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Pamela Tyler. *Silk Stocking & Ballot Boxes: Women & Politics in New Orleans, 1920-1963.* Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1996. 323 pp. $40.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8203-1790-8.

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In *Silk Stocking & Ballot Boxes,* Pamela Tyler "... examines the activities of organized upper- and middle-class women in New Orleans in the twentieth century, with an emphasis on their behavior in the political arena." Tyler traces the path of women's political activities, from their indirect political influence and women's clubs, to their direct integration into the larger political process. In her narrative, she examines the post-suffrage alternatives that southern women faced in their quest for inclusion in the political arena.

Tyler's central thesis is that through their efforts, both directly and indirectly, the women of New Orleans had a real and lasting impact on the politics of the Crescent City. For example, she points to the far-reaching effects of Hilda Phelps Hammond's relentless campaign to rid Louisiana of the graft and corruption of Huey Long. Tyler provides an additional example of the impact of women in New Orleans politics, through her discussion of the increasingly powerful Independent Women's Organization (IWO) within partisan politics.

Tyler develops her argument through a chronological look at women and their connections to New Orleans politics. Her chapter divisions delineate the significant political events from 1920 through 1963. After a clear and concise introduction, Chapter One presents material which provides the reader with an understanding of both southern culture and New Orleans politics. For example, Tyler traces Crescent City politics from the turn of the century through 1926 when politics were dominated by a political machine led by Martin Behrman, of the Regular Democratic Organization or "Old Regulars." She points out that although machine politics thrived on graft and corruption the Old Regulars managed to provide the city's first municipal drainage, sewerage, and water purification systems, thus improving the lives of many. Without this background information, readers would be at a loss to comprehend the path of early political activity.

Chapter Two begins with a look at Louisiana's most influential politician, Huey Long, during his reign of power from 1928 to his death in 1935. Within this chapter, Tyler outlines the force and determination of Huey Long in his pursuit of power and Hilda Phelps Hammond in her dogged campaign to stop him. She chronicles Long's rise to power as he moved from the governorship of Louisiana to the United States Senate. In addition she outlines the steps taken by Hammond in her effort to remove Long from his tyrannical control of her state. For example, Hammond was instrumental in initiating a senate investigation into the campaign funding of John Overton, a Long backed candidate for United States Senate. In Chapter Three, Tyler investigates the New Orleans League of Women Voters. She uncovers the connections between partisan politics and the League, which led to the revocation of their charter in 1934. Out of this debacle springs the Woman Citizen Union (WCU), led by the indomitable Martha Robinson. Although she discussed racism and classism before this point, it is in this chapter that Tyler takes a serious look at the elitist nature of women's organization in New Orleans. The WCU's campaign for election reform, she argues, targeted voter registration efforts only toward white women–an example of the racist nature of women and politics in New Orleans.

Chapter Four to a discusses New Orleans women and partisan politics, providing a history of the Independent Women's Organization (IWO) an organization which grew out of the political scandals of 1939. Because of her in-depth analysis of New Orleans politics, Tyler is able to draw direct connections between corruption and graft during this period and the reign of Huey Long. She points to the enduring strength of the anti-Long movement, initiated by Hilda Phelps Hammond, in uncovering continued graft and corruption in the Crescent City. Members of this group joined together to initiate a reform movement and offer a candidate for governor in 1940. Tyler outlines the women's efforts to continue their fight to clean up voter registration, and their door-to-door canvassing to register eligible women voters. This resulted

in an increased women's vote for the reform candidate. In Chapter Five, Tyler chronicles the post-World War II years and the rise of anti-feminism, particularly virulent in New Orleans. By analyzing Martha Robinson's 1954 campaign for city council, she presents a look at each issue which influenced the outcome of the election. Initially, she delves into Robinson's political experiences which "qualified" her as a legitimate candidate, but then covers the lack of necessary political party support which led to Robinson's move to become an independent candidate. She even examines the split between elite women over ideological issues such as education, housing, and child care, which affected Robinson's ability to garner a "women's bloc" of votes. Tyler concludes that New Orleans was still not prepared for a woman in a position of political leadership.

Chapter Six brings the discussion back to the issue of racism. This section delineates the struggles of Rosa Freeman Keller, a racial liberal, in her move to guarantee certain rights to all citizens. By examining Keller's actions, Tyler presents the reader with a picture of the "... ineffectiveness of gradualism and demonstrated conclusively the weakness of white liberals." The final chapter summarizes the activities of elite New Orleans women in politics and examines the effects of sexism, racism, and classism. Tylor concludes that although the women of New Orleans carried no feminist banners and worked within existing social patterns, they did have a real and lasting effect of New Orleans politics.

In her analysis, Tyler uses a variety of sources to provide a clear, concise portrait of women and politics in New Orleans. Her use of well-recognized secondary sources such as Alan Brinkley's *Voices of Protest* and Anne Firor Scott's *Women's Voluntary Organizations* sets both the cultural and political stage on which Tyler presents the politics of the Crescent City from 1920 to 1963. In addition, Tyler utilizes a number of primary materials to analyze the connections between politics and women's activity. In using letters of notable women to chronicle events, it is clear that she has painstakingly verified information through a number of different sources such as newspapers, government documents, for example, *The Congressional Record*, and/or public notices or petitions. By combining primary and secondary source material, Tyler presents a nuanced portrait of both the women and political activity in new Orleans. In addition her research and source material has provided her with an understanding of the role of class, race, and gender which she weaves into her narrative. This in turn assists the reader in understanding the complexities of the politics of New Orleans.

Although women and politics have been covered in a number of contemporary texts, similar analyses of women and urban politics can be found in articles by Elizabeth Israels Perry and Maureen Flanagan. Perry analyzes the politics of women in New York City in a *New York History* magazine article, "Women's Political Choices After Suffrage: The Women's City Club of New York, 1915-1990." Similarly, Flanagan examines the politics of Chicago women in an *American Historical Review* article, "Gender and Urban Political Reform: The City Club and the Woman's City Club of Chicago in the Progressive Era." Like Tyler, both authors chronicle urban politics, but Perry and Flanagan do so through the lens of a single organization. With a slightly different focus, authors such as Anne Firor Scott in her *Natural Allies* and Susan M. Hartmann in *From Margin to Mainstream* evaluate women and politics by chronicling women's organizations. Both authors examine a variety of women's organizations and evaluate both the direct and indirect contributions these women made to politics. Tyler's text easily fits into this genre of women's political history and thus provides another piece of the picture of women's contributions to American politics.

In her analysis of New Orleans politics, Tyler relies on chronicling the lives of a very few elite women to explain women's connections to politics. Although her narrative provides an understanding of the importance of elite women in Southern culture, her work could be enhanced by using the examples of a more diverse group of women. Again, although Tyler has made it clear that directors and boards of governors set policy and administered programs, other women must have carried out the programs and conducted business. Where are these "less" elite women and how did they influence the politics of New Orleans. Even though Tyler explains the elite nature of New Orleans women's organizations, by using the viewpoint of so few elite women it is difficult to understand how women like Martha Robinson could expect to win a city council election by a "women's bloc" vote. Additionally, although in her introduction Tyler refers to Cott and Baker's broadened definition of politics, her narrative seems to follow organizations more closely aligned with traditional politics, such as the League of Women Voters, and the Independent Women's Organization. By enlarging her narrative to include social reform organizations and church groups Tyler would not only offer a more complete picture of women's "political" activity, but as mentioned above detail a more diverse group of women. Clearly, this chronicle of "great" women in New Orleans has added to the base of knowledge in women's political history, but a more in-depth analysis of all the women in

the Crescent City and a broader group of women's organizations would provide a more complete women's political history.

Despite these concerns, Tyler's analysis adds to an understanding of women's integration into the politics of New Orleans. Her argument is well-researched and she draws conclusion only after meticulous documenation using both primary and secondary sources. Her text is a truly exciting contribution to the field of women's history.

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