

in order to understand this interplay better?

More impressive is the skill with which Nielsen centers primary sources: passport applications, divorce petitions, census data, and institutional records, among others. Nielsen encourages readers to consider the sources for themselves; to ask questions of them; to allow themselves to be enlightened by their details, frustrated by their silences, and haunted by the violence they contain. Building on the work of Saidiya Hartman, Marisa Fuentes, and, in disability history, Susan Burch, Nielsen does not brush past the questions such sources leave unanswered. Indeed, two short chapters are dedicated entirely to the questions raised by blanks in Ott's story. Nielsen is also uniquely willing to discuss and speculate about contradictions within her sources. According to local and institution physicians, Ott's primary symptoms of insanity were delusions

that her husband sought to "deprive her of her liberty" and that there was a conspiracy to "defraud her of her property." As Nielsen points out, "Such supposed delusions included a great deal of reality" (p. 76–77). When sources provide conflicting details, she identifies likely lies: among them, that Dr. Anna Ott lied about having ever attended medical school.

With its modest length and forthright, transparent explanation of archival work, *Money, Marriage, and Madness* will be a welcome addition to undergraduate or graduate history courses and will be especially valuable as an introduction to archival research and methodology. It is a wonderful read and important addition to the history of disability, medicine, gender, and the nineteenth-century United States.

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Big Sister: Feminism, Conservatism, and Conspiracy in the Heartland

By Erin M. Kempker

(Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018. Pp. 224. Notes, index. Clothbound, \$110.00; paperbound, \$24.95.)

Erin Kempker set out to write a singular history of midwestern feminism in the modern era, only to discover a rich history of anti-feminism that coexisted alongside it. She realized that

she could not tell one story without the other. The end result—Kempker's deeply researched *Big Sister: Feminism, Conservatism, and Conspiracy in the Heartland*—is a riveting history of

how opposing movements shape one another. Kempker focuses on the development of feminism and anti-feminism in Indiana from the 1950s to the 1980s, with special attention to the federally funded National Women's Conference in Houston in 1977. At that event and in various state meetings leading up to it, feminists and anti-feminists clashed over issues such as the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, while various factions of feminist and anti-feminist women also competed for influence.

Kempker begins by describing how activists on both sides were impacted by two competing ideologies that emerged after World War II. On one hand, after two world wars, some embraced enhanced globalism and world cooperation as a means to keep the peace. On the other hand—especially in Indiana, a former frontier state that had long been rife with an anti-government ideology of individualism—there was a counter-reaction. This reaction manifested itself in the Cold War era as a virulent anti-communism deeply opposed to “one-world” totalitarianism, large government, and any perceived collective action. Working within that framework, women on the Right positioned themselves as anti-communist warriors ready to save the respectable, family-oriented

citizens of Indiana. Feminists allegedly were championing big-government, communist solutions that would decimate the nuclear family model and its attendant heteronormative traditional gender roles.

The book is especially effective at demonstrating how conservative women wielded conspiracy theories along these lines to discredit feminism. Liberal feminists working in the political arena tried to disassociate themselves from more radical feminists to better shape their image in response to these conspiracies. This, they believed, was necessary to curry favor and pass feminist legislation in a state known for its “Midwestern nice.” Yet, doing so ultimately led to a more fractious, and thus less powerful, feminist movement in Indiana. Kempker shows that the Right, by contrast, was far more forgiving of its radical fringe and incorporated it into the fold.

Kempker's multi-layered analysis and pithy prose make *Big Sister* deeply relevant—both as a case study of how movements shape one another across the political spectrum and as an important primer on the conspiracy-dependent political Right today.

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