



Sex in the Heartland

By Beth Bailey

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Sex in the Heartland is the story of the sexual revolution in a small university town in the quintessential heartland state of Kansas. Bypassing the oft-told tales of radicals and revolutionaries on either coast, Beth Bailey argues that the revolution was forged in towns and cities alike, as "ordinary" people struggled over the boundaries of public and private sexual behavior in postwar America.

Bailey fundamentally challenges contemporary perceptions of the revolution as simply a triumph of free love and gay lib. Rather, she explores the long-term and mainstream changes in American society, beginning in the economic and social dislocations of World War II and the explosion of mass media and communication, which aided and abetted the sexual upheaval of the 1960s. Focusing on Lawrence, Kansas, we discover the intricacies and depth of a transformation that was nurtured at the grass roots.

Americans used the concept of revolution to make sense of social and sexual changes as they lived through them. Everything from the birth control pill and counterculture to Civil Rights, was conflated into "the revolution," an accessible but deceptive simplification, too easy to both glorify and vilify. Bailey untangles the radically different origins, intentions, and outcomes of these events to help us understand their roles and meanings for sex in contemporary America. She argues that the sexual revolution challenged and partially overturned a system of sexual controls based on oppression, inequality, and exploitation, and created new models of sex and gender relations that have shaped our society in powerful and positive ways.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

In this very informative book, which takes the reader through the turbulent 1960s, Bailey (American studies, Univ. of New Mexico) provides a great deal of support for her premise that the "sexual revolution" was not really a revolution but an evolutionary process, a series of struggles for freedom waged by a large number of those facing discrimination. Concentrating her study on the college town of Lawrence, KS, a location far removed from either coast and therefore offering a more realistic view of the country, she surveys the primary shifts of this "revolution," which involved premarital sex, homosexual identity, birth control, drug use, and gender issues. Bailey does not limit her descriptions to Lawrence, using it instead as a lens and going farther afield to describe the news and events that gripped the entire nation (such as the anti-war, hippie, and feminist movements). Recommended for academic libraries. —Tim Delaney, Canisius Coll., Buffalo, NY

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From Kirkus Reviews

A refreshingly unorthodox examination of the sexual revolution that began in the US in the early 1960s. Bailey's (American Studies/Univ. of New Mexico) argument proceeds from two main contentions: 1) the term revolution conflates many different impulses and outcomes and thus obscures the origins and effects of multiple shifting attitudes towards sexuality; 2) the preponderance of those changing attitudes did not arise on the urban fringe (Greenwich Village, Haight-Ashbury) and percolate across to the cultural mainstream; many of the important changes were actually forged in the heartland by everyday, small-town Americans going about the normal business of living their lives. Bailey employs Lawrence, Kans., as her representative site for the American heartland and traces how changes in attitudes concerning such disparate trends as official government policies toward sexually transmitted disease, the creation and dissemination of the birth-control pill, college administrators' efforts to control "panty raids" at the state university, and the rights of women and homosexuals all contributed to what could eventually be recognized as a "sexual revolution" on a national level. She pays particular attention to unintended consequences, such as the manner in which the deployment of the birth-control pill to stop the "population explosion" contributed to the liberation of heterosexual sexual relations, and how reform of the curfew system in the state universities led to greater opportunity for sexual relations among college students. Bailey reminds us of what was at stake in the sexual revolution for many of those caught up in it; she details the story of one young male student threatened with expulsion due to a report of homosexual activity, and a young woman branded a whore in newspapers across the country for living with her boyfriend. An extremely grounded look at an often controversial topic. (22 b&w photos, not seen) -- Copyright ©1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Review

[A] vivid reminder of just how national and chaotic the events we call 'the sixties' really were... **Bailey's** exploration of the sexual revolution offers a subtler sense of the underlying forces of that era, which unified even while dividing a nation and, ultimately, the world. (Tom Engelhardt *The Nation*)

[**Beth Bailey's**] applied research here is interesting, imaginative and compassionate, and the final treat is that Bailey is a very good writer. *Sex in the Heartland* is simply a fascinating read. I'm sorry I can't call her up and congratulate her on this book in person... [This book is] beautifully shaped, carefully thought out, a treasury of useful information. (Carolyn See *Washington Post*)

One of the great strengths of this book is **Bailey's** ability to make local characters, institutions and fights

vital and compelling, all the while keeping an eye on the broader issues at stake. She gives us a vivid portrait of one university town in transition and a case study for U.S. social history. A cast of local characters comes alive... Virtually every chapter has surprising, subtle turns in which Bailey's thesis of historical paradox and unintended consequences is amply demonstrated. (Maureen McLane *Chicago Tribune*)

The book's greatest strength is its delineation of 'social and cultural changes' as effected by watershed events (panty raids, the advent of the Pill, birth control clinics, co-ed dorms, coffee houses, and underground newspapers); [and] local and national institutions (which provided moral direction and financial and social support). (Jay A. Gertzman *American Historical Review*)

Bailey's account of the sexual revolution in Lawrence, Kansas is a rejoinder to American critics on the right who continue to see this process as something imposed on ordinary people by bohemian intellectuals and sex radicals located on either coast, and not as a phenomenon integral to America's 'heartland.' In Bailey's account, the sexual revolution was a grassroots movement happening in any number of college towns across the USA, and created unwittingly by 'people who had absolutely no intention of abetting a revolution in sex.' Bailey argues that the replacement of moral with therapeutic frameworks for understanding sexual and emotional problems undermined any remaining moral consensus by offering non-punitive judgments on homosexuality and other forms of deviance. Unnoticed developments like the reform of parietals were far more important, in Bailey's reading, than the pill or the counter culture... The fact that Bailey's attention is directed towards the less renowned, everyday sources of sexual revolution makes this a valuable book. (H. G. Cocks *Journal of Contemporary History*)

Published by the prestigious Harvard University Press, the book suggests that out-of-the-mainstream states such as Kansas actually were on the cutting edge of the nation's sexual revolution during the early 1960s. (Matt Moline *Capital-Journal (Topeka, KS)*)

[**Bailey**] points out that those who claim the radical nature of the [sexual] revolution may be surprised by just how deep-seated and mainstream the origins of many of those revolutionary changes were. (Philip Godwin, M.D. *Lawrence Journal-World*)

Bailey examines the 20th-century 'sexual revolution' as it played out in the midwestern college town of Lawrence, Kansas... Bailey is especially perceptive on the ambivalent and conflicted relationship of both the feminist and gay rights movements to the sexual revolution. She also has strong sections on the birth control pill and other more mundane but long-lasting changes in American sexual culture... [A] fascinating and impressive book. (K. Blaser *Choice*)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Brecht:

Book is to be different for each grade. Book for children until eventually adult are different content. We all know that that book is very important for us. The book Sex in the Heartland had been making you to know about other information and of course you can take more information. It is very advantages for you. The publication Sex in the Heartland is not only giving you a lot more new information but also being your friend when you sense bored. You can spend your spend time to read your publication. Try to make relationship with all the book Sex in the Heartland. You never feel lose out for everything if you read some books.

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