

Volume 9 Issue 2: Editorial

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This issue of the Journal rounds off a year that has seen many people around the world suffer due to war and the impacts of climate change. For many people in the US, the year also ends with a sense of dread at what might be come in the next four years of a Trump presidency. War and the deadly effects of climate change are linked to those in power and their willingness, or not, to intervene to try and move the world towards peace and a viable future. But increasingly, this does not happen and ‘leaders’ are beholden to their own interests and desire for personal wealth and power over the needs of the many. As we have mentioned many times before, it is the poorest who are the first to be hurt.

People with limited economic means are not in a position to flee easily to safer places, and even if they are able to leave – they face terrible hardship on the journey to what will be a terrifyingly uncertain future. There is also the sheer injustice of being forced to leave not just your own home, but the home that may have been yours for generations culturally as well as physically. We remember that seldom do working-class people in these circumstances leave simply because they feel like a change or an adventure, but most often because their homes have been removed or destroyed through no fault of their own. There are no systems that people are trying to cheat or processes they are trying to circumvent - as most definitions of ‘refugee’ acknowledge - people who are *forced to leave*, often at extremely short notice and in heartbreaking circumstances.

Then there are the circumstances where people have nowhere or means to go. Watching the suffering in Gaza is unbearable, and millions of people across the world have been showing their support for ordinary Palestinians and urging their governments to do what they can to bring about a ceasefire and a withdrawal of Israeli troops. In Sydney, Palestinians and supporters have marched every Sunday since the war began, and they will not stop until there is peace. This kind of collective response, which involves many working-class Australians does provide some hope amid all the darkness. Around the world we know similar actions are taking place.

Political changes around the world this year have also seen the erosion of rights for women, LGBTI+ and other minority genders. The misogyny that informs these decisions does not protect anyone, but instead removes the ability for adults of sound mind to make their own decisions, including for the medical professionals who are now too scared to act. History tells us that laws don’t prevent abortions or other forms of interventions, but instead force people underground to risk their lives unsafely and often brutally. We stand in solidarity with those who persist in opposing the erosion of these rights, understanding that healthcare for everyone is for the benefit of not just someone’s sister or spouse, but also for the young men, children and others whose deserve the right the live freely.

So we try to look forward to better times for everyone who is struggling to survive, wherever they may be.

A journal such as ours offers small rays of hope through the stories of working-class experience that appear among the articles, essays and book reviews. While the stories are sometimes grim, the hope comes via the authors who are uncovering these stories and showing the value of working-class people. The authors published in this journal are committed to working-class lives and committed to exposing classed, raced and gendered inequalities, systems of oppression as well as the importance of collective action and working-class community. We are proud to be curating these narratives in our roles as editors.

This issue contains five academic articles, one personal essay and nine book reviews. We begin with four articles focused on literature, beginning with Xin Yang's "Workers without Borders: Envisioning Sociality in Xiao Hai's Poems", which examines the work of Chinese worker poet Xiao Hai, whose poems about Chinese labourers reveal varied literary influences, from China and the west. Yang points to the labourers who occupy Hai's poetry as members of the global working class, linked to workers around the world.

Next is Michelle B. Gaffey's 'Responding to the Rhythms of Labor: Lola Ridge's Work Songs in *The Ghetto and Other Poems*' which argues that Irish-born poet Lola Ridge can be described as an 'avant-garde poet of the working class' due to the collectivist inclinations of her poetry and her movement among activist circles in the early part of the twentieth century.

This is followed by another analysis of historical literature, this time that by the British socialists and suffragettes, Sylvia Pankhurst and May Westoby. In "The Tale is Soon Told": Working-Class Storytelling in Sylvia Pankhurst's "Thrift" and May Westoby's "The Injustice of the King", Carrie Timlin presents two stories written by these women in the mid-1900s, and argues for an acknowledgment of their work which has been overshadowed by the writing of men from this period.

The final literature article moves back into the present day with an exploration of working-class representation in contemporary American young adult fiction. Lisa Paolucci describes the class cultures on display in two YA novels in her article 'Girls' Class and Character in Contemporary YA Fiction'.

Following this selection of articles on literature is Teresa Crew's 'Working-Class Academics: Challenging Deficit Narratives Through Cultural Wealth', which argues for the positive elements of a working-class background and that working-class culture and experience can be assets in the academy.

The section of papers closes with a personal essay from Ericka Wills who reports on a museum exhibit at the McLean County Museum of History in Illinois that focuses on the stories of workers in the county who were exposed to deadly asbestos during their time working for a local asbestos company, resulting in many workers dying from mesothelioma. "'A Deadly Deception: The Asbestos Tragedy in McLean County' – From Family History to Community Museum Exhibit' outlines the human cost of unsafe work places, and shows the importance of museums in telling the stories of workers often abandoned to their fates by unscrupulous companies.

This issue also contains nine book reviews, curated by the book reviews editor Christie Launius. These reviews once again show the depth and breadth of topics about working-class lives, and the impacts of class-based discrimination and its intersections. The books reviewed include a memoir about class mobility from a Korean-American perspective, a novel about

retail workers, an investigation into ‘rescue work’ that purports to be helping victims of human trafficking, a study into the experiences of the children of immigrants in the US who are called upon by family members to translate and navigate state organisations and systems. There is also a review of a book about the ways that working-class college students manage social mobility, and one focusing on the experiences of working-class academics in the UK. The final three books reviewed contain studies of cities that are both historical and contemporary, with one looking at the deindustrialisation of Montreal, another considering the experiences of Mexicans who settled in Chicago, and the last an account of the 1984 Miners’ Strike in the UK. A great variety of books to check out!

Many thanks to all of our contributors, we always feel honoured to be able to publish your work. Thanks also to the reviewers whose expert knowledge is always appreciated. We wish all of our readers the very best wishes for 2025. We can’t predict the future, but we remain, as always, in hope of a better world for all.