

Note from the Editor

This themed issue on “Women’s and Gender History in Global Context” results from what those of us under the influence of *Annales* thought call a *conjoncture*. The editor, at the end of a decade overseeing this publication, hoped to revisit historical themes that he felt had not received enough direct attention recently. Of these, women and gender in progressive reform seemed particularly important. Of the trends that over the last two generations reshaped understanding of this journal’s era, gender and women’s history perspectives on progressivism had memorably striking consequences. The era, its dynamics, and its legacies look very different than they did before women reformers, their ideas and values, and their movements began attracting sustained attention in the 1970s-80s. Still, while an enormous amount of first-rate research and writing on these matters has appeared in the journal, the editor has wondered at times whether during his decade, the profession was passing through a phase of consolidation and continuation with regard to women and gender perspectives on U.S. history from 1870 to 1920. If such scholarship were going somewhere new, where might that be?

Meanwhile, the editors and editorial board had discussed for some time experimenting with issues built around calls for papers on a theme. Whatever readers think of the innovativeness of the journal’s content, the method for constructing most issues has been conservative: manuscripts that have made it through rounds of regular peer review mixed with forums and invited essays and assorted special features. If we picked a theme and threw out a request for manuscripts, what would happen? Any theme would be useful if it promised to bring in ample and worthy submissions. Finally, the journal intends to use every appropriate opportunity to recognize the international presence that it has gained through affiliation with Cambridge University Press and that U.S. history has been gaining in general. One is aware that “global” and “transnational” threaten to become historiographic buzzwords of the present and that we cannot know what people would have submitted had we worded the call differently. But given the intense current interest in U.S. history in international context, this seemed a sound place to begin. Anyway, the results speak for themselves.

The issue’s title and the call for papers that we circulated in summer 2011 arose readily from our weaving together these thoughts and

goals. A special committee consisting of the SHGAPE president and former journal editor, Maureen Flanagan, along with editorial board members Kristin Hoganson and Elizabeth Hayes Turner refined the theme, evaluated entries on a fascinating variety of topics, and made recommendations and comments. As needed, outside peer reviewers supplemented the committee's work.

So, what did we come up with? Two of the essays fit well within the current tendency to focus on how Western ideas and practices concerning gender might have, alternately, reinforced and undermined Western imperialism. As Ellen E. Adams recounts, the geographer Ellen Churchill Semple and the novelist Fannie Caldwell Macaulay adapted to and, when possible, made use of their status as female writers on Japan from white, southern backgrounds in the United States. The different professional situations of a woman in social science versus a popular novelist meant that Semple sought to avoid a distinctive female voice, while Macaulay wrote from a woman's perspective. Nonetheless, both writers' mode of placing Japan within the hierarchy of civilizations "affirmed the superiority of Western, and specifically American, culture" and reinforced ideologies and policies developed by Western men.

Karen Phoenix, in partial contrast, suggests that Western ideas about gender and women's solidarity and potential could set in motion processes that undermined ideas and practices of Western imperialism. The YWCA in British India recruited women from the United States to serve as secretaries of branches on account of the Americans' reputation for professionalism and effectiveness. These women brought Social Gospel ideas of fellowship along with notions of women's activism and public roles that gradually provided space for Indian and Anglo Indian women to pursue their own agendas in a more public way. The Americans, to be sure, also brought with them an ethnocentric perspective that assessed Indian women according to Protestant, American standards. The Americans presumed that Indian women needed to become more Americanized. The sheer act, however, of promoting a "Y-space" and a sense of fellowship outside hierarchies associated with British imperialism assisted movements and ideas that neither the British nor the Americans could control.

Two transnational phenomena shape Andrew M. Johnston's reassessment of Emily Balch. Most familiar is Balch's role in the post-World War I peace movement, long understood as gendered in thought, strategies, and composition. Johnston, however, works backward to Balch's origins as a sociologist during the Progressive

Era, when sociology's gender identity and the connection between social science and social reform seemed up in the air. In effect, Johnston uses the eclipse of Balch's reputation as a social scientist to bring an international perspective to bear on a lively debate within U.S. intellectual history. This concerns what was lost when in order to establish their disciplines as academic professions, social scientists deliberately promoted an image of themselves as disinterested and scientific and therefore masculine. Balch's blurring of the line between research and reform—espoused, one recalls, by many men during the Progressive Era—came to seem soft and female, applied science, social work and not sociology. (Ellen Churchill Semple navigated these challenges by adapting to male, scientific standards, as Ellen Adams explains.)

Of the four articles, Kimberley A. Reilly's clearly written account of sexual purity movements during World War I draws most upon gender as opposed to women's history. The British and the French sought to restrict soldiers' sexuality out of concern over public health and morality. Still, the Allies were convinced that the Americans pursued purity campaigns with a peculiar—and, it seemed to the Allies, silly—aggressiveness. Many American soldiers and some journalists, Reilly recounts, felt the same. From a comparative perspective, Reilly suggests, American ambivalence concerning its own imperialism combined with American racial ideas (not so different from the British and French) amid the distinctive experience of mass immigration to produce a preoccupation with the personal behavior of recruits and conscripts. Embedded in wartime purity campaigns was the basic contradiction behind all Progressive Era moral reform and Americanization campaigns. The United States defined its soldiers as responsible citizens worthy of respect, while simultaneously "conceptualizing men in uniform as vulnerable adolescents," as "'boys' in need of moral guidance."

To return to the original question, so far as these essays and the others submitted in response to our call might be representative, perhaps the last decade has indeed been a period of consolidation with regard to the application of women's and gender history concepts and methods to the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. All these essays exhibit the assumption that when a new theme or concept arises, for example, global history and transnationalism, women's and gender perspectives need to be applied to it. One sign of success is being taken as a given. Another sign of becoming established might be the critical reflectiveness on American women's roles in sustaining imperialism evident in this group of articles.

As Shelton Stromquist notes in his reflections on his teacher and friend, David Montgomery's last published article, which happened to appear in this journal in January 2008, also concerned a transnational theme: the role of U.S. labor organizations in Canada and Latin America during the Progressive Era. In recent times, labor history has acquired the unfortunate reputation of being a subfield. For Montgomery and his generation, the labor question stood at the heart of modern society. Labor history was modern history. The labor question has, of course, reappeared with emphasis in recent years; it was never gone, though Americans and Europeans pretended that it had become quaint and irrelevant. Montgomery remains, therefore, as profound and relevant a voice as he was to those who encountered him and his work a generation and two ago.

Alan Lessoff