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## Review of *An Army of Women: Gender and Politics in Gilded Age Kansas* By Michael Lewis Goldberg

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*An Army of Women: Gender and Politics in Gilded Age Kansas.* By Michael Lewis Goldberg. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997. Photographs, notes, note on historiography and sources, index. x + 313 pp. \$39.95.

Michael Goldberg, a cultural historian of politics, undertakes a valuable study of the dynamic relationship between politics and gender. His argument is, simply, that to fully understand the actors and organizations in Gilded Age Kansas politics, we must "integrate gender into their story." This "cast of political players" includes the Farmer's Alliance, the Woman Movement, Populists, Republicans, Democrats, Prohibitionists, and activist leaders such as Annie Diggs and Mary Lease, all of whom are situated within religious, economic, racial, and ethnic contexts. To explore the gendered relationships between and among these groups and individuals, Goldberg uses organizational records, songs, and a variety of newspapers.

The first chapter provides the backdrop before which the ensuing story takes place. We learn about the myths and realities of Kansas life and politics, ranging from the frontier myth and "Bleeding Kansas" to the ideology of domesticity and men's and women's separate spheres. Such discourses, Goldberg

demonstrates throughout the book, are as dynamic and difficult to manage as the shifting cultural contexts in which they are embedded.

Chapters two and three document the development of the woman movement. The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the Kansas Equal Suffrage Association (KESA) shared a commitment to political activism based on Protestant, middle-class values, though to differing degrees. Party partisanship became more important to KESA, while the WCTU emphasized to a greater extent the moral uplift of men and the nation. While the Farmer's Alliance also shared the Protestant value system, suffragists resisted including farm women in their political sisterhood. The successful campaign for municipal suffrage changed the political arena in Kansas, as women pursued new political options and used their white, middle-class "respectability" for political ends, while simultaneously excluding women of other races and classes.

Chapter four examines the construction of the Farmer's Alliance community, in which members embraced a mixed-gender, family-oriented culture. This community's tensions were rooted in the "patriarchal underpinnings" of private family life, which contradicted its public identity. Of particular interest is Goldberg's focus on "conflicting images of manhood and success," revealing the contradictory ways in which the Farmer's Alliance and Republican Party rhetorically framed the problems farmers faced.

Chapters five and six explore the culmination of the relationships among the political players. The birth of the Populist Party shifted the political playing field, with loyalties among those in the Woman Movement pulled in the conflicting directions of political sisterhood and party partisanship.

Gilded Age Kansas, as Goldberg accurately points out, "provides a wonderful lab in which to study the ways organizations and actors negotiated a national gendered discourse in a

local context." *An Army of Women* is a fascinating and penetrating exploration into the complex dynamic of how activists shape and are shaped by larger systems of meaning. And, perhaps most importantly, it reminds us that diverse groups of women were indeed politically active on the Plains.

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