

## Editors' Note

Boyd Cothran and Rosanne Currarino

The cover of our July 2022 issue features a portrait of Mills Thompson, an illustrator and decorator who is perhaps best known for his work in the *Scribner's Magazine* and the *Saturday Evening Post*, by Frances Benjamin Johnston. Recently remembered in a retrospective obituary in the *New York Times* as part of their Overlooked series, Johnston was a pathbreaking professional photographer famous for her indelible portraits of Gilded Age and Progressive Era celebrities such as Booker T. Washington, Mark Twain, and Susan B. Anthony.<sup>1</sup> She also photographed portraits of five presidents, including Grover Cleveland, Benjamin Harrison, Theodore Roosevelt, and William Howard Taft, and took the final known photography of William McKinley, taken on September 5, 1901, the day before he was shot.<sup>2</sup> Less well-known at the time, Johnston also took numerous photographs of herself and her friends that destabilize and mocked conventional gender norms. Thompson was a frequent collaborator in these subversive works, and Johnston even produced a series of self-portraits in the 1890s that defied the gentle norms of the era, including one which showed Johnston with her legs crossed and her petticoats showing while smoking a cigarette and drinking a beer; and another in which Johnston posed with a bicycle while wearing a moustache, waistcoat, trousers, and a jacket.<sup>3</sup>

In this issue, we explore stories such as those behind Johnston's portrait of Mills Thompson and delve deeper into queer histories of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. But first, we begin with Ángel de Jesús Cortés's re-examination of Henry Adams's reputation as an imperialist. Drawing on Adams's correspondence during the last decade of the nineteenth century and his outrage over news of American atrocities in the Philippines, Jesús Cortés suggests that while not a full-fledged anti-imperialist, Adams nonetheless viewed the imperialist extension of American power across the Pacific with trepidation and pessimism.

In "Pastor was Trapped': Queer Scandal and Contestations Over Christian Anti-Vice Reform," Katie M. Hemphill traces print media reactions to the popular Baltimore minister and anti-vice reformer Kenneth G. Murray's alleged attempted to engage in sex with another man at the Y.M.C.A. in the fall of 1915. Situating this scandal within the longer history of contestations over anti-vice reform and the legitimacy of using state power to enforce Christian morality, Hemphill argues that allegations of homosexuality, especially in the hands of powerful political opponents such as H.L. Mencken, were potent political weapons against progressive anti-vice campaigning because it reconciled competing representations of these reformers as both obsessed with sex and, at the same time, impotent, feminized, and pathologically masculine.

Ministers and anti-vice reformers were not the only ones to find themselves under increased scrutiny in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. Young women who attended college in the era also had to face mounting concerns from their parents, teachers, and school administrators who viewed their romantic friendships with increasing concerns.

While these cultural anxieties around “abnormal girls” represented larger concerns of the era, Wendy Rouse in her article. “‘A Very Crushable, Kissable Girl’: Queer Love and the Invention of the Abnormal Girl among College Women in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era,” explores the impact these anxieties had on women’s everyday lives, and the innovative strategies these women developed to subversively conceal their relationships while nonetheless pursuing their queer desires.

How to teach the history of public surveillance, suppression, and punishment of queer lives and desires is the subject of Brian Michael Trump’s “Teaching Queer History in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era Classroom: An Introductory Essay with Documents.” Reproducing a variety of primary sources suitable for use in the classroom from criminal statutes and legal records to newspaper articles, medical discourses, and firsthand accounts, Trump provides useful context, commentary, and advice for including queer sources in the classroom.

Finally, we conclude the volume, as always, with a carefully curated collection of book reviews.

## Notes

- 1 Richard B. Woodward, “Overlooked No More: Frances B. Johnston, Photographer who Defied Genteel Norms,” *New York Times*, Dec. 15, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/15/obituaries/frances-benjamin-johnston-overlooked.html?login=smartlock&auth=login-smartlock> (accessed Apr. 11, 2022).
- 2 Frances Benjamin Johnston, “The Last Portrait of McKinley, Buffalo, N.Y. Sept. 5, 1901,” <https://www.loc.gov/item/2001703933/> (accessed Apr. 11, 2022).
- 3 Frances Benjamin Johnston, “[Frances Benjamin Johnston, full-length portrait, seated in front of fireplace, facing left, holding cigarette in one hand and a beer stein in the other, in her Washington, D.C. studio],” <https://www.loc.gov/item/98502934/> (accessed Apr. 11, 2022); Frances Benjamin Johnston, “[Frances Benjamin Johnston, full-length self-portrait dressed as a man with false moustache, posed with bicycle, facing left],” <https://www.loc.gov/item/2001697163/> (accessed Apr. 11, 2022).