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EDITORS' NOTE

The election of 2016 has, at least temporarily, put class analysis back in the saddle. The core explanation of Donald Trump's election has been his strong support from white working-class voters. Not all commentators agree with this interpretation, of course, with some pointing to data that demonstrates Trump's solid support among the middle class and the wealthy, and others contending that race was the most important independent variable among the electorate. Yet class nonetheless has become the central node around which all other arguments seeking to illuminate the nation's dramatic political transformation orbit.

This analytical centrality of class is a welcome revival of an older scholarly current. If you look through the tables of contents of most historical journals over the last quarter century—including the *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*—you will indeed find various articles that explore issues related to class. Yet you will also see the effects of the "death of class" brought about by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the advent of neoliberalism and postmodernism.

It is far too early to predict a renaissance of class analysis in the age of Trump (and Bernie Sanders?). Yet the current issue points toward such a renewal, as three of the authors place class at the forefront of their explorations of key issues in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. This is, however, not your scraggly gray-bearded grandfather's history of class—grounded in a struggle between capitalists and the proletariat. Rather, the middle and professional classes here become just as important players in the dramas of an unequal society.

Also, class analysis now becomes a companion, rather than an antagonist, to cultural exploration. Matthew Schneirov, for example, uses the rise of the popular magazine from the 1890s to 1914 to show the creative class struggles over ideology that ultimately led to the triumph of corporate capitalism. Schneirov argues that corporate capitalism became the central principle of American society not just because of the power of John D. Rockefeller or the Supreme Court, but because media such as popular magazines articulated a "new liberalism" that won over substantial portions of the middle class (as well as the working class), in large part by incorporating elements of socialism and populism into the new cultural regime.

Central to Schneirov's article is "the new middle class." That class could be ideologically all over the map—conservative or liberal, reactionary or, indeed, radical. Brynnar Swenson runs with the concept of a "radical middle class" as a way of reinterpreting the period's literary studies. He introduces us to the novelist Robert Herrick, whom literary scholars have neglected because his novels do not fit into the standard narrative of realism's proletarian origins. Yet through an exploration of *The Web of Life* (1900) and *Together* (1908), Swenson reveals Herrick to both represent and give voice to a middle-class world quite ambivalent toward, if not actively resistant to, the period's emerging corporate capitalism—in a way that marks him as arguably one of the most important literary figures of the era.

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Emily Mieras also explores class ambivalence and complexity in her study of Harvard's Phillips Brooks House in the early twentieth century. In this case, Mieras focuses on the elite—Harvard students with names as resonant as Phillips Endecott Osgood. Many of the era's upper-class students (and not just women) threw themselves into progressive reform efforts. Scholars have largely viewed such reform, no matter how well-intentioned, as contributing to elite and middle-class hegemony. Mieras credits that analysis, showing that Harvard's progressive-minded students were often blind to their Protestant universalism as well as their condescension toward the working class. That said, she also uncovers another side to such youthful progressivism—a determination to genuinely bridge class divides and foster both democratic dialogue and politics.

Scott Shubitz does not place class at the analytical center of his essay, but his exploration of late nineteenth-century liberalism is remarkably congruent with Mieras's insights into contemporary reformers' often-religious search for a "more perfect sympathy." Modern American liberalism was, arguably, born in the decade following the Civil War. The little-known New York Liberal Club reveals many of the tensions within liberalism both then and now. Shubitz underscores the struggles within liberal philosophy over whether or not Christianity helped or hindered modern intellectual insights. Secular social science and aggressive free thought certainly represented one route that liberalism traveled in the 1870s, but so also were tolerant and pluralist attempts to bring together religion and intellect on behalf of reform.

A similarly complicated view of American liberalism emerges in Robert Galler's careful reconstruction of activism on the Crow Creek reservation in South Dakota. Some of the greatest crimes committed in the name of liberalism were directed at Indians: the forcible conversion of their communally held lands into private property (much of which quickly and by design passed into white hands) and the onslaught against native languages and religions in the name of enlightened assimilation. Yet in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Dakotas of Crow Creek found ways to use the progressive language of reform to contest allotment and the petty tyranny of federal officials and to press for the implementation of their treaty rights. Looking beyond the better-studied Society of American Indians, Galler insists that we see this period of native history as a story of activism and political adaptation as well as oppression.

There are several possible lessons for the present in these essays beyond those that the authors bring to the intellectual table. Class matters—but only if scholars bring a creativity and eclectic sensibility to both what "class" is and how class interacts with culture and politics. The middle class matters—in a complicated way where "the middle class" is not one unchanging entity and where its politics is not monolithic or easily predictable. And despite intellectuals' propensity for cynicism and debunking, reform and radicalism could, in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, and can, now, flow from a variety of broad-minded and good-hearted sources.

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