

# Volume 7 Issue 1: Editorial

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In the editorial for the December 2021 issue of the Journal, we said that we were not willing to make any predictions for 2022 (in terms of changes that might impact working-class people globally). The pandemic had made it difficult to look ahead, but we try and stay optimistic about the future (maybe this is a foolhardy approach!). While societies are opening back up and life is returning to ‘normal’, the pandemic is far from over, with infections continuing and the impact of lockdowns, lay-offs and an increase in the gaps between those who have access to health care, and those who don’t.

We have also seen the devastating results of climate change, with unbearable heat waves in South Asia, floods in Australia and wild fires in the US (among many others). Global leaders are still yet to make real progress in terms of reducing emissions and moving to a greener future. And it is those at the lower end of the economic scale who stand to suffer the most as ‘extreme’ weather events increase.

There have been many other global events since December 2021. The invasion of Ukraine has destroyed cities and led to the displacement of millions of people. And people from many other places continue to risk their lives to reach safer countries, only to find harsh and callous government policies that do not recognise their humanity. We note that this is particularly the case in the US, UK and Australia – wealthy countries that should be doing more to protect those fleeing war, persecution and poverty.

Mass shootings continue in the US, to the bewilderment of many of us looking from the outside. It seems that the murders of people in supermarkets, churches and schools is still not enough to change the laws around gun ownership in America.

And now, the US Supreme Court decision to overturn Roe vs Wade, leaves working-class women in anti-abortion states in grave danger. This decision will stop safe abortion for many women.

Is there anything to give us hope? A change of government in Australia is encouraging, with a working-class background leader and signs that there may be policies and actions that will benefit working-class Australians (though it is early days yet and we remain wary). And the continuation of union building across the US is good to see. Workers are showing their power and getting organised.

Amid these events, the scholars, activists and artists within working-class studies, continue to do their work. They provide the historical, political and cultural context for current events and issues, and they offer analysis and insight into all aspects of society and the implications for working-class people globally. They continue to advocate for working-class people and bring working-class voices to the forefront. This work is important, and this Journal is proud to be able to facilitate some of this analysis, commentary and artistic endeavour.

This issue contains one scholarly article, two personal essays and two poems. There are also nine book reviews (we are always very pleased to see so many new books being published on working-class topics!).

The first article is by Swedish graduate student Magnus Gustafson. In “‘Mister Speaker! I therefore have no claim’ – Agda Östlund’s Entrance in the Parliamentary Debate in March 1922 in a Historical and Rhetorical Perspective’, Gustafson outlines the rhetorical position of early twentieth century Swedish member of parliament who spoke on behalf of working-class tuberculosis patients. As well as being one of the first women in the Swedish parliament, Östlund was able to highlight the injustices faced by working-class patients.

Following is a personal essay/narrative piece written by American academic James A. Perkins, who passed away in January 2022. Perkins’ narrative, ‘Conceptual Art and Galvanising’ describes his experience working in a steel mill and the influence this had on his art-making. The narrative is prefaced with an introduction from Colby King, a former student of Perkins. This is a very entertaining piece and operates as a fitting tribute to a much-loved and respected educator.

Sharon Tugwell’s personal essay “‘We tell stories in order to live’: Working-class existence and survival in the academy’ is next. Tugwell highlights the ways that academics from working-class backgrounds are often not given the respect they deserve in UK universities and can experience a great deal of pain as they try to navigate between the middle-class environment and their working-class identity.

We also have two poems by Ian C Smith, ‘Cousins’ and ‘Teenage Testament’ which bring working-class experience to life, from a pilgrimage to a relative in working-class Liverpool, to a recount of teenage life.

The issue also contains nine book reviews, edited by Christie Launius. The reviews once again show the strength of working-class studies, and the interest in working-class life and class that exists across many different disciplines and creative forms. Topics include how working-class people navigate middle class settings; labouring bodies; narratives about hardship in America; the myth of merit; working-class children’s perception of care; class in Australia; class and literature; African diasporic women’s literature and a novel set on the Lakota Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota. The books reviewed offer a diverse range of subject matter and approach.

Once again, we thank all the contributors and reviewers – the Journal is a truly collective endeavour. We hope that readers enjoy the pieces and we thank you for your interest and support.