

EDITORS' NOTE

With this issue, the *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* opens up some new departments. We hope that these new features prove illuminating and that readers will suggest topics and offer submissions in these areas.

We open with a section titled “Historiographical Intervention.” As the scholarly literature on late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries continues to mature – and as the pace of publication continues to accelerate mercilessly – we take too few opportunities to reflect on our classic books. The well-deserved fiftieth-anniversary republication of Walter Nugent’s *The Tolerant Populists* is an occasion for us to take stock of the many controversies that continue to animate the history of Populism. Nugent – a former president of the Society of the History of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era (as well as of the Western History Association)—is one of the most expansive of scholars, and his former doctoral advisee Joe Creech explores not only the critical impact of *The Tolerant Populists* but the broader legacy of Nugent’s work. In our July issue, Louise Newman will analyze the long reach of Aileen Kraditor’s *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement* as that transformative book joins *The Tolerant Populists* in celebrating its golden anniversary.

We also include in this issue a “Primary Source Reflection.” Inspired by the highly successful “Sources and Interpretations” section of the *William and Mary Quarterly*, we hope in this section to highlight unusual and intriguing texts. We plan to reprint all, or most, of a highlighted document, along with a discussion of context and commentary. Ernest Rigney and Timothy Lundy inaugurate this department with a 1908 letter on anarchist violence and immigration from philosopher George Herbert Mead. Mead’s particular concern was to vindicate the ameliorative mission of social settlements such as Hull-House, yet his argument about terrorism and liberalism speaks compellingly to our day as well as his own.

In January we debuted the writing of a high school teacher in a discussion of *The Great Gatsby*. The same happens in the current issue in the context of a “Teaching Forum.” In this case, the occasion is a dialogue about John Green’s “Crash Course US History” videos that, in a very short time, have proven to be a lively and important supplement to many high school courses. John Schmidt, an American history teacher at Illinois’s Homewood-Flossmoor High School, discusses “Crash Course” as a promising part of a lively and inquiry-based classroom. In turn, Leon Fink critically assesses the series from a scholarly as well as pedagogical perspective. We are convinced that scholars and teachers not only wish to speak with each other but are truly engaged in the same mission – all, together, as fellow historians. Robert Townsend argues compellingly in his excellent *History’s Babel* that this vision of the historical profession nurturing both teaching and research as common goals is hardly new, and that in fact it goes back to the founding of the AHA in the late nineteenth century.¹ One of our journal’s most important goals is to reinvigorate this tradition, joining such journals as *The Historian* and *The History Teacher* in seamlessly blending what too many of us continue to see as incommensurate realms. The next teaching forum: on the political and pedagogical controversies surrounding the new AP U.S. History exam.

The scholarly research articles in this issue tackle a wide range of subjects, from variety show entertainment, the late nineteenth-century construction of the memory of a Revolutionary War battle, a dissolute American diplomat, and the politics of race in the Young Women's Christian Association.

David Monod takes readers into the world of double-voiced performances, in which singers performed in both male and female vocal ranges, often dressing and conducting themselves in ways that called into question the rigidity of the male-female divide. While such performances might be reflexively seen today as transgressive of dominant gender norms, Monod is intent on showing us the need to widen our understandings of "freakery," "nature," and "truth"—both on and off stage.

The next two essays remind us that elites can be as interesting, complicated, and important as more ordinary folk. Carolyn Strange explores the construction of historical memory—so often seen as the simple imposition of hegemonic elite cultural power—and asks us to see the messy, complicated, and very human politics of such constructions. Her protagonist, Ellen Hardin Walworth, was the survivor of an abusive marriage where, ultimately, her son killed his father/her husband. The work she and her colleagues (besides her, all men) then did to commemorate the Battle of Saratoga involved difficult financial and ideological choices—especially when one of the major players of that battle was Benedict Arnold.

George H. Butler comes across as a much less sympathetic figure. Far from transgressing or undermining assumed gender roles, or struggling against domestic violence, he lived his life in a singular, overly masculine fashion. Mary Block and John Dunn sketch Butler's life as writer, diplomat, and soldier—one who leveraged the influence of his famous uncle, Union General Benjamin "The Beast" Butler, in every way possible. His scandal-filled and rather short life both epitomized and contradicted the gender expectations of polite society in the 1870s and 1880s.

In subsequent decades, the notions of respectability that lead to Butler's downfall shaped early efforts for civil rights. Dorothea Browder examines how black and white YWCA members seized the opportunities that the U.S. entry into World War I seemed to offer for racial equality. Their claims centered not on the more familiar tropes of black military service or the respectability of elite black women, but rather on the labor of working-class black women. Appealing directly to plebeian white women, these YWCA leaders made significant headway even in an age of brutal white supremacy.

We hope that the *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* increasingly speaks in a multivoiced register, eschewing respectability when necessary and taking seriously all kinds of scholarship, sources, and seemingly strange subjects.

NOTE

¹Robert B. Townsend, *History's Babel: Scholarship, Professionalization, and the Historical Enterprise in the United States, 1880–1940* (Chicago, 2013); see also James M. Banner Jr., *Being a Historian: An Introduction to the Professional World of History* (Cambridge, 2012).