

# Volume 4 Number 1: Editorial

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Now four years in, and we are proud to say that *The Journal of Working-Class Studies* continues to expand in size and scope. This issue, the result of a general call for papers, sees the publication and the field explore truly original and inspiring content, drawing from different parts of the world and on a variety of perspectives. Working-class experience and the place of working-class people continues to be an extremely fertile area of academic and artistic exploration.

As with all our issues we are indebted here to the work of the submitting authors, but also the blind peer reviewers. These volunteers contribute their expertise and time for the advancement of our field. This is, necessarily, an anonymous process, so while we can't isolate out individuals here, we would like to formally acknowledge the generosity of time and spirit that they give to our community. There is no reward for reviewers other than knowledge that the quality of work published will be better as a result of their assistance – and we are extremely grateful that they have chosen to make time, no doubt at night or on weekends – to serve this publication and its readers so diligently. Having said this, if you reading this, are interested in becoming part of the potential 'reviewing pool' for *The Journal of Working-Class Studies*, we'd love to hear from you. Given the variety of submissions we receive, we are always after as diverse a group as is possible. Don't let imposter syndrome or any other nervousness around age, stage or field deter you – we are always happy to discuss possibilities. Early career scholars, in particular, tend to find reviewing a really informative process, allowing them to reflect on their own academic practice while examining another's 'work in progress'. Further enquiries about this can be sent to us anytime via the main journal email, [editorial@workingclassstudiesjournal.com](mailto:editorial@workingclassstudiesjournal.com).

This issue features a variety of approaches to working-class studies, many of which are unique. Notably, Owen Clayton's 'Puns, Politics, and Pork Chops: The 'insignificant magnitude' of T-Bone Slim' is the first academic exploration of the long-lost activist T-Bone Slim (Matti Valentinepoika Huhta), an important voice for his generation in 1920s New York. Long since lost to history, Clayton's work vividly argues for Slim's words to be reconsidered and rightly placed into the canon of Working-Class literature. His argument is beautifully constructed and supported, including never-before published images and supporting materials endorsed by Slim's descendants, as well as a passionate account of the depth of Slim's experience and artistry. We are honoured to premiere this work here and hope that Clayton's work ignites a broader interest into Slim's time and influence.

Magnus Nilsson's work 'Class, Taste, and Literature: The Case of Ivar Lo-Johansson and Swedish Working-Class Literature' provides an important point of departure from the rest of our quite US-Centric issue this time around. Presenting, among other things, an analysis of the representation between taste and class in the 1935 novel *Kungsgatan* [King Street] by working-class writer Ivar Lo-Johansson, Nilsson raises some issues within the text, but also places them into national and historical context. Ultimately, he argues that 'attention to historical specificities can help clarify some puzzling aspects of the representation of class and taste in Lo-Johansson's *Kungsgatan*', an important point when reflecting on the continued influence of such 'key works'.

Also beyond the US is Steven Farry's analysis of the work of Australian Indigenous writer, Bundjalung woman Ruby Langford Ginibi. Farry uses Bourdieu as a reference point to demonstrate a broader exploration of luxury, necessity and habitus in Langford Ginibi's work, a tool which places the accounts in the stories within a broader international discussion about class and worth. The resulting article, 'The porcupine was a feast': The Tastes of Luxury and Necessity in Ruby Langford Ginibi's Storytelling', provides a fascinating access point for those not aware of Langford Ginibi's work, as well as an interesting angle for those who are already fans.

Michael Pennell's 'More than a 'Curious Cultural Sideshow': Samuel Slater's Sunday School and the Role of Literacy Sponsorship in Disciplining Labor' explores a perhaps unlikely method of education for working-class children in early nineteenth century America. Using the case of Slater's Sunday School, an institution linked to the Slater Mill, Pennell explores how the children of mill workers 'learned the basics of reading while also learning the moral code of the factory system—a system that required not only a new 'method of order' but also a new system of discipline that reinforced the Protestant work ethic of rural Rhode Islanders'. Pennell convincingly argues that returning to the example 'provides an early 'canary in the mines' with which to sceptically reflect on current worker socialization movements, operating under the guise of training, education, and development.'

With 'Caring for the Internet: Content Moderators and the Maintenance of Empire', Lindsay Bartkowski reminds us that technology is also a class issue. This examination of emotional, digital and affective labor is an important part of the contemporary experience of working-class people but also the influence that their work has on the broader community. With content moderation as a focus, Bartkowski presents a riveting argument for keeping our considerations of work flows, influence and national borders alive and under sufficient scrutiny.

Returning to a more contemporary education framework, Allison Hurst explores the way tertiary education in America is ranked. Her article 'College Rankings: Creating an Equitable Model of Transformation and Institutional Effectiveness' presents a data-driven approach to rankings and their outcomes for working-class students, making for an ornate and compelling analysis. Importantly, she argues for the consideration of a range of 'success' factors when it comes to appraising a college and its impact – not necessarily dismissing economic impact, but not solely relying on it as a 'one size fits all' measure. The outcomes for working-class students in this framework are particularly significant.

In, 'The Precarious plight of American Working-Class Faculty: Causes and Consequences' George Towers considers the way working-class faculty members are positioned in contemporary tertiary institutions, including responsibilities to represent experience but also built in to a broader academic culture that still isolates them out. With a US-centric base to argue from, this piece builds on earlier articles published in this journal as well as extensive literature from the early twentieth century to the present day, demonstrating the changing climate working-class faculty members find themselves in and the consequences of these changes. While there is a clear decline in conditions, opportunities and general 'fit' for working-class faculty demonstrated here, Towers' work serves to provoke further discussion about how this may be rectified rather than present a defeatist position. Importantly, the value of the working-class perspective in academia is emphasised again and again in this piece –

serving as encouragement for those of us who continue to struggle, in the US or anywhere, within these systems.

Last, but by no means least of the peer-reviewed articles is Colby King's 'Counting the Working Class for Working-Class Studies: Comparing Three Occupation-Based Definitions' which presents a timely reminder of the need to really interrogate the terms we use our discipline. This paper achieves the extremely difficult aim of providing a clear 'in' for new scholars to working-class studies, while also giving strong food for thought to more established readers and contributors. His systematic approach and careful consideration is to be particularly admired.

We are also delighted to include a short story by Justine Sless, 'Panacalty', set in the north of England in the 1970s and featuring local favourite stand up comic Bobby Thompson. Sless creates a fictionalised account of Bobby's comedy through the eyes of a young working-class woman who dreams of becoming a comic. The story is rich with local language and Sunderland slang.

Associate editor Sara Appel completes the main part of the issue with a fantastic collection of undergraduate student essays that focus on class and its intersections. The essays are thoughtfully written, well-researched and show great depth of talent within her 'Social Class in America' unit. Sara is justifiably proud of her students' work, as should all readers of this issue.

The issue also includes a bumper crop of reviews – eight reviews of books and one review of an exhibition. The reviewers carefully evaluate works on a variety of topics of interest to working-class studies, such as life in rural Kansas, women activists in Appalachia, the working conditions of gay, trans and black truck drivers in the US; workers stories from the now closed Guinness brewery in London, the history of labor strikes in the US; mainstream media's lack of representation of the working class, anti-racism activism; Italian-American history and the potential of film as a radical pedagogical tool. Once again, the reviews indicate that there is great work being done within the field of working-class studies!