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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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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.)

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-

tion is a question of both theoretical and practical interest.

In the former context, both neoclassical and neomarxian orthodoxy have generally viewed localities as contingent expressions of regional and national economic processes. Neoclassical vision views them as sums of quantifiable components (labour markets, resources, transportation links and so forth) in whose context civic agents function as competitors with other towns and cities for a fixed pool of available possible investment. The neomarxist view is that they are subsystems whose development structurally reflects the dominant modes of production and social reproduction in a wider political economy and whose "autonomy" in capitalist society turns solely on the tension between capital's immediate and long-term interests. These kinds of perspectives may collide with those of scholars whose starting point and focal objects are towns and cities themselves, who are attuned to vital differences among these objects that may affect their horizons of possibility, and who may view localities as potential key actors in forming their economies, their futures and those of their hinterlands. Gilbert Stelter has named these contrasting views "urban as product" and "urban as process" perspectives.¹ An interesting recent voice in the field has been that of Manuel Castells, a writer once affiliated with the structuralist school, who—in a context of noting the apparent contemporary decline of the nation-state and the pivotal role of city-states in shaping the early modern world—has argued that local authorities may have a key part to play in forging the economic livelihoods of towns and cities in the emerging global "informational" economy.²

This debate also has practical meaning. For, if some localities seem to fare better than others in adapting to economic

restructuring, observers whose interest is urban policy will want to identify factors that may be involved, specify those that may reflect articulated, deliberate social action, and decide whether prescriptive propositions emerge—advice for towns and cities seeking to reinvigorate their economies.

It is to issues of this kind that Ross Gittell's *Renewing Cities* speaks. The author, assistant professor and research associate at the New School for Social Research, studied four smaller cities in the northeastern U.S. whose industrial bases diminished in the late 1960s and early 1970s—two in Massachusetts, one in western New York and one in western Pennsylvania, with populations ranging from about 30,000 to 100,000—trying to learn why two of the four were more successful in refashioning their local economies. Gittell describes his approach as "inductive" (pp.3,157) because he sought to develop propositions grounded in case-study fieldwork rather than potted economic theory. He focused on smaller centres with the view that it might be easier to isolate variables of importance in this context than in more complex metropolitan settings, though he argues his findings may also be relevant for metropolitan locales and neighbourhoods (pp.8-9).

Gittell's principal conclusion is that local authorities do make a difference. Cities that fared more favourably enjoyed sound municipal leadership, effective diagnoses of their dilemmas, and well-organized and clearly-directed civic formations (p.181)—hardly startling findings, to be sure, but what is interesting is Gittell's account of specific features of his cases. In Jamestown, New York, for example, whose record of labour strife exacerbated its industrial decline, a labour-management committee forged by a popular mayor and oriented to consensual decision-making

successfully addressed issues of "productivity" and skills training, helped attract a major new plant to town, and played a role in resuscitating two nearly insolvent local manufacturing firms. Meanwhile, the town's particular historical features, that had spawned an unusual number of local foundations during the first half of the century (p.209), permitted the emergence of what Gittell calls a modestly effectively "community foundation" that has sought to engage a range of economic and social issues. These groups did not wholly reverse Jamestown's industrial decline but, Gittell argues, clearly attenuated the process, particularly in contrast to such localities as McKeesport, Pennsylvania, where analogous local formations did not develop. Among the author's most interesting conclusions is that the failure of his cases to conform to certain neo-classical economic theories—populations, for example, did not diminish as much as should have been expected, given rates of local job-loss—may be related to "the value of place beyond its function as a site to pursue economic self-interest" (p.180), a finding echoing Walter Firey's critique of "economic ecology"³ that will not surprise historians or sociologists but that readers may wish had been discussed further. Readers may also regret that Gittell did not more fully pursue his remarks about "self-interest" as a social construction (p.160).

Renewing Cities will clearly interest scholars seeking literature about the efforts of distinct localities, with specific histories and social circumstances, to adapt to deindustrialization. Readers concerned with urban policy may also find useful discussion in its pages.

References

1. "Power and place in urban history" in Stelter and A. Artibise (eds.), *Power and Place* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), 3-6.

2. *The Informational City* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 351-2.
3. "Sentiment and symbolism as ecological variables", *American Sociological Review* 10 (1945), 140.

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Gerecke, Kent (ed.). *The Canadian City*. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1991. Pp. Xi, 269. Two illustrations. \$19.95 Paper.

Bunting, Trudi and Filion, Pierre (eds.). *Canadian Cities in Transition*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1991. Pp. 555. Numerous illustrations. \$24.95 paper.

The recent appearance of two books on the Canadian city, an unusual event, naturally prompts comparative review, particularly since both are edited volumes featuring prominent academic authorities in the field.

Gerecke's volume consists of an introduction and eighteen chapters, divided equally into six sections with brief prefatory notes. The recurrent theme throughout all sections is tension between the corporate city and local community interests. The editor is author/coauthor of six pieces; others are written by Canadian academics in planning and various social science fields, and urbanists otherwise employed.

This is, to be blunt, a shoddy book. It does not claim to be comprehensive, but acknowledges poorly its omissions. It is a republication of selected articles from *City Magazine*, with some promotion of that source, but no attempt to allow for their age (1983-90) or, with one exception, to update them. The fact that most were written before even the onset of the current near-depression clouds much of what is said—it is not clear that the

1990s will necessarily perpetuate the pattern of developer-community confrontation that is frequently regurgitated here. Beyond this: while the editorial introductions have some merit, there is no conclusion; and furthermore some section headings are frankly cynical, for they are followed by arbitrary collections of chapters inadequate to comprehend the field they address, Urban Theory being the most blatantly unsatisfactory (more corporate-community conflict!). In addition, referencing is variable and usually inadequate, certainly by the standards of most academics, a condition most convenient for the trotting-out of oversimplifications, sweeping generalizations, clichés and value-laden buzz-words too liberally—some, like "vision" and "empowerment" suggesting a specific political agenda. Related to this, style of writing is often too journalistic for the book to carry very much weight. Finally, the editor neither practices nor requires precise English grammar (misuse of apostrophes is one example) that would perhaps be more forgivable if he were equally unconcerned about the correctness of his feminist terminology.

In Part 1 (The Changing City), Reid's account of the New Middle Class somehow left out the present writer, who lives contentedly in the suburbs and views with critical detachment the return to inner-city values of which he is supposedly a part; but Reid's interesting generalizations may leave out a good deal more. Sewell's "two cities" (essentially inner/suburban) concept is a model of simplistic, value-laden, unreferenced, dated work. Foster's prescription for restoring "small talk" to cold mass society forgets to ask whether people actually want their privacy thus encroached upon, in the name of the community spirit beloved of most of the present authors. In Part 2 (Theory), Chorney's account of the capitalist takeover of our socio-economic system is a valid contribution but

is followed by more on the corporate city by Reid (who gives useful definitions, however) and by Nozick, who focuses on the alternative of Community Economic Development, which is questionably realistic and again overlooks the fact that communities, except perhaps for the most deprived, are not necessarily communities of propinquity. Part 3 (Planning) continues in the same vein, but Gunton gives a useful and well-referenced historical overview; Nasewich would reorder city planning (but with excessive repetition of Nozick); and Gerecke and Reid critique an external corporate-biased work so severely, and so questionably in this chapter, that one is left with an inverse empathy for the criticised author's perspective. Part 4 (Design) has chapters by Wolfe, Whitzman and Gerecke on detailed cases/issues that do not carry the theme very far. Part 5 (Housing) is the most substantial section, with contributions by Ley (on gentrification), Blumenfeld and Hulchanski (dated). Finally Part 6 (Green Cities), as the Introduction had acknowledged, gives little of the environmental thrust so important to any contemporary urban collection. Gerecke's article on Geddes would be better summarised as an introductory page. His article on empowerment, architecture and city planning entails grandstanding on issues not linked, as they could be, to the theme. The only "green" chapter, by Cholette, Gerecke and others, damages otherwise worthwhile ecological prescriptions by hijacking ecology for the feminist cause, on the unconvincing pretext that ecological concerns, like women (and natives) are common victims of (male) corporate exploitation.

Overall, this book is a failure, except perhaps for those who put political correctness before reasoned and substantiated argument. It is particularly sad that its inept management could backfire, by