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*The Burgher and the Whore: Prostitution
in Early Modern Amsterdam [Book Review]*

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than that of other countries and at the same time basically similar in its outlines to the European pattern of historical development. Where differences exist, they have frequently been differences of timing or degree, not of kind. On the other hand, a distinguishing feature has been the broad acceptance of a “national idea” about Spain’s mission to extend and defend the Christian faith. Belief in a transcendent national purpose uniting church and state first arose in the sixth century and did not completely disappear until after Franco’s death. It developed gradually during the seven centuries of confrontation with Islam, which Payne condemns as an intolerant, despotic, and violent religion incompatible with Western political and cultural values. The messianic ideal was subsequently nurtured by the Habsburgs’ wars of religion and the traditionalist (and National Catholic) rejection of liberalism and democracy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In Payne’s view, the persistence of this national idea accounts for much of the singularity of Spanish history, giving the lie to the current consensus that Spain is in no way “different” from its European counterparts.

In the longest section of the book, titled “Dilemmas of Contemporary History,” Payne addresses a series of historiographical controversies with ongoing political resonance. Was the Second Republic the reformist liberal democracy envisioned by its supporters then and since? Who was responsible for the collapse of the Republic and the ensuing civil war—the revolutionary left or the antidemocratic right? How extensive was Communist influence in Spain before and during the civil war? Was that war the final episode of World War I or the prelude to World War II? And most important, was Franco a “Fascist Monster” or “Savior of the Fatherland?” Despite the binary framing of these questions, Payne provides a balanced evaluation of the evidence before formulating a nuanced response. Two brief but informative chapters assessing military influence in politics and the “strange case of Spanish fascism” (199) reflect Payne’s deep understanding of these subjects and their European parallels. Some of his conclusions, however, will remain problematic for many historians, especially his argument that the Left Republicans—Manuel Azaña in particular—bear the greatest responsibility for the outbreak of civil war in July 1936. Equally debatable is his contention that Franco was “for better or worse, the most dominant figure to have appeared in the history of Spain . . . and, in terms of the positive transformation of his country, the most successful dictator” (216). Acknowledging that the result was certainly unintended, he argues that Franco’s rule facilitated the transition to democracy by depoliticizing Spanish society and promoting the economic modernization that increased the likelihood of success. Unlike some latter-day champions of the dictatorship, however, Payne does not defend its record of repression during and after the war; he condemns it unequivocally as “atrocious and indefensible” (222). On balance, this highly personal “unique history” represents a successful effort to introduce a judicious respect for evidence and responsible argumentation into Spain’s history wars.

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The Burgher and the Whore: Prostitution in Early Modern Amsterdam. By

Lotte van de Pol.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. x+269. \$55.00.

Books about prostitution, trafficking, and sex work broadly construed are available in abundance, especially in reference to the contemporary global situation. Historical accounts of these activities are less common, and those written by academic historians

even less so. Considering the ubiquity of sex work in every human society for which we have evidence, and the strong ties binding the almost always illegal institutions of this trade to the more open and regularized sectors of the economy, the thinness of serious historical inquiry on these topics is lamentable. Moreover, as Lotte van de Pol points out in the new English translation of her 1996 PhD thesis, *The Burgher and the Whore: Prostitution in Early Modern Amsterdam* (originally in Dutch), the limited historical studies that have been produced focus almost exclusively on “legislation, ideas, and attitudes,” making the “image of prostitution” well documented, but “the reality a good deal less so” (8). Her goal, and it is a laudable one, is to rectify this lacuna for the case of early modern Amsterdam, a city that acquired a lasting reputation in this period as a hotbed of commercial sexual activity. Van de Pol seeks to discover the historical social reality of sex work that stands behind what is now the widely accessible popular image of it: an image that derives less from historical evidence than from the confluence of seventeenth-century genre paintings of brothel scenes, the dominant role played by the Dutch East India and other seaborne trades in the economic history of the city, and the legalization of sex work in Amsterdam today.

Much of the work that van de Pol accomplishes in her book is the fuller description than has ever been possible before of the historical lived experience of prostitution, or what contemporaries would have called “public whoring,” that is, sexual acts transacted outside of the marriage bed and for a fee in the marketplace. This kind of activity was illegal, universally understood to be immoral by its practitioners as well as its critics, often associated with other criminal activity such as thieving and violence, and seemingly ubiquitous. But van de Pol is not content with these broad characterizations that can be culled from the existing literature. Her real contribution lies in the creation of a database of over eight thousand trial cases prosecuted in Amsterdam between February 1650 and February 1750, drawn from the extensive documentation preserved in the so-called Confession Books of the urban judiciary.

These records prove to be extraordinarily rich in detail about both the circumstances of the crimes under investigation as well as in personal information about the defendants speaking before the bench. Van de Pol’s database includes for each person the name, age, place of birth, and current, as well as sometimes past, profession, allowing her to draw up a remarkably rich collective portrait of prostitutes, their bawds, and brothel keepers that can be compared and often usefully contrasted with the image taken from the literary production of moralists, poets, storytellers, and travel writers. Under her careful treatment, prostitutes are transformed from the lascivious, young, always beautiful temptresses of the (mostly) male literary imagination, into a much broader spectrum of women, young and middle-aged, sometimes beautiful but more often disfigured or even scarred by either violence or life itself, and almost always victims of an unforgiving marketplace for female labor and the unrelenting poverty that accompanied it. The spectrum of male involvement in the market for sex is likewise expanded. The men in van de Pol’s story figure not just as clients, either unwitting or intentional as they may have been, but also as resource-poor husbands and fathers who cannot (or will not) insulate their wives and daughters from the worst effects of the labor market, as well-intentioned but ineffectual reformers, as corrupt police officers on the take, as music hall entrepreneurs and brothel landlords eking out their own living, or as information-hungry participants in the vast ocean-going transport sector of the Amsterdam economy for whom brothels and their prostitutes were a critical node in the networks of long-distance information transmission in an age before mass communication.

In the final analysis it is the economics of prostitution that come through most clearly in van de Pol's thorough treatment of her subject, and this is a dismal business indeed. In the legal sector of the labor market, women could not expect to earn more than half of what men were paid for the same job. Nor were they welcome in nearly as many diverse or as potentially well-paying occupations in the economy as their male counterparts, leaving them with at best half the earnings capacity of the lowest-paid men. When you add to these dismal income prospects the legal and physical disabilities shouldered by women in a world in which their public voice, while not entirely silenced, was nonetheless muted, and their access to the tools of violence restricted relative to that of men, it is little wonder that women without sufficient male protection and support struggled to make an honest living. That they often turned to prostitution and its related criminal activities should likewise come as little surprise. A recurring theme in the evidence culled from the Confession Books is that "life as a prostitute often began with the running up of debts" (172). And in an occupation where clothing and accessories, always expensive even if not luxurious, were vital to the success of one's work, it was easy to fall into a kind of debt peonage akin to that of the most imprisoning of farm tenant systems. While the women themselves, plagued as they were by their particular economic disadvantages, were at the center of the sex-for-money nexus, the larger economy of prostitution supported a great many people, including but not limited to, "landlords, purveyors of drink, seamstresses, traders in fabrics, trinkets and used clothing, women who sold cooked meals to whores or did their laundry, people who stood watching out for the constables, deliverymen, and those who treated venereal diseases" (199), not to mention all the support that prostitution provided to the economically vital shipping sector in the form of sailor recruitment, information management, and social services provision. This reviewer is fully persuaded by van de Pol's core conclusion that prostitution played a significant role in the larger urban economy of this vital and prosperous city; or as she puts it, that "the centre . . . ultimately depended on those who lived at the margins" (16).

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Making Democratic Citizens in Spain: Civil Society and the Popular Origins of the Transition, 1960–78. By *Pamela Beth Radcliff*.

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. Pp. xviii+416. \$95.00.

Can the values and habits of democratic citizenship blossom in an authoritarian society? The notion that dictatorships can incubate a "civil society" of independent citizens organizations with democratic predispositions has been controversial: while many observers celebrate civil society as the protagonist of global democratization in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, others have remained skeptical whether such a force can be sufficiently coherent and autonomous to be a relevant agent in regime change. In her study of the neighborhood and family association movement in Franco's Spain, Pamela Beth Radcliff proposes that a dynamic civil society emerged in the 1960s that would prove influential in preparing the way for the democratic transition that followed the dictator's death in 1975. These associations began to appear in the early 1960s, when the official state party, the National Movement, attempted to reverse its declining influence through community organizing. Rival political factions within the regime soon conspired to end the movement's monopoly on this practice by broadening the legal framework for collective action. The