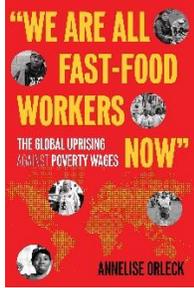


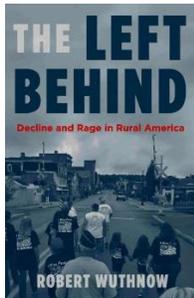
BOOK NOTES



***“We Are All Fast Food Workers Now”*: The Global Uprising Against Poverty Wages (Beacon Press), Annelise Orleck**

The thesis of this book is that there is an uprising of a global precariat that can become contagious in skipping across very different countries and occupations. Annelise Orleck shows how small farmers, fast-food servers, retail workers, hotel housekeepers, home-healthcare aides, airport workers, and adjunct professors are all fighting for respect and living wages. Besides several cities in the U.S., Orleck looks at worker-activist campaigns in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Mexico, South Africa, and the Phillipines. The publisher promises “stories of resistance and rebellion, as well as reflections on hope and change as it rises from the bottom up.” Linda Gordon endorses: ““Stunning in its breadth and impact, filled with vivid characters from many

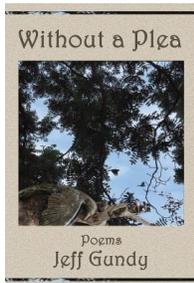
countries who speak in as many languages, the book is an epic achievement—it shows us globalization from the perspective of the people who do its work.”



***The Left Behind: Decline and Rage in Rural America* (Princeton U. Press), Robert Wuthnow**

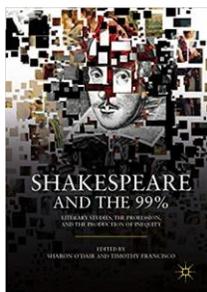
Princeton sociologist Robert Wuthnow spent a decade talking with people in small-town America, beginning well before the 2016 election, and this book promises a deeper look at why rural Americans voted for Donald Trump. Wuthnow finds that rural anger is fueled by “the perception that Washington is distant from and yet threatening to the social fabric of small towns.” Ira Katznelson endorses the book: ““Analytical and humane, this account of the dense, vexed moral communities of rural America is based on profound fieldwork conducted over the course of a decade by one of our most accomplished sociologists,” and it conveys “the anxieties and resentments that run deep in stressed but resilient small-town America.” Nancy Isenberg calls it a

“highly accessible, instructive book [that] reminds readers why the so-called American Dream is closely connected to the politics of place.”



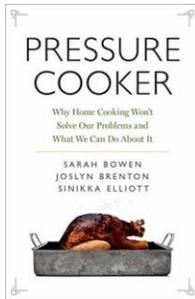
***Without a Plea: Poems* (Bottom Dog Press), Jeff Gundy**

“How can we put the eroded/loaded world back into language?” Jeff Gundy asks in his splendid new book *Without a Plea*. His answer, in poem after adventurous poem, is that “the world is full/of little possibilities for love” if one stays in conversation with everyone and everything—from Bob Dylan to the Book of Job, from “grouchy” geese to the “sweet tangle of sound” from his own guitar. “Impish, probing, and expansive, Gundy’s poems reward the mind and replenish the spirit, speaking truth in the most human way,” says Lynn Powell, author of *Season of Second Thought*.



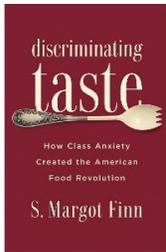
***Shakespeare and the 99%: Literary Studies, the Profession, and the Production of Inequity* (Palgrave Macmillan) Sharon O’Dair and Timothy Francisco, editors.**

Henry Turner of Rutgers University calls this book the “smartest, most original, and most useful book on Shakespeare and the politics of higher education I have seen in many years. [It] shows at once how vital Shakespeare can be for thinking through the structural inequalities of a debt-driven higher education system and how necessary Shakespeare’s work remains to non-elite students, readers, and citizens increasingly alienated from the classrooms of ivy-clad academe.” The publisher promises: “Covering a range of topics from diverse positions and perspectives, these essays confront and question foundational assumptions about higher education, and hence society, including intellectual merit and institutional status. These essays comprise a timely conversation critical for understanding our profession in “post-Occupy” America.”



Pressure Cooker: Why Home Cooking Won't Solve Our Problems and What We Can Do About it (Oxford U. Press) Sarah Bowen, Joselyn Brenton, Sinikka Elliott

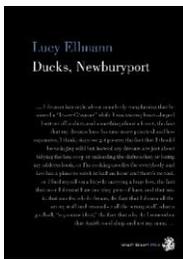
Arguing against food reformers who “implore parents to slow down, cook from scratch, and gather around the dinner table,” this book takes us into the kitchens of nine diverse women to “tell the complicated story of what it takes to feed a family today.” The publisher explains: “From cockroach infestations and stretched budgets to picky eaters and conflicting nutrition advice, *Pressure Cooker* exposes how modern families struggle to confront high expectations and deep-seated inequalities around getting food on the table.” According to the publisher, “The unforgettable stories in this book evocatively illustrate how class inequality, racism, sexism, and xenophobia converge at the dinner table. If we want a food system that is fair, equitable, and nourishing, we must look outside the kitchen for answers.”



Discriminating Taste: How Class Anxiety Created the American Food Revolution (Rutgers U. Press), S. Margot Finn

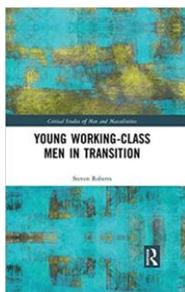
Called a “provocative look at the ideology of contemporary food culture,” this book argues that “discriminating diners” may genuinely care about nutrition and sustainable agriculture, but they are also motivated “to differentiate themselves from the unrefined eater, the common person who lives on junk food.” S. Margot Finn draws on numerous parallels with the food culture of the Gilded Age to show “key ways that ‘good food’ has become conflated with high status.” And she argues that “these taste hierarchies serve as a distraction, leading middle-class professionals to focus on small acts of glamorous and

virtuous consumption while ignoring their class’s larger economic stagnation.”



Ducks, Newburyport (Biblioasis), Lucy Ellmann

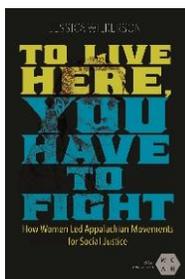
Peeling apple after apple for the tartes tatin she bakes for local restaurants, an Ohio mother wonders how to exist in a world of distraction and fake facts, besieged by a tweet-happy president and trigger-happy neighbors, and all of them oblivious to what Dupont has dumped into the rivers and what’s happening at the factory farm down the interstate—not to mention what was done to the land’s first inhabitants. A torrent of consciousness, narrated in a single sentence by a woman whose wandering thoughts are as comfortably familiar as they are heart-rending in their honesty, *Ducks, Newburyport* is a fearless indictment of our contemporary moment.



Young Working-Class Men in Transition (Routledge), Steven Roberts

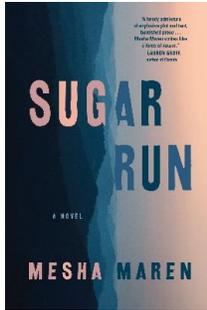
Based on biographical interviews and “ethnographic observation of social media activity,” this book argues “against the grain of prominent popular discourses that position young working-class men as in ‘crisis’ or as adhering to negative forms of traditional masculinity.” Finding “subtle yet positive shifts in the performance of masculinity among this generation” of British young men, Steven Roberts shows: “a commitment to a much more expansive array of emotionality,” stronger engagements in school, openness to so-called ‘women’s work’ in the service sector, and commitment to relatively egalitarian divisions of labor in the home. American sociologist Michael Kimmel endorses: “Steven Roberts has listened attentively and drawn a complex and resonant portrait. Carefully researched, artfully discussed, this is for the 21st century what Paul Willis’s

book [*Learning to Labor*] was for the 20th.”



To Live Here, You Have to Fight: How Women Led Appalachian Movements for Social Justice (U. of Illinois Press), Jessica Wilkerson

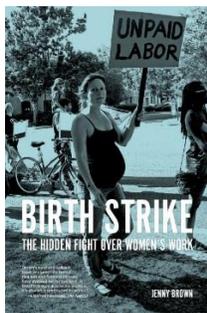
This book shows the role of working-class Appalachian women “devoted to a local tradition of citizen caregiving and seasoned by decades of activism and community service” played in enacting the War on Poverty in the ‘60s and ‘70s. Ronald Eller, author of a classic work on Appalachia, *Uneven Ground*, gives the book high praise: “Drawing on a tradition of family care giving and community support, mountain women brought to their activism an awareness of the profound connection between environmental, health, and economic justice that redefined class and gender issues in America and offered an alternative vision for their communities and our capitalist nation. Based upon extensive oral history research, *To Live Here, You Have to Fight* challenges many of our contemporary assumptions about Appalachia and is an important book for our time.”



Sugar Run: A Novel (Algonquin Books), Mesha Maren

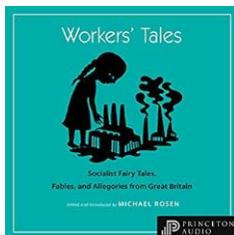
In 1989, Jodi McCarty is seventeen years old when she's sentenced to life in prison. When she's released eighteen years later, she finds herself at a Greyhound bus stop, reeling from the shock of unexpected freedom but determined to chart a better course for herself. Not yet able to return to her lost home in the Appalachian Mountains, she heads south in search of someone she left behind, as a way of finally making amends. There, she meets and falls in love with Miranda, a troubled young mother living in a motel room with her children. Together they head toward what they hope will be a fresh start. But what do you do with your past—and with a town and a family that refuses to forget, or to change? Set within the charged insularity of rural West Virginia, Mesha Maren's *Sugar Run* is a searing and gritty debut about making a break for another life, the use and treachery of makeshift families, and how, no matter the distance we

think we've traveled from the mistakes we've made, too often we find ourselves standing in precisely the place we began. Laura Groff, author of *Florida*, praises: "A heady admixture of explosive plot and taut, burnished prose . . . Mesha Maren writes like a force of nature."



Birth Strike: The Hidden Fight over Women's Work (PM Press) Jenny Brown

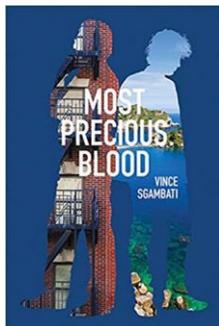
Jenny Brown argues that it isn't just a prudish religious bloc that fights reproductive freedom for women, but also elite policymakers who want women to have more babies because they "want an expanding workforce reared with a minimum of employer spending and a maximum of unpaid women's work." Most women are not cooperating, and with "little access to childcare, family leave, health care, and with insufficient male participation, U.S. women are conducting a spontaneous birth strike." Brown shows that in other countries, the "panic over low birth rates has led governments to underwrite childbearing with generous universal programs" and argues that: "U.S. women have not yet realized the potential of our bargaining position. When we do, it will lead to new strategies for winning full access to abortion and birth control, and for improving the difficult working conditions U.S. parents now face when raising children."



Workers' Tales: Socialist Fairy Tales, Fables, and Allegories from Great Britain (Princeton U. Press), Michael Rosen, editor

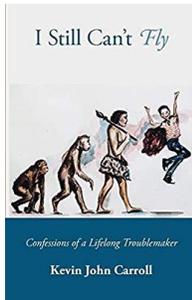
This collection of 40 stories from a heyday of worker activism in Great Britain in the late 19th and early 20th centuries includes tales from both well-known writers like William Morris and others little known now. Meant to entertain readers of all ages, they appeared in familiar genres – fairy tales, fables, allegories, parables, and moral tales—with many challenging "the conventional values promoted in children's literature for the middle class". The tales collected here "exemplify themes and ideas related to work and the class system, sometimes in wish-fulfilling ways." Michael Rosen's Introduction to the volume places the tales in their

historical context and describes "how such tales advocated for contemporary progressive causes and countered the dominant celebration of Britain's imperial values."



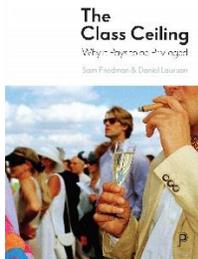
Most Precious Blood (Guernica World Editions 2), Vince Sgambati

Fans of Anne Tyler's quirky characters and her attention to family life, or Pete Hamill's depiction of diverse, ethnic, urban neighborhoods will connect to *Most Precious Blood*, set in the eleventh-hour of a declining Italian-American neighborhood where complex and often destructive loyalties have dire consequences. Hard Luck Lenny is the quintessential good son, brother, and father, and he fears a calamity will derail his son's future the way his own dreams were derailed years ago, but Frankie is preoccupied with thoughts of Gennaro DiCico, the son of a small-time mobster. Lenny's fears are realized when a cabdriver's son avenges his father's murder.



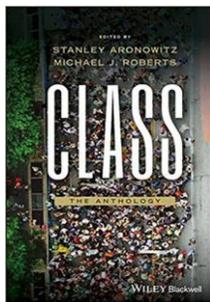
I Still Can't Fly: Confessions of a Lifelong Troublemaker (Hard Ball Press), Kevin John Carroll

Kevin Carroll was a “strung out junkie” for 27 years, during which “he haunted the darkest, most dangerous streets of Harlem and the South Bronx to support his habit,” but also held a job in the New York City Sanitation Department and maintained his marriage. He hit bottom 23 years ago, when an arrest for drug possession threatened his job and pension. During his three-month drug rehabilitation program, he began to write about his life, and it was both cathartic and rehabilitating. This book is Carroll’s life story of being a troublemaker beginning in the first grade in a Catholic school. According to Hard Ball Press, “his hilarious, harrowing and heartwarming story will captivate readers and give hope to anyone who has been mistreated and believes there is no hope.”



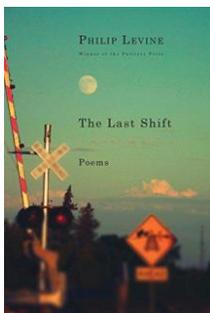
The Class Ceiling: Why it Pays to be Privileged (Policy Press), Sam Friedman & Daniel Laurison

These authors looked at four professional occupations – television, accounting, architecture, and acting – in Great Britain and found that in all four there is “a powerful class pay gap” and a class ceiling. As the publisher explains, “Even when those from working-class backgrounds make it into prestigious jobs, they earn, on average, 16% less than colleagues from privileged backgrounds.” Drawing on 175 interviews, Friedman and Laurison “explore the complex barriers facing the upwardly mobile.” Diane Reay endorses: “This stunning book provides a panoramic overview of class inequality in the UK labour market with a forensic scrutiny of the ways in which privilege works to keep the class ceiling in place.”



Class: The Anthology (Wiley-Blackwell), edited by Stanley Aronowitz & Michael J. Roberts

This 560-page tome brings together what the publisher calls “50 selections rich in theory and empirical detail that span the working, middle, and capitalist classes” and combine scholarship from cultural studies, political economy, and social history. The section on the working-class includes pieces by Marx and E.P. Thompson, but also by David Roediger, Lawrence Glickman, Robin D. G Kelley, Mike Davis and Stanley Aronowitz, among others. The sections on the middle and the capitalist classes are equally diverse in mixing classic and contemporary works of significance, but women authors look to be severely under-represented.



The Last Shift (Alfred A. Knopf), Philip Levine

John Beck of Our Daily Work/Our Daily Lives at Michigan State University endorses Philip Levine’s 2017 book of poems: “Edited ably by poet Edward Hirsch, who also added a great foreword remembering his friend Phil Levine, the book is the last book of poems chosen by Levine himself. In his foreword, Hirsch invokes Levine’s background as a production worker at Chevrolet in post-WW 2 Detroit: ‘He was a poet of the night shift, a late, ironic Whitman of our industrial heartland, and his life’s work is a long assault on isolation, an ongoing struggle against the enclosures of suffering.’ Hirsch goes on to explain that in the book, Levine ‘writes here of his childhood, adolescence, and early manhood in Detroit, which takes on an almost legendary quality now that everything is gone – the factories, the machines, the night workers.’ Though much of what Hirsch says has a ring of truth, Levine’s words can still resonate with a

working class that punches in and out, many of them still in the auto factories of Michigan. The strongest poems in the collection, like the title poem itself, reflect on Levine’s experiences on the streets of Detroit commuting to work and his time on the shop floor. Levine’s poems continue to stand the test of time as the contents of this volume will as well. Check it out.”