The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era (2020), **19**, 305–313
doi:10.1017/S1537781419000744

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

ESSAY

"Just the Status Quo?"

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Abstract*
As much as recent scholarship, popular outlets, and even a documentary film have asserted that we find ourselves in another "Gilded Age" since the 1980s, such a conceit has its limits. Indeed, we should proceed with caution when it comes to embracing analogies that posit a "new" or "second" Gilded Age. We might instead profitably think about the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as being a period of high capitalism and our current moment as reflecting a particular, if not peculiar, phase of capitalism. And, as much as our understanding of gender and sexuality during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries might actually be hindered by separating "Gilded Age" and "Progressive Era," considering gendered dynamics of our current moment—a moment that has been termed late-stage capitalism—deepens our analysis of the low-wage economy. When it comes to sexuality, we should be careful in drawing parallels between the Gilded Age and the present given that contemporary understandings of sexuality began to coalesce during the late nineteenth century. Still, debates about sex and sexuality certainly shaped the Gilded Age and they continue to inform our current moment in dynamic and even unprecedented ways. We might not find ourselves in another Gilded Age, but we should arguably build upon current interest in histories of capitalism as a means think about the significance of progressive social movements within capitalist societies.

When it comes to the dizzying wealth disparities and social inequalities in our current moment that recall those of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we seem to be caught in a vicious cycle. The more things change, the more things appear to remain the same. To be sure, "refer[ring] to the contemporary era as 'the New Gilded Age'" can seem at once apposite and dispiriting.[1] It can also be somewhat imprecise: "the term 'Second' or 'New Gilded Age'" has "describ[ed] everything from the junk-bond 1980s to the internet-bubble 1990s, and the Collateralized-Debt-Obligation 2000s to the top-1-percent 2010s."[2] As much as recent scholarship, popular outlets, and even a documentary film have asserted that we find ourselves in another "Gilded Age" since the 1980s, such a conceit is arguably specious. That said, reflecting upon the Gilded Age *can* illuminate our own current moment in terms of political economy more generally, not to mention why gender and sexuality are critical considerations when it comes to analyzing a host of dynamics within capitalism.

*The abstract was omitted from the original online version of this article. It has been added above and an erratum has been published.

In 1890, activist Mary Elizabeth Lease was convinced that the United States had devolved into "a nation of inconsistencies." Lease also acidly observed that the nation "no longer [had] a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, but a government of Wall Street, by Wall Street, and for Wall Street."[3] The daughter of Irish immigrants, Lease and her husband lost their pharmacy and farm during the economic downturn of the 1870s. Lawyer though she was, Lease belonged to the Knights of Labor and was one of the most electric populist organizers of her day—one who was characterized alternately as being "'unsexed,'" as a "'rabble rousing female fanatic,'" or as possessing "'a large degree of both the feminine and the masculine'" in her person. If anti-populist detractors claimed that the earnings from Lease's crusading activity emasculated her husband, if her feminism unnerved contemporaries, Lease was a mesmerizing populist speaker who enthralled audiences across Kansas, Missouri, the South, and the West.[4]

Whereas populists are included in most standard narratives about the Gilded Age (ca. 1870–1900), women are not often firmly associated with populism. To its credit, the recent PBS documentary, *The Gilded Age* (2018), prominently situates Mary Lease within populism. However, the documentary provides but fleeting coverage of Lease's advocacy of a key reform perhaps more associated with the Progressive Era: woman suffrage. It says nothing of her temperance advocacy. It does not highlight how Lease could pointedly link women's grassroots activism with populist agitation. Nor does it feature and then linger upon the implications of Lease's exclamation that, "shopgirls in New York are forced to sell their virtue for the bread their niggardly wages deny them [.]"[5] And, while the documentary is compelling and laudably draws on diverse historians—among them Nell Painter, Jack Tchen, H. W. Brands, David Nasaw, Susie Pak, Steve Fraser, Paula Giddings, Jackson Lears, Julia Ott, Noam Maggor, Edward O'Donnell, Richard White, and Rebecca Edwards—the film does little to explore women as workers during the Gilded Age, to establish that gender had anything to do with clashes between labor and capital, that widening and ever-stark social inequalities might have had varying impacts on sexuality.[6] Indeed, if *The Gilded Age* encourages viewers to make connections between the previous fin de siècle and our present historical moment, it essentially limits its consideration of women to inclusion of Mary Elizabeth Lease and socialite (and eventual suffragist) Alva Smith Vanderbilt. It perhaps goes without saying that its portrayal of robber barons, let alone Henry George and Jacob Coxey, does not incorporate considerations of either manhood or masculinity. Sexuality really does not figure into the documentary at all, save for coverage of Mary Lease's outrage over Alva Vanderbilt's calculated partnering of her daughter, Consuelo, in a loveless marriage to the ninth Duke of Marlborough largely to restore Alva's social standing after her scandalous divorce from William K. Vanderbilt.[7]

In certain regards, it seems easier (or even more logical) to associate histories of gender and sexuality with the reform impetus that suffused the Progressive Era rather than the economic panics or combustible coexistence of opulent wealth with exploited, alienated wage workers during the Gilded Age.[8] Leigh Ann Wheeler even maintains that, "neither gender nor sexuality, as they are known today, structured lives and identities in the Gilded Age."[9] We cannot say, though, that sex differentiation, erotic activities, and sexual violence did not exist during this period—that these dynamics informed neither quotidian existence nor social movements.[10] Or, for that matter, can we deny that women were concerned with controlling their fertility; that particular anxieties and notions about manhood shaped domestic politics and imperial endeavors; that sexual experimentation occurred in Gilded Age utopian communities; or that free love advocates challenged heterodox notions about sexual partnering. Instead, it is critical to

underscore that our current understandings of gender and sexuality actually started to coalesce during the late nineteenth century. Not only did the categories of "heterosexual" and "homosexual" emerge, but as Kimberly Hamlin usefully contends, "a new regime of gender policing took the place of separate spheres" during this period as well.[11] These very phenomena make gender and sexuality part of the warp and weft of Gilded Age societal fabric.

Yet we still need to interrogate how or whether our understanding of gender and sexuality during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries itself is hindered by separating—or, for that matter, lumping together—"Gilded Age" and "Progressive Era."[12] And it is, of course, critical to consider the experiences of working women when it comes to histories of the Gilded Age.[13] While women such as Alva Smith Vanderbilt were part of—or strove to belong to—the 1 percent during the Gilded Age, women were unquestionably among the ranks of immiserated workers during the late nineteenth century. For one, the strikes that rocked the Gilded Age included those organized by black laundresses.[14] In 1888, moreover, reporter Nell Cusack exposed miseries endured by "City Slave Girls" who toiled in Chicago's sweatshops, factories, and homes.[15] Women also labored as store clerks and clerical workers. If notions that women's ostensibly smaller hands made them particularly suited to typing emerged during the late nineteenth century, it was during the Gilded Age when clerical jobs —"clean" work that was better remunerated than the grind of garment sweatshops, domestic work, airless factories, and the like—arguably became a "pink collar" profession.[16] And, the very industrialization and urbanization that was a hallmark of the Gilded Age occasioned a "high degree of transience and large scale migration from rural areas to cities (often across national boundaries)" that fueled "speculations on the proper relationship among gender, sexuality, and sexual anatomy[.]"[17] Such dynamics seem eerily current.

Still, we should proceed with caution when it comes to embracing analogies that posit a "new" or "second" Gilded Age.[18] We might instead think about the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as being a period of high capitalism, and our current moment as reflecting a particular phase of capitalism.[19] Consider, for example, the following assertion by Karl Marx in his manuscript, *Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie* (Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy):

> … while capital must on one side strive to tear down every spatial barrier to … exchange, and conquer the whole earth for its market, it strives on the other side to annihilate this space with time, i.e. to reduce to a minimum the time spent in motion from one place to another. The more developed the capital … the more extensive the market over which it circulates, … the more does it strive simultaneously for an even greater extension of the market and for greater annihilation of space by time.[20]

Marx wrote the *Grundrisse* in 1857 and 1858, but his observations speak powerfully to dynamics that marked the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His observations about capitalism and the "annihilation of space by time" are all the more applicable to the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries due to globalization, cybertechnology, and what David Harvey refers to as "time-space compression."[21] Rail and steamship compressed time during the Gilded Age in terms of transporting raw and manufactured goods produced by agricultural and industrial laborers alike as telegraph facilitated "global communications,"[22] but fiber optics have all but obliterated time during our

own era when it comes to sundry forms of multinational exchange. What might we gain by thinking about the current moment as a *stage* of capitalism, then?

Whether or not one accepts Glenda Gilmore and Thomas Sugrue's periodization of a "new Gilded Age" as lasting between 1980 and 2000, we are perhaps not experiencing another Gilded Age but are instead ensconced within the absurdities, outrages, and obscenities of late-stage capitalism.[23] "Late capitalism," as theorist Ernest Mandel explained during the 1970s, can be defined as "the epoch in history of the development of the capitalist mode of production in which the contradiction between the growth of the forces of production and the survival of the capitalist relations of production assumes an explosive form." Or, put another way, we may not have entered a new epoch of capitalism—another chronological era—but are instead witnessing "a further development of the imperialist, monopoly-capitalist epoch."[24] And, as Grace Blakely recently observed, late capitalism has perhaps morphed into "zombie capitalism."[25] In the words of Chris Harman, early twenty-first century capitalism has become "a zombie system, seemingly dead when it comes to human feelings, but capable of sudden spurts of activity that cause chaos all around." Financial institutions are not solely responsible for what can be considered the chaotic, parasitic, and even destructive aspects of late-stage capitalism. But, if it was not until the 1980s that "indebtedness began to become central" in the lives of a wide range of people, then financial institutions are certainly among the "undead" that threaten to consume workers.[26]

Since the 1970s, late-stage capitalism has come to feature "rentier capitalists" who are no industrialists in the mold of Andrew Carnegie or even a financier such as J. P. Morgan. Rather, they extract their wealth from the "financialization of the economy," as a host of working people "have become so indebted that permanently low interest rates are required to avoid another [2008], yet permanently low interest rates only lead to higher levels of indebtedness."[27] If, as Katherine Newman and Elisabeth Jacobs contend, almost 35 percent of Americans saw themselves as "among the have-nots" in 2008 while "a CEO earned 262 times the pay of the average worker" at roughly the same time, outsourcing and ongoing deindustrialization have only accelerated the growth of low-wage jobs that offer neither security nor benefits.[28] Labor alienation persists with a vengeance. The financialization of the economy proceeds apace. As Naoko Shibusawa and I have pointed out elsewhere, "capitalism … continues to be a system that forever and even voraciously seeks new places and novel ways to 'monetise' … anything and everything."[29] As a "tectonic shift in the distribution of income" continues, as commodity fetishism drives people further into debt, as payday loans provide one of few options for many working people facing emergencies, how *should* we think about recent history?[30] And how do gender and sexuality matter?

Gender and sexuality have clearly shaped life in both the late twentieth and early twenty-first century United States: from the confluence of attacks on reproductive freedom with federal inaction to the AIDS crisis during the 1980s, from an erosion of the welfare state that witnessed a racialized demonization of welfare mothers to the concentration of women in jobs so poorly remunerated that some of those workers could qualify for food stamps during the 1980s into the 1990s. A "backlash" against feminism emerged as more families became dependent on women's wages: during the first decade of the twenty-first century, some commentators even declared that women workers were more "recession-proof" as working men found themselves experiencing nothing less than a "mancession."[31] Recent reincarnations of the "Forgotten Man" occasionally account for women, but they tend to focus on the white working class. Despite the reality that "unemployment and poverty rates are substantially higher

in African-American, Latino, and Native American communities," some white working-class men have felt especially aggrieved, disaffected, and displaced during the last decade or so.[32] These men are "suffer[ing] the costs while being denied the benefits" of capitalism, but so too are working women who engage in contemporary "unregulated home production," making everything from garments to electrical and computer components while other women perform data entry in "their basements or living rooms."[33] It is hardly incidental that many of these particular workers are recent immigrants.

Many jobs in today's low-wage economy are not only held by people of color—many such jobs are occupied primarily by women as well, including work as hotel maids or domestics, be it for a private employer or for an international franchisor such as Merry Maids.[34] And, as Barbara Ehrenreich observed in 2001, "the color of the hand that pushes the sponge varies from region to region [in the United States]: Chicanas in the Southwest, Caribbeans in New York, native Hawaiians in Hawaii, native whites, many of recent and rural extraction, in the Midwest[.]" Gender discrimination is a reality within the current low-wage economy, too. At the beginning of this century, for example, women filed an unsuccessful class action suit against Wal-Mart.[35] As "the number of manufacturing jobs continues to dwindle and the number of service-sector jobs expands," both immigrant women and women of color face gender discrimination that is profoundly racialized as well.[36] These working women are pointedly *not* among the ostensible "power wives" featured in *Politico*'s special issue on the "New Gilded Age"—women who make more than their well-positioned and prominent spouses, and who are arguably in a better position vis-à-vis male partners because "[their] energy and economic drive" actually facilitate if not enable their partners' careers.[37]

Whether one embraces or rejects the notion of a new Gilded Age, matters pertaining to sex and sexuality have clearly shaped U.S. political culture since the 1980s. Whereas women of color continued to endure sterilization abuse well into the 1970s, the politicization of abortion has dominated considerations of reproductive rights since *Roe v. Wade* (1973). Certainly, both reproductive technologies and the gay rights movement have transformed the sexual landscape in the United States since the 1960s. But it is also the case that since the Reagan era, "debates about sex, rather than remaining the province of feminists and gay liberationists … polariz[ed] the nation's politics."[38] Marital and date rape, as well as sexual harassment, same-sex marriage, gender nonconformity, gay-bashing, and transgender rights are part of our cultural awareness and political discourse in unprecedented ways during the early twenty-first century. Still, it is perhaps true that *Bowers v. Hardwick* (1986), the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), "abstinence-only education" initiatives during Bush II, the 2006 Federal Marriage Amendment, and the very real threat that abortion rights face in light of the current composition of the Supreme Court, can all make one wonder how far we have actually come since Anthony Comstock.[39] And, as much as the Gilded Age ostensibly had its own #MeToo Moment,[40] the fact that Brett Kavanaugh could be nominated—and by a man who publicly boasted of wantonly grabbing women's genitals—and then confirmed to the Supreme Court, it is painfully clear that women have yet to achieve full equality on key fronts, that the fallout from the second confirmation hearings of Clarence Thomas in 1991 did not alter some men's sense of sexual entitlement.

Catherine Cocks's 2006 observation that, "[t]he contemporary politicization of sexualities has deep roots in the previous fin de siècle" still rings true, but I am nonetheless reluctant to declare that we now find ourselves in a "new," "second," or even "third"

Gilded Age.[41] I do not necessarily share James Livingston's take on capitalism expressed in his 2016 *Chronicle of Higher Education* essay, "The Myth of a 'Second Gilded Age,'" yet I find myself persuaded by Livingston's assertion that, "[w]e learn from the past only insofar as we can acknowledge the differences between then and now."[42] What political possibilities might be generated and sustained if we allow ourselves to reflect upon—and even become vexed by—a question posed by journalist Sarah Jones: "are we really living in a new Gilded Age, or is this just the status quo for America?"[43]

Organized labor undoubtedly weakened over the twentieth century, but domestic workers, fast food employees, farm workers, and other "unskilled" laborers have continued to find ways to organize themselves during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Indeed, Premilla Nadasen is encouraged by contemporary labor movements led by women of color—both documented and not. The decades between the New Deal and the Great Society when the U.S. welfare state expanded may have been "kind of a blip in American history," but they still point to what can be achieved when both social and economic justice actually inform domestic policy.[44] Social movements driven largely by social media—including #BlackLivesMatter, #SayHerName, and #MeToo—might have their limits; they also have potential to effect meaningful change.

Eco-socialist organizer Kali Akuno maintains that we need "technological innovations to create a regenerative economy."[45] Such innovation is surely within reach. Activism remains imperative, too. As Annelise Orleck has recently underscored, low-wage workers—many of them women of color—continue to organize on their own behalf against the ravages of global, late-stage capitalism.[46] So, rather than considering our current moment as another Gilded Age, I prefer to think of the radical possibilities that might be produced by a revivified progressive politics—one not bound to replicate the tensions, oversights, and biases of early twentieth-century progressivism. In light of the considerable interest now in histories of capitalism, let us address both intended and collateral damage wrought by capitalism in ways that might inform (or even translate into) social change.

Acknowledgments. The author thanks C. Joseph Genetin-Pilawa, Boyd Cothran, and Daniel Hart London both for editorial suggestions and for their labor in bringing this forum to fruition. I am especially grateful to Linda Gordon for her incisive feedback on an earlier iteration of this essay.

Notes

1 Katherine S. Newman and Elisabeth S. Jacobs, *Who Cares? Public Ambivalence and Government Activism from the New Deal to the Second Gilded Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 113–48, esp. 119.
2 David Huyssen, "We won't get out of the Second Gilded Age the way we got out of the first," *Vox,* Apr. 1, 2019.
3 "In Defense of Home and Hearth: Mary Lease Raises Hell Among Farmers," History Matters, http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5304 (accessed Jan. 2, 2020). For an overview of Lease's life and activism, see Brooke Speer Orr, "Mary Elizabeth Lease: Gendered Discourse and Populist Party Politics in Gilded Age America," *Kansas History* 29 (Dec. 2006): 246–65.
4 Orr, "Mary Elizabeth Lease," 250, 251, 255–57, 262–65.
5 See for example "A Woman's Work: Mary Lease Celebrates Women Populists," http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5303 (accessed Jan. 2, 2020). See also "In Defense of Home and Hearth."
6 To be sure, PBS's 2018 documentary *The Gilded Age* features late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century images of women workers. It mentions that women joined labor unions and were among those who "proudly identified themselves as working class."
7 The film's treatment of immigration is stronger as is its consideration of race—at least when it comes to African Americans.

8 Kriste Lindenmeyer's 2002 review essay discussed work about women, reform, and urban space within both the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era in *JGAPE*'s inaugural issue; Catherine Cocks's thoroughgoing critique of historiographical "assumptions about both Victorian repression and modern [sexual] liberation" appeared in *JGAPE's* fifth volume as a meditation on Progressive Era history. See Kriste Lindenmeyer, "Citizenship, Gender, and Urban Space in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 1 (Jan. 2002): 95–106; Catherine Cocks, "Rethinking Sexuality in the Progressive Era," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 5 (Apr. 2006): 93–118. For additional commentary, see Elisabeth Israels Perry, "Men Are from the Gilded Age, Women Are from the Progressive Era," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 1 (Jan. 2002): 25–48.

9 Leigh Ann Wheeler, "Inventing Sexuality: Ideologies, Identities, and Practices in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era," in *A Companion to the Gilded Age and Progressive Era,* eds. Christopher McKnight Nichols and Nancy C. Unger (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 102–15, esp. 102.

10 See for example Ellen Carol DuBois and Linda Gordon's classic article, "Seeking Ecstasy on the Battlefield: Danger and Pleasure in Nineteenth-Century Feminist Sexual Thought," *Feminist Studies* 9 (Spring 1983): 7–25. It is worth underscoring that this article was produced during the "sex wars" that animated the late 1970s and early 1980s.

11 Whereas Catherine Cocks emphasizes the need to "devise a more satisfactory alternative to the Victorian-to-modern framework," Leigh Ann Wheeler contends that, "the framework remains useful precisely because it has inspired scholars to expose its mythical aspects while exploring the many possibilities for sexuality in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries." See Cocks, "Rethinking Sexuality," 94; Wheeler, "Inventing Sexuality," 111. See also Kimberly A. Hamlin, "Gender," in *A Companion to the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 87–101, esp. 87.

12 Leon Fink makes a case for thinking in terms of a "long Gilded Age": "…I currently prefer the option of 'The Long Gilded Age' for the entire GAPE (for convenience, let's round the years to 1880–1920). Critically inquisitive (if still inevitably somewhat pejorative), the phrase usefully refocuses attention on bursting social inequalities as well as the political management of industrial capitalism across a crucial and formative period of the nation's development." See Leon Fink, *The Long Gilded Age: American Capitalism and Lessons of a New World Order* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 1–11, esp. 2.

13 Importantly, Ellen Carol DuBois and Lynn Dumenil stress that, "[a]lthough women had been working for wages since the 1830s, the centrality and permanence of female wage earners were slow to be recognized. Not until 1890 did the U.S. census identify or count working women with any precision." See Ellen Carol DuBois and Lynn Dumenil, *Through Women's Eyes: An American History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005), 285.

14 See Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 74–97.

15 Nell Cusack, "City Slave Girls" (1888), www.wwnorton.com/college/history/foner2/contents/ch16/documents07.asp (accessed Jan. 2, 2020).

16 For useful statistics on this front, see Hamlin, "Gender," 92. For a discussion about women being seen as particularly suited to typing, see DuBois and Dumenil, *Through Women's Eyes*, 286–87.

17 Cocks, "Rethinking Sexuality," 110–11.

18 For recent examples of such analogies appearing in popular periodicals, see Lily Rothman, "How American Inequality in the Gilded Age Compares to Today," *Time,* February 5, 2018; Rick Hampson, "America's Second Gilded Age: More class envy than class conflict," *USA Today,* May 17, 2018. For a recent article that draws parallels between the Gilded Age and present-day "new donor classes," see Elizabeth Kolbert, "Shaking the Foundations," *New Yorker,* Aug. 27, 2018, 30–34.

19 I am indebted to Linda Gordon in terms of thinking about (and referring to) the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as "high capitalism."

20 See Karl Marx, *Grundrisse—Notebook V: The Chapter on Capital,* www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/ch10.htm (accessed Jan. 2, 2020).

21 Harvey notes that he "use[s] the word 'compression' because a strong case can be made that the history of capitalism has been characterized by speed-up in the pace of life, while so overcoming spatial barriers that the world sometimes seems to collapse inwards upon us." David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1990), 240.

22 Ian Tyrrell, "Connections, Networks, and the Beginnings of a Global America in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era," *A Companion to the Gilded Age and Progressive Era,* 381–98, esp. 382.

23 Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore and Thomas J. Sugrue, *These United States: A Nation in the Making, 1890s to the Present* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2015), 536–88. For recent, popular ruminations on "late capitalism" or "late stage capitalism," see Kimberly Amadeo, "Late Stage Capitalism, Its Characteristics, and Why the Term Is Trending," *The Balance,* December 14, 2019; Annie Lowrey, "Why the Phrase 'Late Capitalism' Is Suddenly Everywhere," *The Atlantic,* May 1, 2017.

24 Ernest Mandel, *Der Spätkapitalismus* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972). Reprinted as *Late Capitalism,* trans. Joris De Bres (London: Verso, 1978), 562, 9.

25 Grace Blakely, "The Latest Incarnation of Capitalism," *Jacobin,* Sept. 5, 2018.

26 Chris Harman, *Zombie Capitalism: Global Crisis and the Relevance of Marx* (London: Bookmarks Publications, 2009), 12, 300, 280. Significantly, Harman critiqued Mandel's *Late Capitalism.* See Chris Harman, "Mandel's *Late Capitalism*," *International Socialism* 2 (July 1978).

27 Blakely, "The Latest Incarnation of Capitalism."

28 Newman and Jacobs, *Who Cares?*, 113–48, esp. 113, 119; Wendy Martin and Cecelia Tichi, eds., *Best of Times, Worst of Times: Contemporary American Short Stories from the New Gilded Age* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 5.

29 Michele Mitchell and Naoko Shibusawa, "Introduction," in *Gender, Imperialism and Global Exchanges,* eds. Stephan F. Miescher, Michele Mitchell, and Naoko Shibusawa (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 1–21, esp. 3. Shibusawa and I also point out that, "[f]eminist Marxists such as Silvia Federici insist that we must consider gender as another means of assessing how much a person [is] alienated from her labour." See Mitchell and Shibusawa, "Introduction," 4; Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Automedia, 2004).

30 Newman and Jacobs, *Who Cares?*, 119; Larry M. Bartels, *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age,* second ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 1–2, 7–16. See also Linda Tirado, *Hand to Mouth: Living in Bootstrap America* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2014); Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001).

31 John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America,* third ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 301–61; Sharon Hays, *Flat Broke with Children: Women in the Age of Welfare Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Pantheon, 1997); Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Crown, 1991). See also Gilmore and Sugrue, *These United States,* 536–88; Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*, 213; Sarah Jones, "Lessons from the Gilded Age," *New Republic,* June 13, 2018. For arguments about gender, recession, and male unemployment circa 2008, see Zachary Karabell, "We Are Not in This Together," *Newsweek*, Apr. 20, 2009, 30; April Patrick Johnson and Yvonne Zipp, "Job Losses Hit Black Men Hardest," *Christian Science Monitor,* Mar. 16, 2009, 25; David Zinczenko, "Decline of the American Male," *USA Today,* June 17, 2009, 10A; Derek Thompson, "It's Not Just a Recession. It's a Mancession!," *Atlantic Monthly,* July 9, 2009. For a contemporaneous assertion that women's unemployment was actually rising in similar proportion to men's, see Linda Hirschman, "Where Are the New Jobs for Women?," *New York Times,* Dec. 9, 2008, A35.

32 Luke Philip Plottica, "The Return of the Forgotten Man: Refurbishing Symbols of the Gilded Age," *Public Seminar,* Nov. 20, 2017, www.publicseminar.org/2017/11/the-return-of-the-forgotten-man (accessed Jan. 2, 2020).

33 Plottica, "The Return of the Forgotten Man"; Annelise Orleck, "Wage-Earning Women," *A Companion to American Women's History*, ed. Nancy A. Hewitt (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 2005), 250–73, esp. 269.

34 I do not, of course, mean to imply that "people of color" and "women" are mutually exclusive categories.

35 Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*, 79n8; Gilmore and Sugrue, *These United States*, 536–37.

36 Premilla Nadasen, *Household Workers Unite: The Untold Story of African American Women Who Built a Movement* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015), 7.

37 Liza Mundy, "The New Power Wives of Capitol Hill," *Politico,* special issue on the "New Gilded Age" (July/Aug. 2014), www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/06/the-new-power-wives-of-capitol-hill-108012 (accessed Jan. 2, 2020). The one article about sexuality in this special issue explores the dissonance experienced by gay staffers in George W. Bush's White House; see Timothy J. Burger, "Inside George W. Bush's Closet," *Politico,* www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/06/inside-george-w-bushs-closet-108016#.U6vxUI1yF8Y (accessed Jan. 2, 2020).

38 D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 345.
39 *Bowers v. Hardwick* is the Supreme Court decision that refused to affirm the right of privacy for gay men who engaged in consensual oral sex. Here, I do not wish to claim that the "repressive strain" of sexual politics that Comstock embodied went unchallenged during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But, as D'Emilio and Freedman point out, whereas "[t]he popular press frequently ridiculed Comstock," commentators "never undermined his political power." See D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 164.
40 Patricia Miller, *Bringing Down the Colonel: A Sex Scandal of the Gilded Age, and the "Powerless" Woman Who Took on Washington* (New York: Sarah Crichton Books, 2018). See also Anna Diamond, "The Court Case That Inspired the Gilded Age's #MeToo Moment," *Smithsonian Magazine,* Nov. 2018.
41 For an assertion that we are now in a third Gilded Age, see James Kurth, "The Foreign Policy of Plutocracies," *The American Interest* 7, no. 2 (2011).
42 James Livingston, "The Myth of a 'Second Gilded Age,'" *The Chronicle Review*, Jan. 31, 2016, www.chronicle.com/article/The-Myth-of-a-Second-Gilded/235072/#.W5QINoa6CRM.email (accessed Jan. 2, 2020); a version of the article appeared in print on Feb. 5, 2016.
43 Cocks, "Rethinking Sexuality in the Progressive Era"; Jones, "Lessons from the Gilded Age."
44 Jones, "Lessons from the Gilded Age."
45 Akuno additionally contends that it will "take a few generations to undo the century of conspicuous consumption that has been advanced and promoted by late capitalism." See "'It's Eco-Socialism or Death': An Interview with Kali Akuno," *Jacobin,* Feb. 15, 2019.
46 Annelise Orleck, *"We Are All Fast-Food Workers Now": The Global Uprising Against Poverty Wages* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018).

Cite this article: Mitchell M (2020) "Just the Status Quo?". *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* **19**, 305–313. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537781419000744