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Review of *Women's Wisconsin: From Native Matriarchies to the New Millennium*, edited by Genevieve G. McBride

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challenged when he was elevated to the White House in 1841. Monroe contends, however, that Tyler's actions were not based on political strategy or career enhancement—instead he maintains that Tyler was simply advancing those republican ideas that he had worked for his entire career. In this excellent study by Monroe, Tyler emerges as a politician with integrity, consistency, and a man willing to destroy his career for his beliefs.

In this cynical age in which we live, it would be easy to take issue with Monroe's conclusions. Wasn't Tyler just another Pro-Southerner masking his chauvinist sectional policies in a republican robe? And wasn't Tyler simply advancing policies that protected Southern economic interests? Maybe—in fact, I still find these simple Pro-Southern arguments convincing. But the author has given us an interpretation of John Tyler that we must take seriously. Furthermore, Monroe's arguments force us to think about other politicians and their motivations. Maybe it's not always about political gain—maybe we need to look a little harder at political philosophy and try to discern what influences those tenets have on a politician's actions.

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### **Women's Wisconsin: From Native Matriarchies to the New Millennium**

Edited by GENEVIEVE G. MCBRIDE. Foreword by SHIRLEY S. ABRAHAMSON.  
Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2005. Pp. xxii, 486. \$37.95.

This new anthology of previously published essays is intended by its editor "to serve students, teachers, and other readers by collecting in one place a remarkable historical record by and about women's place in Wisconsin as published in the more than three hundred and fifty issues of the *Wisconsin Magazine of History* since 1917 as well as from other publications of the Wisconsin Historical Society" (page xiii). Organized into eight sections that move chronologically from discussing the lives of the earliest Indian women to women's responses to World War II, each section contains approximately six essays from a wide variety of authors—scholars, journalists, and the women themselves. As none of the essays is new, the value of the volume relies on the quality of the introductions written by McBride, which act as summaries to each of the sections. Fortunately, McBride writes in a clear, efficient, and organized manner, introducing the larger historical period as well as each of the essays in the section.

In addition to the new introductions and the bibliography at the end of the volume, the value of the book is in bringing together in one collection the bulk of essays that have been published on the history of Wisconsin women. The question that is begged, however, about the essays in this book is: What is the significance of local history, and can it be theorized? In other words, does local history only

make sense when one uses it as a case study for the larger, global picture? One of the most important theoretical attempts to answer this question can be found in the work of Michel de Certeau (*The Practice of Everyday Life* [1984], *Heterologies* [1986], and *The Writing of History* [1988]). Certeau argues that each of us acts as the historian of the everyday realities of our world. De Certeau, like Bakhtin, Aries, Foucault, or more recently Daniel Roche, among other European intellectual historians, seeks to identify the “oppositional practices” of weak or disenfranchised subjects (like women) that allow them to “elude discipline,” all the while remaining within the boundaries of that disciplinary system (i.e., marriage or the religious or educational systems). There are abundant examples in these essays of Wisconsin women acting in “opposition” to the local culture all the while maintaining the façade of conformity, and yet this practice is not recognized by the editor or the local historians.

For instance, section one, “The First Wisconsin Women,” focuses on four women: Therese Schindler, Juliette Kinzie, Eliza Whiting Sheldon, and Susan Hempstead Gratiot. None of these women is particularly well known; therefore, the question that confronts the reader of a local history volume is: Who is the intended audience and what is the purpose of the book? Specialists in Wisconsin history will read this book, but it is difficult to imagine that there is a large audience that is informed or knowledgeable about many of these women. Is it possible to use each of the four women listed above to move beyond their specific historical situations in order to place state history into the larger pattern of American history? The pioneer experience of Sheldon, for instance, could be used to understand issues of class, race, and gender in defining women’s roles as ambivalent “civilizers” during the nineteenth century. But, unfortunately, this opportunity is missed. At points, some of these essays attempt to move beyond the particulars—the local—and reach toward a larger synthesis that would make sense of each specific situation. Most of the time, however, this attempt to theorize is lost.

There has been a good deal of work put into this anthology by the editor. One wishes, however, that it reached beyond the local and journalistic and was informed instead by the latest historical theories that allow us to expand our understanding of what has previously been understood as merely “local.”

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