

**Regulation of Prostitution in 19th Century Paris:  
Effects of Urbanization on Sexual Institutions**

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Tensions between the ruling and working classes were elevated during the nineteenth century in France. The country faced both internal and external threats and underwent various forms of government beginning in the late eighteenth century and continuing through the nineteenth century. The upper classes developed a fear of the working classes due to their repeated demonstrations of their capability to organize revolts and revolutions. These upper classes associated diseases and crime during this period with the working class, leading to various attempts by the ruling elite to either contain or disperse these people to prevent disease, crime, and internal strife. These attempts at containment and dispersion peaked after Georges-Eugène Haussmann's appointment as the *Préfet de la Seine*. He oversaw significant urban developments that destroyed many working-class communities to make room for homes for the growing bourgeoisie in their place through a process known as Haussmanization.

During this time, there was a growing sense of fear surrounding sexuality among the ruling elite, stemming from a fear of disease, contamination of morals, and class mobility. Ruling classes feared the act of prostitution due to these women finding relative success and independence through this occupation.<sup>1</sup> Influential elites and public health officials banded together to call for reforms and restrictions on prostitution, citing the safety of both the army and the general population. This fear ultimately culminated in a series of reforms and regulations in an attempt to make the act of prostitution invisible to the public eye by enclosing these women in government-tolerated brothels.

The process of Haussmannization primarily focused on bringing Central Paris into modernity. Major urban development projects took place to improve public infrastructure, public health, and safety. These developments included enhanced waste management, the erection of

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<sup>1</sup> While “sex workers” would be a more appropriate term in the language of today, I will be referring to these women as “prostitutes” to reflect the language used in the documents and sources of the time.

grand boulevards, and the installation of street lamps, which would forever change Parisian nightlife. These changes displaced many of the working class out of Central Paris as part of a larger strategy to control this perceived unruly population. The bourgeoisie population that moved into the area brought an increase in disposable capital and a demand for luxury. This increased demand and the development of consumer culture brought significant changes to Central Paris's physical and cultural landscape. The transformation of Central Paris had unexpected effects on sexual institutions throughout the city, forcing these women to adapt to a changing public space, clientele, and demand.

This paper will explore the goals and intentions behind the regulation of prostitution and how these regulations shaped sexual institutions. Early studies into the act of prostitution in France were primarily conducted by regulationist doctors in order to urge the government to implement further reforms throughout the country. Many of these early studies were biased due to them being conducted in the backdrop of syphilis. Alain Corbin attempts to provide a thorough look into the act of prostitution throughout France without the backdrop of syphilis in his book *Women for Hire*. While Corbin succeeds in giving a detailed look into regulations put in place on the system of prostitution, there is room for further study into the effects of urbanization on sexual institutions. Analysis of these regulations and their impact on prostitution will display that they ultimately failed at hiding these “vile acts” from the public eye; in fact, these regulations allowed these sexual institutions to cement themselves into public space. This paper will later analyze how the growing number of wealthier residents and developments in consumer culture affected both sexual institutions and how individual prostitutes adapted to this change. Ultimately, the process of Haussmannization, the rapidly growing middle class in central Paris,

and the public infrastructure introduced throughout the century allowed for sexuality and prostitution to become more visible than ever.

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While there is a lack of first-person accounts of the lower classes at this time due to illiteracy and other constraints, we can use death statistics to gauge the livelihood of the lower classes at this time. During the July Monarchy (1830-1848), there was a steep rise in both lower-class suicide and infanticide.<sup>2</sup> This rise reflects the misery that lower classes endured during this period due to the Cholera pandemic that disproportionately affected lower-class communities; attributable to the poor public infrastructure that allowed for water contamination. This disease affected very few people outside of the lower classes, and the ruling elite used this to symbolize the risk the working class posed to the upper classes.<sup>3</sup> This fear of the lower classes grew, leading to a debate on methods to limit the lower classes' interactions with the upper classes.

The working classes also faced an artificial famine due to the price of bread growing higher than their daily pay. In 1830, lower-class workers could not buy a four-pound loaf of bread with a day's pay, resulting in many families going hungry. The winter months brought freezing weather to starving lower-class families that could not afford the luxury of heat to keep warm.<sup>4</sup> The desperation of the working class caused many to turn to crime as a means of survival or a form of protest. From 1789 through the first half of the nineteenth century, Paris went through a period of revolts, riots, and revolutions, many of which were ignited in lower-class communities. The Industrial Revolution allowed these groups to better organize and

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<sup>2</sup> Louis Chevalier, *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes in Paris during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: H. Fertig, 1973), 12.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 56.

<sup>4</sup> Chevalier, *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes*, 370.

communicate ideas due to technological advancements such as the printing press. Areas of central Paris, such as Faubourg Saint-Antoine and the area surrounding the Hôtel de Ville, became a hotbed for revolutionists.<sup>5</sup> The winding, narrow streets of Central Paris made these communities easily defensible through the erection of barricades. First used in 1795, these barricades were used as a signal of defiance to the government and were able to be fortified to transform neighborhoods into fortresses.<sup>6</sup> The ruling elite saw the centralization of these lower classes as a threat to national security, citing the increased crime rates and amount of protests in these areas to justify increased surveillance and police presence within these communities.

Many lower-class women turned to prostitution as a means of survival. While prostitutes came from all backgrounds, the majority came from lower classes due to fewer opportunities for these women and the increased demand for women in lower-income areas.<sup>7</sup> Low-income communities located in Central and East Paris had a higher percentage of men than women due to the majority of immigration into these areas being working-class men seeking work in factories or other manual labor.<sup>8</sup> In the majority of cases, these men were either single or left their families in their home country or town and sent funds back home to them. This surplus of single men in working-class communities created “sexual deserts” that constituted a need for a sexual outlet for these men. This increased demand for sex allowed these women to find clients quickly and had a high profit potential. Many of these women turned to prostitution independently, although some were recruited by *madames*, who would find clientele for them.

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Tombs, *France, 1814-1914. Longman History of France*, (London: Longman, 1996), 189.

<sup>6</sup> Tombs, *France*, 22.

<sup>7</sup> Hippolyte Mireur, *La Prostitution à Marseille; Histoire, Administration et Police, Hygiène* (France: Librairie Marseillaise, 1882), 171-73; quoted by Alain Corbin, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990), 53.

<sup>8</sup> Louis Bertillon, *Annuaire Statistique de la Ville de Paris, Année 1880* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1881), 152-153; Esther da Costa Meyer, *Dividing Paris: Urban Renewal and Social Inequality, 1852-1870* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022), 103; Chevalier, *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes*, 245.

Various forms of prostitution were common, although the most common were individual women soliciting in places where there was a concentration of manual working-class labor. *Les Halles* was, and still is, a commercial hub that employed many working-class men who worked at night loading and unloading goods into the market. Prostitutes would crowd the sidewalks of the surrounding area in wait for these men who were looking for entertainment after a long shift.<sup>9</sup> It was also common to find prostitutes soliciting around other areas with large concentrations of men, such as army barracks and ports.

The ruling elite believed that the rise in the rate of prostitution was due to the weakening of paternal authority in lower-class families, high social mobility, and the promotion of progressive ideals. The high social mobility of this period was seen as a seductive force, driving young women to become obsessed with the dream of luxury. Freethinking media was believed to be promoting liberal ideals, making police intervention and surveillance more and more difficult. These ideas are highlighted in work published by Dr. Mireur, where he advised parents of young girls on how to keep them away from the evil that is prostitution. Mireur advised parents to constantly watch over their daughters due to the fear that men would try to corrupt them with the promise of luxury and to start them with manual labor as soon as possible because “a woman who works, or at least who knows how to keep busy, is inaccessible to ideas of misconduct.”<sup>10</sup>

With the end of the cholera pandemic, the ruling elite began to use syphilis to maintain the association between lower classes and disease. Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet was one of France’s most prolific hygienists of the nineteenth century due to his work surrounding cholera. Following the decline in cholera, he began to analyze the effects of prostitution on public health. His work titled *De la Prostitution dans la Ville de Paris* argued the correlation between venereal

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<sup>9</sup> Chevalier, *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes*, 304-305.

<sup>10</sup> Mireur, *La Prostitution à Marseille*, 335-338.

diseases, mainly syphilis, and the act of prostitution. This work sparked both doctors and public health officials to look further into prostitution and provided quantitative data and methodologies for further studies. His methodology would be modeled and implemented throughout France by other reformist doctors.<sup>11</sup> The correlation between syphilis and prostitution triggered doctors and public health officials to call for reforms to prostitution throughout France in the name of public safety. Parent-Duchâtelet argued that “prostitut[ion] [is] as inevitable, where men live together in large concentrations, as drains and refuse dumps.”<sup>12</sup> While acknowledging that prostitution was inescapable and a necessary evil, city administrators saw prostitution as a threat to public health and to the health of the military due to the vast numbers of soldiers utilizing prostitution.<sup>13</sup> During this time, France faced both internal threats of revolution and external pressure with its border with Prussia. This perceived need for the army to defend the nation from these threats led to many anxieties about the health of the soldiers, leading to the fear that the military would be contaminated by prostitution. Much like the efforts to improve public sanitation, reformists argued that the best way to contain the spread of venereal diseases was to enclose the source, lower-class women.

Reforms on prostitution were put in place with the goal of making prostitutes easier to track and surveil. The city of Paris enacted laws that forced prostitutes to register with local law enforcement, transforming prostitution from an occupation to a title and way of life.<sup>14</sup> This method of labeling these women allowed for the distinction and divide between the perceived “honorable” women and the “fallen.”<sup>15</sup> The women who registered were referred to as *filles*

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<sup>11</sup> Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet, *De la Prostitution dans la Ville de Paris* (France: J.B Baillière, 1836).

<sup>12</sup> Parent-Duchâtelet, *De la Prostitution*, 513; quoted in David Pike, *Subterranean Cities: the World beneath Paris and London, 1800-1945* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), 261.

<sup>13</sup> Corbin, *Women for Hire*, 23.

<sup>14</sup> Corbin, *Women for Hire*, 36.

<sup>15</sup> Eisa Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race: Immigration, Intimacy, and embodiment in the Early Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 102.

*soumises* and were restricted to that title until they could prove to government officials that they moved away from the act of prostitution. It was difficult for these *filles soumises* to separate themselves from this newfound label. In most cases, sickness or old age was insufficient to remove themselves from the registry; the only ways were to show legal documents proving marriage or a familial request to remove their name. Getting their name removed through a familial request requires the family to be well off or have a significant influence in the community. This method was not available to many *filles soumises* because most of them were from lower-class families.<sup>16</sup> Many of these *filles soumises* resorted to evasion to remove themselves from the registry, which they achieved by simply moving towns or not showing up to mandated health screenings. Disappearance was the only method for many of these women to avoid government supervision effectively.

Health checks, or *contrôle sanitaire*, were mandated health screenings for all *filles soumises*, which were required once a week. Male doctors would thoroughly and rapidly inspect these women's genitalia in the search for signs of venereal diseases. The carelessness shown by these doctors often led to healthy women getting venereal diseases transmitted to them during these screenings due to the lack of sterilization of exam tools.<sup>17</sup> Even to reformists, these screenings were seen as degrading and humiliating to prostitutes but were regarded as a necessity to help stop the spread of disease.<sup>18</sup> Methods of concealing venereal disease became common knowledge through the *filles soumises*' community, where they routinely used makeup or rice powder to hide sores from the doctors.<sup>19</sup> The methods used by these women to conceal signs of venereal disease rendered the health inspections almost useless in stopping the rate of contagion;

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<sup>16</sup> Corbin, *Women for Hire*, 34-35.

<sup>17</sup> Yves Guyot, *La Prostitution* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1882), 295.

<sup>18</sup> Mireur, *La Prostitution à Marseille*, 244-245.

<sup>19</sup> Guyot, *La Prostitution*, 294.



however, the screenings were useful in keeping a record of the movements of the *filles soumises* after their initial registry.<sup>20</sup>

If a woman was found to have evidence of venereal disease during a health inspection, she would be transferred to Saint-Lazare prison hospital. This hospital was inferior to other major hospitals in the city and held 400 beds that were primarily comprised of prostitutes. However, everyone infected with venereal diseases in Paris was treated there. While *filles insoumises* (unregistered prostitutes) were moved into cells, *filles soumises* would be confined to rooms housing twenty women each. These women were not allowed to leave until it was proven that they were cured, leading to an average stay between twenty-three and thirty-five days. They were supervised by nuns belonging to the Sisters of Marie-Joseph. These nuns were harsher to these prostitutes than any other patients. They brought punishments in the form of solitary confinement, straight jackets, or withholding of food to any women who refused to work or showed disrespect towards the nuns.<sup>21</sup> Communication between the women and the outside world was strictly supervised to prevent pimps and *madames* to recruit or leverage the women during their stay. Many women were frequently admitted to this hospital, resulting in its acquisition of the nickname *notre campagne*, meaning ‘our countryside.’ This term alludes to the vacations taken by the upper classes to the countryside. Although Saint-Lazare was considered a hospital, the women treated here were prisoners in every aspect with the sole exemption of title.

These restrictions also separated the *filles soumises* into two distinct groups: *filles de maison* and *filles en carte*. *Filles en carte* were independents who worked for themselves, finding their own clientele and working relatively on their own terms. *Filles en carte* were more common than women who worked in brothels before regulations were put in place to pressure

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<sup>20</sup> Corbin, *Women for Hire*, 92.

<sup>21</sup> Corbin, *Women for Hire*, 94-96, 110.

them to become *filles de maison*. The restrictions placed on *filles en carte* did not allow for these women to enter cafés, loiter in public (especially around schools or barracks), use obscene language, appear through open windows, or travel through public streets within open carriages or with men. The restrictions were impossible to enforce, although they gave law enforcement the capacity to arrest almost any *fille en carte* at will, at any time.<sup>22</sup> With these restrictions, a new police force called the vice squad, or *inspecteurs des moeurs*, was instated. They were responsible for enforcing these laws and surveillance of the *filles soumises*. This unit consisted of sixty-five officers who provided constant surveillance and conducted raids on streets that had an abundance of prostitution. During these raids, fifteen officers could up to arrest eighty women per hour. These women were then transported to filthy local jails, where they were not provided with basic supplies such as water and towels in order to wash themselves.<sup>23</sup> These laws allowed for any woman suspected of being a *fille insoumise* to be arrested and forced to be registered. While these laws and restrictions were meant to be enforced towards all *filles en carte*, only those of the lower class were routinely punished. 150-200 *filles soumises* were detained daily, most of which were *filles en carte*.<sup>24</sup> The enforcement of these restrictions led many *filles en carte* to disappear or move into *maisons de tolérances* to escape the constant police harassment.

*Maisons de tolérances* were government-tolerated brothels that were established to confine prostitutes, making surveillance easier. While these *maisons* also had restrictions placed on them, they were not as substantial as those set upon the *filles en carte*. The main goal of these restrictions was to remove any sight of sexuality from the public eye by limiting the ways that the public could view these establishments. These *maisons* were required to have dark glass on their first floor and could only crack the windows a few inches to prevent the public from seeing

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<sup>22</sup> Corbin, *Women for Hire*, 85.

<sup>23</sup> Guyot, *La Prostitution*, 131, 137.

<sup>24</sup> Corbin, *Women for Hire*, 107-108, 111.

inside. They were allowed to have an older woman at the establishment's door and two colored lanterns in the doorway to mark the brothel's presence.<sup>25</sup> The restrictions' purpose of hiding these sexual institutions from public view was a success on paper, removing many prostitutes from soliciting on public streets. However, the government's tolerance of these establishments allowed them to cement themselves permanently into public space. While removing signs of prostitution from the public, the spread of knowledge of the identifiers of these sexual institutions through word of mouth and guidebooks allowed these establishments to become more noticeable than ever to their customer base.

While the *maisons de tolérance* were identified and policed as a single group, they mostly fell into two categories: high-class and low-class *maisons*. High-class *maisons* catered towards the bourgeoisie, military officers, and other wealthy individuals who desired a refined experience that resembled a bourgeois household. The high-class *maisons* reflected their customers' wealth and were vastly more luxurious than their low-class counterparts. The women who resided and worked in these *maisons* wore higher quality clothes and make-up to resemble women of higher class. Customers were consistent, with each woman receiving between 4 and 10 clients daily. In contrast, low-class *maisons* provided their customers with a quick and dirty experience. Relatively cheaper, their clientele mainly consisted of working-class men and soldiers. *Madames* of the house, usually the owner, only cared about profit and submitted the *filles de maison* to harsh living and working conditions. These women were forced to work during their menstrual cycles or while ill with venereal diseases, evidence of which was covered up by make-up specialists employed by the *madame*. Even while pregnant, these women were often fetishized and specifically asked for by clients. The *filles de maison* associated with

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<sup>25</sup> Andrew Israel Ross, *Public City/Public Sex: Homosexuality, Prostitution, and Urban Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2019), 53-58.

low-class *maisons* did not have consistent customers, with many days each woman receiving none, but could receive as many as 25 in a single day. They had no say in which clients they serviced, and all clients would be served. Their sleeping arrangements also reflected the poor standards of these maisons. While regulations were put in place to ensure each woman had a private room, the women would often be crammed side by side in rooms described as “kennels” and were only provided with an iron bed and a flea-infested mattress.<sup>26</sup> Many of these brothels provided health inspections for the girls working in-house, supplying medical exam chairs, forceps, and scapulas to doctors who would come to perform them. The brothels that did not provide them would be required to hire drivers to transport these women to health inspection centers due to the regulations not allowing these prostitutes to travel down public streets.<sup>27</sup>

There were some calls for the abolition of government-tolerated prostitution during this time, such as from Jules Meugy.<sup>28</sup> In 1865, Meugy presented his work titled *De l’Extinction de la Prostitution* to the French Senate, in which he summarized why he believed that there should be an end to government-tolerated prostitution. While he briefly argued that tolerating prostitution brought a financial burden to the government through the cost of surveillance and health screenings, the majority of his argument was based on the belief that prostitution is a moral evil.<sup>29</sup> He argues that with the abolition of prostitution, cities would be cleansed of the moral filth that it brings and would be a safer place for all youth. He also touched on the elite’s belief that high-class mobility led to an increase in prostitution by stating that the promise of wealth would no longer tempt women. Furthermore, he argued that more young men would attend academic

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<sup>26</sup> Corbin, *Women for Hire*, 80-81.

<sup>27</sup> Ross, *Public City/Public Sex*, 138-139.

<sup>28</sup> Abolition was a self-proclaimed title used to compare prostitution to the African slave trade.

<sup>29</sup> Jules Meugy, *De l’Extinction de la Prostitution: Pétition au Sénat, Session de 1865* (France: Garnie Frères, 1865), 52.

institutions instead of spending their money on “detestable passions.”<sup>30</sup> The abolitionist movement did not gain the momentum needed for change until the turn of the century.

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Significant urban developments and changes began to take place in Paris in 1853 with the appointment of Georges-Eugène Haussmann as the *Préfet de la Seine*. Tasked by Emperor Napoleon III to bring Paris into modernity, Haussmann began the major project of sanitizing the city of dark and humid neighborhoods. This process took the form of “slum clearing,” destroying the twisting and windy streets of Central Paris and erecting grand boulevards in their place.<sup>31</sup> The rebuilding of Central Paris brought the classic cookie-cutter apartments and large boulevards that Paris is known for today, unveiled ceremoniously like grand monuments.<sup>32</sup> The erection of these paved streets removed much of the dirt and filth that was present in the now-destroyed Central Paris. The boulevards and wide streets allowed for more effortless troop movement throughout central Paris to respond to unrest. The wide and straight streets allowed for troops to march or fire side by side at long range.<sup>33</sup> This process also introduced streetlights to the majority of the area, lighting the darkness to provide a sense of security to its residents. The wide, lighted streets allowed for police to efficiently carry out surveillance on the general population, with a disproportionate amount of this surveillance carried out on lower classes, which were perceived as dangerous.<sup>34</sup> These wide streets also did not allow for revolting parties to create barricades through the street, taking away their symbol of protest. Along with the physical changes implemented, various forms of government oversight in everyday public life were instated, such

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<sup>30</sup> Jules Meugy, *De l'Extinction de la Prostitution*, 52-54.

<sup>31</sup> Da Costa, *Dividing Paris*, 15.

<sup>32</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Paris: Capital of the Nineteenth Century,” *Perspecta* 12 (1969): 165-172.

<sup>33</sup> Joanna Richardson, “Emperor of Paris: Baron Haussman, 1809-91” *History today* 25, no.12 (1975): 843.

<sup>34</sup> Jordan Hillman, “Steinlen, the Police, and the (in)Justice System in Fin-De-Siècle France,” *Visual arts research* 48, no. 1 (2022): 83-101.

as market inspectors targeting the working class at *Les Halles*.<sup>35</sup> Haussman's Paris was meant to provide the growing bourgeoisie class with a safe and sanitized place from the unruly working class.<sup>36</sup>

The process of Haussmannization destroyed many of the working-class' homes and communities. When rebuilt, the majority of its residents could not afford rent in these new developments, which created an exodus of the working class into the outskirts of Paris. This allowed for the growing bourgeoisie to expand into Central Paris. This new, wealthier population brought a new demand for luxury and disposable income to supply it. The opening of Opera houses and large department stores satisfied this demand for luxury goods and entertainment. These department stores were situated along boulevards and featured large windows, allowing passersby to gaze into the stores to look at their goods. During this period, this growing bourgeoisie class also adopted traditional social practices, customs, and tastes of the aristocracy. They placed value on the purity of women and put themselves into a protectorate role over their wives and children.<sup>37</sup> The promotion of marital sexuality and easier access to contraceptives allowed for the separation of fertilization and pleasure. With this separation, men lost their "conjugal due," their "right to sex," leading men to seek out outlets for desires that their wives would not, or could not, do.

The goal of the introduction of streetlights was to deter crime and allow for police surveillance through the night. Streetlights symbolized security to the bourgeoisie but primarily limited or endangered women of all classes. High-class or bourgeois women had the luxury of limiting their public activity to daylight hours, avoiding the prostitutes that lined the streets as

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<sup>35</sup> Maxime Du Camp, *Paris: ses Organes, ses Fonctions et sa Vie* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1873), 60.

<sup>36</sup> Da Costa, *Dividing Paris*, 124.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 44-46.

soon as the streetlights turned on. Working-class women did not have the luxury of limiting their activities to only daylight hours. Many working-class women were required to travel in public after dark and were subjected to relentless harassment from men on the lookout for pleasure.<sup>38</sup> They were not only subjected to harassment from men but also from the police. Valerie Durand was a piano teacher in her 30s who was stopped and arrested by law enforcement under the suspicion of solicitation.<sup>39</sup> While she was eventually released and not charged, the broad restrictions put in place on prostitution allowed law enforcement to detain any woman suspected of solicitation. Parisian public space at night was built with the ideals of bourgeoisie men in mind while putting women of all classes at risk.<sup>40</sup>

The destruction of central Paris also led to the closing of many *maisons de tolérance*. The closure of many long-standing *maisons* changed how *filles soumises* worked due to the decreased availability of positions within the remaining brothels. Many women working in these lower-class establishments left the *maisons* in favor of becoming *filles en carte*. The *madames* of these lower-class establishments also moved away from the traditional *maison de tolérance* model, instead opening *maisons ouverts*, where these *filles de carte* and *filles insoumises* could rent individual rooms to run their own business. While these women did have to attract their clientele, purchase their own clothes, and were responsible for their health checks, they had free will in whom they would service and had the opportunity to be more profitable than when they were associated with a *maison*. *Madames* also preferred this since they received consistent income from these women while not having to keep detailed records and worry about the women's health.<sup>41</sup> Some *filles de carte* opted not to join the *maisons ouvert*, instead using the

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<sup>38</sup> Da Costa, *Dividing Paris*, 124.

<sup>39</sup> Ross, *Public City/Public Sex*, 150-151.

<sup>40</sup> Da Costa, *Dividing Paris*, 124.

<sup>41</sup> Corbin, *Women for Hire*, 116-117.

city's new infrastructure to both entice and satisfy their customers. *Filles en carte* also changed their ways of attracting clients. Before Haussmanization, they frequented places with a high population of working-class men, such as *Les Halles* or Barracks. Afterward, they began frequenting train stations, where they often waited for dozens of trains until they found a customer and other nodes of transport.<sup>42</sup> They also patrolled the big boulevards, using the street lights to emphasize their make-up.<sup>43</sup> The women displayed under the streetlights reflected the newly built department stores' windows, allowing customers to gaze at the products before purchasing.

While many *maison de tolerances* were destroyed and not reopened during this transformation, many first-class maisons could stay afloat. These first-class *maisons de tolérance* met the demand for luxury and extravagance of the wealthy by transforming themselves into *maisons de débauché*, which were “laboratories of sexual experimentation.” Due to the adoption of many values of the upper class, such as the importance placed on the purity of women, this bourgeois class found themselves in their own “sexual desert” created by their own ideals. The importance placed on the purity of upper-class women limited sexual interactions experienced by the growing numbers of single bourgeoisie men. These establishments focused on catering to the upper classes that were constrained by the sexual norms of their class during this period.<sup>44</sup> In response to the demand for a place where the bourgeoisie could escape their norms, these *maisons de débauché* pushed the boundaries of sexuality by hosting elaborate sex acts featuring female homosexuality and fetishes. These *maisons* allowed for and encouraged “abnormal” sexual desires as a response to the bourgeois demand for the extreme. They accepted and provided the means to serve many taboo desires, such as bestiality, masochism, sadism, and

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<sup>42</sup> Pike, *Subterranean Cities*, 65; Ross, *Public City/Public Sex*, 135.

<sup>43</sup> Corbin, *Women for Hire*, 205.

<sup>44</sup> Corbin, *Women for Hire*, 126, 186.



homosexuality. This new bourgeoisie clientele demanded pleasure from abnormal means, such as oral, which was traditionally not provided by any women working in a *maison*. The *madames* of these establishments hired *essayeurs* who were tasked with teaching these women “abnormal” ways of pleasing clients. These *maisons* were one of the few places that allowed for high-class same-sex relations, in both men and women, with items constructed to help satisfy these individuals, such as harnesses with artificial penises or dildoes imported from England. Homosexual men would be served by either these *filles de maisons* or by young men willing to perform sexual acts.<sup>45</sup>

The ever-increasing demand for extreme eroticism from the upper class began a cycle in which the upper class required the services offered by these first-class *maisons* to escape the sexual frustrations they felt in their everyday life. This demand was not satisfied by a single trip, which, in turn, created a returning clientele that frequented these *maisons* and allowed these establishments to grow to unprecedented heights. These *filles de maisons* became a “prisoner of [a] sexual need,” forced to produce more and more elaborate eroticisms at the service of their bourgeois clientele.<sup>46</sup>

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The regulations put in place in order to hide this perceived vile act from the public eye were ultimately a failure in their goal. *Maisons de tolérance* were able to cement themselves in public space and, through the transmission of sexual knowledge, allowed them to be even more visible to their clientele. Furthermore, the process of Hausmanization reverted many of the perceived benefits of regulation by forcing many of these *filles de maisons* back into becoming *filles en carte* due to the destruction of many of these long-standing *maisons de tolérance*.

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<sup>45</sup> Corbin, *Women for Hire*, 124-125, 186.

<sup>46</sup> Corbin, *Women for Hire*, 192.

Developments in public infrastructure, such as large boulevards and street lighting, allowed for prostitution to be put on display in Central Paris in a way never seen before.

Hausmanization did bring some benefits to women practicing prostitution. The increased number of *filles en carte* gained an increased autonomy due to the popularization of *maisons ouverts*. The ability to rent out their rooms and run their own business separated them from the confines of the traditional *maison de tolerance* model. They could now choose when and where they worked, along with who they served, a luxury not present in lower-class *maisons* before Hausmannization. The women who decided to stay in these few lower-class *maisons* could use this new option as leverage to demand increased pay and living conditions. However, women who worked within a first-class *maison* did not see an increase in living conditions or pay compared to pre-Hausmanization. These women became prisoners of the sexual demands of the bourgeoisie, being forced to be involved with the ever-increasing eroticism that was present within these establishments.

The regulations' goal of gaining control of the individual was ultimately a success. Registration and mandated health inspections allowed government administrators to track the movement of these women, and further restrictions gave them the power to control where they went. The harsh restrictions that limited the movement and conduct of these prostitutes were impossible to enforce but allowed the government to arrest and detain any woman at will.<sup>47</sup> The only means of escape for many of these *filles en carte* and *filles insoumises* were to either disappear or to join one of these *maisons de tolérance*, which allowed for further government surveillance. The disregard and mistreatment of these women in the name of public safety and health directly contradicts the progressive ideals fought for during the revolution.

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<sup>47</sup> We saw this in the case of Valerie Durand.

Haussmann's effects on urban planning and the implementation of public infrastructure long outlived his tenure as *Préfet de la Seine*. Haussmann inspired urban developers globally with his urbanization project in Paris. Larger cities throughout France, such as Marseille, Montpellier, and Lyon, were restructured to model themselves after this “new” Paris. Latin American cities, such as Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro, also saw significant urban developments inspired by Haussmann’s model, erecting large boulevards. The architecture present during the Second Empire was also exported to many French colonies in Asia, such as Vietnam.<sup>48</sup> Barcelona’s urban planner, Ildefons Cerdà, took significant inspiration from Haussmann. He called for the destruction of much of the “old city” to solve the city's issues with overcrowding and disease while also creating room for the bourgeoisie and upper classes to live in the city center.<sup>49</sup>

It is important to note that this regulation system was not limited to the city of Paris or even France. The idea of enclosure was exported throughout the French empire and implemented into their colonies and protectorates.<sup>50</sup> While being the first to establish regulations on a national scale, France is not the sole contributor to this export. Spain adopted a model that was very similar to the French regulation system and implemented it throughout its colonies.<sup>51</sup> The system of registration, enclosure, and mandated health screenings could be traced globally in countries such as Mexico and the Philippines.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Da Costa, *Dividing Paris*, 326-327.

<sup>49</sup> Michael Neuman, “Ildefons Cerdà and the Future of Spatial Planning: The Network Urbanism of a City Planning Pioneer” *The Town Planning Review* 82 (2011), 118-122.

<sup>50</sup> Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race*, 109.

<sup>51</sup> Pedro Egea Bruno, “Las Redes De Prostitucion en la España del Siglo Xix. El Enclave de Catagena en los Inicios de la Restauracion” *Studia Historica contemporánea* 26 (2008), 215.

<sup>52</sup> Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race*, 109; Luis Dery, “Prostitution in Colonial Manila” *Philippine Studies* 39, no.4 (1991), 486.

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