

# Volume 8 Issue 2: Editorial

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As 2023 comes to a close there are many people around the world suffering due to war and conflict. We look for some kind of hope amid the terror and despair and are drawn towards acts of solidarity and collectivism between working-class people within communities and across borders. This might be small acts of mutual aid, or larger organised collective action in the form of strikes. We see working-class people speak at rallies and protests, standing up for their rights and showing support for those who don't have a voice. It is crucial to find this hope and to be optimistic about a better future for all working-class people wherever they may be.

The Journal of Working-Class Studies (and the Working-Class Studies Association more generally) plays a small part in these networks of solidarity. We see this through the scholarship, thoughtful personal essays, creative works and the book reviews that we are lucky enough to publish. It is reassuring to know that there are people who are committed to advocating on behalf of working-class people.

In this issue we have four scholarly articles, two personal essays, one commentary piece, a poem and ten book reviews. Once again, the works included in the Journal show the variety and diversity of work within the field of working-class studies.

The issue starts with two articles focusing on working-class literature – Nancy Caronia's 'Refusing the Sentimental Italian Immigration Story in Denise Giardina's *Storming Heaven*' and Sharon Zechowski's *Middletown Lives through Middle-Class Eyes: Hillbilly Elegy and the Problem with the "Liberal Media"*. Caronia challenges the typical male focus of Italian immigration narratives and argues that Giardina's novel places the experiences of her female protagonist front and center, illustrating the hardships faced by immigrant women to the US in the early twentieth century. Zechowski offers an analysis of J.D. Vance's novel *Hillbilly Elegy* and suggests that the book contributes to a fetishisation of the white working class.

Following is an article about the alienation (in the Marxist sense of the word) experienced by fast food workers in the US. In 'A Study of Self-Estrangement Among Fast-Food Workers', Bethany Haworth, Daniel Auerbach and Jennifer Tabler measure levels of self-estrangement among different employment categories in the fast food industry and show that workers with lower wages and levels of job stability are more likely to experience self-estrangement.

Next is 'What does it mean to be working class? Exploring the definition of a social class identity through the eyes of working-class professional services and administrative staff in Russell Group universities' by Jess Pilgrim-Brown. In this article Pilgrim-Brown explores the experiences of professional services staff with working-class backgrounds in the UK Higher Education sector and considers what a working-class identity means in this setting.

Two personal essays follow. In 'Preparing Working-Class Academics for Success' Kenneth Oldfield offers sage advice to working-class academics based on his own experience as a

‘stranger in paradise’<sup>1</sup> and Fred S Naiden provides an historical narrative about New York transit workers in ‘The Man with a Million Names: A Personal Essay on Transit Work’.

An analysis of inequalities among children is the last article in this issue. Lawrence M. Eppard, Kayla Dalhouse, Erik Nelson and Jenna Robbins offer a discussion of the types of factors that lead to childhood inequalities in ‘Community Inequalities and Children’s Life Chances in the United States’.

A poem by Ian C Smith follows – ‘Motorcycle on my mind’ evokes a teenage boy’s memory as the narrator finds himself back in an old neighbourhood.

This issue also has ten book reviews, edited by Christie Launius. The topics of the books is extremely diverse with books on Black working-class history, the intersections of class, race and gender, public health, working-class queer experience, working-class masculinity in reality television, precarious labour on film and in fiction, the problematic history of white freedom, construction workers, steelworkers and a collection of short stories. The variety is once again impressive and very welcome.

We wish all of our readers, authors and supporters a good start to 2024 and hope that the new year brings us a step closer to a more just world.

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<sup>1</sup> With a nod here to Ryan, J. & Sackrey, C. (1984). *Strangers in paradise: Academics from the working class*. South End Press