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Review of *Sex in the Heartland* by Beth Bailey

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Sex in the Heartland. Beth Bailey. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999. vii+265 pp. Figures, notes, index. \$27.00 cloth (ISBN 0674802780).

In her thorough analysis of six separate but interconnected historical episodes that signpost the “sexual revolution” in the university town of Lawrence, Kansas, from 1945 to 1975, Beth Bailey strives to identify the complicated factors that changed sex for good in America during the postwar period. Bailey argues that the sexual revolution has been erroneously characterized as a rapid transformation of sexual ideology that occurred first in large cities and then spread to smaller towns. Instead, the author claims that the “revolution” was actually a gradual re-evaluation of sexual mores influenced by government policies, the mass market, popular culture, technology, and national, state, and local institutions such as the University of Kansas, which, according to Bailey, emerges as the most significant locus of sexual culture change in the Sunflower State.

In her discussions of several salient crises of sexual authority at the University of Kansas—the university administration’s switch from a moral to a therapeutic system of discipline for students accused of sexual misconduct; the fevered debate about the purpose and efficacy of parietal regulations for female students; town-gown struggles over single women’s access to the Pill; the gay student organization’s fight for official recognition; the salacious content of underground student publications; and the formation of a coed dorm whose specific purpose was to allow residents to explore gender roles—Bailey emphasizes two primary themes. First, she stresses the necessity of studying the battlefields of the sexual revolution outside New York and San Francisco to

counter the mistaken assumption that the sexual revolution was conceived and executed by a radical minority. By studying the way the revolution happened in "places like Kansas," she correctly contends that scholars may gain a greater appreciation for the forces that cause social change in more mainstream locales. Second, Bailey persuasively substantiates her assertion that the sexual revolution emerged from and contributed to historical debates that were not about sexuality at all: civil rights, censorship, and the War on Poverty.

These general conclusions about the academic study of sexuality constitute the most valuable intellectual content of her study. Unfortunately, scholars looking for a sustained or comparative history of postwar sex in the heartland will be disappointed, for the book assumes that what was true in Lawrence (a non-representative Midwestern town by Bailey's own admission) was also reality in other Plains states. Mysteriously, Bailey offers no rationale for choosing to focus her project on Lawrence rather than Omaha or Bozeman or for limiting most of her study to the university's role in the sexual lives of its students. The latter sections noticeably lack the scholarly depth of the book's first half, and on the whole there is a dearth of continuity among the chapters. Bailey does make astute comments about the legacy of the sexual revolution for all Americans in the epilogue, but her title is misleading. **Julia Ehrhardt**, *Honors College, University of Oklahoma*.