About West Virginia University Press

West Virginia University Press is the only university press, and the largest publisher of any kind, in the state of West Virginia. A part of West Virginia University, we publish books and scholarly journals by authors around the world, with a particular emphasis on Appalachian studies, higher education, and interdisciplinary books about energy and environment. We also publish highly regarded works of fiction and creative nonfiction.

Titles published by West Virginia University Press have received reviews and attention in the New York Times, the New York Review of Books, the Atlantic, Harper's, PBS NewsHour, Fresh Air, the Wall Street Journal, Smithsonian, the Times Literary Supplement, the Paris Review, the Los Angeles Review of Books, Time, Publishers Weekly, Library Journal, Booklist, Kirkus, Vox, Bustle, BuzzFeed, and the Chronicle of Higher Education, among many other regional and global outlets. You can find our books at bookstores and online retailers.

At West Virginia University Press, we strive to extend and enhance the reputation of WVU as a major research institution by publishing the very best work in our areas of specialization. Learn more at wvupress.com.

Thanks to all the booksellers who helped connect our readers with books this unusual season, including Joe from Baltimore’s Charm City Books, pictured here delivering a copy of Deesha Philyaw’s The Secret Lives of Church Ladies. Shared from Jennifer N. Shannon’s Instagram feed (@writerjns) with permission.

CATALOG COVER ART COURTESY OF SABA TAJ.

CONGRATULATIONS to Deesha Philyaw, whose The Secret Lives of Church Ladies—longlisted for the National Book Award in fiction—is among the best-reviewed books of the fall. New dates are being added to her virtual tour; see the latest at DeeshaPhilyaw.com.

“A collection of luminous stories populated by deeply moving and multifaceted characters. . . . Tender, fierce, proudly black and beautiful, these stories will sneak inside you and take root.”
—Kirkus Reviews (starred review)

“Triumphant. . . . Philyaw’s stories inform and build on one another, turning her characters’ private struggles into a beautiful chorus.”
—Publishers Weekly

“Cheeky, insightful, and irresistible.”
—Ms. Magazine

“This collection marks the emergence of a bona fide literary treasure.”
—Minneapolis Star Tribune

“Full of lived-in humanity, warmth, and compassion.”
—Pittsburgh Current

“These are stories about Black women that haven’t been told with this level of depth, wit, or insight before, so it will not shock me if Oprah gets around to selecting it before the end of the year.”
—Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

“Beautifully crafted. A lovely collection.”
—Roxane Gay, author of Bad Feminist

THE SECRET LIVES OF CHURCH LADIES
Deesha Philyaw
September 2020
192pp
4.72x7.48in
PB 978-1-949199-73-4
$18.99
eBook 978-1-949199-74-1
$18.99

PHOTO: JARED WICKERHAM/WICK PHOTOGRAPHY
“SO MUCH TO BE ANGRY ABOUT

is an example of the best impulses of people’s history, careful and caring in its attention to people and places, disposing of nothing, casting a loving and critical eye and turning over stones, not just of movement history and its ideas, but also of the labor of the craftspeople, artists, and makers whose work spurs us on but sometimes goes without examination. I love how this book traces generational knowledge, complete with lessons, pitfalls, dynamism, and complication for those of us currently making and joining community, art, and resistance in Appalachia.”

—Madeline ffitch, author of Stay and Fight

“The Appalachian Movement Press has been an inspiration for almost everything we do. An activist press focused on labor and art, and it was based in West Virginia? That’s something we all need to hear about! Especially anyone unpacking the region’s deep history of exploitation.”

—Dwight and Liz Pavlovic, founders, Crash Symbols

“This is a history of Appalachian Movement Press and also a fascinating look into Appalachian history, regional radical politics, and print history. The fire of creation can be passed down through books like So Much to Be Angry About, and maybe this retelling of AMP’s story could spark something else like it down the line.”

—Lucas Church, University of North Carolina Press

“Back before activists used viral memes to reach the masses, the rebels at Appalachian Movement Press used any means necessary to keep their presses running and get information into the hands of all people. I was captivated by the untold story of these scrappy Appalachians who were determined to spread regional pride and history, and who were also completely uninterested in money or fame.”

—Betsy Sokolosky, owner, Base Camp Printing Co.

SO MUCH TO BE ANGRY ABOUT
Shaun Slifer

In a remarkable act of recovery, So Much to Be Angry About conjures an influential but largely obscured strand in the nation’s radical tradition—the “movement” printing presses and publishers of the late 1960s and 1970s, and specifically Appalachian Movement Press in Huntington, West Virginia, the only movement press in Appalachia. More than a history, this craft- and activist-centered book positions the frontline politics of the Appalachian Left within larger movements in the 1970s. As Appalachian Movement Press founder Tom Woodruff wrote: “Appalachians weren’t sitting in the back row during this struggle, they were driving the bus.”

Emerging from the Students for a Democratic Society chapter at Marshall University, and working closely with organizer and poet Don West, Appalachian Movement Press made available an eclectic range of printed material, from books and pamphlets to children’s literature and calendars. Many of its publications promoted the Appalachian identity movement and “internal colony” theory, both of which were cornerstones of the nascent discipline of Appalachian studies. One of its many influential publications was MAW, the first feminist magazine written by and for Appalachian women.

So Much to Be Angry About combines complete reproductions of five of Appalachian Movement Press’s most engaging publications, an essay by Shaun Slifer about his detective work resurrecting the press’s history, and a contextual introduction to New Left movement publishing by Josh MacPhee. Amply illustrated in a richly produced package, the volume pays homage to the graphic sensibility of the region’s 1970s social movements, while also celebrating the current renaissance of Appalachia’s DIY culture—in many respects a legacy, Slifer suggests, of the movement publishing documented in his book.

March 2021 · 256pp · 7.5x9.25in
PB 978-1-949199-94-9 · $32.99
CL 978-1-949199-93-2 · $99.99
eBook 978-1-949199-95-6 · $32.99
28 color images

Shaun Slifer is an artist, writer, and museum professional based in Pittsburgh. He is the creative director at the West Virginia Mine Wars Museum and a founding member of the Justseeds Artists’ Cooperative.

APPALACHIAN STUDIES
HISTORY
SOCIAL JUSTICE
“A MASTERFUL TAPESTRY
created through the interwoven lives of some of New York’s disparate, imperfect, and vulnerable souls, and set against the backdrop of a city that is a character unto itself: chameleonic, contradictory, hallucinatory yet visceral, fiercely wanting yet fiercely self-protective.”

—Richard Price, author of Lush Life

GHOSTS OF NEW YORK
Jim Lewis
Ghosts of New York is a novel in which the laws of time and space have been subtly suspended. It interweaves four strands: a photographer newly returned to the neighborhood where she grew up, after years spent living overseas; a foundling raised on 14th Street; a graduate student, his romantic partner, and his best friend entangled in a set of relationships with far-reaching personal and political repercussions; and a shopkeeper suffering from first love late in life. Mixing prophecy, history, and a hint of speculative fiction, its stories are bound together even as they are propelled into stranger territory. And undergirding it all is a song, which appears, disappears, and then resurfaces.

Ghosts of New York explores complex lives through indelible renderings of settings—a bar, a night market, a recording studio—that alternate between familiar and unsettling. The work of a celebrated novelist and veteran of the art, film, and music scenes in New York and Austin (described as “a rare talent” by the New York Times and “a powerful literary voice” by Jeffrey Eugenides), this novel will immediately absorb readers intrigued by creative people and the places that sustain and challenge them.

“Jim Lewis sees like a photographer and writes like an avenging angel.”

—Sally Mann, author of Hold Still: A Memoir with Photographs

“Ghosts of New York is an intricate cat’s cradle of life trajectories and a beautifully vulnerable work of fiction.”

—Jardine Libaire, author of White Fur

ST. CHRISTOPHER ON PLUTO
Nancy McKinley
February 2020 · 228pp · 5x8in
PB 978-1-949199-26-0 · $18.99
eBook 978-1-949199-27-7 · $18.99

“Like the best comic fiction, it’s constructed out of insider social observations that sting as much as they amuse.”

—Maureen Corrigan, NPR’s Fresh Air

AMERICAN GRIEF IN FOUR STAGES
Stories
Sadie Hoagland
November 2019 · 168pp · 5x8in
PB 978-1-949199-21-5 · $18.99
eBook 978-1-949199-22-2 · $18.99

“A captivating debut collection probes the trauma of being human…. Assured, haunting, and deeply empathetic.”

—Kirkus Reviews (starred review)

“JIM LEWIS is one of my favorite writers. He’s an exquisite stylist with an unsparing eye. In Ghosts of New York, he reveals the city to us through both a magnifying glass and a prism, bringing all facets of it into light. A marvelous novel.”

—Rabih Alameddine, author of The Angel of History and An Unnecessary Woman
AMERICAN VAUDEVILLE
Geoffrey Hilsabeck
With a foreword by Luc Sante

At the heart of American Vaudeville is one strange, unsettling fact: for nearly fifty years, from the late nineteenth century to the 1930s, vaudeville was everywhere—then, suddenly, it was nowhere. This book tells the story of what was once the most popular form of entertainment in the country using lists, creation myths, thumbnail biographies, dreams, and obituaries. A lyric history—part social history, part song—American Vaudeville sits at the nexus between poetry, experimental nonfiction, and, because it includes historic images, art books.

Geoffrey Hilsabeck’s book grows out of extensive archival research. Rather than arranging that research—the remains of vaudeville—into a realistic picture or tidy narrative, however, Hilsabeck dreams vaudeville back into existence, drawing on photographs, letters, joke books, reviews, newspaper stories, anecdotes, and other material gathered from numerous archives, as well as from memoirs by vaudeville performers like Buster Keaton, Eva Tanguay, and Eddie Cantor. Some of this research is presented as-is, a letter from a now-forgotten vaudeville performer to her booking agent, for example; some is worked up into brief scenes and biographies; and some is put to even more imaginative uses, finding new life in dialogues and prose poems.

American Vaudeville pulls the past into the present and finds in the beauty and carnivalesque grotesqueness of vaudeville a fitting image of American life today.

—Luc Sante

THE PAINTED FOREST
Krista Eastman
October 2019 · 144pp · 5x7in
PB 978-1-949199-19-2 · $19.99
eBook 978-1-949199-20-8 · $19.99

“Thoughtful and elegant…Eastman’s deep fascination with and love of her home state, in all its complexity and eccentricity, permeate this moving book and will live on in the reader’s mind.”

—Publishers Weekly

THIS WAY BACK
Joanna Eleftheriou
October 2020 · 264pp · 5x8in
PB 978-1-949199-66-6 · $23.99
eBook 978-1-949199-67-3 · $23.99

“Intimate and a touch mournful, most powerfully so when the author writes about her sexuality…. These essays reveal an impassioned and hard-fought sense of self and place.”

—Kirkus Reviews (starred review)
WORKING IT OFF IN LABOR COUNTY
Stories
Larry D. Thacker

“It seems like everybody but people from here are sure about what we’re about, and they make money being wrong about it.” The residents of Labor County, a fictional small community in the mountains of southeastern Kentucky, may be short on cash, but they are rich in creativity and tirelessly inventive as they concoct new schemes to make ends meet, settle old scores, and work off their debts to society and, in a way, to themselves.

A zealous history professor is caught stealing from the local museum in protest of petty theft; an arsonist strikes it lucky—twice; a skilled leatherworker saddles a turkey and finds a rider; an angel aspires to be a punk rock Roller Derby princess; a grieving artist carves a miracle into a roadside rock face; and affable Uncle Archie produces a seemingly unending supply of new and bizarre items to display in his Odditorium.

More than a collection of tales, Working It Off in Labor County assembles memorable characters who recur across these seventeen linked stories, sharing in one another’s struggles and stumbling upon humor and mystery, the grotesque and the divine, each in many forms.

“Energetic, humorous, and full of heart. Thacker’s voice feels fresh and alive.”
—Jonathan Corcoran, author of The Rope Swing

“Thacker’s linked collection is a carnival ride of southern gothic tales and freak-show oddities…. Hilarious, yes, but it’s also a thoughtful exploration of the residents of Labor County, Kentucky, who are desperate to pull meaning out of loss.”
—Marie Manilla, author of The Patron Saint of Ugly

“There’s a country song on every page…. These characters want out, want in, yearn for some luck, lose whatever fortunes appear in their lives. This collection’s a keeper, worthy of shelf space between Larry Brown and Merle Haggard.”
—George Singleton, author of You Want More: Selected Stories

FERCE AND DELICATE
Essays on Dance and Illness
Renée K. Nicholson

Renée Nicholson’s professional training in ballet had both moments of magnificence and moments of torment, from fittings of elaborate platter tutus to strange language barriers and unrealistic expectations of the body. In Fierce and Delicate, she looks back on the often confused and driven self she had been shaped into—always away from home, with friends who were also rivals, influenced by teachers in ways sometimes productive and at other times bordering on sadistic—and finds beauty in the small roles she performed.

When, inevitably, Nicholson moved on from dancing, severed from her first love by illness, she discovered that she retained the lyricism and narrative of ballet itself as she negotiated life with rheumatoid arthritis.

An intentionally fractured memoir-in-essays, Fierce and Delicate navigates the traditional geographies of South Florida, northern Michigan, New York City, Milwaukee, West Virginia, and also geographies of the body—long, supple limbs; knee replacements; remembered bodies and actual. It is a book about the world of professional dance and also about living with chronic disease, about being shattered yet realizing the power to assemble oneself again, in a new way.

“Many dancers wrestle with one of the central questions of Renée Nicholson’s fabulous book: How does one live as an ex-dancer? The answers Nicholson explores will strongly resonate with those who long to lift the veil that shrouds creative pursuits in unnecessary mystique. I love Nicholson’s powerful prose: how the essays circle in and out of dance, the way movement comes alive on the page, and the articulate grace with which Nicholson writes about sudden disability. In Fierce and Delicate, Nicholson teaches us how to envelop our impossible dreams with gratitude for the life we have now.”
—Renée E. D’Aoust, author of Body of a Dancer
MINDING BODIES
How Physical Space, Sensation, and Movement Affect Learning
Susan Hrach

Starting from new research on the body—aptly summarized as “sitting is the new smoking”—Minding Bodies aims to help instructors improve their students’ knowledge and skills through physical movement, attention to the spatial environment, and sensitivity to humans as more than “brains on sticks.” It shifts the focus of adult learning from an exclusively mental effort toward an embodied, sensory-rich experience, offering new strategies to maximize the effectiveness of time spent learning together on campus as well as remotely.

Minding Bodies draws from a wide range of body/mind research in cognitive psychology, kinesiology, and phenomenology to bring a holistic perspective to teaching and learning. The embodied learning approaches described by Susan Hrach are inclusive, low-tech, low-cost strategies that deepen the development of disciplinary knowledge and skills. Campus change-makers will also find recommendations for supporting a transformational mission through an attention to students’ embodied learning experiences.

“For too long, faculty have only focused on the education of the mind, ignoring the importance of the body in that process. Susan Hrach’s book conveys an authentic sense of wonder and excitement about the topic, and it is a timely and relevant text for higher education faculty.”

—Kathryn Byrnes, Bowdoin College

SKIM, DIVE, SURFACE
Teaching Digital Reading
Jenae Cohn

Smartphones, laptops, tablets: college students are reading on-screen all the time, and digital devices shape students’ understanding of and experiences with reading. In higher education, however, teachers rarely consider how digital reading experiences may have an impact on learning abilities, unless they’re lamenting students’ attention spans or the distractions available to students when they’re learning online.

Skim, Dive, Surface offers a corrective to these conversations—an invitation to focus not on losses to student learning but on the spectrum of affordances available within digital learning environments. It is designed to help college instructors across the curriculum teach digital reading in their classes, whether they teach face-to-face, fully online, or somewhere in between. Placing research from cognitive psychology, neuroscience, learning science, and composition in dialogue with insight from the scholarship of teaching and learning, Jenae Cohn shows how teachers can better frame, scaffold, and implement effective digital reading assignments. She positions digital reading as part of a cluster of literacies that students should develop in order to communicate effectively in a digital environment.

“An important, accessible contribution to conversations about digital reading.”

—Ellen Carillo, coauthor of Reading Critically, Writing Well
RED HARVESTS
Agrarian Capitalism and Genocide in Democratic Kampuchea
James A. Tyner

James Tyner reinterprets the place of agriculture under the Khmer Rouge, positioning it in new ways relative to Marxism, capitalism, and genocide. The Cambodian revolutionaries’ agricultural management is widely viewed by critics as irrational and dangerous, and it is invoked as part of wider efforts to discredit leftist movements. Researching the specific functioning of Cambodia’s transition from farms to agriculture within the context of the global economy, Tyner comes to a different conclusion. He finds that analysis of “actually existing political economy”—as opposed to the Marxist identification the Khmer Rouge claimed—points to overlap between Cambodian practice and agrarian capitalism.

Tyner argues that dissolution of the traditional Khmer family farm under the aegis of state capitalism is central to any understanding of the mass violence unleashed by the Khmer Rouge. Seen less as a radical outlier than as part of a global shift in farming and food politics, the Cambodian tragedy imparts new lessons to our understanding of the political economy of genocide.

“James Tyner has a gift for conveying complex subjects in a direct and accessible style, and his book will make a real contribution to the field of genocide studies generally, and to the study of the Cambodian genocide more specifically.”

—Alex Alvarez, author of Unstable Ground: Climate Change, Conflict, and Genocide

Inaugural Series Title
FEMINIST GEOGRAPHY UNBOUND
Discomfort, Bodies, and Prefigured Futures
Edited by Banu Gökarıksel, Michael Hawkins, Christopher Neubert, and Sara Smith

Feminist Geography Unbound is a call to action—to expand imaginations and to read and travel more widely and carefully through terrains that have been cast as niche, including Indigenous and decolonial feminisms, Black geographies, and trans geographies. The original essays in this collection center three themes to unbind and enable different feminist futures: discomfort as a site where differences generate both productive and immobilizing frictions, gendered and racialized bodies as sites of political struggle, and the embodied work of building the future.

Drawing on diverse theoretical backgrounds and a range of field sites, contributors consider how race, gender, citizenship, and class often determine who feels comfort and who is tasked with producing it. They work through bodies as terrains of struggle that make claims to space and enact political change, and they ask how these politics prefigure the futures that we fear or desire. The book also champions feminist geography as practice, through interviews with feminist scholars and interludes in which feminist collectives speak to their experience inhabiting and transforming academic spaces. Feminist Geography Unbound is grounded in a feminist geography that has long forced the discipline to grapple with the production of difference, the unequal politics of knowledge production, and gender’s constitutive role in shaping social life.

“Feminist Geography Unbound is a must-read for students and scholars interested in the diversity of feminist geographic thought, action, and activism. This is an exceptionally edited collection of leading scholars’ research and reflections on gender, race, sexuality, identity, vulnerability, and power relations. I highly recommend this book for advanced undergraduate and graduate courses engaging with feminist geographic scholarship and methods.”

—Jennifer L. Fluri, coauthor of The Carpetbaggers of Kabul and Other American-Afghan Entanglements: Intimate Development, Geopolitics, and the Currency of Gender and Grief

James A. Tyner is a professor of geography at Kent State University and a fellow of the American Association of Geographers. He is the author of numerous books, including War, Violence, and Population: Making the Body Count, which received the AAG Meridian Book Award for Outstanding Scholarly Work in Geography, and The Politics of Lists: Bureaucracy and Genocide under the Khmer Rouge (WVU Press).

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Banu Gökarıksel is professor, Michael Hawkins and Christopher Neubert are PhD candidates, and Sara Smith is associate professor in the department of geography at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

GEOGRAPHY
CRITICAL SOCIAL SCIENCE
Environmental law has failed spectacularly to protect Appalachia from the ravages of liberal capitalism, and from extractive industries in particular. Remaking Appalachia chronicles such failures, but also puts forth hopeful paths for truly radical change.

Remaking Appalachia begins with an account of how, over a century ago, laws governing environmental and related issues proved fruitless against the rising power of coal and other industries. Key legal regimes were, in fact, explicitly developed to support favored industrial growth. Aided by law, industry succeeded in maximizing profits not just through profound exploitation of Appalachia’s environment but also through subordination along lines of class, gender, and race. After chronicling such failures and those of liberal development strategies in the region, Stump explores true system change beyond law “reform.” Ecofeminism and ecosocialism undergird this discussion, which involves bottom-up approaches to transcending capitalism that are coordinated from local to global scales.

“Remaking Appalachia offers a thorough critical account of Appalachia through a law and political economy lens, and makes a persuasive case for what the region needs today: a hopeful vision for a new future rooted in transformative, bottom-up change.”

—Ann M. Eisenberg, University of South Carolina

REMAKING APPALACHIA
Ecosocialism, Ecofeminism, and Law
Nicholas F. Stump

Nicholas F. Stump is a lifelong West Virginian. His scholarship explores environmental law, critical legal theory, law and social movements, and Appalachian and rural studies. He currently works as a faculty member with the George R. Farmer Jr. Law Library at West Virginia University College of Law.

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—Doug Lederman, Inside Higher Ed

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—Ryan Boyd, Los Angeles Review of Books

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