Propaganda and Public Relations: How Suffragists Pioneered Visual Campaigning

Lange, Allison K. *Picturing Political Power: Images in the Women's Suffrage Movement*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020. 324 pp. $45.00 (cloth), ISBN 9780226703244.

Rachel Michelle Gunter

Collin College, McKinney, TX, USA

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Allison Lange begins *Picturing Political Power* by describing Hillary Clinton's and Donald Trump's 2016 visual campaigns, arguing that such contemporary visual representations support her assertion that the suffragists' "visual campaign illuminates the roots of today's gendered political imagery and its constrains" (217). Lange argues that Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, Mary Church Terrell, and Alice Paul all "decided what the public would see. They worked to leave out the parts that did not fit their vision" (211). She further opines that we can understand the world we live in and the difficulties that female politicians face today by understanding these earlier struggles and strategies.

Lange walks readers through various visual advancements, from mezzotints, lithographs and ambrotypes to cartes de visite and half-tone printing, but she does not get bogged down in technical detail. Instead, she wisely chooses to show the reader how these visual innovations allowed suffragists to control their image and craft visual campaigns.

Lange argues that suffragists "needed to change minds about the bounds of female citizenship," and that visual campaigns helped "to transform notions of political womanhood" (2). She examines work by the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) as well the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), and the National Woman's Party (NWP). In particular, she contends that the NWP and NAWSA assuaged "fears that women's equality would lead to racial equality by backing a vision of political womanhood that was white, motherly, and virtuous" (7).

Lange begins by contrasting the images of three women in the antebellum United States: Phillis Wheatley, Martha Washington, and Mary Wollstonecraft. She notes that Wheatley's engraving was exceptional in its elegance. She further argues that as women's rights advocates like Wollstonecraft and those inspired by her agitated for change, "their opponents made Martha Washington iconic as an ideal political hostess and wife, a foil to female reformers" (8). Washington, who had passed away long before her portrait became commonplace in American homes, was a safe icon known for her support of her husband's political power. Political cartoons warned Americans against public women, depicting women in the public sphere "as masculine monsters who rejected family life and

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threatened American values" (26). Cartoons also depicted Black women joining with white female reformers, effectively arguing that "if women won rights, then black women would as well" (40). Cartoons caricaturing women in bloomers proved so effective—modern readers will surely be struck by lines such as "boldly revealing an ankle" (39)—that early suffragists quickly abandoned them after first donning them in the 1850s.

Lange traces the broader origins of visual campaign strategies in the nineteenth century and how various individuals and organizations deployed such campaigns. She examines, for instance, the increasing popularity of photography during the Civil War, noting that Lincoln was "the first presidential candidate to circulate his portrait to build his public image" (63). She also looks at how visual imagery captured the bodies of the formerly enslaved and thereby shaped the abolition movement. Lange looks at Sojourner Truth's and Frederick Douglass's portraits and how they countered racist depictions of Black Americans. In particular, Lange persuasively argues that Truth "modeled strategies for using photographic portraits to change the way people understood race and public, political women" (55). Susan B. Anthony first learned the power of portraits when she successfully used Truth's portrait and the infamous image of an enslaved man named Gordon and his gruesomely scourged back to raise money for abolition. Lange contends that Anthony thereafter integrated abolitionist strategies into her own work for suffrage.

The National Woman Suffrage Association's circulation of portraits of suffrage leaders was so successful that cartoonists stopped drawing "nameless activists" and began caricaturing Anthony and other specific leaders (84). However, Anthony and other activists also began to pull the movement for women's rights away from the cause of racial justice. "Gradually," Lange writes, "they erased Sojourner Truth, who had modeled strategies for winning supporters and money, from the leadership" (82).

Lange analyzes the *History of Woman Suffrage*, edited by Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, "the first comprehensive project to transform the movement's public image" (90). Anthony and the other editors chose suffragist's portraits that "adhered to traditional conventions for representing femininity" (91). Lange notes, however, that by having their portraits included, these suffragists fought strictures demanding that women stay in the private sphere. They were also photographed "more like male politicians—even presidents—than beautiful, feminine, domestic women," further challenging gender norms (91). These all-white portraits also further "linked [suffrage] with elite white womanhood" (91).

Lange argues that the NAWSA followed the WCTU's model of stressing "that women's votes would bolster established notions of virtuous femininity, upholding the racial hierarchy" (127). Meanwhile, she asserts, Black women formed their own organizations to further their own sense of "political womanhood." Lange maintains that Mary Church Terrell learned from Truth's and Anthony's earlier public image campaigns, and that the use of her portraits as part of the NACW's campaign was grounded in respectability politics, though some NACW members questioned this strategy.

Lange describes Henrietta Briggs-Wall's image, *American Woman and her Political Peers*, displayed at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, as representative of a switch toward visual propaganda. The picture contrasted a poised Frances Willard against a surrounding cast of enfranchised and seemingly grotesque male voters: a mad man, a disabled man, a convict, and a Native American. Such propaganda "portrayed the ballot as an enhancement of, not a departure from, existing domestic duties" and also "emphasized [suffragists'] whiteness as a political strategy" (134–35). Confronted by such strategies, the NACW "often embraced the politics of dissemblance," politely agreeing with white suffragists in public but discussing their true feelings in private correspondence (142).

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Finally, Lange analyzes the NWP's visual campaign in the 1910s, arguing that Lucy Burns and Alice Paul took advantage of new print technology allowing the easy reproduction of photographs in newspapers, along with "modernized campaigns by designing spectacles that would attract professional press photographers who sold their pictures to newspapers and the public" (160). Their militance and their protests won them increased attention but clashed with the NAWSA's goal of portraying suffragists as "refined, white, and moral mothers" (161). The NWP and the NAWSA both freely emphasized the whiteness of their activists, however.

Lange's analysis of suffragists' visual campaigns shows the difficulty in changing the nation's opinion about women in public and highlights the many fissures that further confronted the lived experiences and political ambitions of Black women. The visual strategies developed by suffragists, however limited, nevertheless challenged the masculine world of visual representation. And, as Lange argues, twenty-first century graphical representations of women continue to draw upon the precedents the suffragists set in their campaign for the vote.

Gilded Age Americans and the Consumption of the Civil War

Marten, James, and Caroline E. Janney, eds., *Buying and Selling Civil War Memory in Gilded Age America*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2021. 286 pp. $36.95 (paper), ISBN 9-780-8203-5965-6.

Shannon Bontrager

Georgia Highlands College, Cartersville, GA, USA

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In *Buying and Selling Civil War Memory in Gilded Age America*, James Marten and Caroline E. Janney have assembled an assortment of talented historians who show how the Civil War "could in fact be bought, sold, and perhaps sold once more" by insightfully analyzing material objects from the late nineteenth century (252). The collection's various authors focus on objects ranging from the infamous Libby Prison—sold and transported, brick by brick, from Richmond, Virginia, to Chicago, Illinois—to Confederate veterans' uniforms and three-dimensional photographs of the war dead. By doing so, this book illustrates how the consumption of material objects brought Civil War memory into the intimate and banal domestic spaces of everyday, middle-class Americans.

Each of the collection's authors is well versed in writing cultural history. The thick description they deploy often leads to clever and unanticipated interpretations. Jonathan S. Jones's exploration of veterans who sought cures for wartime opium addictions highlights how unregulated capitalism led broken men to waste fortune and health on

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