



Editorial Note

Radical as Reality Itself

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"No one in his right mind could truthfully say that he liked a vast edifice such as the Palace of Justice on the old Gallows Hill in Brussels. At the most we gaze at it in wonder, a kind of wonder which in itself is a form of dawning horror, for somehow we know by instinct that outsize buildings cast the shadow of their own destruction before them, and are designed from the first with an eye to their later existence as ruins."

W.G. Sebald, Austerlitz

Two signal events have had a global impact during the time it has taken to produce this issue: the continued global COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Currently, it seems as if we are drowning in a cascade of crises, ranging from the ecological to the climatic, from political to epidemiological. World-systems scholars cannot remain quiet about these challenges, confining their analysis to seminar rooms or polite academic exchange. We have conceived a new section for the journal, *Commentaries*, in the effort to ensure that world-systems research remain on the front line of contemporary crises while engaging scholars from different regions to widen the horizon of *JWSR*. The *Commentaries* section of the journal is meant to address issues around the world in



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a manner that is more timely than a typical journal article, but deeper and more scholarly than a blog. We will include in this section contributions on pressing topics or events that are lightly refereed, that are of a length between three thousand and five thousand words per essay, and that use world systems analysis to address critical issues in the contemporary world.

In this precarious moment of war and rising nationalisms, we have invited Patrick Bond to offer his thoughts on the war in Ukraine and the politics of BRICS. A careful meditation on the three “nostalgic forces” shaping anti-systemic processes, Bond’s commentary focuses on uneven development in the capitalist world-economy, and the complex peripheral and semi-peripheral reality in which BRICS, as an alternative, presents no real challenge to a world-system driven by overaccumulation of capital. In a world where our political choices are often framed as either authoritarianism or chaos, the connotations of Bond’s argument reverberate widely.

One place where these reverberations can be felt is in Jason W. Moore’s article on how to think about emancipation in time of the capitalogenic climate crisis. In his essay, Moore provides an impressive overview of the world-ecology conversation. Perhaps the most important recent intervention in the wider field of world-systems scholarship, the world-ecology conversation has been steadily growing both in intellectual depth and in international recognition. What makes the conversation even more exciting is ongoing intellectual (and indeed political) debate around some of its key concepts. In his contribution, Moore makes a valiant effort to dispel some of the more common misunderstandings and misinterpretations surrounding world-ecology, insisting, throughout, on the centrality of revolutionary praxis informed by a world-historical research. Historical materialism is *historical*, he writes, or it is nothing. Rather than engaging in “revolutionary phrase mongering” that confuses methodological statements with theoretical arguments, and sectarian arguments with nuanced debate, we should reclaim world history as a fundamental instrument of revolutionary theory.

In these troubled times, we are especially pleased to publish an interview with Jerome Roos, winner of the Inaugural Immanuel Wallerstein Book Award. In his interview, Roos rehearses some of the central arguments from his *Why Not Default?: The Political Economy of Sovereign Debt* (2019). Drawing on in-depth case studies of contemporary debt crises in Mexico, Argentina, and Greece, Roos explains why so many heavily indebted countries, despite frequent crises and the immense costs of repayment, continue to service their international debts.

Research articles in this issue take us down a variety of avenues: from tributary world-ecologies in high middle ages, to technology, revolutionary feminism, and divergence between Asia and the “rest.” Leading this issue’s research articles is Omar Awass, who extends arguments made in the last issue of the *JWSR* by tracking the evolution of what he terms Global Power-Field (GPF) in the neo/postcolonial era. While a signal feature of the current field of power is the *non-locality* of its operations, the essay concludes with the examination of Post-Revolutionary Iran’s relations with the West. The next article takes us from the field of contemporary power relations to the high middle ages to focus on two distinct world-ecologies, in the North Sea and the Mediterranean, evaluated on its own terms from the World-Ecology Perspective. Çağrı İdiman presents a compelling case as to why it is more useful to theorize the North Sea World in relation

to the larger tributary worlds, characteristic of the High Middle Ages. World-ecologies here refer not only to relations of exchange, but also to production relations, or mode of appropriation of nature and labor. Umaima Miraj brings us to the issues of revolutionary feminism in anti-colonial movements. She provides an empirical case study of published periodicals of the anti-colonial Ghadar Party, in order to emphasize the role of women in the revolutionary life of anti-colonial struggles. Her essay is more ambitious, however: she aims at reviving a feminist world-systems analysis that can help us better theorize women's role in revolutionary anti-colonial movements and rethink inherited categories in the rich tradition of antisystemic movements literature.

Michael Calderon Zacks focuses on the relationship between globalization, technology, and railroad industry. In his analysis, Black and Brown workers who lost their jobs in the railroad industry are a perfect example and reminder that technological changes are more severe threats to employment than globalization or immigration. The next article takes us from the topic of technology to that of technology of power. Víctor Ramiro Fernández and his colleagues take our attention to the Global South, a "new empirical entity of unprecedented dimensions" and "primary aspect of world-systems recent transformation." In order to address the process of "divergent convergence", and of the consolidation of Asian dominance under Chinese leadership, they present their argument in relation to world systems analysis and Latin American Structuralism.

Lana Parker and Natalie Delia Deckard bring us to a territory that is all too infrequently visited in journal pages: the relationship between core and peripheral education. Their contribution is an instructive reminder of cultural colonization of peripheral knowledge systems, empirically demonstrating the global market dynamics in international secondary education.

Lastly, our book review section includes the 2020 book *Give and Take: Developmental Foreign Aid and the Pharmaceutical Industry in East Africa* by Nitsan Chorev, reviewed by Patricia Ward.