



Working-Class Notes

Volume 8, Issue 1

Fall 2004

The Directors' Report . . .

The Center for Working-Class Studies will soon celebrate its 10th anniversary, and we're excited to see clear evidence of the growth and development of both our Center and the field.

Here at the Center, the evidence can be seen in our office and in the local community. Our office used to be a quiet place, but no more. We now have 5 people working in the suite regularly, including our new Director of Research and Development, Dr. Angela Jancius. Angela joined us this fall, in a position partially funded by the Ford Foundation and supported by the College of Arts and Sciences. Along with teaching *one* course a semester in Anthropology, Angela will help us write grants and raise funds to ensure the long-term stability of the Center. Angela brings significant experience in grantwriting and program development, research expertise in working-class studies, an international perspective, and experience with on-line community building. Her dissertation examined the meaning of work and unemployment in Germany after reunification, and she worked for many years for H-Net, which operates a wide range of discussion lists and other electronic projects in History and the humanities.

We're also seeing more students around our office as we begin to make more use of the Ed Mann Library as a classroom. This semester, we're holding our graduate course Class and Culture there, as well as an upper-division course on Youngstown. These courses are taking advantage of upgraded space and computer resources. By next fall, we expect to have more graduate students around as the new MA in American Studies gets under way. That program will include a focus area in working-class studies, making it the first MA program in the country with such a focus.

This year's CWCS Lecture Series is the most ambitious ever. We started in July, with a visit by journalist Dale Maharidge, whose recent book *Homeland* explores working-class attitudes after 9/11. In September, we sponsored a performance of a play based on CWCS community affiliate Jeanne Bryner's poems about nursing, *Intensive Care*. Other guests this year will include historians Jefferson Cowie and Joe Trotter, German labor studies scholar Thomas Greven, and Brent Cunningham, editor of the *Columbia Journalism Review*. See p. 6 for a full schedule of this year's lectures.

In the local community, Center member Greg Moring is developing a new public art project that we hope to install on the west side of YSU's campus, somewhere near the Center's office. Together with Greg, we've been meeting with the committee that's developing YSU's campus plan to explore the possibility of creating a series of public art projects that will reflect Youngstown's history and culture. This effort is one of several projects supported in part by the Ford Foundation. We're working on new projects with area teachers, and the Youngstown African-American oral history project continues its work as well.

Looking beyond Youngstown, we see many developments that show that working-class studies has grown into a lively field with a life of its own. Early this year, we started to notice

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Working-Class Notes

Working-Class Notes is published by the Center for Working-Class Studies twice during the academic year—once in the fall, and again in the spring. Deadline for submissions is October 1 for the Fall newsletter and March 1 for Spring.

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News and Information

Join the Working-Class Studies Association

The field of working-class studies took an important step forward this summer by forming an organization to serve academics, activists, students, artists, and others who are interested in this work. The Working-Class Studies Association aims to develop and promote multiple forms of scholarship, teaching, and activism related to working-class life and cultures. Committees are currently working to build membership, create a constitution, and make plans for publications, including a possible journal. For more information, and to join the WCSA, visit the Association's website, <http://naples.cc.sunysb.edu/CAS/wcm.nsf/pages/wcsa3>.

Chicago Center Update

The Chicago Center for Working-Class Studies, an independent consortium of scholars and activists, has a number of activities planned for the coming year. Our Young Organizers Project (YOP) will build on the success of our first event earlier in 2004 with a post-election forum for organizers on the possibilities for labor and community organizing in the "new" administration and a reprise of our "Careers in Social Justice" job fair in late February or early March.

Center members have also developed a Chicago Labor & Working-Class History Map, 10,000 copies of which will be published in mid-November. We plan to launch the map on Friday, December 10, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at a Loop location (to be announced). The map includes references to a number of sites in Chicago that students can "tour" via the internet.

We must thank CCWCS member Liesl Orenic for coordinating efforts that resulted in our new web site at www.workingclassstudies.org. We plan to use the site to announce CCWCS events, provide links to union and community websites, and suggest resources in Working-Class Studies for interested site visitors.

Directors, cont'd

articles and special issues devoted to working-class issues and to working-class studies itself in a wide variety of journals and reports. In January, *Radical Teacher* published a series of articles reflecting on the state of working-class studies. The United Association for Labor Education (UALE) included a discussion of the relationship between working-class studies and labor studies as part of its report on the state of labor studies, and the UALE conference in April included a panel with John Russo, Michael Zweig, Jamie Daniel, and Kent Wong discussing the same issue. A similar panel will run next spring at the Organization of American Historians, examining the relationship between working-class studies and labor history. Renny Christopher edited a special issue of the *Minnesota Review* about "smart kids," featuring reflections of working-class writers on their experiences in school, and she's currently working on an issue of *Western American Literature* on working-class literature of the American west. Benjamin Lanier-Nabors, Sherry Linkon, and Irv Peckham co-edited an issue of *College English* that focused on class issues in literature and composition. The new journal *Labor* will feature a series of articles this year reflecting on the development of working-class studies. Brent Cunningham, managing editor of the *Columbia Journalism Review*, published a feature piece on Class and Journalism. And this isn't just an American phenomenon. In the UK, David Byrne and Steph Lawler have issued a Call for Papers for a special issue of the British journal *Sociology*, that will focus on the study of class. All of this activity suggests that awareness of and interest in working-class studies is growing, and that the field is engaging scholars in many different disciplines.

We see a similar trend in publishing. Cornell University Press has already published several

major books in the field, including Michael Zweig's *What's Class Got To Do With It* (see review on page 8). They will also publish our book, *New Working-Class Studies* this spring. Other publishers show similar interest in publishing books in this field. For example, Rutgers has several new books out this fall that focus on class, and the University of Michigan Press has just announced a new series on class and culture.

Perhaps the most hopeful sign of the growth of this new field is the formation of a new organization, the Working-Class Studies Association. The WCSA had a "founding meeting" at SUNY-Stony Brook, just before the How Class Works conference in June. Fifty individuals joined in a lively discussion about the mission and goals of the new organization and the challenges we'll face as we get organized. Since then, several committees have been working on plans for the WCSA, including discussions of how this newsletter can serve the needs of the organization. If you haven't already joined, see page 2 for information, including a link to the website where you will find a membership form.

The WCSA will hold its first business meeting at the seventh biennial conference of the Center for Working-Class Studies, May 18-21 (see Call for Papers on page 5). The conference will celebrate the 10th anniversary of the founding of the CWCS. Along with the usual array of readings, papers, exhibits, and workshops, the conference will feature several panels that examine the history, current state, and future of working-class studies. In many ways, this conference will be the most important in the development of New Working-Class Studies. We look forward to seeing you all there.

John Russo and Sherry Linkon

Labor at the Crossroads

Competing Visions, Alternative Strategies, and the Future of the U.S. Labor Movement

Queens College Labor Resource Center and *New Labor Forum* announce the Labor at the Crossroads conference December 2-3, 2004. As the AFL-CIO prepares for its convention in July, 88% of U.S. workers are without a union. Though organizing has been the AFL-CIO's top priority for a decade, union membership continues to decline. At this critical juncture, the labor movement faces the possibility of the most dramatic structural changes it's seen in half a century. A new alignment of unions within the AFL-CIO is proposing a radical reorganization of the federation, constitutional changes, consolidation of unions and—if all else fails—secession from the AFL-CIO. Other trade unionists believe these proposals disregard the challenges of globalization,

circumvent union democracy, and may do irreparable damage by tearing the labor movement apart. Still others hope for a third way, one that preserves the unity of organized labor by incorporating elements of opposing strategies. Enabled by the internet, these divergent points of view have fueled an unprecedented public debate, involving labor leaders, union activists, and social commentators. This conference aims to provoke thoughtful discussion and debate on the future of the labor movement.

- What are the internal and external factors inhibiting union growth?
- Can unions and their federation, as we know them, reverse the decline in union membership?

- Do current proposals for change offer a viable alternative? What are the implications for organizing? collective bargaining? issues of union democracy? women, people of color, sexual minorities?
- What are the implications of the 2004 elections for the future of the labor movement?
- What new strategies will strengthen organized labor as it confronts corporations of the new economy?
- Does organized labor have a plan that adequately responds to the challenges of globalization?

For more information, see www.futureoflaborconference.org, e-mail conference2004@qc.edu, or call 212-827-0048.

Seeking Contributors for New Book Series

Class: Culture, a new book series from the University of Michigan Press, is designed to lend energy and direction to the rapidly growing body of work addressing the impact of class on the framing and formation of culture. At its center will be the publication of books that offer new paradigms for considering what class is and how class “works” in U.S. culture.

The series will foreground work that advances our understanding of the effects and negotiations of class differences, the lived experience of class, and, especially, the inscription of these in the arts and letters, their ramifications in visual and social history, and their structuring of political economy across time and region. *Class: Culture* will explore the full range of cultural expressions of class.

The editors particularly seek work in the following areas: literature and visual culture; popular culture, especially film, television, music, and new media; commodity culture and its institutions; race theory and ethnic studies; feminist and gender studies; transnational and postcolonial migrations; public education and cultural literacy; and queer studies. Writers, scholars, and activists interested in submitting material to the series or seeking more information may contact

Amy Schragger Lang at aslang@syr.edu
 Bill V. Mullen at bmullen@utsa.edu or
 LeAnn Fields, University of Michigan Press, at
lfields@umich.edu.

NEW WORKING-CLASS STUDIES: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

**The 10th Anniversary Conference of the Center for Working-Class Studies
at Youngstown State University
Co-sponsored by Ford Foundation
May 18-21, 2005, Youngstown, Ohio**

In 2005, the Center for Working-Class Studies will celebrate the 10th anniversary of its founding. In honor of that occasion, we are planning a conference that will reflect the diversity, creativity, and energy of New Working-Class Studies. The conference will feature plenary sessions reflecting on the development of the field, taking stock of where we stand today, and looking ahead to new possibilities and challenges. Our conferences always include arts exhibits, film screenings, poetry readings, and other events. The 2005 conference will also include a business meeting of the Working-Class Studies Association.

We invite proposals from students, workers, faculty members, organizers, artists, and activists in all fields, from literature to geography, history to filmmaking, union organizing to neighborhood activism. Along with papers, we invite performances, film showings, roundtables, and presentations of all kinds. In addition, we invite proposals for three-hour interactive workshops and field trips, which will be scheduled for Saturday morning. We encourage proposals that explore literature by and about the working class; working-class and labor history; material and popular culture; current workplace issues; geography and landscape; journalism and media; sociology; economics; union organizing and practice; museum studies; the arts; multiculturalism; ethnography, biography, autobiography; pedagogy; and personal narratives of work.

Presenters should describe the presentation they would like to give, including the suggested presentation format (panel, roundtable, reading, workshop, etc.) and length. Proposals should be no longer than one page and must be received by January 3, 2005. Address written correspondence to John Russo, Biennial Conference, Center for Working-Class Studies, Youngstown State University, Youngstown, Ohio 44555. Fax or e-mail inquiries should be sent to Patty LaPresta, (330) 941-4622 and pmlapresta@ysu.edu.

SSWCL 3rd Annual CFP for ALA Sessions

The Society for the Study of Working-Class Literature is a member society of the American Literature Association devoted to promoting the study of working-class literature, broadly conceived. We welcome proposals for papers and panels at the 2005 ALA Association Conference, May 26-29, 2005, Cambridge, MA, addressing any aspect of working-class literature including: works by working-class writers, texts addressed to working-class audiences, and representations of the working class in literature.

For more information, and to join the Society's electronic mailing list, go to: groups.yahoo.com/group/workingclasslit/

Deadline for proposals is January 15, 2005

Submit proposals to:

Eric Schocket
e-mail: eschocket@hampshire.edu
Humanities, Arts and Cultural Studies
Hampshire College
893 West Street
Amherst, MA 01002-3359

**“Class Theory/
Theoretical Class”
Society for Cinema and
Media Studies
March 31–April 3, 2005
London, England**

Position papers are sought for a workshop that focuses on the recent, simultaneous turn in cinema studies toward renewed class-conscious analysis but away from those Marxist theoretical paradigms which historically have supplied powerful models for critiquing cultures and structures of class in capitalist society.

Papers might consider the prevalence of this contradiction in recent critical (re)turns in the field to genre studies, authorship studies, neoformalism, aesthetic phenomenology, analytic philosophy, and cognitive-behaviorist pedagogy. Has the turn toward media studies affected or determined this contradiction in any way?

Sponsored by the SCMS
Caucus on Class

For more information, see terri1.home.mindspring.com and www.cmstudies.org, or e-mail: t.ginsberg.1@alumni.nyu.edu

**Youngstown State University
Center for Working-Class Studies
10th Annual Lecture Series 2004–2005**

July 1, 2004, Thursday, Noon

Homeland: Middle America after 9/11

Dale Maharidge, Professor, Columbia University
1990 Pulitzer Prize winner
Ohio Room, Kilcawley Center
Co-sponsored by the Journalism Program

September 18, 2004, Saturday, 8:00 p.m.

Intensive Care: A Play

Jeanne Bryner, nurse and award-winning poet
Chestnut Room, Kilcawley Center
Co-sponsored by the Nursing Department

October 12, 2004, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m.

Working-Class Conservatism: From Hard Hats to NASCAR Dads

Jefferson Cowie, Professor, Cornell University
2002 Taft Labor History Award Winner
Jones Room, Kilcawley Center
Co-sponsored by History Department

November 16, 2004, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m.

Clash of Globalizations?: The Politics of International Labor Rights

Thomas Greven, Professor, Political Science,
Free University of Berlin
Presidential Suite, Kilcawley Center
Co-sponsored by the Political Science Department

February 8, 2005, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m.

The African American Freedom Struggle:

Shifting Visions and Strategies

Joseph Trotter, Professor and Chair, History Department,
Carnegie Mellon University
Ohio Room, Kilcawley Center
Co-sponsored by the Africana Studies Program

May 3, 2005, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m.

Understanding the Other: Class and Journalism in America

Brent Cunningham, Managing Editor, Columbia Journalism Review
Ohio Room, Kilcawley Center
Co-sponsored by the English Department

May 18-21, 2005

*New Working Class Studies: Past, Present, and Future
Biennial Conference and the CWCS 10th Anniversary*

Remembering Carol Tarlen, by Julia Stein

Carol Tarlen, San Francisco labor poet and activist, died June 15, 2004.

A brilliant, visionary poet about the working class, she widely published her poems in magazines and anthologies nationwide as well as in two chapbooks: *Trailer Trash* and *Fire*. As a poet she was close to Whitman or Neruda: from her white trash impoverished childhood to her MA in English from San Francisco State College; from her being a poet/delegate on the S.F. Labor Council of her AFSCME local to her getting arrested repeatedly for feeding the hungry and homeless in San Francisco's Civic Center.

Her most well-known poem "White Trash: An Autobiography" tells of her childhood growing up poor in California with a truck driver father. She wrote brilliantly about her own work as well as raising her two daughters on a limited income. Like Whitman, she was a great poet for democracy during the Gilded Age, writing about working people with verve and passion. She was a Quaker, carrying on the centuries-long tradition of Anglo visionary worker radicalism. The last few years she lived in North Beach, writing dazzling poems about that the poor people in that bohemian enclave. She was the warm humane beating heart of the city of San Francisco.

Today
by Carol Tarlen

today, when I sat in bed, nibbling
and reading the *New Yorker*
in San Francisco, and I did not make
my daughter's lunch; I did not pay
the PG&E bill; I did not empty the garbage
on my way out the door to catch the bus to
ride the elevator to sit at my desk on time
because today I took the day off.

And rain drenched the skins of lepers
and they were healed.
Red flags decorated the doorways
of senior centers, and everyone
received their social security
checks on time. The 49ers won
the Superbowl and nobody cared,
and I walked in the streets at 10
in the morning, praised the sun
in its holiness, led a revolution,
painted my toenails purple,
meditated in solitude,
today, on this day, when I took,
with pay
the day off.

Working Class Lives Seminar Series in UK

The second seminar in the Working-Class Lives series (funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council) is scheduled for November 26 at the Museum in Docklands, in London's West India Quay. The theme of the seminar is "The Impact of Economic Change and Restructuring on Working-Class Communities, Identities and Organisation in Place." Within this theme, Jefferson Cowie (Labor History, Cornell) will speak about American workers and class identity since the 1960s, Linda McDowell (Geography, Oxford) will discuss her work on employment change and youth

masculinities, Louise Raw (Working Lives Research Institute, London Metropolitan) will present her research reconsidering the famous Bryant and May match girls' strike, and Tim Strangleman (also WLRI) will conclude with a paper focused on the debates around the end of work and end of class. Making the most of the seminar venue, museum staff plan to introduce us to the museum's collections and the representation of class and politics in the London Docklands.

The third seminar will take place in Manchester in January.

The theme will be "Class, Representation and the City" and speakers will include Les Back (Goldsmiths) and Bev Skeggs (Goldsmiths) and Bella Dicks (Cardiff University). The fourth seminar will take place in Durham in March and will focus on issues of "Work, Class, and Community." Speakers will include Jack Metzgar (Roosevelt University, Chicago).

For information see <http://www.working-class-studies.net/>, or email Alison Stenning (alison.stenning@ncl.ac.uk) or Tim Strangleman (t.strangleman@londonmet.ac.uk).

**Book Review: Michael Zweig, ed., *What's Class Got To Do With It? American Society in the Twenty-First Century*, Cornell University Press, 2004
Reviewed by Jefferson Cowie, School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University**

When it comes to explaining current thinking on class to students and workers, this slim little volume may just be the answer. Often Marx is too antiquated, Gramsci too complicated, social theory impenetrable, economic jargon a mystery, and the media are useless. However, Michael Zweig's edited collection *What's Class Got to do With It?* manages to boil down the core issues (to borrow the words of Jack Nicholson's wonderfully class-confused character) into "Five Easy Pieces."

The first piece is laid out in Zweig's introduction: class is very real, very complicated, and not always predictable. Building on his popular *The Working Class Majority*, he calculates that about 62 percent of the population is working class as defined by the fundamental power relations that shape capitalist society. Zweig explains that class "is an enormous topic with many facets," and the book rests on that foundation, arguing that people possess overlapping identities of which class is a central and often overlooked component.

The second section, "The Mosaic of Class, Race, and Gender," develops that complexity. Dorothy Sue Cobble reclaims the lost story of labor feminists who stressed "multiple sources of inequality and injustice" and struggled to build a politics that addressed gender and class simultaneously. In a similar vein, Bill Fletcher Jr.'s, and R. Jeffrey Lustig's contributions on race argue explain how "white trade unionists frequently put their whiteness ahead of their being working class."

Although hardly easy, the next piece turns to "Class in the Global Economy." William K. Tabb and Leo Panitch trace several key developments that delivered us to our New World Order. The collapse of national Keynesian economics, the eclipse of social democratic politics, the rise of the United States as the sole superpower, and the defeat of the left globally, leave the problem of

class politics in a particularly tight place. As Katie Quan concludes, the globalization of markets confuses the "us and them" logic of class relations, leaving the problem more materially real but ideologically diffuse than in any other time in recent history.

The fourth piece to the puzzle comes in a section titled "Class and Working People." This may be the catch-all section, but it does a solid job of analyzing the recent history and reordering of politics and class relations since 1973. The politics of welfare reform, argues Frances Fox Piven, are found to be part of much broader and more profound politics aimed against the power of the working class. Michael Yates looks at the state of labor today without tears, assessing both the potential and immense problems faced by workers seeking to build a vibrant social justice movement.

The final of the five pieces looks to the future by examining the collapse of much of the democratic promise for working-class youth. Youth, as Gregory DeFreitas and Nieve Duffy clearly show, are the group hardest hit by declining wages and rapidly increasing health care and tuition costs. If and when working-class youth finally do make it to college, explains Michelle Tokarczyk, the institutions of higher learning are far from accepting. In the most lively contribution to the book, Barbara Jensen draws on her own experiences to explore the challenges working-class people face in a collegiate world saturated by mobility and advancement.

In the end, there are plenty of holes to fill, debates to be had, shreds of teleology to be purged, and arguments to be fleshed out in this little book. But as a primer on the centrality of class in the United States, these five relatively-easy pieces are among the best places to start your thinking.

Book Review: Julian Markels, *The Marxian Imagination: Representing Class In Literature*, Monthly Review Press, 2003

Reviewed by Timothy Francisco, Department of English, Youngstown State University

Julian Markels's *The Marxian Imagination: Representing Class in Literature* offers an insightful displacement of the conception of class as a static site of identity in favor of an understanding of class as process. In his introductory chapter, Markels argues that too often scholars conceptualize class as a homogenous identity site. Thus, class is treated as a point of oppression and domination in the same fashion as are gender, ethnicity, or even sexual orientation. African-American women factory workers, according to Markels, are said by critics to experience opportunity and self-concept differently from white homemakers or lesbians. Yet, Markels argues, each group undergoes the experience of expropriation. This framework is complicated by the fact that class, unlike, gender, ethnicity and even sexual orientation, remains an immaterial process, one that is visible only by "the abstracting power of the imagination" (21).

The slant of Markels's study then, is to imagine class as a "socially invisible" process of expropriation, a process that space of transient expropriation, which surfaces in a wide range of texts in varied and unique ways. Although Markels effectively argues that the realist novel is particularly ripe for the analysis of class as process, he also examines non-realist works by Shakespeare, Dickens and Kingsolver in his project to uncover the "Marxian Imagination" at work.

Markels's reading of Shakespeare's *King Lear* is predicated on the assumption that Shakespeare was writing from a perspective that could not acknowledge class as an abstract category, and yet, the play's tragic center layers class conflict onto its other themes and images, such as kingship, gender and "Nature." The conflict in the play between the values of Cordelia and Kent, and those of Edmund, Goneril and Reagan is not blatantly articulated as a clash between the material processes of feudal and capitalist expropriation, and yet it has become a critical commonplace to read the play along these lines. Thus, for Markels, the play wields dramatic power gleaned from Shakespeare's

imagination of an oppositional understanding that anticipates Marx's understanding of history. In what is perhaps his most interesting and original interpretation of the play, Markels moves beyond the obvious tension between residual feudalist and emerging capitalist representations in the play to an analysis of formal structure, in which he nicely argues that the tragedy's resistance to any Aristotelian encouragement of reversal reflects Shakespeare's imagination actively abstracting the irreversible fact of impending dominance of Edmund's "entrepreneurial rapacity" (28).

The next sections of the book uncover the "Marxian Imagination" at work in the writings of both canonical and non-canonical writers, from Dickens to Barbara Kingsolver. In each analysis, Markels clearly and convincingly isolates the works' imagination of class as process, and he makes important discoveries in works like Dicken's *Hard Times*, which for Markels represents class as a process of expropriation, while denying its mutuality with other nonclass processes, and works like Kingsolver's *Poisonwood Bible*, a novel that suggests the intertwining of personal history and material processes of community.

Between his discussions of Dickens, Henry James, and Kingsolver, Markels offers a critique of Raymond Williams and Frederic Jameson in which he uncovers the theorists' resistance to the imaginative process of abstraction that is so important to his own study. For Markels, this resistance amounts to the reduction of class, for Williams, and history, for Jameson, to spatial, hence static locations.

Markels' book is provocative in its re-imaging of class and his analyses provide fresh perspectives on a wide scope of genres and texts. And, what is perhaps most refreshing in this book is the author's appreciation of the varied works as theoretically *and* aesthetically important. Throughout this smart and layered investigation, Markels manages to convey a genuine appreciation of each work's artistic complexity.

Book Review: Christopher Martin, *Framed: Labor and the Corporate Media*, Cornell University Press, 2004

Reviewed by Richard Butsch, Professor of Sociology and American Studies, Rider University

Since the rise of the trinity of race, gender, and class, the last has become the least researched and discussed. Compared to issues of gender and race in the media, relatively few studies take class as their primary focus, although it is sometimes included as a secondary issue with race or gender.

And yet, there probably have been more academic studies of the working class in the media in the last two decades than of labor. Unions are near invisible in the media. For example, think how unimaginable is a television series set within a union or among workers identified as union members, or even one episode of any series focused on union issues. We have innumerable series on police—very many police are unionized—yet can you imagine an episode of *NYPD* or *Law and Order* set within a police union?

That is one reason why *Framed* is an important book, for media studies, for labor studies, for working-class studies, for history, sociology, communication, but more important, for American citizens. It is also important to consumption studies, for showing how media and consumption are linked in fundamental but non-obvious ways. It is the first book on labor in the media, in an era (since the mid 1970s) when the story of labor has been a dramatic and tragic one that has intimately touched the lives of most Americans, and the growth of media power has similarly been a dramatic one shaping the lives of every American.

In addition, it demonstrates a thorough knowledge of research literature in labor and class studies as well as media studies; it is very well researched; it presents its case in a compelling argument; and it is well written and very readable.

The book focuses on news coverage of labor issues, so that we can understand how this has contributed to the unprecedented negative image most Americans hold about labor unions. First of

all, unions are almost entirely absent from mass media. They almost never appear in entertainment media such as television series. Martin reports that only 1% of television network news time was used to cover unions. Newspapers too provide very little information about unions. This invisibility is most remarkable when you realize that the vast majority of adult Americans are workers. There are probably more workers in America than there are spouses! They may even be more workers than citizens eligible to vote!

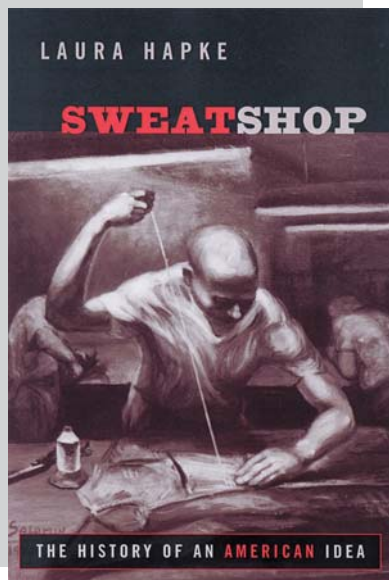
But even in those rare instances when unions are represented, Martin provides vivid documentation of the decidedly negative image given of unions. The book concentrates on the representations of unions that do appear in national TV news, and explains how this image is created without direct assault on workers, who of course are the TV audience.

The introduction clearly lays out the issues and argument. The first two chapters then provide groundwork and background first about labor and next about media. The remaining four chapters present case studies discussing news coverage of five labor stories in the 1990s and how the news effectively constructed biased coverage: The closing of the GM Willow Run plant in Michigan in 1991–94; the American Airlines flight attendant strike in 1993; the 1994–95 major league baseball strike; the 1997 UPS strike; and the 1999 protests against the WTO in Seattle.

Martin does a remarkable job of laying out how and why news media position their audiences as consumers, and then treat unions and labor concerns solely in terms of the alleged consequences for consumers. This positioning helps audiences to forget they too are workers and to think of themselves as consumers instead. One part of this is to simply not talk about the work or the workers' concerns, but to focus on how this would affect the availability and price

Rutgers University Press Releases Two Working-Class Titles

Rutgers University Press has two new books out that address working-class labor through cultural studies approaches.

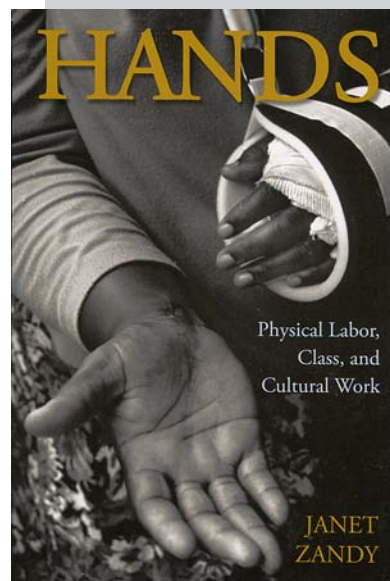


Laura Hapke's *Sweatshop: The History of an American Idea* provides an historical overview of images of and public discussions about sweatshops. She draws on a wide range of cultural texts, including newspapers, film,

literature, and the web to show how the sweatshop has been a facilitator of assimilation, a promoter of upward mobility, the epitome of exploitation, a site of ethnic memory, a venue for political protest, and an expression of twentieth-century managerial narratives. Alan Wald calls Hapke's book "a wholly unique, compelling, and marvelous survey."

Rutgers has also just published the latest work by **Janet Zandy, *Hands: Physical Labor, Class, and Cultural Work***, which uses representations

of workers and their bodies to explore working-class culture. Zandy begins by examining the literal loss of lives to unsafe jobs and occupational hazards. She asks critical and timely questions about worker representation—who speaks for employees when the mills, mines, factories, and even white-collar cubicles shut down? She presents the voices of working-class writers and artists, and discusses their contribution to knowledge and culture. This innovative study reveals the flesh and bone beneath the abstractions of labor, class, and culture. Like her earlier work, *Hands* makes an important contribution to working-class studies by modeling interdisciplinary approaches that link working-class voices with critical analysis of culture.



Congratulations to these authors, and also to Rutgers for recognizing the importance of this new scholarship in working-class studies.

Framed, Cont'd

of the products and services the workers produce. Since the worker is invisible in his/her own story, the audience is not enabled to identify with this absent actor of the story. Instead the consumer is placed at the center of the story, and the news reporter takes the point of view of consumer that enhances identification with consumers.

This is a solid work of scholarship that should be on trade book lists of best sellers. It also has that quality of readability that would make it accessible to the trade market.

New Release:

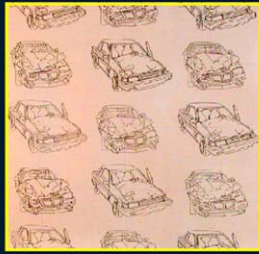
War and Resistance

American Blue Collar Records has recently released a CD by Homestead, PA, songwriter, Mike Stout. *War and Resistance* features a dozen songs about current events, including the war in Iraq and the state of the American economy. For more information on the CD or to order a copy, contact Mike Stout at steel.printers@verizon.net, or write to

Mike Stout
107 East Eighth Avenue
Homestead, PA 15120

New Releases

Emergency Stopping & Other Stories

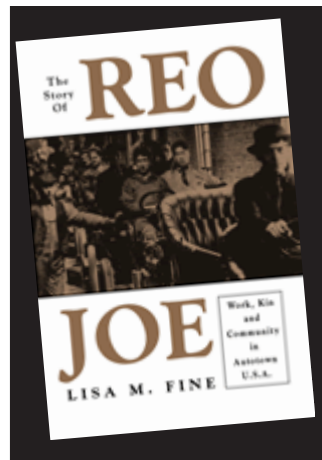


Jeff Vande Zande

Bottom Dog Press has just published Jeff Vande Zande's collection of short stories, *Emergency Stopping and Other Stories*. Vande Zande's stories reflect his own experiences growing up in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. "Its long winters helped me see that people are at their best

when they are helping other people," he comments and explains, "It was also in the Upper Peninsula's spare job market that I first started to look for work." Among other jobs, he has worked as a dishwasher, furniture mover, janitor, welder, projectionist, and maintenance man. He now lives in Michigan's Lower Peninsula in Bay City with his wife, son, and daughter. The stories describe the lives of working-class people in the Midwest.

Lisa M. Fine's book *The Story of Reo: Work, Kin, and Community in Autotown, U.S.A.*, published by Temple University Press, tells the story of the relationship between the Reo Motor Car Company and the community of Lansing, Michigan, where Reo operated for 70 years. Fine gives the workers' perspective on the social, economic, and political changes of the twentieth century and explores their understanding of the city where they lived, the industry that employed them, and the ideas about work, manhood, race, and family that shaped their identities.



One of the fastest growing segments of working-class labor in the U.S. is in health care, yet too often our discussions of work ignore these workers. Thomas Edward Gass's new book *Nobody's Home: Candid Reflections of a Nursing Home Aide*, published last spring by ILR Press, provides a personal, insider's look at what it's like to do the work of taking care of elderly people who can no longer care for themselves. Gass writes in a voice that is at once straightforward, grim, and at times humorous. Through his stories, Gass offers a critique of the social and economic forces that shape elder care.



Those who attended the May 2003 Youngstown conference may remember the powerful reading given by Diane Gilliam Fisher, whose poems speak in the voices of the working-class families in a coal camp of West Virginia. Perugia Press has recently published a collection of these poems, *Kettle Bottom*. The poems in this book,

each in the voice of one member of the community, reflect on the experiences of workers and their families—especially the families—during the coal mine wars of the early 1920s. Fisher brings the sounds, images, and feelings of that period to life in her work, making labor history both personal and powerful.

