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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 decison 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 narrative 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.

‘Mister Speaker! I therefore have no claim’ – Agda Östlund’s Entrance in the Parliamentary Debate in March 1922 in a Historical and Rhetorical Perspective

Magnus Gustafson, Malmö University, Sweden

Abstract

In March 1922 the Social Democrat Agda Östlund (1870–1942) speaks as the first female member of Swedish Parliament in the Second Chamber due to her own proposal for the state to take responsibility for arranging suitable work for tuberculosis patients when they leave the sanatorium, so that they can complete their convalescence. It may seem that democracy was once and for all established when women were finally included in the Parliament. But that was not the case. The question is how Agda Östlund acts in a formative historical stage after the first democratic election, how she finds a speaking position and how her speech can be understood in relation to the negotiation of the meaning of women’s civil and democratic rights.

This article includes a contextualisation and a text analysis where I go into how the text relates to a rhetorical situation. I see Agda Östlund’s utterances as rhetorical in accordance with the theoretical perspectives established by Lloyd F. Bitzer where the key concepts are rhetorical situation, problem, restrictions and audience. Agda Östlund uses the mother role as a rhetorical strategy, connects the issue of tuberculosis to the home and everyday environment and nursing, which are traditionally female spheres, and highlights class injustice in the possibility of completing convalescence after sanitation. The mother role and the factual and low-key argumentation have two purposes in this speech – partly to adapt to the Parliament order, and partly to present the actual issue. The rhetorical strategy is about using the mother role as a persona to make the class perspective a matter of care, nursing and compassion.

Östlund’s entry into the Parliament debate can be described as a rhetorically fragile situation because she speaks for the very substance of her own motion while at the same time following the committee’s line, in which she herself is a part, and demands a rejection of it.

Keywords

Agda Östlund, Swedish parliament 1920s, women’s civil and democratic rights in Sweden, working-class health, tuberculosis, the mother role as a rhetorical strategy

‘Mister Speaker! I therefore have no claim’ – Agda Östlund’s entrance in the parliamentary debate in March 1922 in a historical and rhetorical perspective

> Det blev tyst och stilla i andra kammaren på lördagseftermiddagen då talmannen ropade ut i salen fru Östlunds namn. Riksdagsmännen samlade sig i en stor klunga framemot talarstolen, och när fru Östlund tog ordet

> rådde en andlös tystnad. Hon var också den första kvinna, som tagit ordet i riksdagen, och det märktes att riksdagsfarbröderna liksom kände att det var vad man kallar ett historiskt ögonblick.[1]
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> A hush fell over the Second Chamber on Saturday afternoon when the Speaker called out the name of Mrs Östlund. The Parliament members gathered in a large group in front of the podium, and when Mrs Östlund spoke, the silence was total. This was actually the first time a woman spoke in the Parliament, and it was noticeable that the male members somehow felt that it was what one might call a historic moment.

On Saturday, March 11, 1922, the Social Democrat Agda Östlund (1870–1942) speaks as the first female member of Swedish Parliament in the Second Chamber due to her own proposal for the state to take responsibility for arranging suitable work for tuberculosis patients when they leave the sanatorium, so that they can complete their convalescence.[1]

It may seem that democracy was once and for all established when women were finally included in the Parliament. But that was not the case. The question is how Agda Östlund acts in a formative historical stage after the first democratic election, how she finds a speaking position and how her speech can be understood in relation to the negotiation of the meaning of women's civil and democratic rights. At the time for her speech Sweden is being ruled for the second time by a Social Democratic government.

This article includes a contextualisation and a text analysis where I go into how the text relates to a rhetorical situation. I see Agda Östlund's utterances as rhetorical in accordance with the theoretical perspectives established by Lloyd F. Bitzer where the key concepts are rhetorical situation, problem, restrictions and audience. A rhetorical situation is a situation that can be changed through utterances. Problem refer to the current situation that motivates an utterance. Restrictions refer to what can be said in a given context. I will return to this later.

Agda Östlund's road to the podium

The first female member of the Parliament to reach the podium had grown up in the small town of Köping in Västmanland, a province in central Sweden. Her father, Per Lundgren, was employed in mechanical workshops and worked extra to reach the threshold for the right to vote, at this time 800 kronor per year (Flood, 1954, p.12). Her mother, Ulrika, was interested in politics and enjoyed reading Fredrika Bremer, a pioneer of the Swedish women's movement. Here, the young Agda Lundgren thus acquired a political awareness from home at an early age (Flood 1954, p. 119).

Her radical mother thought that it was important that she learned a trade, so that she would not be forced to marry in order to secure her livelihood. Agda Östlund trained as a seamstress (Flood, 1954, p. 14). At the age of 16 she rented a sewing machine at a cost of five kronor as a deposit and then five kronor per month (Benavente, 2020, p. 11).

[1] *Social-Demokraten,* 13.3.1922.

[1] From 1866 to 1971 the Swedish Parliament consisted of the First Chamber and the Second Chamber. The Second Chamber was directly elected by those entitled to vote, while the First Chamber was elected indirectly via the country's county council. A law fell unless both Chambers voted yes.

The family were active in the temperance movement, more precisely in the Gustaf Adolf lodge of the Good Templars in Köping, and Agda Östlund herself joined when she was 19 years old (Flood, 1954, p. 15)[1]. This is where she learned how to play an active part in organizations and how to speak in public. She has herself recounted how she forgot the first verse and ran off in shame, when she was to perform the poem 'Hjärtats hem' (Home of the heart) by King Charles XV of Sweden (Flood, 1954, 119)[2].

Soon, however, she would become a well regarded speaker and was entrusted with a number of different assignments. It was in the Good Templar lodge that Agda Östlund met her future husband, the metal worker Anders Östlund. In the mid-1890s, they moved to Stockholm, where they became members of the Fram lodge. In 1898 the daughter Hildegard was born.

Something that distinguishes the labour movement in the Nordic countries is the mobilization through popular movements. Class politics in the Nordic countries acquired, as the sociologist Göran Therborn puts it, a popular movement character. The temperance movement existed, Therborn continues, in the middle of this popular movement field and was until the First World War the largest popular movement (Therborn, 1994, p. 71).

Membership in both the labour movement and the temperance movement increased rapidly, and the two movements became closer as the temperance organizations shifted their focus from individual self-help to general temperance policy, and social democracy developed in a reformist direction with less emphasis on the revolutionary perspective. Many were active in both the labour movement and the temperance movement (Ambjörnsson, 1998, p. 258).

According to Ronny Ambjörnsson (1998), a specialist in the history of science and ideas, a specific culture of conscientiousness gradually developed through the temperance movement, the independent church movement, and the labour movement. Conscientiousness meant, according to Ambjörnsson, a consciously controlled life and awareness of the conditions of life needed to take a position vis-à-vis society – in short, the control over one's own actions that was needed to change society in an organized way and to develop as a person.

Dignity and solidarity were two important elements of this conscientiousness. The unionized worker has dignity, both in relation to the employer and in relation to the other workers. This dignity includes the same kind of conscientiousness that is characteristic of the temperance movement: sobriety, disciplined behaviour, and an emphasis on the value of knowledge and education (Ambjörnsson, 1998, p. 112).

It was in connection with the general strike for voting rights in May 1902 that Agda Östlund became seriously involved in politics, and a year later she joined the Social Democratic women's club in Stockholm (Flood, 1954, p. 22)[1].

Initially the support offered by the party to the Social Democratic women was limited. If any campaigning was to be carried out, they had to beg for money, mainly from the Social

[1] The Good templar movement had its roots in the United States. At first it was religiously influenced, but in the early 20th century it became religiously neutral

[2]In Hulda Flood's biography the title of the poem is 'O, var är ditt hem, jag frågade mitt hjärta'. This line forms part of the poem 'Hjärtats hem' (Home of the heart) by King Charles XV of Sweden. I therefore believe this is the poem that is referred to.

[1] The general strike took place 15–17 May 1902 in Sweden and was used to get universal and equal suffrage.

Democratic Party, but also from LO, the confederation of trade union organizations linked to the Swedish labour movement (Flood, 1954, p. 23). [1]

The Social Democratic Party was early characterized by a patriarchal structure, according to historian Christina Carlsson (1986, p. 139). One of the consequences of the division of the labour movement into a trade union and a political part was that it separated issues that dealt with paid work from other social activities, such as family, housework and children. The ideology and organization of the Social Democrats were based on men and wage labour. The women, who were both mothers and workers, became a weaker part in the organization, says Carlsson.

As a pioneer in the Social Democratic women's movement, Agda Östlund built up an extensive network of contacts. One of her early correspondents was Hulda Flood from the Karlstad women's club. Flood would later become the party's first female party secretary. 'You immediately felt that here you had a reliable friend and comrade, to whom you could turn with confidence. This meant an enormous amount to us, who at that time, with small means and against a lot of resistance, worked hard in the rural areas to get the women interested in political work', Hulda Flood said about her party comrade Agda Östlund (Flood, 1954, pp. 8-10).

When Agda Östlund appeared in public one of the first times in Stockholm, at a suffrage meeting in the autumn of 1907 with an audience of 2,000, she came straight from a day in the washhouse (Flood, 1954, p. 24). When a childhood friend, Svea Säfverström from Köping, later asked her how she found the courage to speak, she replied: 'if you really want something, you find the courage' (Flood, 1954, p. 15)[1].

For many years, Agda Östlund travelled around Sweden, campaigning for women's right to vote and organizing women from the working-class. At the same time, she wrote articles in *Morgonbris*, the magazine of the Social Democratic women's movement. Her articles covered both the activities of the Social Democratic women's clubs and the conditions experienced by the workers.

The Social Democratic men prioritized an extension of men's suffrage before the introduction of the women's and bourgeois LKPR (Landsföreningen för Kvinnans Politiska Rösträtt – National Association for Women's Political Suffrage) demanded suffrage for women on the same terms as men, which meant that the association did not take a clear position on universal suffrage. For a long time, there were financial barriers to suffrage.[1]

[1] The Swedish trade union confederation, LO, is an umbrella organization for trade unions that organize mainly blue-collar workers. It was founded in 1898 and started its work the year after. The original task was to coordinate the resources of the affiliated unions when conducting defense battles. LO is an abbreviation for Landsorganisationen i Sverige, National organization in Sweden.

[1] The childhood friend, Svea Säfverström, is mentioned in *Köpings Tidning* (20.12.1893) when she was elected bookkeeper for Köpings Sparbank. It also appears that her father, 'R. Säfverström', was employed as materials manager at Köpings Mekaniska Verkstad, the mechanical workshop where Agda Östlund's father also worked.

[1] In 1866, the Parliament with two Chambers was established. Anyone who earned 800 kronor per year, had wealth or owned agricultural property of a certain value was allowed to vote in the Second Chamber elections. The right to vote in the First Chamber was graded according to income. In 1909, universal suffrage was introduced for men. If you had not paid your taxes or were dependent on social services were not allowed to vote. In 1919, the Parliament decided on universal and equal suffrage for women and men. In 1921, women were able to use their right to vote in parliamentary elections for the first time.

For Agda Östlund and her female party comrades, it was a question of managing ideological, organizational, and strategic considerations in the struggle for the right to vote. The Social Democratic women agreed on a compromise: they would primarily push for the right to vote through their own organizations, but with the freedom for those who so wished to participate in bourgeois suffrage associations (Flood, 1960, p 63).

While, for example, her party colleague Ruth Gustafson abandoned the bourgeois LKPR after her proposal that LKPR would work for the abolition of the exclusion from suffrage of those receiving poor relief – Agda Östlund chose to continue cooperating with them (Rönnbäck, 2004, p. 88).

As a Social Democratic woman active in the struggle for the right to vote, she fully experienced the tensions of both the male labour movement and the bourgeois movement for women's right to vote. There was class conflict between suffragist women and gender conflict between Social Democrats. As a campaigner Östlund had to deal with these ideological cracks and contradictions in various contexts in order for her message to get through. Both the message and the description of the problem must be angled in different ways – Östlund's awareness of this is evident from the range of her styles. As a writer for the magazine of the Social Democratic women's movement, she used drastic images, irony, and sarcasm to stir up political consciousness among working-class women. As a subordinated female speaker in the public arena, she instead used a low-key, factual rhetorical strategy (Gustafson, 2018, p. 52).

Tuberculosis – an acute health problem

In addition to her positions of trust within the Social Democratic women's movement and the temperance movement, Agda Östlund was also a member of the board of the Stockholm city tuberculosis bureau (Stockholms stads tuberkulosbyrå). During the 19th and early 20th centuries, tuberculosis claimed more lives than any other disease. At the turn of the 20th century approximately one million people in Europe died each year from tuberculosis (Puranen & Zetterholm, 1987, p. 124).

Tuberculosis not only caused human suffering but also became a socio-economic problem, when people at their most productive age were snatched away, leaving families behind (Uddenberg, 2015, p. 47).

Tuberculosis is a social disease, largely linked to the environment in which people live. It is an infection that is spread from person to person, or indirectly via bacteria in milk, dust etc. Housing density and the quality of housing play a major role in the spread of the disease, which is not highly contagious, but dependent on more lasting contacts for it to be transmitted. Tuberculosis is also related to nutrition – people with good nutritional status are significantly more resistant than those who are malnourished (Puranen, 1984, p. 5).

The Stockholm that received Agda and Anders Östlund was experiencing rapid growth associated with industrialization and characterized by overcrowding and housing shortages. Most workers, with their family, lived in single room accommodation (Puranen, 1984, p. 343)[1].

[1] Three types of apartment dominated in the working-class neighbourhoods of 1890s Stockholm: one room and kitchen, two rooms and kitchen and a room with a porcelain stove but without a kitchen (Torsten Gårdlund, *Industrialismens samhälle*, Stockholm 1942, p. 380).

Many workers were forced to sleep at their workplaces (Tallerud, 1999, p. 185). There are reported cases of ten people sharing a room of twenty square metres. It is estimated that 25 percent of workers in Stockholm towards the end of the 19th century lived as lodgers (Puranen, 1984, p 256). Housing was often substandard, damp, cold and lacking in ventilation (Puranen, 1984, p. 343).

The city was completely inside the old customs, what is now called the inner city. Södermalm and Kungsholmen were the most distinct working-class districts because most of the factories were built there. The workers tried to live as close to the workplace as possible in order to get there on foot. Tram travel became far too expensive (Lindgren, 2014, pp. 73-77). That Kungsholmen – the King's Isle – was known as Svältholmen – Starvation Isle – says something about its social status (Puranen & Zetterholm, 1987, p. 115).

Of the 10,067 who died of pneumonia in Sweden in 1905, a majority, 54 % belonged to the 'poor', according to the Royal Majesty's report on the tuberculosis issue (Puranen & Zetterholm, 1987, p.114). In Stockholm, mortality was higher than in the country as a whole. The National Board of Medicine's statistics for the year 1890 state the mortality rate in infectious diseases to 54 per 10,000 inhabitants, against 24 in Stockholm County (Lindgren, 2014, p. 77).

The work environment might also contribute to the spread of tuberculosis. At this time Stockholm was the country's largest industrial city and factories and residential buildings coexisted in the same neighbourhood. Cleanliness and air quality in the workplace were poor, which is clear not least from numerous local agreements from this time, specifying how often cleaning should take place (Lindgren, 2018, p. 11). Inhalation of different types of dust – for example lead dust in the printing works, tobacco dust in the tobacco factories and textile fibres in the textile factories – increased the workers' susceptibility to the tubercle bacterium (Berggren & Greiff, 1990, p. 170).

Tuberculosis was spread from person to person through coughing, but could also be spread via, for example, milk from cows suffering from udder tuberculosis. The most important preventive measures were therefore to do with hygiene. Patients who were cared for at home had to cough and spit into special containers containing disinfectant, and if they died their clothes would not be used by others until after thorough cleaning. In schools, factories, meeting rooms and railway carriages sick people's expectorations would also have to be made safe (Uddenberg, 2015, p. 48).

By the end of the 19th century, Sweden's first sanatorium had opened in the mountains in the north of Sweden. Subsequently, state owned sanatoriums were built in each county, in rural and often upland areas. In many ways the care was reminiscent of that of spas and health resorts, but in the sanatoriums it was the air, not the water, that was to promote health (Uddenberg, 2015, p. 49)[1]. At the same time, preventive efforts were carried out through so called dispensaries, or tuberculosis bureaux, which functioned as a kind of advice agencies that

[1] From the beginning of the 20th century there were four sanatoriums in Sweden for the care of mainly poor tuberculosis patients. They had been funded by public fundraising. The treatment, diet and leisure activities offered were the same regardless of the patients' ability to pay. However, the differences in room distribution remained. Patients were offered a private, semi-private or public room. The poor paid for their rooms through subsidies. According to the statutes, it was clear that financial reasons should not be an obstacle to being considered for a care place. (Puranen 1984, p. 329).

provided education and information. One goal was to detect early tuberculosis, so that it could be treated before it got hold of the patient. One method used was radiological examination: a weak X-ray through the chest was aimed at a fluorescent screen where the doctor could detect 'shadows on the lungs' which could be tuberculosis (Uddenberg, 2015, p. 48).

The tuberculosis bureaux cooperated with the sanatoriums and were not infrequently established in connection with them. Stockholm city tuberculosis bureau, where, as we have seen, Agda Östlund was a board member, were open four days a week. Those who were diagnosed with tuberculosis were offered a free spit bottle, a spittoon, a toothbrush, and a laundry bag, as well as an information brochure about the disease (Lindhagen, 1910, p. 13).

The lack of knowledge was a problem, not least among those who were particularly vulnerable and lived in appalling hygiene conditions and great poverty. The many magazines, brochures, and lectures that were intended to disseminate information to the public often contained language that was difficult to access. Victor Berglund, a doctor and the director of Sundsholm's sanatorium, near Halmstad on the West Coast, commented: 'The language and method of presentation used by scientists will not be understood by the common people, and it is precisely these who harbour most of the sources of infection and need help first' (Berglund, 1910, p. 13).

Criticism soon emerged that the extensive investment in sanatorium care did not yield the expected results. According to several doctors, the problem was principally that working-class tuberculosis patients were unable to complete their convalescence appropriately after they had been discharged from the sanatoriums. Many were forced to return to hard work, overcrowding and substandard hygiene conditions.

The rhetorical situation

In order for a situation to be considered rhetorical, it must, according to rhetoric researcher Lloyd F. Bitzer, contain a problem or other factor that warrants expression, have an audience with the ability to affect the problem, and finally incorporate all the constraints that the speaker has to take into account if he or she wants to be able to convince the audience to approach the problem in the way the speaker wishes. Rhetorical acts, according to Bitzer, are thus first and foremost anchored in a historical context and constitute an answer to a specific situation in this context (Bitzer, 1968, p. 3).

A rhetorical situation is a language situation where a speaker can influence the participants' beliefs and actions. The first element of the rhetorical situation is the rhetorical problem. It is an imperfection that has an urgent character: it is a defect, an obstacle, something that is in a way that it should not be. In almost all contexts, there will be many different problems, but not all are part of a rhetorical situation, not all are rhetorical problems. A problem that cannot be influenced by rhetoric is not a rhetorically problem, says Bitzer (1968, p. 6)[2].

[2] According to Bitzer, things that happen with necessity and that cannot be changed – such as death, winter and certain natural disasters – are examples of intrusive problems but not rhetorical intrusive problems. But there he is wrong: a natural disaster that has occurred cannot be abolished, but the situation can be improved through a wise rhetorical effort of, for example, a deliberative (advisory) nature. This can be compared with Agda Östlund's speech against a decision already made by the committee – which thus should not be able to change but which she still creates a rhetorical situation around.

Critics have pointed out that the very identification and description of the problem is part of the rhetorical act. For good reasons they believe that Bitzer, through his definition of the rhetoric problem and the rhetorical situation, does not pay enough attention to the actor setting the agenda by selecting facts and events, interpreting them and giving them a specific meaning by depicting them linguistically and symbolically. Rhetoric is about linguistically and symbolically creating attention for a specific situation and giving it a specific meaning, according to rhetoric researcher Richard E. Vatz (1973, p. 161).

The second element of the rhetorical situation is the audience. If a speech is not aimed at an audience that actually has the ability in some way to influence the rhetorical problem, then it is not a matter of rhetoric, Bitzer says (1968, p. 8). For an audience to be considered rhetorical, however, it does not necessarily have to manifest itself as a homogenous collection of people. The rhetorical audience may well consist of only a part of the total audience who listens to the message.

According to Bitzer, the third element of the rhetorical situation is the set of constraints (1968, p. 8). The constraints constitute a context that the speaker must relate to in his or her speech, and represent a large and varied group of circumstances. It can be a question of doxa, hegemony, attitudes and traditions that the speaker must consider in order to get the message across.

All rhetorical situations emerge and develop to reach the point when a speech is most appropriate or effective. According to Bitzer, recurring and comparable situations create traditions and expectations of the content and form of a speech. Bitzer states that a good speaker must carefully examine the type of situation he finds himself in and, after consideration of possible answers to the given situation, choose what best suits the speaker's agenda. Bitzer sees a predictability in the rhetoric: if you read the situation well, you should – in this reasoning – be able to predict what will happen next (1968, p. 9).

The debate on tuberculosis and parliamentary rhetoric

As regards the rhetorical situation described by Bitzer that the Social Democrat Östlund faced in her first appearance in the parliament the identification of the tuberculosis' relationship to class was by all accounts an important factor. Firstly, class was a factor in terms of the prevalence of tuberculosis, which could be linked to general sanitary and economic living standards, in that poverty and deficient sanitation provided a breeding ground for tuberculosis. Secondly, class was significant within tuberculosis care, in that working-class patients found it harder to complete their period of convalescence after the sanatorium stay.

Debate about the problem of many tuberculosis patients being unable to complete their period of convalescence, following a period in the sanatorium, had been going on for a long time.[1] Gustaf Wahl, then a Social Democratic member of the Stockholm City Council, had proposed that the City of Stockholm and the state would help arrange suitable work for people recovering

[1] In 'Arbetslöshet och tuberkulos', in *Svenska Nationalföreningen mot Tuberkulos Kvartalstidskrift*, 1:1912, Emanuel Lindhagen argued for the introduction of labour colonies as a solution to the problem. Victor Berglund addressed the problem in several publications and launched his vision of smallholdings as a solution (*Några reflektioner öfver arbetarhygien och tuberkulos*, Halmstad 1907, *Några reflektioner öfver tuberculos och tuberculosvård*, Halmstad 1910 and *Den vita pesten. Hur lungsot uppkommer, sprides, utvecklas och motarbetas*, Stockholm 1916). Victor Berglund was interviewed in the newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* 10.7.1908 about his thoughts on tuberculosis care, under the heading 'The fight against the enemy of the people. Conversation with the tuberculosis-insurance doctor'.

from tuberculosis. In his motion to the City Council, Wahl had referred to the previously mentioned Victor Berglund's program of rural smallholdings for tuberculosis patients. Wahl also reported on his own observations of tuberculosis care in connection with a visit to Söderby hospital in Stockholm.

> Jag har sett patienter lämna sjukhuset relativt återställda och som, om de haft möjligheter att erhålla något lättare arbete samt i övrigt möjlighet att leva under något så när goda hygieniska och ekonomiska förhållanden, säkerligen skulle ha kunnat vidmakthålla den återställda hälsa, som de vunnit på sjukhuset. Istället ha de merendels, omedelbart efter utskrivningen från sjukhuset, kastats in i sina gamla yrken eller mången gång ännu tyngre arbete, än de förut innehaft, med resultat att de om någon tid nödgats återvända till sjukhuset, fullständigt nedbrutna och till utseendet liknande skuggor av vad de förut varit. Sådana patienter repa sig sällan mera från sin sjukdom.[2]
>
> I have seen patients leave the hospital fairly well recovered, who, if they had been able to find somewhat lighter work and an opportunity to live in reasonably good hygienic and economic conditions could certainly have maintained their restored health, which they had gained at the hospital. Instead, they have mostly, immediately after leaving hospital, been thrown into their old trades or often even heavier work than previously, with the result that at some point they have had to return to the hospital, completely broken down and looking like shadows of what they were before. Such patients rarely recover from their illness.

The proposals tabled in 1922 by Gustaf Wahl in the First Chamber and by Agda Östlund in the Second Chamber of the Parliament were based on Wahl's previous proposal to the Stockholm City Council, with the difference that now only the state and not the municipality is asked to take responsibility for providing work for people suffering from tuberculosis. Several passages in Wahl's motion to the Parliament are identical to those he previously used in the motion to the Stockholm City Council. In his motion to the First Chamber, Wahl demands that the parliament request that the state investigate what measures could be taken to prepare suitable work for a convalescent center for tuberculosis. Östlund's motion, which is dated five days later, refers only to Wahl's motion and uses the same claim.[1]

Both Gustaf Wahl and Agda Östlund were newcomers to the Parliament and both had a strong commitment to improving tuberculosis care. The problem of working-class tuberculosis patients not being able to complete their convalescence after their sanatorium stay was still unresolved. Society had not yet organized lighter work for the group of tuberculosis patients who lived in poverty.

The mother role as a rhetorical strategy

In the following, I want to test the idea that Agda Östlund makes use of the role of mother as a persona and situates the issue of tuberculosis care in the home and the everyday environment

[2] 'Om åtgärder i syfte att Stockholms kommun och staten må anskaffa åt tuberkulossjuka konvalescenter', proposal put forward in the Stockholm City Council in 1915, by Gustaf Wahl.
[1] 'Angående beredande av lämpligt arbete åt tuberkulossjuka konvalescenter', proposal put forward in Second Chamber, 1922, nr 162 by Agda Östlund.

and nursing – which are traditionally female spheres – as a rhetorical strategy to enable her to assert herself and make her voice heard in a patriarchal rhetorical forum.

According to the rhetoric researcher Brigitte Mral, the concept of persona can be defined as an external character which, in a complicated process, on the one hand is to some extent imposed on the individual by the environment, but which on the other hand is just as much the result of the individual's own choice. This character forms a mask to hold in front of and speak through. According to Mral, the choice of persona can be seen as a strategic adaptation to the expectations and rules of the environment (1997, p. 29). In order to be able to give the words an impact in a situation of subordination, women choose roles, identities that are acceptable to women, or at least comprehensible to the respective audience. This role-play does not mean denying, but rather varying and developing different aspects of one's own identity, which sometimes becomes a game with the audience's prejudices (Mral, 1995, p. 110).

According to Mral, a characteristic of the Swedish suffrage women was that they had chosen socially acceptable roles. This rhetorical strategy was a consequence of the suffrage women arguing out of a disadvantage and the opponents portraying them as threatening subversives. Much of these women's argumentation can be seen as a forced defensive stance. One of these socially acceptable roles that women of suffrage had chosen was the role of mother, or the maternal attitude, in which the refining influence of motherhood on social life was emphasized.

The idea of women's world-improving mission, motherhood and the safe home, against the adversary's accusations of subversive tendencies, had recurred not least with Ellen Key, who had summarized her utopia of women's importance to good society in the metaphor of 'mother of society'. Ellen Key was a Swedish feminist who had great influence as a writer and lecturer. Just as women build the good home for their own family, they should also be able to build the good society for all, she had written in a manifest from 1896. The suffrage women had used notions of home as the lost paradise that could be recaptured. In this discourse, the woman had represented the good home that had been lost in the new era (Florin, 2006, p. 230).

Mral, who has studied the rhetorical strategies of female speakers during times when demanding a place in public was seen as unnatural behavior for a woman, connects the mother role, or motherly attitude, with the use of a humility topos – to indicate that one really wants to be silent, that one does not really have the ability to speak, but that one forced by the circumstances, or that you speak for others, that you take on the cause of others or serve a higher purpose (Mral, 2003, p. 42).

Agda Östlund's speech in the parliament could be linked to humility topoi of this kind, but it has a completely different tone and meaning here. This is a new historical situation, when women gain access to the public through the democratic breakthrough with the newfound right to vote and stand for election. The question of the use of humility topoi also gets a specific tone from the fact that Agda Östlund is a socialist and part of a movement. That Östlund makes herself a mouthpiece for the working-class and the fact that she does not speak for herself does not necessarily mean in that perspective that her use of humility means that she takes on a submissive female role. Rather, it means that she speaks for others out of ideological conviction, that the rhetoric is driven and characterized by a commitment to the cause, in this case helping the tuberculosis sufferers.

> När jag nu begärde ordet i denna fråga, så var det icke för att tala för utskottets yrkande. Men jag har velat begagna detta tillfälle att å deras

> vägnar, som motionen avser att skydda, rikta en den varmaste vädjan till regeringen att, då nationalföreningens utredning föreligger färdig, taga sig an denna sak och att, för att än en gång citera utskottet, 'så fort förhållandena medgiva' ett förslag i motionens syfte må vara att förutse. [2]
>
> When I asked for the floor on this issue, it was not to speak in the favor of the committee's request. But I have wanted to take this opportunity to address, on their behalf, who the motion seeks to protect, the warmest appeal to the government, once the national association's investigation is complete, address this matter and, to quote the committee once again, 'as soon as circumstances permit' a proposal for the purpose of the motion may be to anticipate.

The use of humility topoi, which Mral has observed as a rhetorical strategy among female speakers throughout history, thus acquires a specific tone with regard to the Social Democrat Agda Östlund at a new historical stage when women conquered the right to vote and stand for election to the parliament.[3] As previously pointed out, the very identification and description of the rhetorical problem can be seen as part of the rhetorical act. The speaker can set the agenda by selecting facts and events, interpreting them and giving them a specific meaning by depicting them linguistically and symbolically. Östlund selects the tuberculosis issue, focuses on the home, the everyday environment and nursing and highlights a class injustice in terms of the possibility of completing the convalescence after the sanatorium stay.

As new members of the parliament, Wahl and Östlund take the opportunity to raise the yet unsolved issue of tuberculosis care. Wahl is more or less reusing the six-and-a-half-year-old motion from Stockholm City Council. The introduction that more and more doctors have pointed out that tuberculosis care is expensive and ineffective is the same. Wahl also refers to the same lecture and uses the same quote from the doctor Victor Berglund. In the paragraph that deals with own experiences and experiences of tuberculosis care at Söderby Hospital, the only difference is that in the parliament motion it is clearly stated that Wahl himself lived there as a patient and apparently was himself affected by tuberculosis.[4]

Östlund's motion in the Second Chamber does not contain any of his own formulations but only refers to Wahl's motion and has the same claim as him.[5] The first thing Östlund does is to ally herself with a man, also in the First Chamber, and follow in his footsteps. To refer only to Wahl's motion could be seen as a defensive strategy, a strategy of humility. It may therefore seem that Östlund is just jumping on a train that is already rolling, but in fact it is she, and not

[2] 'Angående lämpligt arbete åt tuberkulossjuka konvalescenter, lördagen den 11 mars' in *Riksdagens protokoll vid lagtima riksmötet år 1922. Andra kammaren. Andra bandet*, Stockholm 1922, nr 16, p. 64.

[3] This strategy has not only been used by female speakers but is part of an old rhetorical tradition to 'captatio benevolentiae', ie. win the goodwill of the audience. See E.R. Curtius, 1945, chapter 'Topoi'.

[4] 'Om åtgärder i syfte att Stockholms kommun och staten må anskaffa åt tuberkulossjuka konvalescenter', proposal put forward in Stockholm City Council 1915, nr 25 by Gustaf Wahl; 'Om vidtagande av åtgärder för beredande av lämpligt arbete åt tuberkulossjuka konvalescenter', motion in First Chamber, 1922, nr 36 by Gustaf Wahl; For information about Söderby hospital in Stockholm, see särtryck ur Svenska Nationalföreningens mot tuberkulos kvartalsskrift, issue 4, 1935. Alf Gullbring writes about the history of the hospital in conjunction with the 25 year anniversary. The inauguration took place October, 1910. It was then the country's largest tuberculosis hospital with 452 care places. 'Sun and light, outdoor walks, walks and dietary treatment were the predominant things', according to Gullbring. He writes about the treatment methods that applied at the opening and then explain how the treatment methods have changed over the years.

[5] 'Angående beredande av lämpligt arbete åt tuberkulossjuka konvalescenter', proposal in Second Chamber, 1922, nr 162 by Agda Östlund.

Wahl, who speaks out in the Chamber – even if she demands a rejection – and raises the issue and brings it up in the public, which was clearly central to their common strategy. The purpose of the motion was to shed light to an old issue that was still unsolved. The one who fulfills that purpose is Östlund, not Wahl. The motion itself does not attract any attention to the issue.

Östlund is aware that she, as the first female member of the Parliament to enter the podium, will arouse interest in the mass media and she uses it to shed light on the issue. In an article entitled 'How it feels – to be one of the four', published in *Morgonbris* in February 1922, shortly after the opening of the Parliament, she describes with an ironic tone how the journalists ask questions to the female members as if they had never worked with politics in the past and that the newly elected thirty male members in this respect have been 'sadly neglected'.[6]

With the role of mother as a rhetorical strategy, Östlund thus connects the tuberculosis issue to the home and everyday environment and nursing when she highlights the difficulties of completing the convalescence after the sanatorium stay for tuberculosis patients from the working-class.

> Men om den sålunda vårdade icke kan behålla den hälsa han återvunnit eller åtminstone den förbättring han undergått på sanatoriet, så är det ofta beroende på de omständigheter, som möta honom eller henne, då de återvända till vardagsförhållandena. Det är oftast brist på arbete och därmed brist på allt. Det är, som någon sade till mig här om dagen: de får sörja för mycket. Detta är nog sanningen i all sin bitterhet.[7]
>
> But if the person thus cared for cannot maintain the health he has regained or at least the improvement he has undergone in the sanatorium, it is often due to the circumstances which meet him or her when they return to everyday conditions. It is usually a lack of work and thus a lack of everything. It is, as someone told me the other day: they have to take care of a lot. This is probably the truth in all its bitterness.

This can be compared with the following speaker, the left-wing socialist Ivar Vennerström, who places the issue in the medical department world when he talks about his experiences of tuberculosis care in the County Council in the province Västernorrland in the north of Sweden.

Östlund substantiates her argument by referring to medical experts, investigations, motions and committee reports. For example, when she refers to a statement by the doctor Georg Kjellin, who is the director of the Stockholm city tuberculosis bureau, to emphasize that the issue is still relevant.

> Huru aktuell denna fråga är t.ex. inom läkarkretsar, fick jag nytt bevis på genom ett häromdagen gjort uttalande, av föreståndaren för Stockholms stads tuberkulosbyrå doktor Kjellin. Han sade: 'Om jag haft pengar, skulle jag för länge sedan på egen risk ställt i gång med en dylik arbetskoloni.' Man ställer sig sannerligen icke beredd att för saken till och med offra av vad man själv har om man icke känner, att det är en nödvändig sak, som

[6] *Morgonbris* 2:1922, p. 2.
[7] 'Angående lämpligt arbete åt tuberkulossjuka konvalescenter, lördagen den 11 mars' in *Riksdagens protokoll vid lagtima riksmötet år 1922. Andra kammaren. Andra bandet*, Stockholm 1922, nr 16, p. 63.

> behöver göras. Men så har också denne läkare sitt arbete på tuberkulosbyrån uteslutande bland de mindre bemedlade.[8]
>
> How relevant is this question in medical circles I received new proof of this through a statement made the other day, by the director of the City of Stockholm's tuberculosis bureau, doctor Kjellin. He said: 'If I had money, I would have started such a working colony at my own risk a long time ago.' One is certainly not prepared to sacrifice for the cause even of what one has if one does not feel that it is a necessary thing that needs to be done. But this doctor also has his work at the tuberculosis office exklusively among the less well-off.

The objective and distant style can be linked to the language view that dominated the labour movement and the temperance movement.[9] With the political scientist Kari Palonen, it can also be said that maintaining distance to both the subject under discussion and between members is a fundamental condition for parliamentary work (Palonen, 2019, p. 7). Östlund shows that she masters and adapts to the parliamentary situation. That she accepts the parliamentary order is explicitly manifested when she demands the rejection of her own motion, and thus adapts to the parliament colleagues and the committee's decisions, a committee in which she herself is a member[10].

Objectivity and distance as a rhetorical strategy

The objective and distant style can also be linked to Östlund representing a party that wants to achieve respectability in the parliamentary arena. Ever since Hjalmar Branting's entry as the first Social Democrat in the Parliament in 1897, the party's parliamentary work has been characterized by 'formal adaptation, correctness and moderation', according to political scientist Ragnar Edenman (1946, p. 1). The Social Democratic parliamentary group also distinguished itself early on for its willingness to compromise and cooperate, and the Social Democratic members have been perceived as knowledgeable and hard-working, according to the historian Kjell Östberg (1990, p. 274). When Agda Östlund makes her debut as a speaker in the Parliament, the country has been governed since the 1921 election by a Social Democratic government with Hjalmar Branting as Prime Minister. This is the second time that Sweden is governed by a Social Democratic government.

The fact that Ivar Vennerström allows himself to go against the committee, be a little bolder and not adapt in the same way to the Parliament order can, in addition to being a man and more experienced – he has been a member of the Parliament's Second Chamber since 1915 – also probably be linked to the fact that he represents a breakaway party to the left of the Social Democrats who can reserve the right to oppose the parliamentary framework. Shortly before the famine riots of 1917, when workers across the country revolted against a policy they believed disadvantaged them and favored the bread barons, he had in a pamphlet criticized the 'parliamentary superstition of the Social Democratic right' and argued that direct struggle and

[8] 'Angående lämpligt arbete åt tuberkulossjuka konvalescenter, lördagen den 11 mars' in *Riksdagens protokoll vid lagtima riksmötet år 1922. Andra kammaren. Andra bandet*, Stockholm 1922, nr 16, p. 63.

[9] The language view that dominated the labour movement and temperance movement aimed at increased discipline, order and conscientiousness. It was about learning to argue objectively and restrainedly without getting upset. The distant style could be reconciled with the pursuit of respectability that was important for the early labour movement. (Olle Josephson Olle Josephson, *Mäster Palm talar*, Uppsala 1991, pp. 73).

[10] The Parliament in Sweden traditionally has standing committees whose task is to prepare matters for decision.

direct action through strong trade union and cooperative organizations was the most viable path to what he called the 'costly misery'(Wennerström, 1916, p.10). In this context, it can be mentioned that during the violent demonstrations of women in the spring of 1917, Agda Östlund was one of several leading female Social Democrats who actively acted to stop further demonstrations (Östberg, 1997, p. 34)[11]. It should nevertheless be emphasized that Vennerström also follows the Parliament order – the issue is not decided until the vote has been completed. Vennerström thus follows the rules of the game even if he goes against the committee's statement. The vote gives the result 122–51 in favor of the committee.

Vennerström, who at the time is the editor of the daily newspaper *Nya Norrland* and who was previously a member of the Social Democrats' party board, had at the party split in 1917 become the leader of the left-wing socialist parliamentarians. Four years later, in 1921, he had belonged to the fraction that opposed the Social Democratic Left Party's transition to Leninism.

The disagreement, the pro et contra or for and against debate, defines Parliament as an institution according to Palonen and the rhetoric researcher Cornelia Ilie believes that there is an antagonistic spirit in parliamentary rhetoric based on the assumption that there are always two different views on each political issue that can be debated for and against (2016, p. 134). With Palonen and Ilie, it can be said that even though Vennerström, who thus speaks after Östlund, praises her for her 'feminine warm speech' and both run with a commitment to the issue itself, they are on different sides in the current debate.[12] While Vennerström demands approval for the motion, Östlund thus chooses not to make any demand but stands behind the committee's statement. In his speech, Vennerström in fact directly criticizes Östlund when he describes it as a 'exaggerated formalism, when for purely formal reasons one demands the rejection of such a proposal, which, as I said, received the warmest agreement from the entire committee, who dealt with the motion in question'.[13]

The words 'formal' and 'formalistic' and similar expressions are used in different ways and are flexible concepts in the debate. At the end of his speech, Vennerström uses further variants when on one occasion he urges members to 'leave the formalities' and on another occasion he urges them to 'leave the formulas' to instead choose to approve the motion.[14] The right-wing Axel Eurén, who is chairman of the committee and hospital doctor at the Jönköping hospital, opposes Vennerström's claim that the committee only based its decision on formal reasons. In fact, the committee has had a real reason for its decision because it is aware that the National Association against Tuberculosis is already investigating the issue. From a rhetorical point of view, it can be said that the Eurén makes the formal reason a real reason. Here, Eurén and Östlund agree. It is Vennerström who deviates.

Although Östlund uses a similar wording as Vennerström that the committee only had formal reasons for its rejection request, it takes on a different meaning for her. The committee has assessed the actual issue in the motion as important, she points out and quotes from the report.

[11] After the violent demonstrations of women in early May 1917, Agda Östlund tries to avert further demonstrations through a statement in *Södertälje Tidning* (11.5.1917).
[12] 'Angående lämpligt arbete åt tuberkulossjuka konvalescenter, lördagen den 11 mars' in *Riksdagens protokoll vid lagtima riksmötet år 1922. Andra kammaren. Andra bandet*, Stockholm 1922, nr 16, p. 64.
[13] 'Angående lämpligt arbete åt tuberkulossjuka konvalescenter, lördagen den 11 mars' in *Riksdagens protokoll vid lagtima riksmötet år 1922. Andra kammaren. Andra bandet*, Stockholm 1922, nr 16, p. 64.
[14] 'Angående lämpligt arbete åt tuberkulossjuka konvalescenter, lördagen den 11 mars' in *Riksdagens protokoll vid lagtima riksmötet år 1922. Andra kammaren. Andra bandet*, Stockholm 1922, nr 16, p. 65.

> Men som var och en, som läser betänkandet, själv kan se, så finns det icke en rad i det hela, som tyder på, att utskottet funnit saken för obetydlig eller oberättigad, utan tvärtom möter förståelse och sympati för motionens syfte. Och jag skall be att få citera några ord i utskottsbetänkandet, som bevisar detta. Så säger utskottet alldeles i början av sitt utlåtande: 'Det i förevarande motion avhandlade ämnet är enligt utskottets mening av den vikt och beskaffenhet, att det måste anses vara förtjänt av statsmakternas synnerliga beaktande.' Och när utskottet senare har utvecklat sin tanke om saken, säger utskottet: 'Av vad i det föregående anförts torde vara tydligt, att utskottet finner en utredning rörande lämpligaste sättet att åstadkomma vård åt tuberkulösa konvalescenter vara i hög grad av behovet påkallad.'[15]
>
> But as anyone who reads the report can see for themselves, there is not a sentence in the whole that indicates that the committee has found the matter too insignificant or unjustified, but on the contrary meets with understanding and sympathy for the purpose of the motion. And I will ask to quote a few words in the committee report which proves this. This is what the committee says at the very beginning of its statement: 'The subject matter discussed in the present motion is, in the committee's opinion, of such importance and nature that it must be considered worthy of the special consideration of the government.' And when the committee has later developed its thinking on the matter, the committee says: 'From what has been stated above, it should be clear that the committee finds an investigation concerning the most appropriate way to provide care for tuberculous convalescent centers to be much needed.'

Östlund is ideological in a specific way that differs from, for example, the male communist speakers. Her argument is low-key, factual and logical, which could be seen as a response to the notion that women cannot think logically. She presents her political agenda in a distant way and does not seek confrontation. The rhetorical strategy is about using the mother role as a persona to make the class perspective a matter of care, nursing and compassion.

> Jag skall icke säga mer om motionen eller saken, och jag tror, att kanske kammarens ledamöter ändå i grund och botten ha tänkt på denna sak förut och kanske äro eniga med motionärerna. Men jag vill bara säga det, att den starka motiveringen till de motioner, som väckts i denna fråga, är grundad på mångårig erfarenhet och övertygelse, att snart [sic] hjälp är dubbel hjälp. Och jag tror, att ingen, som kommit i någon beröring med tuberkulossjukvård, kan stå likgiltig eller tveksam inför den påtagliga nödvändigheten att snarast bringa denna fråga till lösning.[16]
>
> I shall say no more about the motion or the matter, and I think that perhaps the members of the Chamber have nevertheless basically thought of this matter before and perhaps agree with us who are behind the proposal. But I just want to say that the strong motivation for the motions raised in this matter is based on many years of experience and conviction that soon help

[15] 'Angående lämpligt arbete åt tuberkulossjuka konvalescenter, lördagen den 11 mars' in *Riksdagens protokoll vid lagtima riksmötet år 1922. Andra kammaren. Andra bandet*, Stockholm 1922, nr 16, p. 62.
[16] 'Angående lämpligt arbete åt tuberkulossjuka konvalescenter, lördagen den 11 mars' in *Riksdagens protokoll vid lagtima riksmötet år 1922. Andra kammaren. Andra bandet*, Stockholm 1922, nr 16, p. 63.

> is double help. And I believe that no one who has come into contact with tuberculosis care can be indifferent or doubtful to the apparent necessity of solving this issue as soon as possible.

The mother role and the factual and low-key argumentation have two functions for Agda Östlund in this speech – partly to adapt to the Parliament order, and partly to present the actual issue. After Östlund appealed for an urgent solution to the issue of tuberculosis care, she concludes with the words: 'Mister Speaker! I therefore have no claim.'[17]

Concluding remarks

In her debut appearance in the Second Chamber of the Parliament, the Social Democrat Agda Östlund uses the mother role as a rhetorical strategy, connects the issue of tuberculosis to the home and everyday environment and nursing, which are traditionally female spheres, and highlights class injustice in the possibility of completing convalescence after sanitation.

The mother role and the factual and low-key argumentation have two purposes in this speech – partly to adapt to the Parliament order, and partly to present the actual issue. The rhetorical strategy is about using the mother role as a persona to make the class perspective a matter of care, nursing and compassion.

Östlund's entry into the Parliament debate can be described as a rhetorically fragile situation because she speaks for the very substance of her own motion while at the same time following the committee's line, in which she herself is a part, and demands a rejection of it.

The speech can also be seen in relation to the negotiation of the meaning of women's newly acquired civil and democratic rights in a formative historical stage. It is important for Östlund to adapt to the Parliament agenda to find a position but at the same time do so in a new way through the issue – the class perspective on tuberculosis care – and the way she does it, through the mother role.

Author Bio

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[17] 'Angående lämpligt arbete åt tuberkulossjuka konvalescenter, lördagen den 11 mars' in *Riksdagens protokoll vid lagtima riksmötet år 1922. Andra kammaren. Andra bandet*, Stockholm 1922, nr 16, p. 64.

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Conceptual Art and Galvanizing

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With an Introduction by **Colby King**, University of South Carolina, Upstate

Introduction

By Colby King

Art is what you can get away with.
- Nelson Oestreich (1932–2014), as quoted in the story

When I was in middle school and my Dad was working midnight shifts at the mill, we'd put a box fan in the hallway to cover the noise my brother, mom, and I would make while Dad slept. Even with the fan running, though, he struggled to adjust his sleep schedule, and we all spent those weeks grumpier. Those shifts were scheduled on a rotation, but Dad explained that when a manager was being particularly difficult, he could use the threat of placing a worker on midnight, basically as a punishment. The midnight shift came to represent to me the inhumanity and alienation of steel mill work.

So, as I started reading, 'Conceptual Art and Galvanizing,' a deeply human story about steel mill work, by Dr. James A. Perkins, the first detail that drew me in was that the protagonist (Dr. Perkins, or a version of himself) was unfamiliar with the concept when a steel mill worker told him the local mill was hiring 'for midnight' (3). I realized I knew what working 'midnight' meant, even though the protagonist, a professor, apparently did not! As the mill worker explains, it meant working 'Third turn, graveyard shift, midnight—11:00 pm to 7:00 am.' In this story, Jim (as I came to know him after I graduated college) takes on a summer of working midnight shift at a local galvanizing plant, ostensibly to show the guys at the bar that a professor could do more than just work with his mind (but also probably for the adventure of it).

Jim must have anticipated how this story would resonate with me when he shared it. He knew I was the son of a steel mill worker. I had told him that my Dad was a laborer who tended to the furnaces at Armco Steel (later AK Steel and now Cleveland-Cliffs, Butler Works) in Butler, PA, and had explained proudly that my Dad was a member of his union, which is now UAW Local 3303. I have written about my Dad's work with the furnaces here (King, 2019). This story is set at Young Galvanizing, Inc., in Pulaski, PA. The two mills are just 41 miles from each other.

I was not, however, the type of student from a working-class background who showed up to class in all the working-class regalia. I was never interested in the repair projects Dad would work on in the garage. I was more intimidated by than appreciative of loud engines and machinery. Even though I had decent hand-eye coordination, playing on baseball and basketball teams up to high school, I handled hammers and wrenches clumsily. To me, an active mill was loud, hot, and overwhelming. I was not like Renny Christopher (2009) on campus in carpentry clothes. On campus, I could pass as middle class. I was wearing clothes

from Hollister and Abercrombie & Fitch that my peers did not know my mom had bought for me on credit. I had always been a good student, was comfortable in that role, and had even been student council president in high school.

Unlike many of my peers at our small liberal arts college, though, I did not have the same social or cultural capital, nor did I have a financial safety net. By my sophomore year I was taking on student loan debt to pay tuition. Over time I became more aware of how my perspective was informed by my family's class status. I was drawn to sociology in part because of how the discipline helps us understand how changing contexts shapes people's opportunities. I had witnessed how deindustrialization in western Pennsylvania seemed to have made my Dad's job at the mill more precarious. I was further informed by mom's experiences working in retail and occasionally cleaning houses, by the stories my Dad shared of him and his Dad taking plastering jobs in the evening after Grandpa King got off at the mill, and by my Grandpa Mellott having had to move my Grandma, Mom, and Uncle around Pennsylvania chasing trucking jobs (which I wrote a little about here (King, 2018)).

I don't know if Jim knew when he shared this story with me that I was on my way to being a professor, but I do think he knew I would appreciate how it explores class cultural mismatch. This story, of a professor faltering around a steel mill for a summer on the graveyard shift all in an effort to prove he is not incapable of working with his hands, illustrates the strains of attempting to make your way in two worlds. On my way to becoming the first person in my family to earn a bachelor's degree, I struggled to find a sense of belonging in either world. In Hurst's (2010) typology of college students from working-class backgrounds, I probably *looked* like a renegade, appearing to embrace middle-class culture and goals, but in my *heart*, I was a double agent, trying to maintain a foothold in both working-class and middle-class worlds. In academia, I was motivated to demonstrate that my perspective, coming from my working-class background, could be an asset. In my family, I was motivated to demonstrate that my academic skills and knowledge could be just as valuable as their practical abilities.

I expect many academics will appreciate this tale for a variety of reasons. Academics from working-class backgrounds will likely identify with the strains Jim experiences from their own efforts navigating both working-class and middle-class cultures. Those who study social class may find the descriptions of class cultural worlds illustrative as well. Furthermore, this piece explores the persistent debates about how work is conceptualized, and what is considered 'real work.' We see from the protagonist's perspective that academic work can be inane, just as much as mill work can be dangerous. With the protagonist trading banter with his coworkers on the shop floor, we see that mill work involves emotional labor, even if it is a different kind of emotional labor than a professor keeping their cool in a contentious department meeting. This story helps reveal how both forms of work are real.

I also appreciate Jim's self-deprecating humor in this story. Although he was a professor, I could see he brought some working-class culture with him from his rural Kentucky background. So, when I read the banter between Jim and his coworkers in the mill, I heard it in my Dad's voice. When a coworker points out something dumb Jim had done, I heard my Dad's prodding refrain to me: 'You might be smart, but where's your common sense?' The story is not intersectional, it does not explore how gender or race or other social identities played a role here. But, what we do see is how, through the series of near-calamities, the protagonist finds a place for himself among his coworkers in the mill.

The story is not only about the protagonist's struggles in the mill, either. In the story, you will read how he connects with his coworkers through a shared interest in (let's call them extracurricular) art projects. Jim shares with his coworkers his artist friend Nelson Oestreich's contention that 'Art is what you can get away with.' He tells them about a piece he actually made, which he called 'The Administrators,' a piece that offers a critique that academic faculty and staff, and maybe even a few administrators themselves, might appreciate for how it explores Oestreich's maxim. In a (possibly fictionalized) story, Jim involves several of his coworkers in a project, putting together a conceptual piece that Jim dreamed up. This part of the story, the group effort, illustrates a kind of solidarity that was familiar to me from seeing how my Dad and Uncle would draw on friends and family for help with their projects, but is a kind of solidarity often more difficult to find on college campuses. This bit of the story also highlights a sort of practical interdisciplinarity, as each character applies their myriad expertise to the process of creating the sculpture, which in my reading illustrates an embrace of the liberal arts perspective that Westminster College, and the Inquiry class in which I was a student of Jim's, worked to foster.

I only took one class with Jim. It was Inquiry 101, a required course for all first-year students at Westminster, which functioned as an introduction to liberal arts education. Jim embraced the multidisciplinary ethos of the course, walking us through analyses of texts from a wide range of disciplines and highlighting how embracing multiple ways of knowing and a variety of disciplinary perspectives can help us make better sense of the world and appreciate the richness of culture and life. This story of the sculpture project that Jim involves his coworkers in, highlights a sort of practical interdisciplinarity, as each character applies their myriad expertise to the process of creating the sculpture.

Jim's artistic creations, all conceptual art pieces imbued with elements of social critique, resonate for me in other ways as well. Years after Jim shared this story with me, my brother, Trevor King, completed a BFA, and then an MFA, and has become a working artist. He is now exploring what he can get away with. For the Working-Class Perspectives Blog, I (2013) wrote about how my brother's work inspires me, in this essay, 'Work to Do.' You can check out my brother's work at www.trevorkingart.com. Among Trevor's work, one of my favorite pieces is one that also explores Oestreich's maxim. It is a performance piece called 'Resonator,' (King, 2014). You can see pictures documenting the performance here. For the piece, Trevor stood up a sheet of chipboard on top of cinder blocks with clamps, like a chalkboard. He attached a contact mic to the chipboard and connected that to an amplifier, making the board something like a guitar. Then, with spotlights behind him, he took a belt sander to the board. The audience watched and listened as he ran the sander on the chipboard until it was sanded through.

Jim passed away in January of this year. He was a member of the Westminster College (New Wilmington, PA) faculty from 1973 until he retired in 2008. From Covington, KY, Jim earned an undergraduate degree from Centre College in 1963, a master's from Miami University of Ohio in 1965, and a Ph.D. from the University of Tennessee in 1972. He published twenty books, including edited collections of Robert Penn Warren's letters, along with his own short story and poetry collections, including the short story book *Snakes, Butterbeans, and the Discovery of Electricity* (2003) and *Decembers* (2013). The list of his academic accomplishments is impressive. The following is from a Westminster College (2022) announcement regarding the memorial service that the college held for him this past spring:

> Perkins has been a National Endowment for the Humanities Scholar at Yale University, New York University and Princeton University. In 1998 he was

> awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to lecture on American literature at Seoul National University in Korea. He was the recipient of Westminster's Henderson Lectureship, a McCandless Fellowship and a Watto Award. In 2006, he was presented with the College's Distinguished Faculty Award in recognition of his unwavering commitment to Westminster and its students.

In reading this story, I continually return to a specific reflection: If an accomplished professor — someone with a Ph.D. who taught hundreds of students, participated in dozens of committee meetings, and researched and wrote every year — had trouble navigating the mill, the reader can certainly invert that scenario and take on the perspective of a student from a working-class background having trouble navigating college.

Betsy Leondar-Wright (2014) writes about building cross-class coalitions. Jack Metzgar's (2021) recent book is specifically about bridging the divide between working-class and middle-class cultures. Christopher (2005) argues that we must 'transform higher education into something that works for, instead of against, the working class' (220). This story of a professor doing his best to make it through the probationary period over a summer on midnight shift in a galvanizing plant helped me understand how story sharing supports these efforts. I have embraced stories and perspective taking in my teaching and writing (King, Griffith, and Murphy, 2017). I work to support the diverse working-class and first-generation college students and to bridge class divides (King and McPherson, 2020; King, Swint, Miller, and Bareiss, 2020).

If you're interested, Young's is still operating today, and their website includes several pictures of the galvanizing process here. The process of galvanizing is a meaningful metaphor as well. Galvanizing is a process of coating steel or iron with zinc to prevent corrosion, usually through a process of immersion called hot-dip galvanizing (AGA, 2022). Immersing ourselves in other class cultures (taking a 'hot dip,' if you follow) might help us all avoid interpersonal rust and social corrosion.

Before he passed, Jim included this story as part of a collection of short stories he hoped to publish, which he titled *A Thunderous Collection of Weird*. That title, and all the pieces in the collection, highlight Jim's enigmatic quirkiness and embrace of the diverse and often strange human experience. While the collection hasn't been published (not yet, anyway), I am elated for this piece to be published in the *Journal of Working-Class Studies*.

More than any specific conversation or piece of wisdom Jim offered me, this story expresses his mentorship for me and his inspiring model of the kinds of work an academic can do. It highlights an openness to different social worlds, a sense of wonder, an embracing of multiple perspectives, and a valuing of all kinds of work that I strive to incorporate in my work every day. I hope you too will find this story just as useful as I have, and that it might inspire you to familiarize yourself with other social worlds, and to explore what you can get away with in your work!

Conceptual Art and Galvanizing

James A. Perkins, Westminster College

‘You remember the night you were in here with those three girls from the college and those bikers from Cleveland rolled in?’ Bobby asked without looking at me as he restocked his cooler with Rolling Rocks.

I was unlikely to ever forget that night at the Hillside. I didn’t say anything. Bobby never really needs an audience to tell a story.

> ‘Sounded like thunder when they come into the lot. They bust through the door, and the next thing I know, one big ugly mother is in your face saying, ‘You have three girls and I don’t have any. Want to share?’ I had my hand on my ball bat and was about to come across the bar when this little blonde cutie with you pushes between the two of you and says, ‘You leave him alone. He’s a famous writer.’’

> ‘Yeh. I remember that moment. I thought I was dead.’

> ‘But, the biker says, ‘Oh yeh? What did he ever write?’ And she says, ‘He wrote *Billy-the-Kid, Chicken Gizzards and Other Tales*.’ Then I heard this roar from the other side of the bar and this huge guy all in black leather ran toward you saying, ‘‘Chicken Gizzards’ is my favorite story in the whole world. Leave him alone. He’s a great writer.’’

> ‘Yeh, Bobby, I remember That’s one of the few times I was glad I wrote that damn thing. It’s been reprinted so many times I’m afraid when I die they’re going to put ‘Here lies the man who wrote ‘Chicken Gizzards’’ on my tombstone.’

> ‘Well, it’s one of the legends of the Hillside.’

The Hillside doesn’t have legends. It doesn’t really have much of anything. It is a long, low-slung concrete block building with a couple of pool tables, a lot of mismatched furniture and one small window looking out on the parking lot on the east side of route 18 in western Pennsylvania just north of I-60 about two miles from the Ohio line.

It has the distinction of being the closest bar to the college where I teach English, and it has cheap drinks. There was a time years back, when we hung out there on Friday afternoons, my wife and I; Joe Fusco, our football coach, and his wife, Gail; Nels Oestreich, the Chair of the Art Department, and his wife Sue; Bill McTaggart from the English Department; Elizabeth Orndorff, the short story writer (she was then Liz Shear and was earning an honest living as our public information director); Kim Christofferson (then Kilmer); Linda Friedland, the Dean of Students and her husband Howard (AKA How Weird); and Mary Dorsey, the Dean of Fun. We drank beer, told stories, danced occasionally (especially to Kenny Rogers and Dolly Parton doing ‘Islands in the Stream’), enjoyed each other’s company and generally decompressed from the inanity that the general public associates with small college life.

I told Bobby to give me another Jim Beam and water and I'd tell him a legend of the Hillside he probably hadn't heard. I was sitting in here one Friday afternoon about four. The only other folks in there were half a dozen guys from Young's Galvanizing's day turn who had just finish their week. I introduced myself and bought a round of beer. One of them said, 'You work at the college don't you?' I admitted it, and he said, 'You damn college professor never did a day's work in your life.'

> 'Look,' I said, 'I'm tired of this shit, of the assumption that, simply because I make my living with my mind, I'm incapable of working with my hands.' Even as I said it, I remembered all of the stupid things I had done in my attempts to do things, like the time I hotwired the windshield wipers on my car or the time I called the repairman to fix the dryer and all he did was replace a fuse. The steel worker stepped off his bar stool, spread his feet like a man squaring to throw a punch, and asked,
>
> 'What are you going to do about it.?'
>
> 'You got any openings?'
>
> 'At Young's?'
>
> 'Yeh.'
>
> 'Sure. During the summer we go to three shifts of keep up with the demand from Penn DOT. They're hiring now for midnight.'
>
> 'What's that?'

He smiled at my question and the others laughed out loud.

> 'Third turn, graveyard shift, midnight—11:00 pm to 7:00 am.'
>
> 'I'll be there Monday morning.'

* * *

I drove from New Wilmington to Young's Galvanizing in Pulaski. It took about seven minutes. I found the personnel office, filled out an application, and was hired on the spot. I was handed a brand new yellow hard hat, told to buy some good steel-toed boots, shown the foot-thick OSHA (Occupational Safety & Health Administration) manual covering the dangerous chemicals I would be breathing in and working around, and told to report back at 11:00 that night.

> 'You already missed your first day in this pay period. Night turn starts on Sunday and closes out its week on Friday morning. You get extra compensation for night turn. You understand that you're on probation for the first thirty days. After that you're union and your hourly rate will depend on the job you're doing.'
>
> 'I was wondering if I could take that OSHA manual with me and study it some today.'

> ‘You mean, read it?’
>
> ‘Yeh.’
>
> ‘That’s a good one. Read an OSHA manual. Nobody has ever read an OSHA manual.’

He was still laughing when I left his office and headed for my car. He stuck his head out of the door and shouted, ‘One more thing. Don’t wear anything tonight you care about.’

* * *

I arrived that night at 10:45 dressed in an old shirt and jeans, carrying my shiny new yellow hard hat and my lunch box, wearing the newest boots in the plant. The third turn crew was waiting in the break room for the afternoon turn to clear the floor and clock out. I had decided that I would be better off if I kept my occupation to myself.

> ‘New shoes on the floor,’ a big guy shouted. I was almost immediately surrounded by the night shift crew.
>
> ‘Ever work steel before?
>
> ‘You’re kinda old for this work, ain’t you, Pops?’
>
> ‘His name ain’t Pops. That’s the Professor. My sister, works over at the college, knows him. He teaches English and stuff. Ain’t that right Professor?’

So much for my plan to remain anonymous. About then the afternoon turn clocked out and the night crew started to punch in. I had never used a time clock in my life so I hung back and watched. One of the older men handed me a card with my name on it and said, ‘Come on. I’ll show you how to do it.’

On the floor the foreman, Leonard, handed us cotton gloves and told us what we would be doing that shift. I was assigned to common labor on the dirty side. That meant that I was working with Ed the older guy who helped me clock in. We racked up the steel they brought in from the yard and prepared it for a three step process. First it was dipped in a caustic soda wash; then it was heated up in a sulfuric acid bath; then it was hot dipped into 600 degree zinc. That process turned raw steel guard rail into a galvanized product that could withstand years of Pennsylvania weather.

The work was hard, and it didn’t stop. Besides that it was chilly inside that big windy barn of a building in the middle of the night. ‘I have [not] been one acquainted with the night,’ and I wasn’t well dressed for this venture. After that first night I wore layers starting off with long underwear.

I racked guard rail, picking up one end with a baling hook while my partner picked up the other. I was told never to pick up anything that weighed more than 75 pounds. I was told that was what the crane was for. I asked Leonard how much the guard rail weighed. ‘150 pounds, but you are only picking up half of it.’ In the best of all possible worlds where physics theories

worked, that would be true. In a galvanizing plant in the middle of the night when as often as not, I picked up my end before my partner hooked his up, that guard rail was heavy.

Some of the work was hard because I am stupid. One night I was racking a basket of small shit, brackets and what not. I was reaching in a barrel, pulling out a piece, squatting down and securing it in the basket with a rod. Leonard came over and said, 'Professor you are about the dumbest shit I have ever seen.' Then turned the barrel over and spilled the brackets out right beside the basket I was filling.

As I said earlier they could have fired me any time in the first thirty days without cause. I hoped they would. I would never quit, but I would have been delighted to have been fired. I have never been as tired or as sore as I was during that probation period. Most of the work was routine and boring. I spent a lot of time filling baskets of small items on the floor. Since I'm too old to squat, I kneeled on one knee or the other for hour, usually the right one. That jammed my right big toe against the steel protection cup of my boots. My toe went numb during the summer and didn't recover for six or seven years.

I provided the floor three major laughs during my probation period. One night the kettle crew got an I-beam stuck in the tank. Since everything on the floor eventually had to go through the tank, we were out of business till they cleared it. I was just standing around talking to my partner when Leonard came up, tossed me a broom and told me to sweep the plant. I thought what I had been doing was boring, but sweeping the dirtiest place on earth with a push broom was really boring. Finally about dawn, I just went to sleep and slid ever so slowly down the broom to the floor. Leonard came up and tapped me in the ribs with his boot. 'Professor, if you weren't so damned funny, I would write you up right now,'

Another night I was working close to the kettle with my back to it. I had been told that if I heard anything unusual, I shouldn't try to identify the sound, I should just run away from it a fast as I could. When I suddenly heard a 'swoosh' sound behind me near the kettle I headed out. Using my hurdle skills from college, I cleared a rack of guard rail on my third step. I was at full speed when I cleared the plant floor and headed past the ready room by the clock. As I went through the outside door into the yard, I heard a roar of laughter behind me. A pneumatic hose on a grinder had come lose. The sound I had heard was the air escaping not a wave of 600 degree zinc cresting behind me.

Later in the break room I heard all about it.

> 'Jeesh, did you see the Professor fly?'
>
> 'Can you teach me to fly like that, Professor.'

As we filed back onto the floor, Leonard said, 'Professor, you did the right thing, but it was funny as hell.'

My third amusement nearly cost me my private parts. One of the larger items we dipped was those light poles you see at expressway exits. They arrived in the yard with grease pencil marking on them that we had to remove before they could be put through the process. We used a hand grinder for this. Now I never gave hand grinders much of a thought. I certainly never considered that it was a right-handed tool. It is. The wheel spins clockwise and a right-handed worker using the tool sends a shower of sparks harmlessly off to the right. As a left hander, I

sent the shower of sparks straight into my crouch making my jeans smolder and burning two or three small holes in them before I figured out what that smell was. There was a little laughter, but accidents are a serious concern. Mostly I heard from Leonard, 'Professor I don't know what to do with you. Besides being old and slow and nearly useless, it turns out you are also left handed.'

Despite all these errors, I made the union. The Friday morning when the shift closed that marked the end of my probationary period, we all headed, as we did every Friday morning, to the West Middlesex Inn. There every man on the floor bought me a beer and Leonard stuck his head in at the lottery ticket window and said, 'That Professor is OK. Give him five shots on me.' So there I was at 7:30 on a Friday morning trying to drink 17 bottles of beer and five shots of Jim Beam. If I had a brain in my head, I would have known that I could put the blue poker chips lying in front of me in my pocket and redeemed them later. But I teach in a college. I woke up in my own bed about 3:30 that afternoon with no memory of having driven home.

* * *

Sunday night, after I lived through the usual ribbing about how wasted I got Friday morning, I could see that I had been accepted as part of the crew. During breaks, they no longer teased me and talk turned to things they were interested in outside the plant. One guy never came around. Doug, a big hulking guy took his breaks out behind the plant by the river where night after night he cast for bats with a fly rod. When he caught one, he would reel it in, stoop it to death and say, 'Filthy creature.' He never said a word to anyone. But once I hear a voice say, 'Move. Professor.' I did , and then I turned toward the voice and saw Doug standing right behind me bracing a tall stack of steel with his leg. He slipped aside and the stack crashed to the floor covering the place I had been working with several hundred pounds of metal. Doug walked away without another word.

Curiously several of the guys were artists of one kind or another. After listening to these guys talk for several days and telling them that my artist friend Nelson Oestreich says 'Art is what you can get away with,' I brought in five drawings I had done for a show at the college. They were whimsical plans for sculptures. One was of a second arch to be built beside the Gateway to the West in St. Louis. The plan was to paint them both gold, as a memorial to Ray Kroc the founder of McDonalds. Another was a rendering of the Statue of Liberty with a hair dryer instead of a torch. A third showed the cooling tower at Three Mile Island with a big Bar-B-Que grill on its top. A fourth was a cut away of the Trade Towers in New York revealing them as a giant tuning fork. The fifth one was a drawing of a sculpture I actually made. It was a triangular base with three rail road tie columns topped by electric fans. The fans were wired in parallel so when you threw a switch the fans blew on each other. It was called 'The Administrators.' My colleagues on the faculty thought it was pretty amusing. The college administration wasn't too fond of it.


James next to *The Administrators*

While they were looking at those drawings I was telling them of another idea I had. I wanted to make a sculpture out of crushed aluminum cans.

> ‘You know those big squares of aluminum that they make by crushing cans? I want to get four of those and paint them like kids alphabet blocks and spell out C—A—N—S. You could arrange the letters on the blocks so that it would read the same way from either side.’
>
> ‘Why don’t you do it, Professor?’
>
> ‘I don’t know where to find the aluminum, and even if I did, I couldn’t afford it.’
>
> ‘I got a cousin works in Cleveland where they crush those things. You get us the plan, we’ll make the sculpture.’

A few days later I handed them a drawing with the blocks schematically presented so that they would read C—A—N—S on both sides and read L—O—V—E on top. Then I forgot about it and racked steel.

A few days later a flatbed FASH (Fraternal Association of Steel Haulers) truck rolled up in the lot with four 40 inch cubes of crushed aluminum on it. We all stood there during break staring at them.

> ‘How are we going to paint them?’ I asked.
>
> ‘That’s simple, Professor. I paint cars on the weekends. You know specialty stuff, flames, pin stripes, lettering; you name it, I can paint. I’ll lay down an undercoat

> of white epoxy and then use a royal blue for the edges and the letters. Should be done by Monday.'

They were done by Monday, and they were beautiful.

> 'How did you get those edges so sharp on that bumpy surface?'
>
> 'Good grief, Professor. If I can spray paint a flame on a car fender free hand, it not hard for me to paint a straight line using masking tape.'

I just stood there looking at a thing that had been in my head for years, a thing that I never in this world thought I would see created, But there it was, and it had been created by a bunch of guys who most people would assume knew nothing about art.

> 'Now what?' I asked.
>
> 'Now, Professor, we send them to Tennessee for installation.'

* * *

Just as we were leaving the plant on Tuesday morning the FASH truck rolled out headed for Knoxville, Tennessee, actually Alcoa, just outside Maryville, south of Knoxville toward the Great Smokey Mountain National Park.

Alcoa is the site of a huge aluminum smelting facility run on cheap TVA electricity. One of the guys from Young's had a friend who worked in receiving at Alcoa. He met the truck with a crane and swung the blocks into place on a concrete bed that had been poured as soon as I presented the plan to the guys on the floor. He sent us Polaroid photos of the blocks in place in front of the plant. Leonard put them on the bulletin board beside the clock.

A day or two after we got the photos, we got a clipping from the Knoxville *News-Sentinel* about the impressive new sculpture that Alcoa had installed in front of their plant. The director of the Dulin Art Gallery in Knoxville was quoted in the story as saying, 'This is a fine example of the way industry and arts can create symbiotic relationships. The humor and skill demonstrated by the CANS sculpture shows us once again that Marshall McLuhan was right when he said, 'The medium is the message.' We at the Dulin hope that other area industries will follow the lead of Alcoa and involve themselves more completely with the arts.' We were amused by the whole thing, and said we were like those medieval craftsmen who labored away anonymously for years creating the cathedrals.

The friend who worked at Alcoa told the guy who worked at Young's that the Alcoa management was going nuts trying to figure out where the sculpture came from. They mostly hated it, but they couldn't walk away from the good publicity it was causing. Finally toward the end of the summer, Alcoa gave CANS to the Dulin Gallery along with enough money to endow and outdoor sculpture garden. By the time I left the plant to go back to teaching my classes, we had clippings from the *News-Sentinel* of the architect's plans for the new sculpture garden. The morning I left the plant for the last time, Doug walked up to me, gripping his fly rod in his left hand. He extended his right hand to me, and we shook hands. 'Professor,' he said, 'that CANS thing was really neat.'

I could have gone back to Young's the next summer, but I got into an NEH Summer Seminar at Yale taught by R.W.B. Lewis on the work of Robert Penn Warren. That summer Yale put us up in a dormitory called Helen Hadley Hall. During one of the first seminar meetings in a small room that looked out on the main reading room in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Dr. Lewis was fielding complaints about their housing from the middle-aged professors who hadn't been in a dormitory for twenty or more years. He finally came to me.

> 'Well Mr. Perkins, do you have any problems with Helen Hadley Hall?'
>
> 'No sir. I spent last summer in a galvanizing plant. Yale is better.'

* * *

Before the Dulin Art Gallery got their sculpture garden built, the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh swooped in and tagged CANS for exhibition in the 1991 Carnegie International the preeminent international survey of contemporary art in America. At that point, the guys decided there was nothing to be gained by remaining anonymous cathedral workers, so they got in touch with the Carnegie. One of the guys was a Cristo fan, so they had their creation of CANS documented up one side and down the other. When the show opened, all of this material—from my original schematic, to letters, to bills of lading, to internal Alcoa memos, to tapes of phone calls (with transcriptions), to photographs of every step of the process and of everyone involved in the process—was laid out on the walls surrounding CANS on the main floor of the Carnegie Museum just outside the museum shop. I was identified as 'The Professor,' but it didn't take a crack art critic form the *New York Times* long to break that code and call me at work.

> 'When I was talking to the college operator, she said you were in the English Department: why is that?'
>
> 'It's the sort of thing that happens at a liberal arts college,' I answered.

The man from the *Times* completely misunderstood my answer, and when his column appeared it read in part, 'The man known as 'The Professor,' who worked with the group, known as 'The Young's Gang,' that created CANS, the artistic sensation of the decade, is himself so little known at his own college that the switchboard operator this reporter contacted thought he was in the English Department.'

As stupid as it was, that *New York Times* article led to a commission for 'the Young's gang.' They created CARS for the Ford Stamping Plant in Dearborn, Michigan. The concept was similar to CANS. They used four of those long flat stacks of crushed automobiles. They buried them, on site, until just a 5 foot square was visible. Then they sprayed in the background, the edges and the letters. I saw the thing on the evening news. Clearly they were growing as artists. This time they used the dark blue for the edges, but the letters were a bright red.

Ford paid them huge bucks for the installation and the media loved them and referred to them as 'Steelworkers with an art of gold.' *The New Yorker* published a David Remnick profile of them with a parody of CANS by Bruce McCall on the cover. That did it. The Young's Gang became the darlings of the New York art world. They quit their day jobs, and shortly they had more commissions than you could shake a crane at. They were masters of all recycled media. They worked in plastic, glass, newsprint and baled cardboard. The last I heard from any of

them, they were in Paris working on an installation for the European Union's global recycling initiative.

I finished telling Bobby my long story about my summer in the galvanizing plant, and he put another Jim Beam and water in front of me.

> 'That's amazing,' he said. 'You mean those guys managed to create that sculpture and place it on site in Tennessee, and all you did was think up the idea?'
>
> 'Yeh, Bobby. You see, they were dead right. We college professors never did a day's work in our lives.'

Author Bios

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‘We tell stories in order to live’: Working-class existence and survival in the academy

Sharon Tugwell

Abstract

How does it feel to be of working-class heritage and to work as an academic in the UK? This paper takes an autoethnographic approach in order to think this question through. Its focus is on the ways in which social class becomes internalised through the subtleties of affect and the enactments of symbolic violence over the life course. I suggest that the elite environment of the academe is a particularly painful place to be, especially when held in tension with one’s working-class past and present. I suggest that the split at the heart of the cleft habitus is not singular, but the result of multiple fractures and tensions as one moves through different social contexts and locations. The academe is the place where this split can no longer be sutured and in fact becomes an open wound of class.

Keywords

Working-class academic, social class, symbolic violence, cleft habitus, autoethnography

In the beginning

Figure 1: My first year of life (1973)

What follows in this paper is a story I need to tell in order to confirm I have lived. There is an element of longevity, one might fantasise eternity, in having your words published. The words you see before you emerge from a deeply reflexive process, one which, without my exposure to and engagement with academic, scholarly, intellectual writings, would never have been able to take shape and organise itself so meticulously on the screen. In what follows, I aim to seize the illusive residue that lingers and continues to circulate within me. A murky residue left behind after the storms of inner- and outer-world conflicts, tensions, splitting, and

fragmentation. This paper, as finite, cohesive *thing*, is one way of me picking up those splinters and pieces and trying to put them all back together again. An attempt at cohesion, which may indeed be successful in the context of a journal dedicated to exploring working-class lives and experiences, but one which seems like an absolute impossibility in the context of the academic environment in which I most recently existed. I firstly want to explore how my understanding of being working-class has developed and has been shaped in relation to what one might think of as the 'classing gaze' and that process of interpellation that ensues. I then turn specifically to my experiences of working with, amongst and against academics, and the ways in which this relationality helped further sediment my sense of class.

This paper takes an autoethnographic approach to examining the experience of being working-class and an academic. Neither of these two labels are without their contradictions, complexities, and ambivalences. I take an autoethnographic approach precisely for this reason: I do not want to represent the working-class academic definitively, and I do not seek to make any generalised claims about this positionality either (Brook & Michell, 2012; Binns, 2019). What follows is my own experience. As a method, autoethnography allows me to write of the working-class experience (mine) without reproducing the harm that upper-middle-class colleagues enact when writing about working-class Others. It remains singular and specific to me, although one might assume (hope?) there will points of convergence and identification with others who may read this – such is the nature of constellations in transnational working-class experiences.

A spoiler alert that might be helpful here is that there is not a fairy tale ending to this story. After a succession of short fixed-term contracts, I am no longer employed in the academe. I am no longer an 'academic' (was I ever?) but of course I remain working-class. Joan Didion's observation that 'we tell stories in order to live' seems particularly pertinent to the working-class academic (Brook & Michell, 2012; Binns, 2019; Goodson, 2003). As Stacy Holman Jones writes, 'telling our stories is a way for us to be present to each other; the act provides a space for us to create a relationship embodied in the performance of writing and reading that is reflective, critical, loving, and chosen in solidarity' (Adams et al, 2014, p.5). Indeed, I would go as far to say that our ontological survival depends upon such acts.

When everyone was 'normal'

Figure 2: End of first year at school (1979)

This is me during my first year of primary school. My school was situated between two council estates,[1] so all the kids there were what I would describe as 'normal'. It is to my childhood photographs from the 1970s and 1980s that I go for the reassurance of my working-class heritage. Class is known for me, felt, through that affective response I have to the clothes, the home décor, the bad haircuts, the awkward poses. This heritage is easily forgotten in the mash-up of where I later became positioned and, post-PhD, where I can be perceived to be located now. This was a time when for me, class did not exist. I was surrounded by people 'like me'. I grew up in a seaside town on the south coast of England. Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government decimated the town, and during the 1980s half of it was boarded up, a ghost town.

The photograph above was taken in my parents' little back garden, in the Wimpy-esque[2] terraced house they bought for £7,000 in 1976, and in which they continue to live today. These houses were built and marketed specifically for those who could just about afford to get off the council estate and become homeowners. My parents all grew up on estates and I started my life in one. As an adult, I have returned to estate living, it is where I feel at home, and I am proud to be a social housing tenant. For my parents, Thatcher's promise of status and social mobility via home ownership appealed.[3] They wanted to 'do better' than their parents had. In turn, they wanted their children to 'do better' than them. It is difficult to understand exactly what this means, but it was most certainly the result of an investment in a neoliberal narrative, which pedals the fantasy that status and security are on an equal playing field and one can move up the 'social ladder' with hard work, commitment, and dedication.

My parents were both born in the first couple of years after the end of the second world war, during the legacy of rationing. Their early years were filled with hardship: poverty, alcoholism, violence. I understand the affective dimensions of how homeownership was able to become such a powerful signifier of alternative futures and possibilities. They were young and desperate to believe that history need not repeat itself. However, the terrifying responsibility of a mortgage came at a price which filtered its way down into our family home – materially as well as emotionally. The purse strings had to be tied tightly and for those first six years or so, during my primary school years, there was no telephone, no colour tv (we all crowded round the black and white portable), and no car.

[1] 'Council estates' is a term commonly used to denote a collection of local government subsidised dwellings, often existing across a collection of streets, carving out an entire area of such housing.

[2] 'Wimpy' was a construction and house building company which, during the 1970s, dominated the UK housebuilding market. Their houses were small and simple, akin to local authority houses, and would often follow the same structure, layout and aesthetic, so much so that other construction firms would build in the same style as Wimpy (such as my parents' home).

[3] Margaret Thatcher, former leader of the Conservative Party, was Prime Minister of the UK between 1979 and 1990. The Housing Act (1980) was legislation which enabled council tenants (i.e. tenants of local government subsidised housing) to purchase their home from the local government authority (which they rented from) at discounted market value (according to property type, length of tenure etc.) For many working-class people, this was the only way that owning a home was possible.

Figure 3: Christmas (1979)

My mum worked the twilight shift in the factory to help make ends meet until my brother was born. I remember her cutting the feet off his baby-grows so that he could get a bit more wear out of them; ripping up old sheets so that she could wrap these around her leaking breasts – breast pads would have been an unthinkable luxury; and washing our hair in washing-up detergent when there just wasn't enough to stretch to buy a new bottle of *Vosene* shampoo. Sunday 'tea' (as opposed to the Monday to Saturday 'dinner') involved tuna and vinegar sandwiches cut in triangles, crisps, jelly, tinned fruit and evaporated milk. We'd listen to the Top 40 on the radio and me and my sister would dance and flash torches, creating our own disco.

The weekly 'big shop' was a family mission, with the kids mucking in and lugging bags of shopping back home, as we all broke our backs during that 20-minute walk back from the 'big supermarket'. We'd use each other's bath water, and the hot water would only ever be put on when it was bath night. Woe betide anyone who forgot to turn the immersion off immediately after it was no longer needed![4] It meant I wore hand-me-downs and sported wonky home haircuts. We always had a 'meat and two veg' cooked dinner (often stewing steak, always potatoes); our house was always heated by the coal fire; we smelt of clean washing; and the pop man still came once a week. For those reasons, I never once thought we were poor. In fact, we had a lot more than several of the other kids I went to school with, who lived in carpetless, cold houses and regularly went to bed hungry, sleeping in their coats. This was a time where there seemed to be little difference between me and those around me. We were one and the same. Class did not exist.

[4] Our central heating system was fuelled by a coal fire in the living room but did not heat the water. Therefore, washing up was often done by boiling a kettle and to run a warm bath an electric boiler (immersion heater) had to be switched on. A shallow, warm (not hot!) bath could be run after the heater had been on for about 30 minutes.

Figure 4: A birthday ‘tea’ (1980)

Introduction to the Middle-Classes

I passed my 11-plus and went to the local grammar school.[5] It was during this time that the cracks and fissures resulting from class difference and otherness began to start. It would be these early fractures that would provide the foundation for the wounds of class that would later emerge – slowly, insidiously, perniciously over time. It is only with hindsight that I see the significance of this move. At the time, I still had no idea about the subtleties of class-based abjection. At secondary school, you were placed in your form class alphabetically, so I was with all the kids at the end of alphabet. So, how come we had children in our class whose names started with Bs, or Ds or Gs? This was because all of the children from the one private prep school in the area were placed in the same class together, at the request of their headmaster.

It was by being in proximity to these kids that I started to realise that perhaps my family was not actually ‘normal’ but we were in fact poor. These kids lived in big, detached houses with large gardens, professional parents, holidays abroad and so on. My mum left school at 14, my dad at 16. There were no holidays, abroad or otherwise; instead, we had local days out, lugging big carrier bags full of foil-wrapped sandwiches, unbranded crisps, and plastic bottles filled with squash.[6]

[5] Throughout the UK there used to be a ‘selective’ school system, which meant that pupils sat an exam in their last year of primary school (year 6). Those children who ‘passed’ the exam were able to attend grammar school, where there was often a broader academic curriculum and higher educational attainment on completion. The system still exists in the UK in certain areas but has generally been replaced by a non-selective system whereby secondary (high) schools local children irrespective of educational attainment.

[6] ‘Squash’ is a colloquial term for cordial, a fruit flavoured concentrate to which water is added.

Figure 5: Family day out (1985)

My getting into grammar school was a source of pride for my mum and dad, an opportunity to believe that maybe my life would be less of a struggle than theirs was. No doubt many of the prep school kids were intensively tutored to pass the 11 plus – every single one of them got a place at the grammar school and were allowed to stay together. During my secondary school years, I began to get a sense of class without being able to name it as such. I came to be classed through the looks I received about my clothes or shoes, how my parents were looked at, and how other kids' parents looked at me. Without knowing what or why, I started to develop a level of embarrassment or insecurity about my home, my appearance, my family. I started paid work aged 12, working for a pound an hour in a café every Saturday and Sunday. This was so that I could afford to buy the clothes and shoes I wanted, cheap fashion from the market which would give that superficial sense of fitting in. I worked so I could 'pass' as having enough cultural capital (in the form of fashionable, albeit cheap, clothes) to participate on an equal footing in the complex network of the superficiality of adolescent relations. I worked to protect myself from feeling shame. At the start of secondary school, I was in the top three of the year for every subject, spanning the sciences and the humanities. Despite this academic 'success', the 'failure' of my lack of cultural capital meant that from age 13 I spent less time concerned about achieving good marks, and more time desperate to fit in or cultivate a sense of belonging.

It was at this age that my relationship with alcohol began, which would in turn lead to drugs, and my leaving grammar school with two A-levels graded B and D (see Reay, 2017; 2018 for a similar experience resulting in an eating disorder). Drugs and alcohol have plagued my adult life and yet in spite of this I managed to pass my undergraduate degree (after taking a two-year break mid-studies due to a drug induced psychosis). I was to be surrounded by more middle-class people during my time at university (technically it was a college back then although subsequently has had a rebrand). It became apparent that the further I went away from that house I grew up in, in that deprived coastal town, the more of these middle-class people I would meet. It was during this time at university that I first ate mayonnaise, olives and vegetables which were not root- or cabbage-based. I was being introduced to middle-class foods, music, and aesthetics, and still not quite knowing how or why, I was adopting many of these as my own. In my late twenties, I did a Masters' degree, getting a bank loan for the fees, running up copious amounts of debt via an extended overdraft facility. The result of this was having to live transiently, equipped only with a cashpoint (not debit) card, for 7 years, in order to avoid bailiffs and have the debt eventually written off.[7] In my adult life I have known hunger, homelessness, addiction, and criminality. Experiences that my parents had fought hard to

[7] A 'cashpoint card' is a bank card which can only be used to withdraw money from ATMs, and cannot be used for purchases.

protect me from, yet still caught up with me at moments when I have tried to navigate the world without finance or security. At 40 I did another Masters, which eventually led to me successfully getting a Graduate Teaching Assistant job which included my PhD fees being paid. PhD study would not have been conceivable for me had it not been for that opportunity.

Meet the academic elite

'The term autoethnography invokes the self (auto), culture (ethno), and writing (graphy). When we do autoethnography, we study and write culture from the perspective of the self. When we do autoethnography, we look inward —into our identities, thoughts, feelings and experiences— and outward —into our relationships, communities, and cultures' (Adams et al, 2014, p.46). It is at this point in the narrative that I again look inward to return to the recent past. What follows is an account of how it felt to be me (read that as you will) working as an 'academic' in a British university. I use scare quotes around the word academic as it's a label that doesn't comfortably sit with my sense of self. Who exactly is an academic? If it is someone who teaches, lectures, designs modules, presents at conferences, and publishes research papers, then, yes, I seemed to qualify. But my experience tells me that an academic is not someone who sounds like me or has my background. Surely the proof is in the pudding? Well, despite the evidence being there (of publications, of invitations to speak at conferences, of glowing student feedback), I was constantly reminded of my 'place' as 'non-academic' by the 'proper' academics I worked alongside. 'Economic privilege gives a person the freedom to erase class - or to reduce it to value judgements about people's taste - as if 'good' and 'bad' taste are objective realities devoid of social context' (Johnston, 2018). I worked alongside those who belong to the upper-middle classes. Those who come from long lines of academics, doctors, writers, and other professionals. I often saw the same reflected in the PhD students who came through the Department. It seems that this trajectory is taken for granted by some, things seem guaranteed to always end this way for these people. It is inevitable, an entitlement, a right. It was their due. For people of this lineage, the barriers are invisible and can be passed through with ease, if seen at all (Binns, 2019; Friedman, 2015). They have secure academic careers forged by the age of 30, elitist (inherited?) networks already in place. There is a genealogy amongst academics which almost always can be traced back to privilege. They were always meant to take up their place in the academe. How the bloody hell did I slip in? I am an intruder. Don't leave your ivory tower offices unlocked, I might nick something.

Knowing My Place

Paulo Freire's (1970/2017) work is invaluable in illuminating the ways in which we participate in our own oppression. We become the oppressor at the same time as being the oppressed. I want to reflect upon a few examples of what I consider to be the symbolic violence enacted on me over those six years spent working in a university, a consequence of my outsider status of being proudly working-class. I refused to adopt their mannerisms, to strategically network through superficial ego massaging, to humblebrag, to change the way I sound, the way I dress, the place I live. I did not aspire to be them, nor do I now. At the time, I just wanted secure employment and the opportunity to write and teach. I'll start with the time in a departmental staff meeting when the issue of precarious contracts came up, a lecturer insisted on the difference between her precarity and mine (despite us both having fixed term lecturer contracts) was that she was 'not *just* a PhD student'. Or the first time I presented my work to the Department, and an eminent professor made a disparaging comment about my accent and the fact that I use the vernacular, to say 'well, if that's academic…' He didn't need to finish his sentence. Or the times that I was left out of email exchanges, or 'forgotten' to be invited to

crucial meetings. It's easy to forget who is a 'proper' member of staff and who isn't, obviously (Brook & Michell, 2012). Not being heard in meetings, but when a more senior academic says exactly the same as me (but with their accent, vocabulary and demeanour), everyone applauds and listens. Or being told that I should 'check my privilege' because of the location where I live (totally glossing over the fact that I qualified for social housing due to addiction, mental health issues, and homelessness), for me the postcode was irrelevant. The hatred that was projected my way in the most diffuse, yet consistent ways, seemed to always be circulating and was at times overwhelming. This all took place in what can be understood as a 'culture of disbelief' (Morella-Pozzi, 2016, p.177). Disbelief that they are capable of inflicting harm, disbelief that classism is a *thing* outside of my own imagination. When I once disclosed to a senior academic that I felt the snobbery and elitism of my fellow PhD students and the Department more generally, she said that she finds it hard to believe that anyone – apart from me – sees class as an issue. It must of course, just be me then. Me and my warped thinking and skewed perspective on things.

The fact that I am still haunted by these thoughtless dismissals, and the ways in which these iterations have interpellated my sense of self in the context of the academe, proves Freire's point (Skeggs, 2004). I am participating in my own oppression. Interactions such as these reinforce that 'feeling that I am in some way wrong just for being myself'. These are Morella-Pozzi's words, writing on how it feels to have a disability and be both student and faculty in the academy. Her words chime with my own experience which suggests that the further one gets from that pinnacle of privilege at the heart of university life, through those various intersections of our social locations, and rarely of our own making, the closer one comes to a kind of ontological dereliction. She goes on to say, 'The terrible dichotomy [of legitimacy] is this struggle for recognition, acknowledgment, and acceptance. It is the act of being legitimate and illegitimate all at once. Because of my insecurity of my legitimacy and validity, I often find myself unable to take back power when I really need to' (Morella-Pozzi, 2016, pp.187-8) So, how to 'take back power' in a situation such as this? It can only ever be reclamation of symbolic power, hence we are back to the start of this piece – the need to tell stories so that we may live.

The Struggle for Legitimacy

The struggle for legitimacy in the academe meant that I was constantly open for exploitation: having my workload changed to accommodate the needs of others; having to take on work that others have refused; carrying that unbearable weight left from the emotional dimension of pastoral care. I am blessed that there were many working-class students (at undergraduate level) at the institution I worked at. My relationships and the interpersonal dynamics with these students in the classroom were what kept me there. Students told me I'm 'normal', 'real', 'not like the other lecturers'. Ontologically, I felt more closely aligned with these students, than I did my colleagues. Senior academics and management focus on 'retention strategies' without considering the emotional toll this work has on staff who are working-class and / or Black or of colour (Binns, 2019). Like all the proletariat, I am there to do the graft for the benefit of others, just because my work was then taking place within an elite profession, these facts remained the same. At the start of my time there, I was so acutely aware of my outsider status I went above and beyond to prove my worth and legitimacy to be there, to exist. Ultimately, this meant that my work for the Department was always prioritised over my own PhD work. Due to the fact that my presence and activity can be witnessed and to some extent measured in the job, it was into the teaching and student support work that a disproportionate amount of my efforts were poured. The creative and thinking space required for the PhD constantly struggled

to gain legitimacy in a head which was forever telling me that I'm not good enough to be there and that my purpose is the job, to 'work'. In the end, it took six and a half years to complete the PhD. It was also only in the latter stages of the doctoral process that I was able to understand that, within an academic context, thinking *is* work. In many ways, how I've interpreted my intellectual labour epitomises my sense of alienation from a sense of academic legitimacy. Ever since that first pound-an-hour job, I always worked weekends and school holidays in shops, care homes, kitchens, and laundries. 'Working' for me meant physical labour. Sore hands, an aching back, and heavy legs. Tiredness. The ability to pursue a line of thought creatively and dynamically requires the time and a lack of responsibility that must surely be indicative of luxury, leisure, or respite, not work. This logic still haunts me. Despite the fact that 'thinking' is a vital necessity in the context of research, I continue to taunt myself that hours spent in that cycle of sitting, thinking, munching, thinking, is evidence of my laziness and, moreover, my academic illegitimacy. I need to be actively *doing*, in a way that can be witnessed by others, to gain legitimacy for my efforts and then *maybe* I'll recognise its value myself. The only way my intellectual musings can get some legitimacy is by making themselves visible as coherent words on a page – to become a product – which they rarely do, and never reading as intelligently as I think they should. For example, despite this paper being submitted under the rubric of 'research article', I would struggle to think of it as such. Even my 'story' seems to lack legitimacy once I feel it to be interpellated through the mechanisms of academic publishing. Yet, we must persist. So, I submit it anyway.

Linked to the notion of legitimacy is of course the notion of 'respectability', and as we know from work such as Elias' *The Civilising Process* (1969/2000) respectability has long been used as a marker for both 'race' and class. I drop 't's, often don't pronounce 'h's, my 'th's sound like 'f's and I swear frequently, whether I'm at home, teaching, or in meetings. I defy respectability, and class is deeply inscribed on my body (Reay, 2018; Skeggs, 2004). I may have white skin but, in the context of the social mileus of the upper-middle classes, I operate as one of the 'internal others' of whiteness. 'Whiteness as a site of privilege is not absolute but rather crosscut by a range of other axes of relative advantage and subordination; these do not erase or render irrelevant race privilege, but rather inflect or modify it' (Frankenberg, 2001, p. 76). Many of us who are trying to think about the bodily and affective dimensions of classism turn to Bourdieu's work (Binns, 2019). This is perhaps because of the nature of reflexivity at the heart of this work, that we are compelled to return to those childhood memories and locate them within particular social conditions (Thatcher et al, 2015). This becomes our starting point, our litmus paper, to determine how we might understand where we are at now (Skeggs, 2004).

The cleft habitus (or habitus clivé) is a useful tool to apply in order to think the implications of these dichotomies through (Brook & Michell, 2012). For me, the cleft is such that it cracks and splinters, with further fault lines off-shooting from it, much like the lines on the palm of one's hand. There are so many dichotomies, splits, fault lines, but ultimately all of these can be traced back to the markers of class. These clefts, splits or fractures, are not just symbolic – the hurt, pain and struggle is felt at the level of the body – physically and psychically (Reay, 2017; Binns, 2019). The embodied dimensions of class are something only the working-class have access to. It is only us who can know how it *feels*. Academics in my previous Department write about people like me, like us, as objects of study. Yet, they will never understand people like me, like us; neither would they fully accept my working-classness when I was in the role of academic. To do so would mean the object of study has become the subject, thus the status quo would be threatened, and the surety of their position of entitlement might come under threat. So, instead what happened was either I was invisible, not seen, I didn't exist – when my working-classness seeped out in the context of me being an academic; or I was *only* seen as

working-class and my academic capabilities were rendered invisible, obsolete, non-existent. Either way, something always had to be erased – be that my working-classness or my academic status. I signify something that the university wants – the success story of inclusivity, social mobility, widening participation - but I will always just be an empty signifier. My position as an academic will always be precarious – irrespective of contract. I felt paranoid, like they were all waiting for my working-classness to trip me up, to legitimise my removal. I existed like a spectre, haunting. The university wants students like me, wants to read and write papers on people like me, but doesn't want people like me doing a job that was never meant for me. The mutual coexistence of the dimensions of working-class and academic seems an impossibility in the imaginaries of those I worked with.

No Fairy Tale Ending

Figure 5: My daughter on our estate (2020)

Maya Angelou once said, 'My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humour and some style'. I would love to have this as my own motto but after seven years working within the institutional machinery of a contemporary British university, I think the best I could hope for is to survive. The academe does not seem to be a place which would like me to thrive. My 'style' maybe questionable, but I have humour and compassion in abundance and without my working-class upbringing I would not have either of these. What would it take to thrive in the academe? Assimilation would definitely make it easier (Binns, 2019; Friedman, 2015). However, I am not willing to kill off a part of myself which runs to my core. In fact, the more I was on my own surrounded by a sea of upper-middle-class assumptions, values and practices, the more desperately I held onto those working-class experiences that have shaped who I am (McKenzie, 2015). My story is told here so that I may live, as I am no longer part of the academe, and instead part of prison education. I wanted to go out giving a two-fingers up to the snobbery, elitism, and class prejudice. An empty gesture I know, as those who won't notice I've gone, have never accepted that I was there in the first place. Those with whom I live and love - friends, neighbours, family, the incarcerated men I teach – do not seek to abject me but all the time I was in that role as 'academic', I was always marked as different. None of the people I know really understand what *doing* a PhD means and, importantly, nor do they really care!

The crucial difference between my experiences of difference amongst working-class folks and amongst upper-middle-class academics is that amongst the working-classes my difference does not need to end in my rejection or my erasure. It does not render my existence, contributions,

relations illegitimate. The working-classes I live and work amongst can tolerate 'difference', do not insist upon assimilation, lack the defensiveness of upper-middle-class academics, and are not motivated by fantasies of their own prestigiousness. They / We have a level of acceptance and comfortability in our own skins, that the upper-middle-classes can only dream of … or, in the case of the well-published academic, write about.

Author Bio

Sharon Tugwell recently completed her PhD in Psychosocial Studies at the University of London and is currently working in prison education.

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Two Poems: ‘Cousins’, ‘Teenage Testament’

Ian C Smith

Cousins

Dirty side-panelled windows, acid-etched,
a wide entrance with cracked mosaic tiles
suggesting past elegance, seemed far-fetched
after slogging Liverpool’s streets for miles,
a Down Under dream, searching for lost kin.
My rebellious aunt’s son lent me his room
post-pub crawl, my hot head in a scouse spin.
The hallway stretched from loneliness to doom,
a wan naked light bulb hung from a wire.
Seeing no-one, I heard keys scrape in locks,
saw his plastic flowers jarred, cold ash fire,
thoughts of cherished hope when leaving the docks.
Daybreak, sparrows mounting in guttering,
taps behind those closed doors, soft muttering.

Teenage Testament

Thirteen

In trouble, school, home, we almost made the state border. A light in gathering gloom flashing on the squad car’s roof ended our flight. We claimed our carton of *Camels* was legit, exchanged for food with homeless men, an edited inversion of the truth, cop looking sadly bemused. The only place available for us to sleep, door unlocked, smelled of ancient stone, walls a vulgar archive of misspelled rage. The cop’s wife, motherly, served eggs, tea, for breakfast before we were entrained back.

Fourteen

A collie stray, that slender nose, luxurious coat, sad, knowing eyes, made overtures, a pick-up. Alert, maintaining its distance behind on the footpath, it dogged me walking home after work. Tired, undernourished, I swore later I offered no encouragement. Uncertain about gender, my landlady’s garden filled with dog, I called it Laddie. Her clothesline offcut replaced my shoelaces for its lead, the landlady warning me a boy-with-dog visit via train might end badly.

Sixteen

Poor, lustful, on wheels, some stolen, we took any chance to cruise beyond our ghetto for crime or romance we called Scoring, tattooed, t-shirts tight. The junior, so in the back, I spotted two girls. We braked, they got in, I got lucky. A rathe beauty in my lap, the girl-less driver agog, his illiterate mate up front too slow for logistics. Thus, stunned by luck, an abstract explanation for the absence of forethought used by street rats the way God is attributed by the devout, I transitioned to carnal sweetness.

Fourteen

In the guard's van's sway and windy rush, smells of oil and dust, old sunlight, he laughed, repeating the dog's name, accepting my offer of a smoke, me bullshitting like the lamplit station ads. Then the bus shelter's varnished light, the waiting car, that face my mother said was carved from granite. A whole weekend. In the dark chambers of my imagination I hoped a dog might soften a heart of stone.

Seventeen

My tarnished angel said she chose me in one glance, hot thighs wrapping my ribs in my rented room, one way to beat back the seething past, to forget. Her friend shared a mattress under my high rattling brass bed, my back seat mate in her arms.

Coda

Google Earth transports me in vivid close-up. Our idyll, neighbourhood roofline updated with skylights. I gaze longingly on the past, their window yellowed, shadowy, an old story. She straddles the boy, charm necklace jumping for joy, holds it in her mouth, bites down in rapture.

Author Bio

Ian C Smith writes in the Gippsland Lakes region of Victoria, and on Flinders Island. His work has appeared in *Antipodes*, Communion, *Cordite*, *Eureka Street, Griffith Revi*ew, *Journal of Working-Class Studies*, *Meniscus*, & *Shaping the Fractured Self* (UWAP). His seventh book is *wonder sadness madness joy*, Ginninderra Press (2015).

Metzgar, J. (2021) *Bridging the Divide: Working-Class Culture in a Middle-Class Society.* ILR Press.

Review by Christie Launius

Those familiar with the work of Jack Metzgar, whether through his scholarly writings, his role as a regular contributor to the *Working-Class Perspectives* blog, or his presentations at working-class studies conferences over the past 20+ years, know that he has spent a long time developing his thinking and making a series of arguments about the existence of a working-class culture that is different than middle-class culture, and is *not* a deficit culture. *Bridging the Divide: Working-Class Culture in a Middle-Class Society* is the culmination of that thinking, and here readers will find a thorough and thoughtful articulation of what Metzgar sees as working-class culture's categorical differences from middle-class culture, as well as its more specific aspects. In broad strokes, as laid out in a helpful table in Chapter 6 of the book, middle-class culture emphasizes 'doing and becoming' and is more cosmopolitan, while working-class culture emphasizes 'being and belonging' and is more parochial (p. 103). Chapters 7-9 explore what Metzgar calls 'strategies and aspects' (p. 129) of working-class culture: 'the strategy of *ceding control to gain control*, the extraordinary value given to *taking it*, and what has been called *working-class realism*' (p. 130-31).

In and of itself, this full treatment of working-class culture is a significant contribution to the field of working-class studies (and beyond), but Metzgar has bigger fish to fry in this book; more specifically, he draws our attention to how the strengths and limitations of working-class and middle-class culture can (and should) be leveraged to help foster progressive political changes that would benefit both working-class people and so-called standard-issue middle class professionals. He calls for a 'class-cultural dialectic, whereby one culture helps balance and enrich the other' (p. 97). In this vision, working-class and middle-class people could act as 'both productive antagonists and complements' to one another, and as 'coalition partners' working to 'address our savagely inequitable distribution of income and wealth' (p. 188). More specifically, he calls for 'restoring productivity sharing and progressive taxes,' (p. 70) as happened during the 'Glorious Thirty' years from 1945 to 1975.

The unappealing alternative, according to Metzgar, is to continue as we have been, with working-class culture seen as the problem, more education posed as the solution, and middle-class people further hardening into their 'defensive crouch,' focused on 'preserving our privileges so we can pass them on to our progeny' (p. 87) and living in mortal fear of falling. This is a timely intervention and an optimistic vision, in a moment when optimism feels in short supply. He certainly acknowledges the obstacles to achieving his vision, but persists nonetheless, enough so that I found myself feeling a flicker of hope and wanting to jump on this bandwagon.

My desire to jump on the bandwagon Metzgar builds was further enhanced by the tone he adopts and the rhetorical strategies he uses throughout the book. In other words, my willingness to be swayed by his arguments was very much shaped by *how* he makes them.

This book feels conversational, because the style and tone of the writing is engaging and accessible. It is also conversational in the sense that you feel as though the thinking behind the writing is happening in real time, as if you as a reader were being walked through Metzgar's own thought process. As a reader, I found this strategy compelling, as it gave me context for his arguments and helped me see how he arrived at them.

Throughout the book, Metzgar situates himself and foregrounds his positionality explicitly. He doesn't shy away from the fact that his perspective is deeply shaped by his maleness, his whiteness, his age, and his geographical location. He acknowledges that this narrows his perspective, but adds, 'But how would I know this without putting out my interpretations for others to judge against their own observations and experience? . . .I ask readers to reflect on their own experience even as they challenge my book learning and I challenge theirs' (p. 14). Through statements like this, he invites readers to engage with his ideas and seems to envision how their engagement might run the gamut from 'the thrill of recognition to 'yes, but' to 'what the hell are you talking about?'' (p. 130).

This foregrounding of his positionality throughout the book is crucial in another sense; as he points out from the outset, his argument is as much based on his 'observation and experience over more than seven decades' as it is scholarship from the fields of sociology, history, and economics. These observations and experiences of working-class and middle-class cultures are more specifically from the point of view of someone who has at various points understood himself to have crossed over, moved between, and straddled the two cultures. Though Metzgar is at pains to argue that this book is *not* a memoir (and I don't disagree with him on this), it is a good fit with the scholarly personal narratives that Sherry Linkon argues constitute the signature genre of working-class studies. Metzgar generates new knowledge by weaving together his studied observations of working-class and middle-class cultures with his assessment of scholarly sources from a range of disciplines in what I am coming to call a straddler epistemology.

The book's conversational tone and its invitation to readerly engagement are, I think, enactments of this so-called straddler epistemology. Metzgar engages in dialogue with his scholarly sources, his imagined readers, and his own dialectical experience of the two class cultures, sifting through ideas and arguments to piece together his own. The phrase 'by my lights' is sprinkled throughout the book, which serves as shorthand for a way of authorizing an argument by appealing to his knowledge of both working-class and middle-class cultures. But importantly, these observations from experience are never used as a trump card, nor does he shy away from citing evidence that runs counter to his observation.

As I hope I have made clear in the preceding paragraphs, the value of this book does not lie solely in its content but also in its form. Put differently, Metzgar manifests the class-cultural dialectic that he calls for out in the world within the pages of the book itself. While I don't always or fully share Metzgar's optimism about enacting policies that will tackle income and wealth inequality in the US, I *did* come away from the book convinced that a class consciousness that is formed by knowledge of the strengths and limitations of both working-class and middle-class cultures is a much needed and powerful perspective. And while I couldn't fully share his optimism, I recognize how much the field of working-class studies needs people like him to have it.

Reviewer Bio

Christie Launius is interim Head of the Social Transformation Studies Department at Kansas State University. She is a past president of the Working-Class Studies Association, and co-editor (with Michele Fazio and Tim Strangleman) of the *Routledge International Handbook of Working-Class Studies* (2021).

Press, E. (2021). *Dirty Work: Essential Jobs and the Hidden Toll of Inequality in America*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux

Review by Nathaniel Heggins Bryant

The most recent book by American journalist Eyal Press, his 2021 *Dirty Work: Essential Jobs and the Hidden Toll of Inequality in America* might sound like the latest in a long line of popular exposés that show average people doing a variety of necessary, physically taxing, underappreciated labor, usually the kind that leaves workers unhealthy, exhausted, and soiled. In some ways, and in some chapters, that is certainly true, but, on the whole, readers should not expect Press's book to function like the Mike Rowe television series *Dirty Jobs* (2005-2012) or *Somebody's Gotta Do It* (2014-2016).

Instead, the 'dirty work' that Press examines is as much about individual shame, social stigma, and existential pollution as it is about dirty laboring bodies. Drawing on sociology, psychology, economics, philosophy, labor studies, and a wide variety of investigative reports, he investigates four large arenas of essential but often invisible contemporary labor, much of it oriented around different facets of violence work.

Part I, titled 'Behind the Walls,' explores current conditions in US jails and prisons, particularly in the way these institutions have become warehouses for people with untreated mental health issues. Part II: Behind the Screens, is a powerful examination of the lives of unmanned drone operators in the US's recent wars abroad. Press demonstrates how a broad public and political desire to remove American soldiers from killing fields gave rise to unmanned combat and, unfortunately, to new, underappreciated forms of moral injury to those operators. Part III: On the Kill Floors is perhaps the most familiar section of the book to people within labor studies; in it Press testifies to the lives, labor, and ongoing struggles of meatpacking workers, many of whom are undocumented. Part IV: The Metabolism of the Modern World, shifts gears one more time as Press indicts the polluting effects of resource extraction and the energy sector, focusing on the 2010 British Petroleum Deepwater disaster and the environmental and social aftermath, and then concluding with a brief but sharply focused discussion of the global tech industry's dirtier dimensions, including corporate surveillance and data mining.

What unites these seemingly disparate forms of work, what makes them 'dirty,' is one of Press's key contributions. In the introduction he draws on the ideas of Everett Hughes, who after World War II sought to understand why so many Germans not only stood aside but even tacitly approved of the Nazi extermination of Jews, Roma, and other socially undesirable people. Dirty work, in this historical example, was (to quote Press), 'unethical activity that was delegated to certain agents and then conveniently disavowed. Far from rogue actors, the perpetrators to whom this work was allotted had an 'unconscious mandate' from society' (p. 5). From this early definition Press painstakingly lays bare the ways we encounter similar cycles of public exigence for and subsequent repudiation of the laborers engaged in forms of violence that benefit us greatly.

The bind, of course, is that each one of these industries often employs people already marginalized who engage in necessary but morally repugnant and often physically *and* spiritually degrad*ed* and degrad*ing* labor because the work is widely understood, at the outset,

to be beneath most peoples' basic dignity. Many of the laborers are working- or poverty-class people of color in rural spaces, far removed from centers of power and policy making. What usually happens is familiar to those steeped in labor and working-class studies: Press illustrates multiple times a public relations cycle wherein investigations into the spaces of this dirty work engender public outrage that is nearly always directed at the workers themselves. The jobs they do are 'essential' precisely because a vast majority of Americans want, to cite his first example, an overtly punitive judicial system with long prison sentences and, at the same time, continually vote in politicians who vow to slash state budgets for adequate penal facilities, let alone mental health care. This same public later decries the logical results of their very own social desires when inmates are abused, neglected, or killed by guards, while the guards themselves rightly feel stigmatized for working in underfunded, under-resourced systems that do exactly what the broader public expects and 'perhaps even secretly desire[s]' (p. 88).

These dirty workers are invisible, forgotten, except when what they actually do is made public from time to time, at which point, they draw our ire, scorn, and opprobrium. As Press convincingly makes clear, there is very little rinsing and repeating for these dirty jobs; the moral stains and pollution run too deep. And this is not a leftist or liberal treatise, either, because the author is fully cognizant of the ways that well-meaning participation in animal rights, anti-war, or climate change activism often unwittingly contribute to a cycle of outrage that winds up further stigmatizing the workers carrying out these broad social mandates.

Outside of Hughes's idea and term, Press leans heavily on a handful of other familiar interlocutors in *Dirty Work*. These include the sociologist Erving Goffman and his ideas about stigma. He also employs the ideas of clinical psychiatrist Jonathan Shay, whose groundbreaking 1994 book *Achilles in Vietnam* introduced the idea of 'moral injury' to describe the experience of Vietnam War veterans and their ongoing, often debilitating sense of shame and grief in participating in things they knew to be ethically wrong. Press deftly recontextualizes these ideas in a timely and contemporary work that helps to identify and name familiar but nevertheless damaging patterns that marginalize and victimize some of the most precariously positioned workers in the United States.

Finally, this is one of the first books I have encountered that testifies to the ongoing and as-yet unresolved impacts that the COVID-19 global pandemic has had on already difficult work. The portraits that Press paints of 'essential' prison guards and undocumented slaughterhouse workers in an era of Trump and the coronavirus are timely, devastating, and gutting. This is doubly true because these portraits of everyday people are informed by Press's careful documentation of the political and economic machinery, or cynical machinations, maintained to ensure that guards and inmates bear the burden of their own infections, that meatpacking factories remain open for business despite the clear and present danger these spaces have for contributing to the spread of viruses.

Reviewer Bio

Nathaniel Heggins Bryant is Assistant Professor of English at California State University, Chico. He is the author of several articles dealing with the intersection of labor studies, prison studies, and prison writing on individuals like George Jackson and Caryl Chessman. Recently he served as the Working-Class Studies Association secretary and is also the secretary for his campus chapter of the California Faculty Association, the labor union representing faculty, counselors, librarians, and coaches in the CSU system.

Pascale, C-M, (2021) *Living on the Edge: When Hard Times Become a Way of Life.* Polity Press.

Review by Allison L. Hurst

This often poignant and moving book presents a vision of America and Americans that is often missing from dominant narratives produced by people living in relative comfort some distance away from the reality for millions of economically struggling Americans. It is based on an original research design that is a cross between Studs Terkel's opportunistic approach and more rigorous sociological research methods. From 2017 to 2018, Pascale 'travelled the country to talk with people who live in communities where hard times have become a way of life' (p. 233). Her decision to visit three regions of the country – Appalachia, the Standing Rock and Wind River Reservations in the Midwest, and Oakland, California –allowed for a much more diverse sample (racially, ethnically, geographically, politically) than other recent works on 'white working class' people in a single location.

In each locale Pascale initiated conversations with random strangers, whom she met at gas stations, flea markets, pawn shops, and other places where strangers are likely to converge. Some of these conversations went so well that she was able to formally invite the stranger to sit down with her for a formal interview. These twenty-seven interviews form the heart of the book. Information on these interviewees, including the names they adopted for themselves for this book and their espoused racial identities (e.g., Arapaho, White/Italian, Mexican/Latino, Native American/American Indian, Caucasian, Black/White), are found in a helpful appendix.

Pascale adopts an Institutional Ethnography (IE) approach, adapted from Dorothy E. Smith, the trailblazing feminist scholar who also developed standpoint theory. Although their stories clearly anchor the book, it is not simply about particular people, but rather 'the larger contexts around them' – how 'business practices and government policies create, normalize, and entrench economic struggles for many in order to produce extreme wealth for a few' (xi). Local experiences provide 'a window into how broader power relations work' (p. 236). Pascale takes individual stories about unemployment, bad jobs, payday loans, slum landlords, and traces these back to structures of power and policy. For example, she explains payday lending and food deserts as background to stories about being in debt and hungry. Embedded throughout the text are 'budgets' which highlight the disjuncture between what people are paid and what is required for a decent living in a particular place. These budgets are an eye-opener for those accustomed to being able to pay their bills. Ultimately, Pascale explains, this is a book 'about power that has been leveraged by government and corporations at the expense of ordinary people' (xi).

Each chapter can operate as a stand-alone chapter, although the whole still adds up to more than the sum of its parts. In Chapter Two, we meet six members of 'the struggling class,' the term that those Pascale interviews almost universally endorse rather than 'working class.' But these stories about people are just as much 'stories about places' (p. 17). There are specific contextual differences to living in Oakland, Appalachia, and the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, and yet, 'even here, the daily lives of the struggling class bear remarkable similarities….to work consistently in a breathtakingly vulnerable situation, with few resources,

and with an unfounded hope that you can build a better life' (p. 40). Place inflects the experience of class, but struggle remains the *leitmotif* across the land.

The next three chapters take on three structural aspects of these struggling lives: predatory business practices, environmental racism/classism, and substance abuse and addiction. These chapters in particular are strong stand-alones that could be used in various sociology courses. Chapter Three documents the high cost of being poor, as in the 'lower bills and higher costs' found at dollar stories, where people can buy 16 ounces of milk for $1 (that's $8/gallon!). In Chapter Four, we see how each of the three communities experience their own place-based version of living in a 'sacrifice zone' – uranium mining in Standing Rock, lead contamination in Oakland, and the myriad environmental catastrophes associated with mountain top removal and coal mining in Appalachia. In Chapter Five, Pascale documents the painful reality of 'ordinary' life, the daily confrontations with drug addiction, gun violence, police brutality, or the 'Oxy Express' – a stretch of highway whose single motorists are likely in search of the Sackler drug, or its down-home equivalent.

Together, these three chapters convey how different daily reality is for most struggling Americans than it is for those who read books about them. Inured to violence, unfairness, disaster, people just do the best they can while hoping to survive a little longer. There's little to no protest, as there is little energy left for that, and precious little expectation of making a difference. Precarious work and low wages fundamentally restructure expectations and understandings about how the world works and what is possible for the future.

Chapters 6 and 7 tackle classism, racism, and gender oppression. One of the refreshing aspects of reading Pascale is her honest accounts of how she stands up to and speaks back to people saying hateful or ignorant things. At one point she explains she tries to do this with love in her heart, but, perhaps because of that, what she ends up saying is often pretty raw and confrontational. I see this as her giving the people she is talking with the respect they deserve; not allowing anyone to get away with saying things that are hurtful just because they themselves may be hurt. In one example, she recounts an increasingly flustered white man as she continues to question him on why his family thought it was alright to call a Black man an insulting name (129-30). In another account, she refuses to accept that joking about the holocaust can ever be 'in good fun,' as was explained to her by a Jewish man who suffered these jokes from a white nationalist co-worker (p. 133).

In Chapters Eight and Nine, Pascale tackles professional-middle-class understandings of, respectively, white working-class politics and the myths of meritocracy and social mobility. She marshals data that undercuts the common media narrative that Trump was supported by a racist white working class, showing that he was pretty well supported across the class spectrum. Although she finds plenty of instances of ignorance and racism, she also finds a lot of people rejecting Trump and eschewing politics altogether. If there was one thing in 2016 that most appealed to 'the struggling class,' it might have been Trump's seeming disavowal of politics and politicians. Pascale also reaches further down into the myths that have sustained professional-middle-class hegemony, the belief that anyone can make it if they try, that our 'meritocracy' is fair, that the American Dream is not rather a nightmare for most.

The book concludes with two nicely bookending chapters – one on the future we have now and that took us all by surprise (the Pandemic), and one on the future we want. Pascale was concluding her research when the pandemic hit, so she was able to go back and talk to her interviewees during that really bad year of 2020. Unsurprisingly, she found the pandemic

exacerbated inequalities, killing poor people and people of color at higher rates than others and dividing the workforce into 'essential workers' (ironically, easily disposable and unprotected) and those privileged to keep their jobs and work safely from home.

All of this bleakness is finally confronted in Chapter 11, 'The Future We Want.' Pascale argues that the corporate takeover of our government has undercut the ability of our democracy to function (p. 211). She hopes the pandemic might be the catalyst for change. 'Moments of crisis are ripe for progressive transformation because they lay bare existing inequalities' (p. 232). Perhaps. It is hard to have hope in times like ours. But I do take comfort in the fact that people like Pascale are out there, having real conversations with strangers, even difficult conversations and arguments, trying to find a way back to some semblance of community, of a shared democracy, of 'a land that is made for you and me.' The first step in our recovery has to be moving out of denial about how badly fractured and hurt we are, combined with an honest naming of the forces to blame for it. This book helps us get out of our denial.

Reviewer Bio

Allison L. Hurst is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Oregon State University. She is the author of *The Burden of Academic Success: Loyalists, Renegades, and Double Agents* (2010), *College and the Working Class* (2012), and *Amplified Advantage: Going to a 'Good' School in an Era of Inequality* (2019). She currently serves as the Past-President of the Working-Class Studies Association, and is a member of the American Sociological Association's Taskforce on First-Generation and Working-Class Persons in Sociology.

Sandel, M.J. (2020) *The Tyranny of Merit: What's Become of the Common Good?*

Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Review by Kenneth Oldfield

Michael Sandel, a professor of government theory at Harvard University Law School, considers how merit, an allegedly neutral standard, has become the guiding principle for deciding which candidate is best qualified for a position. Given their power to grant credentials, college faculty have become the primary arbiters in establishing who's competent, who's not, and what graduates must know to be deemed qualified. Who will be credentialed and who won't. Having a college diploma proves you are smarter than someone who didn't go beyond high school, if that far. Sandel asserts that this obsession with 'credentialism,' as he calls it, has caused too many college graduates to harbor feelings of conceit and condescension toward the uncredentialled, especially members of the working class (hereinafter also meant to include poverty-class individuals), whom Sandal defines as those employed in 'manual labor, service industry, and clerical jobs.' Credentialism is, in Sandel's words, 'the last acceptable prejudice.'

The uncredentialled are not oblivious to this bias. Sandel argues that these feelings of elitism among the credentialled help explain the growing resentment and discontent being seen among American workers, people whose living standards have steadily declined over the last forty years or so, a downslide due in large part to globalization, the ongoing upward redistribution of wealth associated with trickledown economics, stagnating wages, decreasing social mobility, and a diminishing sense of community.

Sandel describes the results of the upward redistribution of wealth caused by trickledown economics and globalization as 'approaching daunting proportions.' He cites research showing that the top one percent of the US population has an annual income equaling that of the bottom fifty percent combined.

America's financial elites are not the only ones pulling away from the rest of America. The same thing is happening with the US Congress. Sandel reports that while half of the country's labor force is working-class, only two percent of Congress held working class jobs before assuming office. This unrepresentativeness is equally daunting when considering these legislators' education levels. Every Senator and ninety five percent of House members finished college. Sandel describes the state of our national government as the 'oligarchic capture of democratic institutions.'

Provoked by recent history, President Trump, and certain plain-spoken Republican leaders, the uncredentialled have become increasingly unwilling to blame themselves for their declining status. Some Democrats, on the other hand, have too often been saying and doing things that working-class people consider, and understandably so, demeaning. Sandel cites Hillary Clinton's 2020 presidential campaign comment about Donald Trump's supporters being a 'basket of deplorables' as an example of the dismissive attitude too many members of America's elite hold toward uncredentialled Americans. The deplorables expressed their

disaffection and alienation by denying Clinton the presidency she craved. Shortly after being elected, Donald Trump proudly announced, 'I love the poorly educated.'

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

In the penultimate chapter of his book, Sandel offers several reforms meant to counteract the tyranny of credentialism. Here are a few of his recommendations.

First, he says governments should commit more resources to 'community colleges…technical, and vocational training programs.' This heightened support will enable these schools to instruct people in the trades, where he says the better paying jobs are and will remain. Along with training, these classes will encourage students to reconsider how Americans define success. The enrollees will be advised to see that achievement is more than having a four-year degree and earning lots of money.

Second, and borrowing an idea from Oren Cass's book *The Once and Future Worker: A Vision for the Renewal of Work in America*,' Sandel suggests that US government officials follow the lead of some European policy makers by subsidizing low-paying jobs. Doing vital work, jobs that do not require a college diploma and might not pay a high salary, are, nonetheless, as essential to society's well-being as are the so-called professions. The Covid19 virus and its variants have reminded Americans of the centrality of otherwise taken-for-granted employees. These workers include, among others, supermarket clerks, delivery drivers, and home health aides. The proposed government subsidies will allow American workers to earn a living wage and presumably avoid having to work more than one job to stay afloat.

Third, Sandel recommends that the government redirect the tax burden from wages and salaries to wealth, speculation, such as credit default swaps, and consumption. (This last revenue source ought to have been clarified with examples to show how it will improve workers' lives). Sandel says that adopting these changes will greatly improve the living standards of many uncredentialled Americans. Money solves a lot of problems.

WHERE TO GO NEXT

Sandel's *Tyranny* is a well-researched, well written, informative, and provocative work. His assessment and proposals for remedying the ills engendered by the ideology of merit are sound. He should continue critiquing the prevailing belief in meritorious selection but with two thoughts in mind. First, he should weigh how his word choices have limited his characterizations of the injuries spawned by the dogma of credentialism and, by extension, his list of possible reforms. Second, he should use a more contrarian mindset when evaluating the institutional constraints that have contributed to the reign of meritocratic thinking. Deploying these two standards will impel Sandel (and other researchers) to develop still more proposals for reversing an ever-growing state of inequality among Americans.

The following paragraphs provide a sampling of specific terms and contextual questions that when viewed from another vantage point will, ideally, prompt Sandel to discover additional ways to resolve the problems caused by the tyranny of merit.

First, government *entitlement* programs are commonly seen as benefitting those who think they deserve something for nothing. Sandel discusses entitlements in this light. Legally *entitlement* simply means if you meet the criteria, you are entitled to the benefits. Sandel should extend his

analysis and discussion to include explaining that material inheritances, financial assets, and other properties, are entitlements. If you are named in the will, you are entitled to the benefits, even if you never did anything to earn them. Sandel should argue that it's doubtful that many scions of wealthy families feel guilty or humiliated by inheriting a large fortune, unlike how working-class people are expected to think when they receive government assistance. These workers meet the eligibility criteria, so they are entitled to the benefits, the same as the people who are entitled by law to receive a large inheritance. This enhanced delineation of entitlement would make for a welcomed edition to the curriculum of the vocational schools Sandel says deserve more funding.

Second, he uses *privileged* to describe the numerous advantages most Harvard law students have enjoyed throughout their lives. If there are privileged children, there must be underprivileged children because these are relative terms. Labeling one group underprivileged while not calling the other group overprivileged has obvious political implications for how we view socioeconomic outcomes and the sources of the many resulting disparities. Again, the idea of over and underprivileged children should be included in Sandel's revised vocational school curriculum.

Third, he discusses how working-class white people are embittered by accusations of having white privilege, while being denied the respect they deserve for their considerable knowledge, talents, and expertise. Sandel's future writings, and not just those regarding credentials, should, where appropriate, refer to overprivileged children (past and present) and the wealthy in general as having class privilege, yet another topic vocational school students should encounter in their studies.

Fourth, Sandel called credentialism 'the last acceptable prejudice.' Based on the evidence he cites in *Tyranny* concerning the strong relationship between people's socioeconomic origins and their odds of earning a college credential, he would be better off saying instead that classism is the last acceptable prejudice.[1]

Finally, Sandel favors enhancing socioeconomic diversity among Harvard Law students to improve that program's learning environment. He doesn't mention the myriad ways the Harvard Law professors' choice of texts, assignments, and in-class talking points (conversations that inevitably spill outside the classroom) influence their students' thinking and actions, and thus the overall learning environment. Sandel should expand his support for class-based affirmative action among Harvard law students to include their instructors.

This democratizing initiative would expose not only the students, but many of their professors and other people at the school to a broader range of perspectives on legal issues, practices, problems, and potential ways to address these faults. If this faculty diversity program were adopted, it would help mitigate the prejudicial faculty hiring practices that others have identified (Borthwich & Schau, 1991) and that persist (Stegall & Feldman, 2019) at America's top tier law schools. As one of the nation's leading law programs, were Harvard to implement the proposed faculty hiring policy, it would likely inspire most if not every other American law school to follow suit. Optimally, this same hiring reform would then spread throughout American higher education.

[1] Given the discussion and large number of references listed in Chapter Six, 'The Sorting Machine,' Sandel had good reason to conclude that the common practice of calling them 'class rooms' is fitting. Unfortunately, he never refers to them as class rooms

CONCLUSION

Social class, particularly the notion of challenging the legitimacy of inherited wealth, is the third, fourth, and fifth rail of American politics. Given his notable success in crafting and publishing other well-received books, Sandel is urged to keep educating Americans about, first, the significant role social class background plays in determining who is eventually judged qualified to benefit from the current system of structural nepotism. Second, he should use his deep understanding of merit to formulate still other ways beyond those listed in *Tyranny* to show readers and other researchers how to level the playing field so maybe someday everyone will have the same opportunity to achieve the American Dream.

Reviewer Bio

Kenneth Oldfield is emeritus professor of public administration at the University of Illinois-Springfield. He has published articles on various topics including property tax administration, Graduate Record Examination predictive validity, the Office of Economic Opportunity, personnel selection and orientation, community college funding disparities, property-assessment uniformity, tax increment financing, the human genome project, graduate internships, the philosophy of science, and the sociology of knowledge. His current research, conference presentations, and publications focus on democratizing higher education by recruiting more students, professors, and administrators who are first-generation college and of poverty or working-class origins.

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Luttrell, W. (2020) *Children Framing Childhoods: Working-Class Kids' Visions of Care.* Policy Press.

Review by Lisa M. Paolucci

Sociologist Wendy Luttrell's *Children Framing Childhoods: Working-Class Kids' Visions of Care* is a visual analysis that centers diverse working-class children's views on their own care, both at home and in school, as shared through their photographs, videos, and associated oral accounts; this work fits well within her body of research, which is largely focused on education with an emphasis in social justice. Embedded within the physical book, which contains six chapters, a prelude, and a postlude, are five links to what Luttrell titles 'Digital Interludes.' In addition, an accompanying website contains an archive of 2,036 photographs taken by the participants at ages 10, 12, 16, and 18, and 65 hours of video and audio recordings of interviews with students. Luttrell invites the public to view all of these elements in what she terms 'collaborative seeing,' with the intention that viewers notice their assumptions and biases and that these continued discoveries extend the research (p. 9). Indeed, throughout the completion of this research, the children shared their accounts along with their photographs with different types of audiences, including their own school communities and university settings, and were given opportunities to further explain or even to change their own minds as they spoke about their own photographs and recordings.

In the prelude, Luttrell places us at the entrance of Park Central School in Worcester, Massachusetts in 2003, a longtime working-class racially and ethnically diverse immigrant community where 92% of the student population is eligible for reduced or free lunch. She imbues her writing with sensory details so that we feel the heaviness of the camera against her hip, hear the buzz of the beginning of a school day, adjust our eyes to the brightly lit hallways. The plan is to provide children with disposable cameras and to ask them to take photos of anything that matters to them over four days, to start, with the intentions of aiming to understand what students see as important, and to learn from their perspectives. This project evolved into a fifteen-year long study that concluded, in part, that children are attuned to the many ways in which care is provided in their lives.

This work represents a significant contribution to working-class studies through Luttrell's assertion, in Chapter 1, that the participating working-class children ultimately argue against their own invisibility through their photographs and accounts. In the students' presentations of their families, school community, and other aspects of their lives, Luttrell finds that they continuously emphasize the care that they receive, almost as if they expect that others hold negative views of working-class culture and working-class people. Luttrell describes these care relationships as 'choreographies of care,' emphasizing the energy and design that goes into the necessity of coordinating individuals and resources in order to provide care for children (p. 22). Undergirding this analysis is a critical childhood perspective in which children are rightly regarded as possessing active roles in their own interpretations of their lives.

In Chapter 2, Luttrell illustrates the children's active roles in demonstrating that their families care for them, that their homes are places where they belong. For example, she interprets the collection of Jeffrey's images of some of his possessions, such as his black sneakers and some

t-shirts and sports jerseys, as possessing a kind of tenderness toward both his mother and also his childhood as a whole. Another child hangs his father's artwork, created in prison, emphasizing for both himself and anyone to whom he describes the photo, that he still has a strong relationship with his father. Notably, when describing the many photographs of televisions and video games, Luttrell emphasizes that the children tell stories about these objects that emphasize how they are objects around which family members gather, thus highlighting the relationships of care at home and their emotions about these relationships; pointedly, the children's descriptions refute the interpretation that the children are celebrating consumerism and possession of material goods.

Luttrell's work further contributes to working-class studies in Chapters 3 and 4, which focus on mothers' and teachers' care. She points out that all mothers are judged in school settings, but that mothers with resources, including time to volunteer, are viewed more positively than mothers who have less 'money, time, energy, transportation, or flexibility in [their] job[s]'; often, mothers of color who are also characterized as 'working poor' are negatively judged as uninvolved, when the children's photographs and accounts often indicate their mothers' strong abilities to coordinate their care as they manage work and household responsibilities (p. 86). Children's photographs highlight the 'choreographies of care' in their lives, demonstrating their awareness of the ways in which multiple family members had to plan together to ensure the child's ability to travel to and from school on time, and to be fed and cared for in other ways (p. 22). When sharing photographs of their mothers, most children pointed out their mothers' intelligence and competence, their affinity for reading, and ability to care for them through a collective setup among resources and family members. The children are very intentional in conveying that no matter how busy their mothers are, they are heavily involved in their lives.

Race and ethnicity are also powerful lenses through which Luttrell analyzes the students' work. She notes that Black and Latinx children appear to appreciate their teachers' trust in their 'goodness' more than white or Asian children do (p. 137). She strongly states that the perspectives of students from diverse backgrounds on their school communities must be paid attention to, as they have different experiences inside and outside of school. Strikingly, Luttrell finds that the children seem to insist with their photographs that they deserve care, and highlighted their valuing of interdependence in school. As many photographs depicted 'kitchens and classrooms,' the children were thought to be valuing women's labor, pointing out that teachers are often disregarded in public narratives as not being worthy of higher salaries and being incompetent (p. 159). Powerfully, Luttrell argues that corporate interests are thereby served by these public narratives, and sees the children's photographs as a potentially powerful counternarrative.

Working with teenaged participants in 2011, in examining their photographs and listening to their accounts, Luttrell uses the lens of time in chapter 5 to interpret the teenagers' viewing of themselves as individuals with agency. The teenagers use VoiceThread, a software program that integrates photographs, audio, and text into digital stories, as well as camcorders, to record video. Luttrell notes how they playfully integrate content related to gender expectations, ethnic or racial stereotypes and classification, and the way they express their identities. Quite significantly, she offers the interpretation that overall, the teenagers, all working-class, appeared to inculcate meaning in their busy lives and all of the activities therein to indicate that they were 'proper and good people,' rather than to use their time to generate 'cultural and social capital,' an interpretation that Luttrell bolsters in citing sociologist Beverly Skeggs' work on working-class culture which emphasizes the working-class tendency to focus on just 'being'

rather than being 'productive' (pp. 193-194). Notably, through specific students' experiences, Luttrell finds that a major social inequality is some individuals' lack of access to flexibility of time.

As she draws conclusions in Chapter 6 and in the postlude, Luttrell demands that the public attend to children's needs for physical and emotional safety and security. Her research uniquely and strikingly indicates that children are capable of arguing for the necessity of their own collaborative care. She rightly emphasizes that the current 'neoliberal capitalist society' in the United States upholds a form of care that is biased in terms of gender, race, and class (p. 204).

Luttrell's work leaves us with challenging marching orders: to seriously question how we can respond to the 'educational opportunity debt' that society has incurred regarding children themselves, especially children of color, as well as their caregivers, who do not have the free time to engage in their own (or their children's) educational lives (p. 226). How, then, can the freedom promised by a democratic society actually be delivered? One answer put forth by *Children Framing Childhoods* is to intentionally and robustly invest in environments where working-class children are the recipients of care and enrichment.

Reviewer Bio

Lisa M. Paolucci is an assistant professor of Education at St. Francis College in Brooklyn, New York. She recently received her Ph.D. in English Education from Columbia University's Teachers College, and is a former public high school teacher.

Threadgold, S., Gerrard, J. (Eds.) (2022) *Class in Australia*, Monash University Publishing.

Review by Sarah Attfield

Class in Australia is a collection of twelve essays and two interviews that seeks to demonstrate the importance of class analysis in understanding how inequality works in Australia. The chapters are mostly written from a sociological perspective, with the majority of authors being sociologists (with the exception of some historians, political economists and authors from the field of education).

In the introduction to the collection, Threadgold and Gerrard state that 'class inequality exists and gaps are widening' (4). And they note that class as a method of analysis is making a 're-emergence' (5), but that it is still 'markedly absent' from public discussions of inequality (5). The book is therefore designed to open up debate and discussion of class.

The book is structured into five sections; situating class analysis in Australia; class, labour and employment; cultural formations of class; class and education and finally, interviews. The contributors employ a variety of different approaches and methods, from survey-type chapters that look at class analysis across various time periods, to case studies and textual analysis.

There is a sense of what has come before in chapters such as Greg Noble's 'Contradictory Locations of Class' that looks back on class analysis from the 1970s and asks what class models are 'for' (36). And this is a pertinent question, and one that several authors attempt to tackle. Class analysis is also contextualised within Australia's colonial history with a chapter by Barry Morris that explains how the original penal colony became a capitalist society and the way in which 'colonial class dynamics' (40), operated in the settler-colonial society that was based on the violent dispossession of Indigenous people by the settlers. This context is important in gaining an understanding of how class in Australia shares some commonalities with the British system that it is based on, but also how the specific circumstances of colonialism in Australia further shaped the class system. This type of survey also includes the different ways that class positions have been described and defined, and Mark Western evaluates some of these methods in his chapter 'Some Comments on Class Analysis'.

The book then turns to issues around labour, with a chapter by Hannah Forsyth on 'Rethinking Class Through the History of Professions'. The focus here is on the rise of the middle classes in Australia and the role they have played in shaping Australian politics. This section also includes a chapter that attempts to 'modify class theory to better address…precarity' (94), with the authors, Tom Barnes and Jasmine Ali offering a critique of some existing scholarship on precarious workers, and presenting their own ideas based on a case study of warehouse workers. This chapter incudes a small number of quotes from the workers themselves. Unemployment is also tackled in this section, with Jessica Gerrard and David Farrugia considering how notions of a work ethic have been used to paint unemployed people as lazy and 'unproductive' (109). Excerpts from an interview with a young unemployed woman bring this study to life.

In part three of the book, there is a turn towards culture, with a chapter on the use of the term 'bogan' as a derogatory method of describing working-class Australians – at least those who do not adhere to notions of respectability or 'worthiness' (129). And Penni Rossiter follows with a look at *Struggle Street*, which was a fly-on-the-wall reality TV show about a group of working-class people in western Sydney. Rossiter is not completely dismissive of the show and suggests that it did give some of its participants a chance to tell their own stories (and I have previously commented on this aspect too). The final chapter in this section is a discussion of class positioning in rural romance literature which, according to the authors, Barbara Pini and Laura Rodriguez Castro, tends towards a neo-liberal white, middle-class presentation of feminism (163).

Class and education is the theme of the next short section, consisting of a chapter that revisits a longitudinal study undertaken in the 1990s that followed a group of teenagers from private and public schools and demonstrated intersections of class and gender in educational settings. Intersections of class and race also feature in the following chapter by Rose Butler, Christina Ho and Eve Vincent who conducted interviews with parents of students at private and state selective schools (these schools require an academic test to gain entry). The study focuses mainly on middle-class parents and reveals white middle-class negative perceptions and judgements towards the parenting of Asian-background students who placed emphasis on their children's academic success via entry into a selective school.

The book concludes with two interviews, one with Professor Larissa Behrendt who is an Indigenous scholar and filmmaker. Behrendt outlines the ways that class is experienced and understood by Indigenous people in Australia and speaks of the class system as 'imported ideas' (217) 'forced' (217) onto Indigenous people by the British colonists. Behrendt concludes by stating that Indigenous people must tell their own stories (222). The other interview is with Professor Raewyn Connell, a sociologist known for her work on class and masculinities in Australia. Connell notes the changes in class relations that have occurred since she began her work in the 1970s and speaks about the development of class analysis in Australia.

It is very welcome to see this interest in class analysis from an Australian perspective. It has been difficult to garner such interest in a country that likes to think of itself as egalitarian, and the chapters in the books demonstrate that this idea is indeed a myth. There is useful historical context and helpful surveys of class analysis, as well as some finer grained case studies. But overall, I would have liked to know more about the class positions of the authors. Raewyn Connell is the only contributor who directly references their own class background (as middle-class) and provides some insight into why she became interested in understanding how class works. The aims of the other authors are less clear, and from a working-class studies perspective, this book lacks the kinds of narratives that bring class issues to life. Working-class studies centres the experiences of working-class people in its scholarship and this is what I would have liked to see in this (otherwise very worthy) collection of essays.

Reviewer Bio

Sarah Attfield is a senior lecturer in communication at the University of Technology Sydney, Australia. She is the co-editor of the *Journal of Working-Class Studies*. Her latest publications include *Class on Screen: The Global Working Class in Contemporary Cinema* (2020).

McMillan, G., ed. (2022). *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Class*. Routledge.

Review by John Lennon

Reading through edited collections can often feel like a late-night viewing of *The Blob* (1958): some collections are unwieldy, they take up a lot of space, and I never quite know where it begins and ends. That confusion was my initial feeling when reading *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Class*. I was sucked into spaces not clearly defined—I am reading about politics and Depression-era British literature one moment before finding myself entangled within an essay on West African rhetorical voices the next. Class subjectivities are centered in one essay before critical race theory becomes the anchor of ideas three essays later. Queer studies is applied to three (somewhat) related novels, while the next chapter is a Marxian analysis of Irish theater. Since I did not find a strong lifeline to hold onto when wading through this collection, I was absorbed into it, spent time fighting and trying to find my footing before giving up and reading through 32 essays that covered an enormous number of novels, countries, time periods, methodologies, and theorists. I was often disoriented, trying to find markers to ground myself and I eventually created some: Marx, Rancière, Bourdieu, and Deleuze were the most referenced theorists. Dickens was a popular author to analyze in several essays, and Depression-era texts were often invoked, either as the subject of the essay or as a reference point. In addition, lesser-known (to me) texts and methodologies were discussed within the collection: I know very little about Australian Indigenous literature (analyzed in the first chapter) nor have I ever thought about a corpus methodology such as 'Social Class Metaholon-Based Literature Analysis' (defined in the last chapter). In the thirty essays between these two bookends, I found myself surprised by what I would read, and often wrote down primary texts that piqued my interest to (hopefully) read at some point down the line. It would have been helpful to have some clearer markers linking these texts together besides an amorphous notion of 'class,' but the opportunity to float through this collection did let me pass through interesting spaces.

Reading through the 456-pages, I discovered some excellent essays. Carrie Conners' 'Productive Disruption in the Working-Class Poetry of Jan Beaty, Sandra Cisneros and Wanda Coleman' exemplifies the kind of essay that works well in this type of collection: clear, straightforward prose that introduces these poets to the reader by connecting them together, offering specific stanzas to analyze, and concretely linking all of the analysis to her three major concerns—isolation, marginalization and embodied resistance. While there is little theoretical grounding, the essay, as constructed, does not call for it. Connor seamlessly links several strong close readings to tell a story of women working-class poets carving a space within patriarchal society, in general, and working-class poetry, specifically. Heather Laird's article 'Writing Working-Class Irish Mothers' similarly wants to (re)introduce authors to readers by discussing several urban-centered texts and writers with an intent to show how literary representations of Irish working-class mothers are often invisible to scholars who see mostly tropes and not fleshed out characters. Like Connor's, Laird's essay works because the intent is clearly stated and the follow through is unencumbered by theoretical posturing.

Other essays in the collection work from a defined theoretical concept before applying the theory to particular texts. Peter Kuch's essay 'Class and Upper-Middle-Class Consciousness in Katherine Mansfield's Stories' integrates Pierre Bourdieu's work on class (specifically his definitions of 'habitus' 'field' and 'status') with post-colonial theory to show that Mansfield's work is centrally concerned with class consciousness. Without getting into the weeds of Bourdieu, Kuch introduces the theorist's concepts while also reading against the grain of literary critics who feel that Mansfield is not primarily concerned with class dynamics. It is easy to see a professor in an introductory class assigning Mansfield's 'The Garden Party' along with Kuch's essay in order to frame how theory can help us read texts in a new light. In Mattius Richard's essay 'The Urban Spatiality of Street Literature,' the author focuses on a few key theoretical terms such as bell hooks' 'vernacular architecture' and Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s 'signifying,' to explore how street novelists represent and construct spaces of African American autonomy in the city. Both essays are good introductions in applying theory to literary texts.

A third (loose) strand of essays that I mentally formed in this collection were those that based themselves in historical context. Simon Lee's essay 'Social Class and Mental Health in Contemporary British Fiction' is a model essay with the stated intention to show how class and mental health intersect. Instead of discussing numerous books (a distraction I found in several of the essays in the collection), Lee focuses on Richard Milward's 2007 novel *Apples* and grounds his analysis within a context of the way mental health was framed from a governmental position in post-World War II Britain. Ingrid Hanson's 'Victorian Socialist Obituaries and the Politics of Cross-Class Community' similarly grounds her analysis in historical context, focusing on death notices in the socialist journal *Commonweal* and examining the way grief is a tool for solidarity. Both Lee's and Hanson's essays are great introductions to the way historical context matters when doing literary analysis.

Despite containing a fair number of strong essays, it is the lack of overall framing that I felt was the biggest obstacle to appreciating this collection. Although it is being marketed as a pedagogical resource, the hardback version from Routledge is $250.00 dollars and the e-version is $50, which makes it prohibitive for faculty and students to buy and given the wide range of authors, texts, and time periods represented, the collection is ill-suited for undergraduate courses. My problem with *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Class* is that it is not concerned with marking distinctions and similarities between nations, methodologies, time periods, or theories but collects whatever it can collect, bringing them all together in a blob-like fashion. As a 'companion,' I wanted something that would walk along with me, alerting me to possible ways of reading these essays as a group or at least putting markers down to light my path. While I created some of my own while reading, I found it frustrating to do and after leaving the collection, my memories of the essays quickly jelled together, and the distinctions disappeared.

Reviewer Bio

John Lennon is an associate professor of English at the University of South Florida and author of *Conflict Graffiti: From Revolution to Gentrification* (University of Chicago Press, 2021).

Brooks, R. (2022) *Class Interruptions: Inequality and Division in African Diasporic Women's Fiction*. University of North Carolina Press.

Review by Scott Henkel

Intersectionality—as a method, a perspective, an activist strategy—is among the most important advances in humanistic and social scientific research in the past few decades. The idea that human experiences, histories, oppressions, and liberations intersect and share characteristics in common, while still retaining uniqueness and diversity, is as powerful politically as it is useful intellectually.

The concept's history has been told elsewhere: Kimberlé Crenshaw gave intersectionality a name in 1989. Thinkers like Angela Davis were writing intersectional analyses in books like *Women, Race, and Class* well before the method had that name. Its future, I hope, looks like Robin Brooks' new book *Class Interruptions: Inequality and Division in African Diasporic Women's Fiction*.

To my mind, one of the key values of such an analysis is that it attempts to show a fuller picture of human experience than an examination of a single facet of what that experience can do. Of course, focusing on any single variable can produce insight, too, because what looks like a single variable—say, class, race, sexuality, gender, ethnicity, geographical location—often shows that what looked singular at first turns out quite multifaceted.

Nevertheless, the insights that intersectionality has given us might banish, for the good, baseline assumptions that even monograph-length works need focus narrowly on one aspect of human existence, even perhaps with a quick comment, strategically placed, that nods to knowing that people cannot be summed up by any single characteristic. If the question from some years ago was: how can a book on both race and class and gender cohere? then the question now ought to be: how can a book that ignores these intersections adequately represent human complexity and the overlapping barriers to our liberation?

In *Class Interruptions*, Brooks boldly and ambitiously shows how, in her words, 'contemporary African American and Caribbean women writers advocate for a reassessment of economic, social, and political practices within U.S. and Caribbean societies while leading readers to greater class consciousness' (p. 2). This is no small task, and the many fine details in the book prove that it is exemplary intersectional analysis. As Brooks also writes, the book 'is an examination of the pendulum swings between setbacks and progress, failed hopes and aspirations in this era' (p. 2).

A book with such an ambitious scope must find a throughline to make the argument cohere, and Brook's focus in this regard is to select fiction that includes what Brooks calls the 'cross-class relationship trope,' a literary technique that pairs characters from different class backgrounds in order to show how that relationship dynamic critiques systemic inequalities. In Part I of the book, Brooks writes two chapters about African-American novels (Gloria Naylor's

Linden Hills, Dawn Turner's *Only Twice I've Wished for Heaven*, and Toni Morrison's *Love*). In Part II, Brooks writes two chapters about Anglophone Caribbean novels (Merle Hodge's *Crick Crack Monkey*, Olive Senior's *Dancing Lessons*, and Diana McCaulay's *Dog-Heart*). Brooks uses that trope to analyze those relationships and a range of problems: unequal access to healthcare and housing, sexual power dynamics, the ends of education, the tension between human rights law and its lack of enforcement, and more. Each of these inequalities, of course, has its own specific characteristics, but Brooks weaves elements of each together with examples of how the novel's characters deal with those inequalities, successfully or not. One thread she pulls through each analysis is 'the importance of coalition-building and alliance building; [...] relationships,' Brooks writes, 'represent the beginning of or foundation of the solutions to address these matters. The reality of imperfect alliances should not be deterrents, as fractures can lead to further insight' (148).

While firmly grounded in literary analysis, Brooks also weaves social scientific research into the book's analysis. As a field, working-class studies is admirably interdisciplinary, but nevertheless, in any particular work, one tends to find either Sherry Linkon or Bordieu in the citations; Brooks deftly builds upon both, and many more thinkers in the field, to make the book's case. Brooks draws on a wide-ranging scholarly archive—the book's introduction charts what she calls 'the long contemporary,' including major theorists of Africana Studies, the Black Arts Movement, and the Caribbean Artists Movement, and also surveys the scholarship on working-class studies of recent decades. Brooks combines this archive with time spent in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Bahamas conducting field research (27-28). The combination of methods makes the interdisciplinary approach in the book particularly strong.

The author of several articles, *Class Interruptions* is Brooks' first book. I hope it is the first of many, because this book has vision, ambition, and insight. Again, Brook's central concern is the cross-class relationship, which of course receives consistent attention, but I also look forward to reading more of her work because there are tantalizing ideas in *Class Interruptions* that receive prominent mention, but could benefit from full-length studies of their own.

For example, Brooks drops mention of the need for a strong welfare state several times. That fascinates me, given the book's central concern. It surfaces on p. 99, where, wonderfully, it joins with a conversation about gardening and becomes a symbol of a much larger project of cultivating a just community. From that point, Brooks raises the question of an adequate welfare state, capable of facilitating and supporting human dignity, approximately a dozen more times, dwelling on it the longest in Chapter Four, 'Human Rights and Wrongs: Violations to a Decent Standard of Living in Diana McCaulay's *Dog-Heart*'. This question, it seems to me, is one that an author who mixes literary and social scientific methods is well-prepared to answer: a writer who studies fiction has tools to think about what could be, but is not yet, and a writer who studies material conditions has tools to study what currently is, and how it could be changed. These are the opportunities intersectional and interdisciplinary methods provide.

While clear-eyed about the injustices and inequalities of the 20th and early 21st centuries in the United States and the Caribbean, Brooks looks forward to a better world. As she writes, the cross-class relationship trope in the fiction under consideration:

> advocates for people to see themselves and others in different ways and to imagine new ways of thinking to help generate solutions to inequalities. A part of changing the narrative and wider culture around class involves increasing people's class

> consciousness and their awareness of their possible complicity in the skewed state of affairs. Mind shifts can lead to greater advocacy for structural changes. (p. 148)

The work of forging such alliances, as Brooks writes, is not easy, but *Class Interruptions* makes a powerful case for the mind shifts that can lead to them, by making an intersectional and interdisciplinary demonstration of why they are necessary.

Reviewer Bio

Scott Henkel is the Wyoming Excellence Chair in the Humanities and Associate Professor in the departments of English and African American and Diaspora Studies at the University of Wyoming. He is a past president of the Working-Class Studies Association.

Weiden, David Heska Wanbli, (2021) *Winter Counts.* Ecco.

Review by Cherie Rankin

David Heska Wanbli Weiden's debut novel, *Winter Counts*, is a riveting look at the power of family, tradition, and connection. Set on the Lakota Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota, the author draws on the poignancy of all three when they are entwined in battling the drug trade on the reservation that threatens the life of its people.

The title *Winter Counts* is a reference to traditional Native American calendars, kept on animal hide or cloth and created by painting on symbols and pictures to memorialize the significant events of each year. The protagonist, Virgil Wounded Horse, and his sister, Sybil, made them as children with paper and crayons, including the year they lost their mother when they were young.

Virgil Wounded Horse is an enforcer who metes out justice when the authorities fail or refuse to do so, when they turn a blind eye to domestic abuse, rape, and child molestation. Beginning to doubt his path and feeling the physical effects of both fighting and aging, Virgil considers giving up this life and taking more traditional work. When he's asked by Ben Short Bear, tribal councilman and father of Virgil's ex-girlfriend Marie, to investigate and take down a man bringing heroin onto the reservation, he's reluctant to get involved. But when it strikes close to home and his nephew Nathan nearly dies from experimenting with heroin – and then gets wrapped up in the formal investigation when he's asked to be a mole for the feds after drugs are put in his locker to frame him – Virgil recommits to his role as enforcer. The majority of the novel focuses on Nathan's seemingly hopeless predicament, a young man forced to put his life at risk and make difficult choices if he's ever to be free.

The novel is a story of both entanglement and separation. One of the primary entanglements is family. Family is central to Virgil's story and to the narrative; he and his sister lose both parents fairly early on, and Sybil dies in a car accident, leaving a son, Nathan, to be raised by Virgil. The novel focuses on their relationship and how it motivates Virgil's actions, in his desire to hang onto the one family connection he has left and to raise his nephew well. Virgil's ex-girlfriend Marie, the daughter of a powerful tribal councilman, is constantly entangled in what her family's expectations of her are and how those expectations differ from her own priorities and dreams.

The other constant entanglement is with the reservation, with tribal tradition, tribal identity. There is a pull to remain, even in the face of incredible difficulty and ugliness. At one point, Virgil says:

> Why didn't I leave? People here always talked about going to Rapid City or Sioux Falls or Denver, getting a job and making a clean break. Putting aside Native ways and assimilating, adapting to suburban life. But I thought about the sound of the drummers at a pow-wow, the smell of wild sage, the way little Native kids looked dressed up in their first regalia, the flash of the sun coming up over the hills. I wondered if I could

> ever really leave the reservation, because the rez was in my mind, a virtual rez, one that I was seemingly stuck with. (48)

Marie feels this as well, struggling to decide between going to a local tribal college or leaving for medical school. Even though she has options outside the reservation, Marie chooses to give back by working for the tribal council on things like food grant programs. She clings to 'the old ways,' to Lakota tradition and ceremony, which Virgil at first vehemently rejects. It is Marie who pushes Virgil—when Nathan is in trouble—to pursue remedy and healing through sweat lodges and a yuwipi ceremony.

Yet there is separation, even amid these entanglements. One of the primary separations Virgil and Nathan experience is the injury of class. Even on the reservation, where poverty is commonplace, Virgil grew up comparatively poor. When Nathan gets in trouble, Virgil has to accept help from Ben Short Bear to pay for a lawyer, a lawyer Ben chooses. In this he and Nathan are particularly vulnerable. One can never be sure if the help is trustworthy, but refusing it really is not an option when Nathan is looking at jail.

And there is the isolation of race, of blood—of being a 'half-blood,' or of even being not fully Lakota. Marie grows up somewhat an outsider at the local school because her mother is not Lakota but Osage. Nathan expresses his frustration with the way other kids treat him because he is 'not Indian enough.' At one point he says 'And iyeska, I been called that since the day I was born. You know, it's like I'm not Indian enough for the full-bloods, but too Native for the white kids. I don't fit in nowhere' (217).

Lakota language is woven into the narrative, much in the way it is woven into the characters' lives. The author often leaves the meaning of the words for the reader to wrestle with for a while before explaining. The term iyeska is used multiple times in the novel before it's explained a couple hundred pages in. This feels like a deliberate refusal to make the meaning easy for the unfamiliar reader; it's effective and appealing.

One of the most intriguing moments in the narrative is when Virgil and Marie make a road trip to Denver, seeking out the man Virgil's been told is bringing heroin onto the reservation. On the way they see a roadside attraction, cars arranged in the shape of Stonehenge. When the two of them stop to examine the giant sculptural shapes, Virgil has the first of several visions in the book, visions which show how he comes to open himself to the old ways, to the unknown, to open his mind and heart to what he has defensively walled off.

The narrative is often violent, meaningfully so. Life on the reservation is mean for many. Virgil recounts horrible things he's seen in the course of his work. We get excruciating detail of the punishment he deals to those in need of it; you can feel thumbs stretched until the ligaments pop, bones snap. You feel the pain Virgil endures after a savage beating. The violence and terror running through the drug trade is palpable. One of the worst characters in the narrative turns out to have been serially sexually abused as a child. Pain begets pain, and the reader is not spared.

That is not to say that this isn't a beautiful book. It is. It is beautiful in its starkness, in its honesty, in its rawness. The beauty and grace of connection shine even brighter set against the darker elements of the tale—Virgil's love for his nephew, Virgil and Marie's reconnection, Virgil's slow-growing giving over to the pull of the Old Ways and the connection to things he cannot explain, which nevertheless pull him through.

Reviewer Bio

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