

the level of Black resistance to such laws. Further, *Threatening Property* reveals that segregation laws did not simply flower across the South with uniform white support. Instead, class status often dictated visions of what Jim Crow segregation should look like, both in North Carolina and across the broader region. Herbin-Triant complements scholarship demonstrating that Jim Crow was a modern response to industrialization and urbanization. She demonstrates, for instance, that many middling whites, including Clarence Poe, viewed rural residential segregation as a progressive reform necessary to address both economic changes rooted in the industrialization of agriculture and the increasing number of Black farm owners across the South.

While Herbin-Triant captures significant class-based approaches to Jim Crow, she perhaps underestimates the political power of middling whites. Although she describes the South as a “world ruled by elites,” middling whites were still able to successfully pass residential segregation ordinances in multiple North Carolina cities (9). Although the North Carolina Supreme Court eventually invalidated these ordinances, in other southern states it took the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Buchanan v. Warley* (1917) to overturn such laws. Class power relations were perhaps more uncertain and contested than Herbin-Triant implies. Nonetheless, Herbin-Triant identifies important differences in white approaches to residential segregation in the South and thereby provides vital insights into the nuances of Jim Crow. By doing so, *Threatening Property* offers a fascinating history of race and class in the U.S. South.

Climate Uncertainty in America’s Gilded Age

Giacomelli, Joseph. *Uncertain Climes: Debating Climate Change in Gilded Age America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023. 238 pp. \$40.00 (cloth), ISBN 0-226-82443-8.

Kevin Mason

Waldorf University, Forest City, IA, USA

doi:10.1017/S1537781423000464

Joseph Giacomelli’s *Uncertain Climes* sifts through the relationship between climate uncertainty and both economic growth and scientific development in Gilded Age America. Giacomelli skillfully surveys the diverse debates and divergent viewpoints surrounding climate change in the Gilded Age to provide new insights into a topic pertinent to today’s world.

Giacomelli’s focus sits squarely on uncovering how historical actors in the Gilded Age understood scientific and climatic uncertainty, both in their own immediate weather and climate data as well as from a longer-range perspective. Giacomelli also skillfully examines how uncertainties surrounding climate change and environmental knowledge influenced

the course of capitalist development. By carefully examining and drawing conclusions from debates between scholars, surveyors, scientists, settlers, and others, Giacomelli manages to provide illumination without firmly imposing a “tidy taxonomy on the past” (14). A relatively brief text, *Uncertain Climes* successfully incorporates a wide variety of evidence over six chapters relating to Gilded Age concepts surrounding civilization, climate and capitalism, mapping climate, ecologies, and technocracy. The resulting work provides analytical illumination while leaving questions for future scholars to consider.

Giacomelli’s self-awareness shines as a strength of the text: he consistently keeps the reader informed of the pervasiveness of uncertainty in his source base while raising important questions about the difficulty in reconstructing “pronouncements of scientific and cultural uncertainty” posited in raging debates about climate change during the Gilded Age (13). The author’s methodological approach to carefully reconstructing scientific, cultural, environmental, ontological, epistemological, and other debates through the direct voices of the past allows the reader to better understand the uncertainty surrounding climate change debates during the time period (151). Giacomelli, for instance, shows how nineteenth-century climate debates illuminate discussions surrounding Gilded Age capitalism. He demonstrates how “human-induced climate change served as a litmus test for faith in American progress” (31). The emphasis on climate debates in the discourses surrounding westward expansion and capitalist development is another of the book’s strong suits. Assessments of ponding, forestation efforts, and the mythology of “rain follows the plow,” helps readers grasp the varied and extensive discussions sheltered under the umbrella of Gilded Age climate change theory. By carefully assessing physical maps, while also painstakingly reconstructing mental maps, Giacomelli helps to uncover how individual theorists understood and presented geographical aspects of climate. He brings debates to life in imaginative and insightful ways but never lets uncertainty wander far from the reader’s mind, reasserting how “studying uncertainty in the past underscores the uncertainty of our knowledge in the past” throughout the text (13). Giacomelli’s timely work helps underscore the difficulties sifting through climate change rhetoric in the current historical moment by breathing life back into old debates, disagreements, and conclusions.

While the work provides an important contribution to better understanding climate change debates of the Gilded Age, the ambitious scope and scale of the project packaged as a relatively short monograph may leave readers seeking a deeper analysis. Limited exclusively to Euro-American climate writings, and consistent in providing brief descriptions of debates through partial quotations, at times the text yearns for greater depth. Scientific and climate debates of the Gilded Age raged on a transatlantic scale but are here assessed by a work without a transnational focus. As the United States exhausted continental-scale expansion during the Gilded Age, considerations of climate theory in a broader international context might help to more fully develop Giacomelli’s argument. While asserting “climatic hopes and anxieties shaped Euro-American’s continental and global visions,” the work offers little in illuminating how those visions extend beyond the nineteenth-century United States (149). Although it draws from available letters, articles, and reports about climatic changes, the quick pace of *Uncertain Climes* at times feels out of sync with the scope and scale necessary to truly bring the debates surrounding Gilded Age climate fully to life. Giacomelli consistently brings his own uncertainty to the forefront, at times leaving the reader to wonder if the uncertainty lies with the author or with the debates he strives to examine. The book, meanwhile, unabashedly refuses to look beyond the narrow scale of the Gilded Age, providing little understanding how thinkers of the era drew from, and built upon, ongoing discourses that predated the era.

While the author tepidly asserts a relevance to modern discourses surrounding climate and climate change, the uncertainties of our current moment retreat into the background throughout the book. While the book serves as an important jumping off point for examining how uncertainties influenced scientific and public discourse of the Gilded Age, abundant room remains to further develop and investigate the conversations, theories, and debates surveyed by Giacomelli.

An important opening salvo into an underexamined conversation, Giacomelli's work leaves room for continued development. The specific debates focused on within each chapter offer opportunities for expanded scope, deeper research, and better understanding of how Gilded Age climate uncertainty can help modern thinkers better understand ongoing debates about how humans influence climate and the broader world around us. By diving into broader global conversations, linking American ambitions beyond the continental United States, and investigating transatlantic scientific discourse, future scholars can meaningfully build upon *Uncertain Climes* to advance conversations vital to a twenty-first-century world grappling with its own climate uncertainties.