What this isn’t is a study of the *novel* of prostitution. Rather, it showcases the prostitute herself, the main character in works by Dostoyevski, López Bago, Pérez Galdós, Edmond de Goncourt (*La fille Élisa*), Huysmans (*Marthe, histoire d’une fille*), and Zola (*Nana*). Rousseau-Minier eschews a narrow feminist discourse, aiming instead for “un élargissement comparatiste” to enrich existing scholarship while demonstrating that despite the diversity in these figures, there is a coherence “dans l’imaginaire littéraire de ce personnage ainsi que dans son fonctionnement métaphorique” (25). Rousseau-Minier sees the *fille naturaliste* as a reaction to the *courtisane romantique* in such works as Dumas fils’s *La dame aux camélias* and Balzac’s *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*. To say that the world of prostitution becomes more complex toward the end of the century would be an understatement: there are *filles à numéro*, *filles en carte*, and *filles de joie clandestine/courtisanes*, not to mention a variety of colorful names for them (*pieuvres*, *carpes*, *demi-castors*, *horizontales*, etc.). A composite portrait of the literary prostitute emerges from Rousseau-Minier’s treatment of her corpus: typically red-headed and voluptuous, she is immature, unstable, isolated, self-destructive (and destructive of others), lacking in self-control, and on the verge of insanity. Her story likewise has certain standard features: an opening description of a brothel from her perspective; characters including a tyrannical *tenancière*, a good friend, a loyal servant, and a posse of male clients; details about daily activities (eating, reading, playing cards, bickering). It is a plot that unfailingly follows “un itinéraire descendant” (150) marked by the protagonist’s passage from one kind of prostitution to another, “un événement perturbateur” (typically a diagnosis of syphilis) (148), and death. Rousseau-Minier insists on the importance of *Nana* as a pivotal work in the history of naturalism, one which inaugurated the Europeanization of the movement. She reads the novel as an allegory of the Second Empire and *Nana* as a burlesque version of the emperor, whose name is echoed by hers and that of her son (*Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte*) (300). Rousseau-Minier is at her best when engaging in such microtextual analyses (an exception being her puzzling claim that since *prostitution* rhymes with *illusion*, and even more so with *falsification*, it symbolizes “le contraire de l’authenticité et cristallise ainsi une dualité” [336]). The book could have benefitted from a heavier editorial hand to eliminate the frequent restatement of its main ideas and occasional repetition within short sequences (“Émile Zola […] revendiqu[e] désormais la littérature comme un objet commercial, ainsi qu’il semble l’exhiber et l’assumer dans *Nana*. […] *Nana* est le roman qui exhibe le plus manifestement l’objet littéraire comme objet commercial” [355]). But Rousseau-Minier’s mastery of her material, meticulous documentation, and especially her comparatist approach make for a unique contribution to the fields of nineteenth-century literature and culture in France and beyond.

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