and culinary connoisseurship played in urban colonial social life.[20]

His entire description pulses with sensual stimuli, of which food and drink comprise one part of the intense and pleasurable whole: "Assuredly, I thought that this day was made for love affairs, it being neither hot nor cold, the sun being covered by some clouds that only gave pleasure. A controversy of smells was stimulated by the woods with a confused murmur of diverse birds that seemed to be sharing their love with us. I am going to let you ponder just what a state we were in." He and his fellows teased the girls at the party, telling them the muscat wine they brought was Normandy cider, and "only the beautiful Languedoc girl" could not be fooled. The appearance at the party of the governor, who tried the muscat and danced two minuets, marks the elite colonial context for this tasting of France. After three hours of music and dancing, the hostess invited Caillot's party to join them for a late-night meal. The dinner party is impressive in its scale and lavishness, suggesting that by this time planter families such as the Carrières were well established in their wealth. He reports, "I began to taste new pleasures. . . . We were placed at a table where we were 46 in number. . . . We enjoyed a meal of 5 to 6 hours very agreeably but after we left the table our pleasure expanded infinitely because Bacchus had quit his empire to go find Venus." The guests finally left at 5 o'clock in the morning.[21]

Colonists and French travelers enjoyed New Orleans for the tastes of "home" that it offered. The city's market full of imports and a selection of cabarets, breweries, and inns distinguished it from the plantations and smaller posts of the colony. Sharing food and drink in these establishments offered not just simple sensual pleasures but fulfilled important social functions, bonding together a dispersed population of colonizers who were elsewhere isolated or outnumbered by American Indians and Africans. Caillot's text highlights the fact that the colonial capital brought together

immigrants and passers-through from many different regions. Individuals who might have been separated by ethnic distinctions at home found common cause in redefining Frenchness in a foreign land, across the old divides of Parisians, Languedocs, and Bretons. The "home" they were nostalgic for was thus a blended construct of place and a moment frozen at the time they departed France, sometimes decades earlier. Hospitality intentionally designs a temporal bubble. Caillot's carousing also demonstrates that the tourist gaze was long anticipated by a colonial leer.[22]

Colonial soldiers and masculine travelers of the Atlantic World experienced a labor and consumption landscape that was dramatically gendered. The old stereotypes about sailors and their women in port towns undoubtedly resonated in the *old* Old World. However, prior to the development of the Portuguese caravel ship and the sprawling Atlantic system, their bouts of homosocial isolation were brief in comparison to the three to six months of sea travel or military deployment that become the norm for the foot soldiers of European empires. As a result, colonial towns such as New Orleans became more intensely loaded as ports of pleasure and sites of heterosexual adventure. These colonial desires and structural patterns form the stratigraphic foundation lying below the city's current tourist economy and circulation of sensual images. It is an old, patinated landscape of desire.

HOW NEW ORLEANS BECAME FRENCH

> Man sees the things of his clan as relatives and associates; he calls them friends and considers them to be made of the same flesh as he. Hence, there are elective affinities and quite special relations of compatibility between them and him. Things and men attract one another, in some sense understand one another, and are naturally attuned. —Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*

It could be said that the first step in the process of New Orleans's becoming French was not its colonial founding, which was due as much to African and American Indian labor as to Gallic, but the development of a hospitality economy that served homesick soldiers and sailors. What remains to be accounted for is how the city retained its Frenchness so long after the Francophone population had been swamped by Americans and other immigrants. Despite boosts from San Domingue refugees, Napoleonic exiles, and 1848ers, French-speakers had become a minority by the 1860s, losing out not only to Anglo-American entrepreneurs but to Irish and German immigrants as well as an influx of English-speaking freedmen

after Emancipation. During the Civil War, French was abolished as a primary language in the public schools. By 1900, perhaps one-quarter of the population could still converse in French.[23] But in the same period, the Frenchness of New Orleans was reconstructed with a renewed focus on particular forms of materiality and consumption. The city's Frenchness became more pronounced in ever-expanding hospitality offerings and good times in the form of French food and consumables, in French gambling games, and ultimately in Storyville's purveying of "French" sex. As related in chapter 3, this materialized Frenchness can be seen in the insistence by historic preservationists and tour guides that the architecture of the Vieux Carré exhibits French qualities, despite the Spanish building code that dictated so much of its reconstruction after the fire of 1788. Today these physical references simultaneously enunciate New Orleans's eroticism and its antiquity by referencing the city's French colonial foundations.

In 1882 English travel writer George Augustus Sala expressed his delight in the persistence of French culture in New Orleans despite the "all-dominating influence of Anglo-Saxon language, institutions, and character" that reigned elsewhere in the nation.[24] In particular, he was charmed by the transplanted sights and sounds of France—*la bien aimée* (the beloved)—embodied in goods for sale, such as French newspapers, food, Catholic images, and even pharmaceuticals sold in the now-familiar faience pot. All these pleasant titillations that Sala lists suggest a commoditization of Frenchness.

Sala's citation of French pharmaceuticals returns us to the Rising Sun Hotel site and its many faience rouge pots. Archaeologists working in Louisiana have long identified these small cylindrical ointment pots as French-made based on their "faience" glaze (the French name for the tin enamel ceramic called delft in England and the Netherlands and majolica in Spain, Italy, and Mexico). They have also assumed that the pots contained the eponymous rouge, another borrowed French word and identifiably a French product.[25] These pretty little jars reflect the city's enduring French connection. Their ubiquity suggests that French rouge and ointment jars, as well as their contents, were more available and more desirable in the local economy than elsewhere in North America.

The fact that this particular faience ceramic type indexed France may have buoyed its popularity in nineteenth-century New Orleans. The manufacture of these tin-enamel wares had almost entirely died out in France by the early nineteenth century, yet the rouge pots retained a special niche for at least another century. One likely reason is that they reinforced the association of Frenchness with cosmetics. Since the eighteenth century, France dominated the cosmetics market, first as a site of innovation and then as

a source of guarded tradition associated with a high-quality product. The antiquated retention of identifiably French packaging in the form of the faience ointment jar appears to have been a useful marketing device. Similar "antiqued" associations connecting national origin and quality of contents through packaging can be pointed to today with the impractical survival of "English" tea tins and the Cuban cigar box. The conservatism of the packaging communicates authenticity and historical value to the consumer. The heavy shipping weight of the small rouge pots, especially in proportion to the modest amount of product they could contain, further speaks to the communicative value of the packaging. We know by wear marks and their durability that New Orleanians reused and handed down rouge pots through the generations, but new pots were also marketed locally well past their peak production in France. In fact, their highest incidence on sites in Louisiana corresponds to the first third of the nineteenth century, when Anglo-Creole tensions following the Louisiana Purchase were at their hottest. Faience rouge pots represent a commodification of patina in a small everyday object. These old-fashioned things objectified an association with an older French regime, both exotic and venerable.[26]

Another example of commodity packaging that the local market clung to for its association with France and the past was French-made wine bottles, identifiable by their paler olive-green color, their rough flat-string rims, and their tendency to patinate quickly to a lustrous golden color (fig. 4.2). These bottles, particularly those of the straight-sided "Bordeaux" type, occur far more commonly on New Orleans sites in the nineteenth century than in comparable North American cities outside the Gulf Coast. The bottles are fragile and ship poorly, so importing in casks would have been more sensible, or purchasing the cheaper and more durable British-made black glass bottles that were widely available by the late eighteenth century. The production techniques for French wine bottles, as for the faience rouge pots, were conservative and intentionally anachronistic, with hand-blowing and hand-finishing techniques used since the Renaissance surviving well into the period when mold-blown bottles began to prevail elsewhere in the early nineteenth century. They evoked the Old World not just as a place but as a time.[27]

While the predominance of French-made bottles in the colonial period is not surprising, given the natural shipping connections to France and an official embargo against British imports, their persistence under the economic liberalization of the Spanish regime in the 1780s and their continued dominance in late antebellum deposits speaks to an extra effort to import this highly valued symbol of French culture. In New Orleans, old-fashioned handblown French wine bottles account for upwards of 50 per-

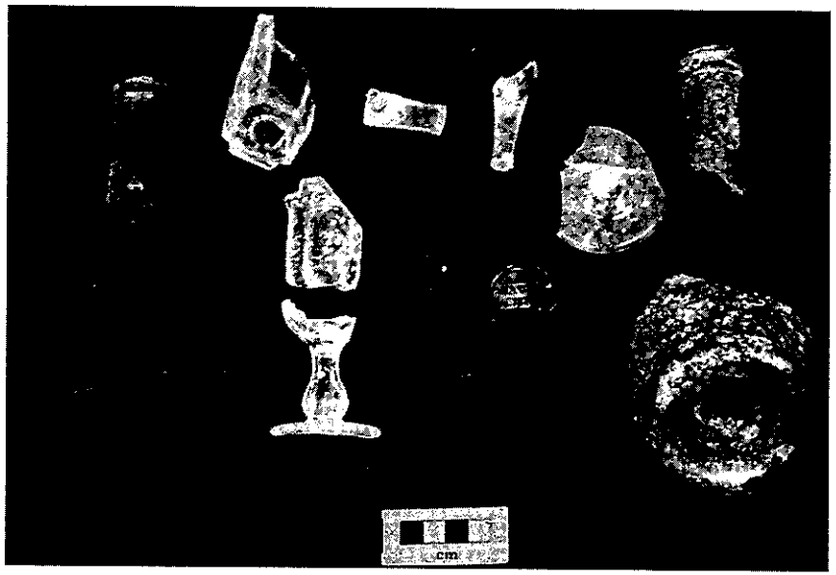

FIGURE 4.2. French wine bottles and seals from Maginnis Cotton Mill site.

cent of the liquor-bottle assemblage in nineteenth-century components, including those at the late Victorian Richardson Hotel, which replaced the Rising Sun. New Orleanians appear to have placed a special value on these bottles and curated them long past the period of their first distribution. In contemporary deposits from other port cities, such as New York or Boston, wine-bottle assemblages are instead dominated by the English- or American-made mold-blown bottles, often discarded after a single use. British and American wine importers had largely overtaken French merchant houses by the Civil War era. Although much of the wine still came from Bordeaux (the British vulgarly called it "claret" with a hard *t*), it arrived via casks. It was then carefully poured into the patinated French bottles—heirlooms from the colonial era—for presentation at the table.[28]

The symbolic capital of this antiquated, French commodity can be contrasted to the other imports available from the British and Anglo-American markets, which were readily adopted and widely available, often in violation of trading monopolies. Archaeological assemblages demonstrate that British-made ceramic tablewares such as creamware and pearlware were available in New Orleans as quickly as anywhere on the global market. In elite households, such as that of Captain Manuel de Lanzos, who rebuilt Madame John's Legacy to retain its French style, British creamware appears to have been a prized and fashionable tableware. It had almost thoroughly

replaced French-made faience dinnerware by the 1780s. Likewise, single-event deposits associated with the 1788 fire dump at St. Anthony's Garden and with the 1794 fire at the Rising Sun Hotel site show that New Orleans's households were well stocked with the latest British ceramics, which constitute more than 80 percent of the assemblages. With the exception of special forms such as the faience rouge pot and American Indian collectibles (see chapter 5), everyday table ceramics do not appear to have been particularly symbolic of origin for colonial and nineteenth-century residents. This makes the selection and preservation of French wine bottles that much more significant. As with the rouge pots, the contents and the associated practices mattered. Wine-drinking was a distinctly French social practice, one that acquired greater significance in a colonial context where production was impossible and immigrants vied for cultural dominance. In fact, one salient architectural feature of West Indies and Creole Cottage floor plans are two flanking *caves*, or small, pantrylike rooms (later called *cabinets*) attached to the rear wall that were often devoted to wine storage.[29]

Further evidence of the special place these bottles held in the visual vernacular of New Orleans homes and hospitality establishments in the late-eighteenth through the nineteenth century comes from the incidence of imprinted, proprietary bottle seals (called blob seals, pressed into a hot circle or oval of glass applied to the bottle's shoulder). In New Orleans, not only do the more fragile French wine bottles predominate past the period of easy shipping connections to France, but local residents appear to have both preferred and curated those bearing identifiable French origin stamps in the form of these seals. Particularly prevalent are the ones with Bordeaux appellations such as "Haut-Médoc," "Saint-Julien," and "Saint-Estèphe," suggesting that Louisiana consumers preferred the fragile French bottles for their direct visual reference to France. Served at table, the bottles would have signaled not only the host's good taste but the person's totemic connection to the city's colonial past.

One particularly striking example comes from the house of Monsieur Poeyfarré, the builder of the indigo plantation buried under the Maginnis Cotton Mill (introduced in chapter 2). His cellar contained bottles marked "St. Julien/Medoc," an appellation that includes many well-known chateaus, including that of his own ancestral roots, the Leoville-Poeyfarré estate. While many French immigrants to colonial Louisiana came from Bordeaux, they were by no means a majority. However, Bordeaux wine merchants had easier access to the Atlantic ports and succeeded more than other French wine-growing regions in exporting their surplus. As a result, their wines became both a literal and a symbolic link to France for expatriots and their descendants. Perhaps no clearer proclamation of this regional

commodity's special resonance could be had than the chant of the crowd on the streets of New Orleans during the 1768 rebellion against Spanish rule: "Hurray for the King! Hurray for Good King Louis! Hurray for Bordeaux wine! To hell with Catalonian rotgut!"[30] Although this political slogan evokes a kind of connoisseurship, it had more to do with ethnic than class distinction. The selection and utilization of "French things" in New Orleans's material culture entails complex class, race, and ethnic referents, depending on the context, but they are most emphatically, and ironically, used to emphasize *local* culture to mark off rooted locals from unenculturated newcomers and visitors. In the 1760s, this distinction ran along French-Spanish lines with high political stakes. Several French Creole rebels died before the firing squad for their resistance to the Spanish takeover of their colony. By the early nineteenth century, an even more fraught distinction arose between French Catholic Creoles and Anglo Protestant Americans. So shrill and real was this rift that the city literally broke apart in 1836, dividing into three distinct municipalities, and was not reunited until 1852.

THE SCENT OF HISTORY

Another example of the peculiar confusion of Frenchness follows a waft of scent—perfume. The case of French perfume in New Orleans presents a story more about reinvention than reuse. In the colonial and early antebellum periods, no evidence of a local market for perfume can be found, in either the archaeological or the archival records. Although it is likely that small, ornate perfume bottles were heirloomed and less breakable than other types of glass, there is little evidence to go on if one wants to make the argument that early New Orleans residents practiced the art of scent. However, today on Royal Street, two French-style parfumeries compete just doors apart. The first was established in 1843 by a French immigrant, the second in 1931. These small family-run establishments prepare proprietary batches by hand and purvey them in small bottles of early-twentieth-century form with labels reminiscent of parchment and script. Nineteenth-century lithograph portraits of women adorn many of the labels; others bear antique floral prints. Both establishments simultaneously emphasize their Frenchness and their long tradition. "Bourbon French Parfums" (originally Doussan Parfumerie) made a name change in the 1890s in order to emphasize its continental associations. The original proprietress of "Hové Parfumeur Ltd." changed the spelling of her married name from the English-looking "Hovey" to "Hové" with a French accent and also added the logo of a crown to invoke associations with the French

monarchy of the eighteenth century. Today both shops sell small selections of antique gift items such as hand mirrors, soap dishes, and ornate perfume bottles, along with their perfumes. Also, "when the proprietors find antique reproductions that they feel are up to the standards of Hové's clientele, they will offer them in the shop."[31]

The websites, brochures, and interior signage of each shop provide a detailed history of the business, presented as a genealogical descent of proprietors, in one case emphasizing the careful apprenticeship and transfer of the traditions, recipes, and skills of the parfumeur and in the other case emphasizing the continuous family line in ownership. One shop is also decorated with the portraits of all the previous owners in a visual display of ancestry traced back to French immigrants. These shops were established during two particularly intense periods of commodity "Frenchification" of New Orleans. Three high points in this pattern correspond to the early territorial period (1800–1810s), the late antebellum period (1840s-50s), and the rise of historic preservation and cultural tourism in the 1920s-40s. In the first two cases, these developments took advantage of a local demand for French things, as well as the know-how and panache of new influxes of French-speaking immigrants. As one of the first perfume houses established in the United States, Bourbon French Parfums catered to visitors and filled orders from across the country in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, according to the current proprietor, the majority of its business was local until World War II. Around this same time, Mrs. Hovey established the competing Hové Parfumeur to take advantage of the city's growing tourist trade. An extensive world traveler herself, she seems to have had a sense of what discerning visitors might like to take home. The scent lines for the two shops overlap somewhat in their themes, but Bourbon French emphasizes local florals and "traditional" recipes brought over from France 160 years ago and faithfully followed, while Hové carries several new fragrances with catchy, kitschy names evoking New Orleans's brand of romance—from pirate lore to love across the color line.

Perhaps no commodity wraps up the nostalgia and romance of New Orleans quite as blatantly as its perfumes. Looking at their names, marketing, and even their liquid recipes makes clear two important points—that these are products purchased to trigger memories, and that they do so for both locals and tourists, but in different registers. In other words, they can serve as either heirlooms or souvenirs. The difference is in the past they evoke—either sweetly familiar for the native, or exotic and tinged with oriental sexual fantasy for the visitor. Psychologists and neurologists in recent years have found that our common sense about the close link between olfaction and autobiographical memory is well founded. Olfactory nerves

are located close to the centers in the brain that have to do with emotion and associative memory. However, studies also underscore that responses are filtered through cultural conditioning. So it is still important to look closely at the type of images or associations that scents call forth for different actors.[32]

While the marketing and labeling of this commodity visually evokes Frenchness, it performs more complex work in the realm of scent. Perfumes can be a trigger for the replay of autobiographical and shared local experiences, at the same time that they can supply a new sensory referent for nonlocal fantasies. These latter associations might be understood as false memories constructed out of a montage of movies, romance novels, and the yarns spun by tourism. The names and descriptions of the perfumes make clear these twin intents for local and visitor, a parallel of the doubled landscape described in chapter 3. Many perfumes cite local florals and the distinctive landscape, such as gardenia, magnolia, sweet olive, and even Spanish moss. Some are more vaguely French—Elan D'Orange, Louise Quatorze, Touché, Entre Nous, Sans Nom, or the aptly named Vous Souvenez-Vous? (do you remember?). Other names and descriptors attempt to create new associations with local history and landmarks, such as Carnaval, Pirate's Gold, Spring Fiesta, Rue Royale, Voodoo Love, and Bayou D'Amour. Others try to blend local associations and oriental sexuality, such as Kiss in the Dark, or Tonight, which, according to the shop's brochure, is "frequently worn by Latin women, who instinctively understand the full meaning of 'tonight.'" The scent of night-blooming jasmine bridges the Near East and the Near South. The flowering vine grows ubiquitously in New Orleans's gardens, and its scent is marketed in a "southern florals" line of the "vintage and exotic." Jasmine "since ancient times is described as feminine and seductive." Other product designs baldly attempt to resurrect a sense-scape of the past. George Washington Cable might be pleased to find that "Creole Days" is "a gentle blending of old-fashioned spices," while Purple Violet is "reminiscent of days a lot slower and life more gracious."

When I interviewed Brenda, one of the shop owners, she explained that their oldest scent is also their best seller. I asked her why this might be so.

> Brenda: [It's] a very mild fresh, powdery fragrance that appeals to all ages. It's just a comfort fragrance, kinda, you know, like comfort food. . . . [In addition] we have a fragrance called Forever New Orleans which is kind of a compilation of those florals. . . . A lot of people after the storm were buying those single-note florals. Just, you know if you were here you know there was no nothing—it was all brown [referencing the landscape of dead lawns and gardens]. And it's just any little thing to make you better. You know it was just a $8 little roll-on cologne—you know it made you feel better today.

She added that since Katrina, the local customer base has grown significantly, suggesting that nostalgia for home and a desire to trigger memories of it peaks after episodes of catastrophic change.

A sentimental focus on the flora of New Orleans is not restricted to perfume purchasers. In my interviews with residents, another surprise pattern I noted was how many conversations drifted from architecture to gardens. Several interviewees lamented the loss of trees in the storm—not just trees in general, such as the loss of old oaks on St. Charles Avenue, but individual trees. Agatha lost a pecan tree, and Jane lost a cypress, both native trees. They also stressed that these trees predated their home purchase. There is something about the longevity of trees on the landscape as witnesses (and sometimes victims) to events over and beyond the human life span. Some of the most-cited stories about St. Anthony's Garden revolved around the date palm tree planted by Pere Antoine just outside his humble hut behind the cathedral. It stood for many generations after the priest had died and was colloquially spoken of as a kind of miraculous memorial. Although it finally died in the mid-twentieth century, the post-Katrina redesign of the garden brought it back to life with the planting of a new palm in the corner of an otherwise austerely symmetrical parterre French garden.

Agatha had a lot to say about New Orleans gardens, some of which are literally heirloom gardens.

> Agatha: When I moved here—I'm from the country and my idea was to plant everything that I had grown up with as a child [laughs]. Lots of nostalgic planting and two of everything [laughs] . . . [and] my father remembers roses that his mother planted. . . . He loved plants and older plants and remembered other plants from his mother's garden.

She elaborates that her own design aesthetic comes out of the 1940s and 1950s, when several historic-house museum gardens were established and quickly emulated.[33] These gardens used native and long-adapted plants and "had a romantic feeling about Louisiana." I asked her what might be typical of these gardens.

> Agatha: Certainly, the native magnolia, grandiflora is part of the mythology of our gardens . . . I think that Louisiana gardens smell very wonderful and sweet and there's always something wonderful to smell—ginger, all the beautiful jasmines and the nightblooming jasmine which is so wonderful

to smell on a summer night. And of course the sweet olive trees. And the sweet olive trees really don't grow very well in a slightly colder place so they are very much a part of New Orleans. And of course they change. They smell wonderful—the flowers. The trees burst into bloom when the weather changes from warm to cold or from cold to warm. So you've got that wonderful smell off of them in the spring and in the autumn. And that to me is the smell of New Orleans because you really don't smell it so intensely anywhere else that I know of.

Agatha's description of old-fashioned gardens stresses the olfactory over the visual elements, as well as nostalgia and the sense of time cycling. Peter had a more sanguine comment on the ubiquity of sweet olive trees, while not denying their dominance on the scentscape: "Prior to 1900 you didn't have a sewer system in the French Quarter, you didn't want to live down here in the summer. You know where did the Sweet Olive trees come from? To cover the smell in front of your property . . . of the open sewer." Unprompted, he went on to describe the smells of today's French Quarter, which at night smells like beer and piss, but "since the hurricane, they have a new company . . . almost every morning he [the company man] comes through and powerwashes and sprays a nice scent, a little stronger than Sweet Olive, but that's OK." I had noted myself that the spray smells a bit like bubble gum, and is the same color. This strange new cleansing operation has reinforced some complaints about the "Disneyfication" of the Quarter, a bright morning cover-up of its nightly reality.

Clearly, there is a shared scentscape that resident New Orleanians, especially those who stay around for all seasons, can cite that evokes strongly shared memories. After Katrina, local customers sought the floral scents above all others (including the best-selling mythical magnolia and sweet olive). Bought online by displaced residents, or by residents surrounded by a deadened landscape, these purchases were nostalgic acts in the original sense of the term—a yearning for a lost home. Other scents are purchased as a bottle of more personal associations. I asked Brenda for her thoughts on the connection between smells and memory.

Brenda: It's the biggest déjà vu generator there is. You know, because there are things we smell and it makes you think of your grandmother or where you were at a certain moment in time.

SD: So do we want to smell like our grandmother because we miss her or—?

Brenda: No. [both laugh]

SD: Why don't we want to smell like our grandmother?

Brenda: Because it *smells like* [emphatic] your grandmother [laughs]. Sometimes people will get it and spray it on their pillows or something—for that comfort issue. But you know, the changes, if you look through the fragrance industry, back in the 60s, it was the heavy heavy opium fragrance, you know the orientals, the patchouli and all. So right now we are in a period of light, clean, fresh. So it'll make the circle. And we'll come back to those heavy fragrances. But, you know right now they don't want *that* smell.

According to Brenda, scents can be associated biographically with a particular person, such as a family member, but they can also bring up entire lifeworlds, such as the India-inflected era of hippies, opiates, and free love. These lifeworlds can be delineated by time or by space. Contradicting the shops' own efforts to market perfume to the consumer's self-conception (perfumes are variously described as suitable "especially for the conservative," "for those who are outgoing and who like bright colors," or for "those who love the outdoors," etc.), Brenda reveals that perfumes may be used as much to keep alive the memory of family members, or a lost way of life, as to spin the identity of the living. As commodities, the desires they package are not always, or simply, narcissistic. In fact, the association of smells with the dead was quite vividly enunciated when our conversation took a surprising turn toward the "smoking ghost" who haunts Brenda's shop (chapter 3).

In the marketplace of New Orleans, many other commodities accent and reproduce the Frenchness of New Orleans, especially types of comestibles such as French Market coffee, beignets, and Creole cuisine generally. The three "French" commodities I have discussed here—rouge pots, Bordeaux wine bottles, and perfume—are connected not only by their antique-style packaging, but by the social practices they enable. The wearing of French cosmetics and perfume marked the family body as French, regardless of the actual origin of one's near ancestors. Of course, makeup, perfume, and getting a little tipsy also help make things sexy.

FRENCH SEX AND ANTIQUE FANTASY

During its heyday, the legalized red-light district of Storyville (1897–1917) concentrated some of the most elegant brothels in the United States, as well as backstreets full of dilapidated houses cut up for 50-cent cribs. It was a dense, specialized development. The largest, most elegant brothels

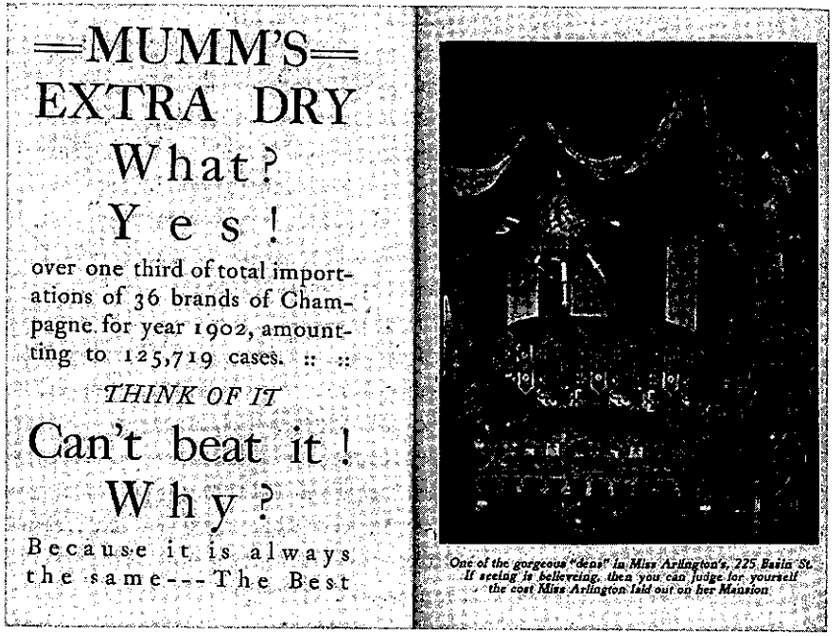

FIGURE 4.3. Blue Book Storyville advertisement. Courtesy of Historic New Orleans Collection.

(or "houses," as they were called) fronted Basin Street, overlooking the French Quarter, in plain view of train passengers arriving at the adjacent depot. The architecture of the street has been called "Robber Baron Victorian." Legalization followed an already established practice and geography, however. In 1866 a writer with the *Southern Daily Star*, while complaining about the "low classes of immodest and impure women" moving into the neighborhood, also grudgingly admired the "spacious and elegant house, costing from thirty to fifty thousand dollars," that belonged to prominent madam Hattie Hamilton. A fascination with the opulent interiors and collecting tastes of the successful madams became a recurrent theme in Storyville journalism. Photographs taken of the interiors of the brothels indicate different thematic rooms, such as the "Conquistador" room (fig. 4.3), complete with a suit of armor, where patrons could act out fantasies that had as much to do with being somewhere else, in some other time, holding some other social status, as they had to do with sexual pleasure.[34]

Popular nineteenth-century notions of Frenchness and sexuality became entwined in this sector of the city's business, a bald-faced marketing of erotic orientalism. Partly because of France's precocious home industry of pornographic literature, lithographs, and photographs, American and

English consumers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries often associated promiscuous sexuality with Frenchness. Photographs of female nudes were known as "French pictures." The work of the Storyville photographer E. J. Bellocq further entangled these strands with the history of New Orleans, as did the popularization of his work in Louis Malle's 1978 film *Pretty Baby*.[35]

The branding of "French sex" took place on an international stage, but the insinuated parallels between New Orleans and Paris worked market magic for local entrepreneurs. Timothy Gilfoyle, in his study of nineteenth-century prostitution in New York, shows that Frenchness was often a central theme of the discourse on sexual disorder. During the 1840s and 1850s, madams advertised "French love," and the "French association" used Tammany Hall as a venue for suggestive masked balls. The latter may have been inspired by New Orleans's own tradition of masked balls, dating to the territorial period. Storyville merchants and "sporting men" continued this tradition, giving it a heightened sexual charge. They organized several carnival organizations (for example, the CCC Club and the Red Light Social Club) to put on public balls. The unofficial mayor of Storyville, Tom Anderson, sponsored the best known of these. By 1883, he and his partner were hosting a "Grand Fancy Dress and Masquerade Ball" that became an annual tradition. After legalization in 1897, they renamed it "The French Balls" (1898–1905). The transparent advertising made possible by legalization unveiled the commercial character and social underworld behind the event. According to Gilfoyle, a French Ball was the "most erotically charged Victorian institution" and "probably the most significant public forum for testing the boundaries of urban sexual behavior." By the turn of the century, "French box" became an English euphemism for a brothel and "French love" an exotic catch-phrase. Sexual props were "French imports." In 1907, reformer Francis Kellor lamented, "There has grown up a great trade in what is known as French Houses. . . . These women will stoop to practices that the ordinary American girl could not be induced to do."[36] Kellor nods to the greater specificity "Frenchness" had acquired in the American market by this time, where "French Love" referred to fellatio and a "French Studio" was one that specialized in oral sex. The New Orleans sex industry capitalized on this association to attract out-of-town visitors and became renowned, even within the business, for catering to the most outré Edwardian tastes, offering "circus shows" of kink allegedly ranging from lesbian live acts to bestiality, as well as "Olivia the Oyster Dancer." Local proprietress Emma Johnson advertised herself as the "Parisian Queen of America" and actively sought out convention business. New Orleans's Frenchness enhanced its reputation for sexual in-

dulgence, and vice versa. More surprising, perhaps, is the large role that antiques and fancy things played in the commodification of sexual fantasy.[37]

Perhaps nowhere is the transferability of the patina—and thus its unstable relation to social distinction—as trackable as in Storyville. The high-end brothels sported elaborate interiors, decorated with pieces that were both "French" and antique. In 1869 an investigative reporter described the interior of Kate Townsend's "house," emphasizing how the furnishings sent disturbingly mixed messages: "The decorations of the rooms, in the pictures that hung on the walls, the plated mirrors, the delicately tinted furniture . . . evidently [were] intended to embody a sybarite's dream—luxury and repose. The grotesque and bizarre aspect of everything—splendor without comfort, glitter and sparkle suggestive of death and decay—gave rise to singular reflections."[38] For the viewer, malignant patina glinted in the premature sheen of purchased gilt and the anticipation of decay. "Splendor without comfort" indexed the dangerous appropriation of the domestic accoutrements of elite uptown wives by proprietresses who were anything but respectable in the eyes of the newspaper's readership. The danger that the visitor, if not the occupants themselves, could misread this spellbinding material world as a sign of respectability and social esteem is signaled in the reporter's eagerness to see the elegant and glittering furnishings as "already decaying." He may not have been aware of the Old English root of *brothel*, "to decay," but his verbal excess enunciates the moral and material entanglement that houses of assignation excited in the Victorian imaginary.

An updated description of Townsend's boudoir appeared in an 1883 edition of the *New Orleans Daily Picayune* with details such as, "Next to the armoire was a rep and damask sofa and over the mantel was a French mirror with a gilt frame." This reporter admired the fact that not only had Townsend acquired the goods, but she had acquired the taste to distinguish them, an acquired skill elites thought they had reserved for themselves: "In the left-hand corner was a magnificent étagère [a French bric-a-brac shelf], upon which were statuettes, the work of renowned artists, and small articles of *verdu* [curios], betraying great taste both in selection and arrangement. . . . Around the walls were suspended chaste and costly oil paintings. The bloodstained carpet was of the finest velvet." The only taint in this well-read tableau that disturbs what might otherwise be a clear case of Bourdieu's bourgeois distinction, was the blood from Townsend's murder at the hands of her lover.[39]

Newspaper accounts also grant some respect to Madame Gertrude Dix for her collection of art and rare books. Lulu White and Willie Piazza competed in their reputations for cutting stylish figures and hosting memorable parlors. Josie Arlington's four-story brothel was renowned as the fanciest one in the District. In an advertisement she placed in one of the Blue Books (surprisingly transparent consumer guides to the district), not a single mention is made of her female employees or the services her business provides. Rather, the advertisement presents a drawing of the four-story house with its skyline-piercing cupola and a long list of furniture and renovations; she does not shy away from mentioning dollar figures for her improvements. In another promotional piece, Arlington enunciated the oriental sophistication of her accommodations, including a Turkish Parlor and a Japanese Parlor, as well as a Hall of Mirrors. A visit to her Storyville house offered theatrical tableaux of other times. She knew that if you suspend guests in a bubble of time, they are more likely to linger. And she well understood another precept that the New Orleans tourism industry has long capitalized on: there is something erotic about pastness.

Arlington's business plan aimed to attract "only refined gentlemen with a taste for 'amiable, foreign girls.'" But these interiors made an impression on everyone. Pianist Clarence Williams, one of many black musicians legally allowed only to work, not frequent, the brothels, reported that they "were really something to see—those sporting houses. They had the most beautiful parlors, with cut glass and draperies, and rugs, and expensive furniture. They were just like millionaires' houses." The heavy investment of high-end brothels, sometimes called fairy palaces, is documented in the large credit accounts of the city's prominent furniture dealers. Some stores allegedly went bankrupt when Storyville closed in 1917.[40]

Arlington's focus on architecture and furnishings was not unique. Remarkably, almost all of the surviving advertisements from Storyville spend at least two-thirds of the copy space and images (including the *only* photographs) detailing the "splendor" of the material setting rather than the beauty of the employees (figs. 4.3, 4.4). Typical entries from the 1906 edition of the Blue Book include those of Miss Lillian Irwin, whose "home has been pronounced extremely gorgeous by people who are in a position to know costly finery, cut glass and oil paintings, foreign draperies, etc.," and for Miss Flo Meeker: "Bon vivants and connoisseurs pronounce her mansion the Acme of Perfection. Her furniture and fittings were all made to order from her own designs; many of the articles in her domicile, such as paintings and cut-glasses, came from Paris and Germany and the late St. Louis Exposition. Her new Mirror dance hall, recently put in at great expense, is the talk of the town. See it."[41] Miss Meeker's style may have run a bit more to the contemporary, but her focus on material connoisseurship of European art and the latest collectibles from the arcades of the world expositions echoes other aspects of the cult of the antique and curio.

FIGURE 4.4. Storyville dining room. Courtesy of Historic New Orleans Collection.

Clearly, brothels were as cluttered and as "distinguished" as any elite or aspirant interiors of the Gilded Age—loudly and insistently so.

Fancy houses offered taste in fine things as part of their general package of hospitality. As many have noted, their major revenue came from the sale of drink, food, and entertainment (music, dance, and occasionally theater) rather than sexual services. High-end French champagne (Veuve Cliquot and Mumm's Extra Dry) and oysters appear to have been favorites, as corroborated by Storyville pianist Jelly Roll Morton and by archaeological assemblages from known brothels in other American cities. According to reports, mastery of the rules of etiquette complemented the material appointments of the downstairs parlor. A dress code required patrons to arrive in formal wear and "hostesses" to maintain a large wardrobe of silk dresses and lacy dressing gowns. Anonymous editorials claimed that working-class children were sometimes voluntarily recruited into the business because they "envy the sinful elegance displayed before them and hanker after the pleasure enjoyed by their possession." The objects, not the women, lured them into the underworld.[42]

Perhaps it was the same with the johns. Why were the furnishings, architecture, and food and drink of brothels so important, perhaps even more important than the physical attributes of the women, to judge by advertising decisions? We can speculate on the possible fantasies that drove

individual men, depending on their background and class position. For the sporting men of the well-heeled crowd, the surroundings would have been generally familiar, not unlike their mother's house on St. Charles Avenue. For them, perhaps there *was* some comfort in the splendor, with the idea that they were enjoying just another privilege of their class. Familiar surroundings naturalized their activities. In fact, one factor that may have contributed to the rapid expansion of fancy brothels after the Civil War was the displacement of sexual practices elite men had become accustomed to within slave society. In other words, prostitution provided a new home for the "privileged" practice to which planter-class men had become accustomed: having ready sexual access to enslaved women. This social stratigraphy below Storyville prostitution had a significant material dimension. In the vernacular of Louisiana architecture, wing extensions off the back of plantation great houses are called "garconnières"—or "boy's rooms." Most Louisiana tour guides will tell you that teenage boys moved into these wings separated from the main house in order to have discreet but easy sexual access.[43]

In the story of Storyville, we observe a dense accumulation of entwined sensuality, power, and colonialism. In its sinister aspect, plantation slavery and its practices of sexual predation lay just below the surface, even echoed in the architecture of the district through its barrack-like cribs. Deeper still lay the ruins of colonial nostalgia for the French girls that soldiers left behind when they embarked on their male-dominated missions. And built *over* Storyville's stratum, we find Bourbon Street's good-time excess and the foggy erotics of historic preservation.

Al Rose, the author of the quirky but still best-documented historical account of Storyville, recalls that when he grew up in New Orleans in the 1920s and 1930, adults around him were already recalling the District "with a certain nostalgia." Such sentiments countervailed concerted efforts by others to demolish the physical remnants of Storyville and its archive. In his decades of exhaustive research and collecting of Storyville memorabilia, Rose discovered that newspaper files in the public library, the *Times-Picayune*'s photo files, and even real estate plat books had been vandalized, with insalubrious details of Storyville excised. Other attempts at public erasure occurred in the renaming of streets. Within a few years after the district's demise, anonymous censors renamed almost every one of the shorter streets (those that did not extend far into "respectable" neighborhoods) of Storyville as well as the older antebellum sex districts known as Gallatin and Perdido.[44]

Whether they were seen as the good old times or the bad old times, not everyone wanted to erase the patina of Storyville's heyday. Within a gen-

eration of the district's closing down, concerned citizens were mobilizing nostalgia in an effort to save its remains of saloons, brothels, and even cribs from the federal wrecking ball. The importance of the area to the history of jazz, but also as a revived site for tourism, motivated boosters in the 1940s. Although the National Jazz Foundation succeeded in restoring Basin Street's name (having been cloaked as "North Saratoga" for a while), it did not win against the slum-clearance project that transformed the space into the Iberville public housing project. Not even the sponsorship of *Esquire* magazine, which briefly got behind this historic preservation effort, could save Storyville.[45]

Bourbon Street, which came to inhabit the same imaginative space as Storyville's Basin Street, makes residents nostalgic for Storyville. Although they rarely frequent upper Bourbon Street, leaving it to college students, midlifers-gone-wild, and conventioneers, most residents agree with Al Rose's assessment in the 1970s, when it already seemed aged and tawdry. For him, the "junk" of Bourbon Street manifests in its negative patina and the ultimate after-object of the aged bawd: "[It] is a welter of unattractive and usually dirty saloons . . . [with] harridans in varying stages of physical decomposition (some are in their fifties)."[46]

Walter Benjamin was enchanted with the prostitute as a metaphor for the commodity and the Freudian complexity of our attachment to things: "Love for the prostitute is the apotheosis of empathy with the commodity."[47] One of the paradoxes of the prostitute that parallels the biography of commodities is how time waits in the wings to erode promised value. Prostitutes age, decline, even "decay" if afflicted with the symptoms of untreated venereal disease. The value they tease with their catcalls or come-hither looks in fancy parlors lasts, according to disappointed johns in the moment, less than three minutes. As recycled commodities circulating in the market in new clothes and jewels, most know that their clock is ticking. The majority of prostitutes legally registered in Storyville were between sixteen and twenty-four years old. Although a few went on to become madams, others descended into the cribs when their beauty or health faded. A few escaped and married out. Most died young. But some hung on, cultivating their own knowledge and experience as a marketable asset. In the society column of the *Mascot* of October 1896, we read: "Kittie Archer, the Ancient Hibernian . . . was very mad last Friday when she read what Bas Bleu said about her youthful attributes. Kittie declares that she is no 'Old Curiosity Shop' but that she is a walking encyclopedia. . . . Kittie is proud of posing as a blue stocking in New Orleans. In New York and other large cities, she is a mere footprint on the sands of time; she is a lady with a past who is looking out for a future."[48]

Hearn or Faulkner couldn't have said it better. The city-courtesan is acutely aware of the passage of time while she defiantly flaunts it. She uses the erotics of heterogeneous time to command brief moments of power. She knows that her value contradictorily depends upon her accumulated experience *and* that this value is headed toward certain decay. She is a patinated object, having a sheen of experience acquired through repetitive human strokes, powerful with tabu, hot with bad mana.

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Looking back over the long history of nostalgia in New Orleans, we can identify three different types associated with its Frenchness. The first equals the longing for home felt by colonial travelers and settlers who had left France behind. The second consists of a critical nostalgia that took root as an embattled minority lost its former dominance over the political and cultural landscape. In this form, "things were better when we were more French." And finally, there is the exotic and erotic Frenchness of orientalism. Although each of these forms may have predominated in certain periods, from the early French colonial period to the present day, they are not exclusive to any one era. They can, and do, coexist in the complex landscape of New Orleans's material signs and practices of hospitality.

When I asked Eliza, an eighty-one-year-old native of uptown to describe the aesthetic preferences of New Orleanians, she replied with the linked trio of "French-antique-garden": "They like gardens . . . [and] I think they like old things more than new because the French antiques are old." I later asked Peter why New Orleanians like to collect antiques. His reply went straight to local hospitality.

> Peter: You live in another period when you entertain. You're using fine silver, fine china, fine crystal. And that's how you entertain at a formal dinner party. You don't have a BBQ pit on your balcony.
>
> SD: And people expect this?
>
> Peter: People live it. You don't do business with people until you've had a meal with them. You get to know them. People prefer not to discuss business at a meal. Part of that is a European lifestyle. And as you know, there's a huge French influence here.

By the early nineteenth century, New Orleans had become a marketplace for tasteful French things where knowing locals were connoisseurs and visitors could acquire some sought-after souvenirs and sensual expe-

rience. Presenting and scenting the body as French was one way to mark oneself as a local. For the tourist, a bottle of perfume or a jar of rouge would also make a nice souvenir of the city's eroticism. The hospitality exchanges of New Orleans's very active social life provided important occasions for the presentation of self and the display of connoisseurship from the eighteenth century forward that included (and includes) dinner parties, garden picnics, balls, Mardi Gras parades, teas, and theater events. In the colonial period even French visitors remarked upon the exhausting pace of the entertainment calendar. To understand and participate in the events where Bordeaux wine flowed from antique French bottles was to belong to a special social world. One could marry into this world. Or, with time, one could acquire the cultural facility to insert oneself into the chain of title through intimate knowledge of townhouses, rouge pots, and shared scents. Consumption of old "French" things binds this world together.

The early colonial city was a place nostalgic for an imagined France left behind by forced immigrants and soldiers. By the American period, it had become a doubled space of the familiar and the strange. Today, the city is nostalgic for itself. Mourning every loss—a tree in Katrina, a grandmother dying, the sale of a house—offers an opportunity to savor and reassert the spirit of place. In contrast, the visitor pursues nostalgia for a time and a place that is so exotic it has never existed, except perhaps in the parlor of a brothel. The Orient down south.

Through their interiors, the prominent Storyville franchises sold much more than sex, which in its stripped-down form could be bought in the abject cribs on the backstreets. Their collections of French antiques and fancy things emanated profane mana—a seductive force associated with both pleasure and death. It fascinated neighborhood children as well as the journalist viewing its incarnation as blood on an oriental carpet. The profane mana flowing through Storyville's brothels confirms the old anthropological observation that such a force could be both dangerous and contagious—moving between people, and between things. Like mana, the material sign of patina could quickly oscillate from "good" (respectable, quaint) to "bad" (decaying, morally decrepit).

The product brothels offered was often packaged as an experience of uncertain vintage. They sold a fantasy of masculine achievement on many planes. In the Japanese and Turkish boudoirs, with the attentions of "amiable foreign girls" (most of them, in fact, Irish) and fabled octoroons, johns could travel through time and space and become colonial adventurers. Fancy brothels represented dazzling heterotopias. Or perhaps better said, chronotopias. They actively, sensuously created bubbles of time.

Although prostitutes have been called "frail goddesses in glass houses,"[49] the patina aesthetic provided some salvation from obsolescence. Senior madams were among the most admired and sought-after figures in Gilded Age New Orleans. In their many appearances in court and the newspapers, they espoused a way of life that embraced good times over hard labor. As such, they served as loudly dressed mouthpieces for New Orleans's deep history of hospitality. The French colonial euphemism for a madam was "hostess." Upon closer inspection, the trope of New Orleans as an aging courtesan seems to be right on the money. Well beyond Storyville, the city is an arcade that promotes "the good *old* times" as an alternative to the despiriting forces of less playful markets.