

Urban History Review Revue d'histoire urbaine

URBAN HISTORY REVIEW
REVUE D'HISTOIRE URBAINE

Gilfoyle, Timothy J. *City of Eros. New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790–1920*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1992. Pp. 462. illustrations, maps, tables, appendixes, index. \$24.95 (U.S.) \$29.99 (Can.)

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Volume 22, numéro 1, octobre 1993

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1016722ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1016722ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (imprimé)

1918-5138 (numérique)

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Citer ce compte rendu

Iversen, J. (1993). Compte rendu de [Gilfoyle, Timothy J. *City of Eros. New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790–1920*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1992. Pp. 462. illustrations, maps, tables, appendixes, index. \$24.95 (U.S.) \$29.99 (Can.)]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 22(1), 50–50. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1016722ar>

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The history of the rise and fall of prostitution in New York City from 1790 to 1920 provides the skeletal structure of *City of Eros*, a brilliant social history that won both the Allan Nevins Prize of the Society of American Historians and the New York State Historical Association Manuscript Prize. The author, who teaches history at Loyola University of Chicago, has carefully researched municipal and court records, real estate assessment lists, and applied meticulous geographic and demographic analysis to flesh in the complex story of commercialized sex in the past hundred years.

By the middle of the nineteenth-century, New York had become the "carnal showcase of the Western World." Never developing a red-light district as such, prostitution flourished in all of New York's neighborhoods. The real estate system, developed after 1800, made prostitution profitable for landlords and some more prominent people of the time owned brothels. John R. Livingston of the celebrated revolutionary family owned more than thirty documented houses of prostitution.

Working class women, contrary to myth, often entered prostitution only temporarily and without coercion. Meanwhile, larger social transformations that led to the delay in the age of marriage also increased male promiscuity and contributed to the rise of a culture of "sporting-male sexuality." These changing patterns of male leisure and social behavior had sometimes manifested as brothel riots—violent attacks on houses of prostitution. This, in turn, led to the emergence of the pimp and by midcentury a "male hege-

mony over the profits of prostitution" (p.91).

An interesting event that highlighted the tensions in gender relations of this period was the highly celebrated murder of a prostitute Helen Jewett by Richard Robinson. Courtroom observers came wearing distinctive hats to declare their allegiance to the victim or perpetrator and Robinson's acquittal stimulated a contemporary discussion on this evidence of "respectable" sexuality.

By 1870 a sex industry had developed in New York, with guidebooks to houses of prostitution, widely attended "model artist" shows, and brothel-sponsored costume balls. These developments joined the spread of pornography that had emerged earlier. This new sexual culture, with distinctive misogynist traits, mirrored the larger society by emphasizing individualism and personal choice and created the "halcyon years of commercialized sex" which existed before the rise of the purity reformer.

After the civil war moral reform groups as "preventive societies" grew in strength. These male reformers, not hesitating to use almost vigilante approaches, launched attacks on New York vice and its popular-culture supports. Occasionally, in their desire to regulate private and leisure behavior, moral reformers usurped police power. Gilfoyle credits these reformers with cultivating a consensus on sexual morality in New York that would be "harvested in the era of Progressive reform" (p.196). The later political vice campaigns and formation of commissions such as the Committee of Fifteen (1900-2) and Committee of Fourteen (1911-32) completed the reformers' agenda—dismantling the "City of Eros."

Ironically, by the "Roaring Twenties" New York had less open vice than any other city in the country. New York's century of prostitution was over. These changes

were the result of more than the zeal of moral reformers, of course. The author notes that federal laws, immigration restriction, prohibition, structural changes in the real estate market, patterns of American sexuality, and the improvement in working women's wages all proved important factors to the change. Indeed, all these economic, legal and social changes had combined into what can be seen as a "new conception of male heterosexuality" (p.312).

City of Eros presents a careful and complex social history. Some of the most interesting sections are those in which the author analyzes the popular culture stereotypes of the "fallen woman" and "white slave." He deftly weaves the reality of individual lives with the literary record and also traces the shift in literature that accompanied the emergence of the social science findings of the early twentieth century. Paintings by John Sloan of the Ashcan school provide an added bonus that enables the reader to contrast Sloan's portrait of the prostitute in 1908 with a book illustration, shown earlier, of "A Street-Girl's End" (1872).

Gilfoyle's study reveals his solid grasp of feminist scholarship. He has given us an important study, delineating the variety of alternative subcultures that underlay vice in New York while revealing the dominant mores of the period.

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Gittell, Ross. *Renewing Cities*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. Pp. X, 232.

The degree to which local authorities may function as effective agents of economic renewal in towns and cities that have been crippled by deindustrializa-