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activism was shaped by Progressive Era networks of bourgeois reform clubs and professional interests.

Nevertheless, *A Brotherhood of Liberty* is a must-read for anyone interested in Baltimore and will prove engrossing for all scholars of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. Whether interested in politics or cities, social or legal history, the book holds something for everyone.

Hemphill, Katie M. *Bawdy City: Commercial Sex and Regulation in Baltimore, 1790–1915*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Xv + 342 pp. $59.99 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-108-48901-0.

Adam Malka

University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, USA

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It may not seem, at first glance, that a history of brothel prostitution in a single city could reveal much about the emergence of the American market economy, the many mechanisms of U.S. state-sanctioned policing, the transformation of property law during the era of emancipation, and the ways that discourses of gender shaped and were shaped by all three. However, Katie Hemphill's excellent new study does all that and more. Her book, *Bawdy City*, teaches as much about the nineteenth-century United States as a combination of many other books could hope to do.

Hemphill utilizes the different tools of social, legal, and cultural history to chronicle the rise and fall of brothel prostitution in Baltimore. Beginning her narrative in the Early Republic, she shows how commercial sex grew out of the dislocations and unequal division of resources of early capitalism, and how, by the 1840s, the city's municipal officials had come to tolerate commercial sex so long as it was sold inside, off the streets. Hemphill labels the municipality's treatment of brothel keepers and prostitutes "a tacit system of regulation, designed to contain prostitution and minimize its harm to the public as much as possible" (8). The rise of brothels, and the stamp of legitimacy that the city's courts gave them, helped embed sex work in Baltimore's growing economy. Sex workers from madams to the many women who worked in their establishments forged commercial relationships with "property investors, dealers in goods, insurance agents, bankers, lawyers, publishers, and liquor dealers" (78). Money generated from brothel prostitution, in short, helped make a lot of men wealthy even as it elevated certain madams to the middle class and helped many more prostitutes escape poverty.

Such a system of toleration did not survive the Civil War era intact. The legal precedent for the city's regulatory power over the sex trade stemmed from the 1857 *Hamilton v. Whitridge* decision by the Maryland Court of Appeals, which redefined brothel prostitution as a threat to neighbors' property rights. It was only after the war, however, that Baltimore's authorities began to deploy these new powers in earnest.

Such a change in practice owed to a change in philosophy: "communitarian notions of public welfare," explains Hemphill, gave way "to individualist concepts of rights and freedoms" after Maryland's 1864 emancipation decree (173). The blossoming liberal order did not immediately result in the disappearance of brothels from city streets; initially, the new regulations effected the removal of most brothels to poorer neighborhoods, where they formed red-light districts. But the growth of these neighborhoods also foretold the end of an era. The parlor house model that had thrived for decades faded during the 1880s and 1890s, especially as young working-class Baltimoreans began to incorporate sexual exchange into their courtship rituals. By the time the Progressive Era's anti-vice reformers persuaded the courts and police to shutter the city's "bawdy houses," Baltimore's brothel business was already well in decline.

This is a deeply intelligent book that is as ambitiously framed as it is well-researched. And let me be clear: it is extremely well-researched. I have worked in many of these same archives, and Hemphill's recovery of heretofore invisible sex workers is impressive. She cross-checks census records, city court dockets, and newspaper blurbs to reconstruct the lives and fortunes of myriad women, and in the process builds upon the work of scholars such as Jeanne Boydston to show how women's work—in this case sex work—generated capital, promoted urban development, and created wealth for a diverse set of actors, women included. Such an argument not only provides a gendered contribution to the new history of capitalism, but also necessitates a reconceptualization of the makeshift economies model that historians of prostitution frequently employ. Hemphill demonstrates that, throughout the nineteenth century anyway, "many women working in the sex trade were not merely trying to survive, but rather to gain access to leisure and luxuries like jewelry, hats, and clothing" (13).

Another theme that courses through *Bawdy City* is the varied nature of governmental regulation. Historians have tended to explain nineteenth-century municipal toleration of prostitution as the result of some combination of neglect and weakness. Hemphill urges us to consider how policing involved more than criminalization and crackdown. The local state, she reveals, was active in both managing and shaping the nature of sexual commerce in Baltimore long before the authorities endeavored to eliminate it. During the 1840s and 1850s, on one hand, city authorities primarily penalized streetwalking, thus forcing many prostitutes to enter the more private sanctuary of brothels. During the 1870s and 1880s, on the other hand, local officials, courts, and policemen reorganized the geography of the sex trade by pushing brothels into less affluent neighborhoods away from middle-class property holders. Those same authorities also sanctioned the entrance of many Black women into the trade, not least because they segregated Black Baltimoreans into the same areas of town. Hemphill's close inspection of how regulation of the sex trade worked in one large American city thereby lends substance to the growing body of literature that portrays the U.S. state as an energetic agent long before the twentieth century, positions women as important actors in American state formation, and historicizes the more famous crackdowns of the Progressive Era. "The developments of that period," concludes Hemphill, "were actually part of a long-standing continuum of state efforts to manage the shape of the sex trade" (300).

And yet, what is perhaps most impressive about this book is its empathy. Hemphill is not interested in condemning her subjects, nor is she concerned with celebrating their agency as a form of liberal empowerment. Her role, like that of any good social historian, is to understand her subjects on their own terms. So she does. *Bawdy City* shows the economic, legal, and political systems that structured brothel workers' lives even as it accounts for how those very workers navigated, profited from, and contributed to those systems. It is elegantly

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written, well argued, and deeply humane, and it deserves an audience among anyone interested in the history of U.S. women, cities, capitalism, criminal justice, and state formation.

Hanzlick, K. David. *Benevolence, Moral Reform, Equality: Women's Activism in Kansas City, 1870 to 1940*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2018. 222 pp. $50.00 (hardcover), ISBN 978-0-8262-2162-9.

Kelsey Carls

University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, USA

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Over the years, scholars of women's activism in the United States have developed many theories to understand the actions and behaviors of the women they study. Perhaps the most widely known is the "wave" metaphor, used to partition women's activist history into manageable pieces. Such mechanisms can be tremendously helpful in painting a broad picture of women's activism: they provide a ready-made structure onto which simple narratives can be built and disseminated. But the particularities of historical context are easily lost in the vastness of such theories. In *Benevolence, Moral Reform, Equality: Women's Activism in Kansas City, 1870 to 1940*, historian David Hanzlick does much to counteract the totalizing influence of another of these grand theories: the "eastern thesis" of women's activism.

The eastern thesis, Hanzlick explains, describes the fragmentation of U.S. women's activism after passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. Once suffrage was won, the tenuous coalition of women that worked to gain the vote broke into smaller cohorts, each with their own goals and preferred strategies. Scholars often group these splintered efforts into three categories: benevolence, moral reform, and gender equality. In general, benevolence indicates a preference for Christian forms of charity; moral reform describes reliance on the politics of maternalism to rid society of evils, such as the temperance movement's focus on alcoholism; and gender equality encompasses efforts to end discrimination against women on the basis of sex. According to the eastern thesis, these factions often failed to fully meet the needs of those they sought to serve and male-led organizations stepped in to fill the void. Hanzlick argues, however, that this general theory for the evolution of women's activism in the United States does not accurately capture what was happening on the ground in Kansas City, Missouri. Or, as he puts it, "While this metanarrative may hold true in eastern cities, the unsettled character of rapidly growing western cities … provides an occasion to reexamine this 'eastern' thesis of women's organizational structures" (5). In other words, the eastern thesis is not a one-size-fits-all solution for understanding the development of women's activism in the expanding American West. As Hanzlick points out, most of the scholarly research conducted on early American women's activism focused on large cities on the East and West Coasts, or in the Upper Midwest. Kansas City, a Midwestern metropolis on the rise during the

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