in debates over slavery, emancipation, and the status of free black people in the Atlantic world. This adds to the book’s theme of cultural exchange and intervention by showing that he “evaluated the lessons [of] prior emancipations in Haiti, France, and the British West Indies” in his cultural production (p. 153).

Within the text, Braun points to potential avenues of scholarly research, though a few could be added. Strong is the case for “struggles over political and cultural sovereignty” reflected in playhouses, but how did the playhouses, in turn, affect these struggles (p. 9)? This multidirectional flow of cause and effect would deeply enrich this study. Additionally, a fuller investigation of the plays’ reception would help reveal the effects of theater. The unexplained disappearance of the Théâtre Marigny would enhance this study, as would more evidence that “Indian populations escaped the official racial gaze” in New Orleans (p. 101).

Braun’s study of cultural exchanges and interventions smartly incorporates the contributions of non-Anglophone groups into the larger body of American literary and cultural studies. It widens and extends the path for other researchers in these areas.

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Being known as the parent of an accomplished daughter was high praise in the antebellum South, and the concept still resonates. Antebellum accomplishments took the form of needlework, drawing and painting, and music. The latter included vocal and instrumental performance (on piano, guitar, or harp). Inasmuch as it was considered unladylike to perform in public, except in recitals at their schools, the musical talents of southern belles were on display only as parlor music. Without benefit of radio, television, film, or social media, families relied on their women to provide entertainment. But musical accomplishments were more than entertainment for elite families. Requiring years of expensive instruction, a solid musical repertoire was a marker of upper-class status. And within that class, displaying binder’s volumes was a way to distinguish among elites by underscoring their cultural tastes and cosmopolitan outlook. Binder’s volumes were collections of sheet music, sometimes several hundred pages in length, often elegantly bound and displayed in the parlor for guests to peruse and admire prior to a young woman’s marriage.

The musicologist Candace Bailey examines the binder’s volumes of Harriet Lowndes, Henrietta Aiken, and Louisa Rebecca McCord, daughters of some of the wealthiest and most influential families in Charleston, South Carolina. The bulk of this book is a deeply researched study of the provenance of these pieces, mostly for voice and piano. The benefit of this approach is that it teases out information on the quality of available instruction, the influence of opera, opportunities for attending musical performances in Charleston and abroad, trends in musical styles, the backgrounds of music sellers and teachers, and the existence of touring professional musicians and women composers. Common across these binder’s volumes is their owners’ extensive experience with European culture derived from lengthy visits to the continent on family trips. In some respects, their binder’s volumes were souvenirs of these travels.

The purchase of sheet music continued during the Civil War, but the quality of the paper declined, and pro-Confederate lyrics dominated. After the war some southern women used their musical educations to supplement family income, because such instruction did not transgress ladylike strictures against public display.

Bailey argues convincingly that studies of American parlor music do not do justice to the South. Midcentury collections show a greater diversity of composers and more challenging and technically difficult pieces than parlor music is generally thought to be. Music by Giuseppe Verdi is more common than that of Stephen Foster. She is careful, however, not to generalize from such a small sample from one small
region but does claim that music histories must be more nuanced and recognize the high quality of music instruction for some elite women as well as their commitment to hours of practice over many years in pursuit of excellence. Bailey’s careful research lays the basis for a reappraisal of southern women’s accomplishments.

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Erica Rhodes Hayden uses multiple sources, especially institutional records, to investigate female criminality and incarceration in antebellum Pennsylvania. She documents that the majority of incarcerated females were young, working-class women of color; most had committed nonviolent offenses such as larceny and public drunkenness. Discussions of women participating in riots sparked by political or economic grievances, such as Pittsburgh’s rolling mills riot in 1850 and Philadelphia’s 1844 nativist riots and 1851 fugitive slave riots, are particularly interesting.

The second part of Hayden’s book investigates women’s experiences in Pennsylvania’s penitentiaries and county jails. Unlike their male counterparts, female inmates were generally not subject to prisons’ demands for “total silence and isolation” (p. 102). In fact, many of these convicts were allowed to walk the penitentiary grounds and to act as cooks or servants to wardens. But as Hayden notes, such liberties could lead to women’s exploitation. Failure to enforce prison protocols also reflected institutional neglect of female inmates and the belief that most could never be rehabilitated since they had transgressed prescribed views of femininity.

Throughout her book Hayden argues that female criminals repeatedly asserted their agency and voice, even when incarcerated. Although she offers examples of prisoners doing this, I wonder how representative such women were. How many women were able to resist oppression in institutions where prison officials enjoyed tremendous power and often escaped public scrutiny?

Significantly, Hayden briefly raises but does not discuss the sexual abuse of female convicts. No doubt the paucity of evidence hindered her investigation of this topic. But important questions remain unexplored, including how women inmates could resist or protest sexual assaults.

One topic Hayden does address is the female prison reformers who regularly visited women inmates and offered them religious and educational instruction. Hayden discusses the formation in 1823 of the Female Prison Association in Philadelphia and its establishment in 1853 of the Howard Institution, a place where recently released female convicts could live for three to six months and transition more easily to productive lives.

Hayden’s analysis of the relationship between female prison reformers and convicts is problematic. She asserts that reformers saw incarcerated women as their “peers,” stressing their “kinship” and “sisterhood” (pp. 179, 183). Yet Hayden undercuts her own argument when she later admits that women reformers were “somewhat controlling” as they sought to mold female inmates into a model of womanhood based on their “white, middle-to-upper-class behavior and morality” (p. 185).

In her eagerness to illustrate how women reformers rehabilitated female prisoners, Hayden offers unpersuasive interpretations of several documents. She quotes extensively, for example, from a pamphlet and a letter purportedly authored by a penitent inmate, who thanked an unnamed woman reformer for her religious conversion. Although Hayden admits that these texts might have been ghostwritten by reformers, she uses them to argue that convicts were actually being rehabilitated.

Despite my criticisms, Troublesome Women is an ambitious, provocative work and is required reading for scholars investigating female criminality, imprisonment, and penal reform in nineteenth-century America.

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