



A Woman's Work: Making Something Out of Nothing Introduction to the Special Issue

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Abstract

This paper introduces this Special Issue of the Journal of World-Systems Research, "Women in World-Literature: A Woman's Work" by making the case that the Warwick Research Collective's (WReC 2015: 9) conception of "combined and uneven development" can not only be applied to women's writing in conversation with materialist feminist theory, but perhaps misses the ways in which women, Black feminists, indigenous lifeways, and queer world-making shows us a form of work that is not bound by the wage or value-exchange system, as many acts of care or favors often described as "women's work"—cannot be repaid (Walton and Luker 2019). Missing from the WReC's framework is an explicit engagement with women's writing and how women contribute to, and are exploited by, the world-system. This Special Issue thus focuses on only one aspect of women's engagement with the world-literary system: women's work. From the labor market, motherhood, sex work, affective work, to knowledge production and storytelling, to the very work of consumption itself. Social reproduction theory and materialist feminists have made the case that capitalism relies on the invisible labor of women, particularly domestic work and community work. Yet, if we consider the creative dimensions of women's work, do we discover gaps in world-systems frameworks which, when refracted through literary analysis, actually upset capitalism's insistence upon the inevitability of exchange value? To exemplify this, I turn to Silvia Federici's explanations of the witch as a tool to think about how we might "make something out of nothing."

Keywords: World-Literature, Women, Workers, Social Reproduction, Labor, Labour



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The special issue of the *Journal of World-Systems Research* is one of two core publications which originate from 2022's "Women in World-Literature" conference at the University of Warwick, which I co-organized with Dr. Fiona Farnsworth. This hybrid-form conference, with over 200 delegates from all over the world, brought scholars together to discuss women's relationships to the capitalist world-system, and specifically how this is registered in literature. The conference sought to expand on the Warwick Research Collective's (WReC 2015: 9) conception of "combined and uneven development." Their book, *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (2015), held not only that the global capitalist system engendered a series of multi-scalar cores and peripheries which channel power and goods such as novels, but also that the literature within such a system was *of* the world-system, of one modernity that is lived unevenly. This is to say that this method of reading alerts us to the registration of "combined and uneven" modernity in the form, content, and artistic strategies of cultural objects. Missing from the WReC's framework, however, was an explicit engagement with women's writing and how women contribute to, and are exploited by, the world-system. The critical conversations facilitated by the "Women in World-Literature" conference demonstrated that a system that is uneven, multiscalar, and globally entangled, is manifestly gendered. This Special Issue thus focuses on only one aspect of women's engagement with the world-literary system: women's work. From the labor market, motherhood, sex work, affective work, to knowledge production and storytelling, to the very work of consumption itself. This issue includes some of the most exciting new voices in world-literary analysis, including early career and postgraduate research colleagues who are collaborators with members of the WReC. These innovative thinkers bring together the feminist legacies of Marxist feminists with the WReC to ask: how is woman's work registered in women's writing, and how or can the process of writing itself be registered as work? If we closely consider the dimensions of women's work that uphold global capitalism, do we discover gaps in world-systems frameworks which, when refracted through literary analysis, actually upset capitalism's insistence upon the inevitability of exchange value? What does feminist work look like beyond exchange value, and are we already using these strategies? In other words—are women already, and historically used to, making something out of nothing?

This issue of the *Journal of World-Systems Research* represents an urgent and timely intervention into how we theorize the literature of the world-system as a gendered system, from the act of work, to representing work in art, to the work of artistic production. My hope is that this Special Issue will continue the critical conversations in this urgent field of enquiry to consider world-literature as literature of the modern capitalist gendered world-system. In this introduction I sketch how the WReC theorize world-literature, and imbricate this with theories of social reproduction, I move on to the witch as an imaginative resource to demonstrate how literature—the reading, writing, and analysis of—elucidates a variety of gaps in the world-system itself. Ultimately, this introduction asks if women's work illuminates the gaps in the world-system; that there are tasks that are performed not for exchange value, but for community good and world-building, which represent strategies that we might be able to harness for feminist purposes.

The World-System, World-Literature, and Gender

Readers of this Special Issue may already be familiar with the WReC's work; however, it is pertinent to briefly summarize aspects of *Combined and Uneven Development* (2015). The WReC (2015) hyphenizes the term "world-literature" in order to differentiate and extend this mode of analysis from comparative literary studies and postcolonial studies, in order to consider the role of "commerce and commonality, linkage and connection, articulation and integration, network and system" (WReC 2015: 6). Such a hyphenation explicitly formulates the global system of modernity as singular, that is lived unevenly across a variety of scales (WReC 2015). They posit that by combining the Trotskyist concept of a global and multiscale theory of combined and uneven development in which one modernity is lived out globally as an unequal division of capital and power, with postcolonialist concepts of world-literature, alongside literary and artistic aesthetics, we are then able to consider the literature of that system as simultaneously a part of the commerce of such a system, and reveal its specific "accents" that register the world-system (WReC 2015).

They draw upon Franco Moretti's (2014) argument, that:

international capitalism is a system that is simultaneously *one* and *unequal*: with a core, and a periphery (and a semiperiphery) that are bound together in a relationship of growing inequality. One and unequal: *one* literature... or perhaps, better, one world literary system (of inter-related literatures), (P. 161)

which is nevertheless "profoundly unequal." For the WReC, this theory helps us to reapproach texts from the periphery of the world system, sites such as the global South or the peripheries of Europe, or, in their final chapter the uneven space of the city. Yet, while the WReC (2015) acknowledge class relations, and in some places racial politics as aspects of peripherality, their readings around gender¹, and specifically women, are limited. They acknowledge in their introduction that modernity has been understood as something

that happens first—in "the west" and to which others can subsequently gain access; or that happens in cities rather than in the countryside; or that, on the basis of a deep-set sexual division of labor, men tend to exemplify in their social practice rather than women. (WReC 2015: 13)

They usefully discuss a sex worker in Viktor Pelevin's *The Sacred Book of the Werewolf* (2004) where Hu Lui, the sex worker in question, "conceives of sexual exchanges in language mirroring the oil economy with its logic of unlimited extraction" (WReC 2015: 107). This is a helpful starting point because the WReC are implying that to be a sex worker, a typically feminized and/or queer position, is to be on the periphery, and that, in such a gendered position one's entanglement with ecologies and economies becomes more complex, and sometimes occulted. In this Special Issue, Charlotte Spear will extend this by considering novels about sex workers in the Caribbean whose exploitation and sense of agency is conversant with global debt systems. Nevertheless, in the

¹ The word "gender" appears twice in the prose of *Combined and Uneven Development* (once on page 93, and again on page 106).

WReC's text selection, the sex worker's narrative was written by a man; this is not to say that any artists cannot make art that illuminates a lived experience that is distinct from their own, but there is a world of women's writing on this very subject available to us that we can and should also draw upon. Eleven of the 88 primary texts cited by the WReC are by women, which, given the wide geographical reach and excellent theoretical accomplishment housed within *Combined and Uneven Development* (WReC 2015) shows that gender was not originally conceived as a constituent part of the WReC's project, or perhaps to their theorization of world-literature. But gender is a constituent aspect of this project, which locates how and where women's labor falls within and beyond the world-system, and the literary registrations of it. This introduction considers how art and women's labor might open up questions about the seeming inevitability of exchange and wage-value, that all things in one way or another could be priced and valued according to currency or debts of service. Can and do women already make something out of nothing, and what does this mean for the world-system?

Social Reproduction and the Work of Being a Woman

The title of this special issue (playfully) evokes Kate Bush's (1989) single "This Woman's Work," which was popularized by its appearance in John Hughes' *She's Having a Baby* (1988). Despite appearing at the titular moment of birth, the song narrates the feelings of Kevin Bacon's character as waits in the hospital as his wife undergoes a traumatic birth, and the end of the film reveals that she and the child both mercifully survive. The emotive song and montage are a vehicle for Bacon's character to realize his maturation into a father. The clips of his memories include painting a house and performing DIY tasks together, quite literally building a home. This Special Issue contends with what counts as gendered labor, but in *She's Having A Baby* Bacon's wife's suffering also makes a world in which Bacon becomes a more mature man. According to Bush's song, childbearing itself is a form of world-making, Bush sings, "I stand outside this woman's work/ This woman's world/ Ooh, it's hard on the man/ Now his part is over/ Now starts the craft of the father." In other words, this vignette alerts us to a few key themes for this introduction, one being that gender itself is work, whether it is the "craft" of the father, or "this woman's work" (Bush 1989). Another, of course, is how this world-making is framed through the lens of the father rather than the imperiled wife, played by Elizabeth McGovern. One would hope that writing in 2024 one would not be able to draw too many parallels between discourses around the bodily autonomy of people who can get pregnant, especially fatalities and dangers around pregnancy, and a 1988 Kevin Bacon movie; yet, the perspective and primacy of a man's thoughts and feelings in that moment of dangerous labor bespeak a devaluation of social reproduction that continues to this day to subjugate women and people who can get pregnant. At the time of writing, women across the United States, Ireland, Poland, Nicaragua, and El Salvador have had their reproductive rights revoked, and 40 percent of people worldwide who are able to be pregnant live under restrictive laws on abortion, causing "39,000 deaths per year from unsafe abortions;" "the loss of educational and economic opportunities;" and "the deepening of historical marginalization" (Center for

Reproductive Rights 2023). At the same time, in the UK violence against trans women and anti-trans sentiment in the media has risen (ILGA Europe 2023). Catherine A. MacKinnon (2023) recently commented how “much of anti-trans sentiment and violence...focuses on the body” and its potential for violation and/or childbearing (MacKinnon 2023). I see these issues as intersecting, where women’s claims to social and political life (that is, trying to undo the “historical marginalization”) return erroneously to whether one can or cannot have children.

Silvia Federici (2004) understands this as a gendered form of enclosure, the division of capital and assets, and historicizes it through the European witch trails, claiming that

the body has been for women in capitalist society what the factory has been for male waged workers: the primary ground of their exploitation and resistance, as the female body has been appropriated by the state and men and forced to function as a means for the reproduction and accumulation of labor. Thus, the importance which the body in all its aspects—maternity, childbirth, sexuality—has acquired in feminist theory and women's history has not been misplaced...the body can be for women both a source of identity and at the same time a prison, and why it is so important for feminists and, at the same time, so problematic to valorize it. (P. 16)

For capitalist accumulation it is important to control those who can get pregnant, and for feminists it is important to recognize the material realities of the body as socially inflected. Within this Special Issue Bushra Mahzabeen considers the commodification and enclosure of the body of mothers and nannies from this perspective. Nevertheless, Federici goes on to discuss how this form of enclosure shaped women’s and minoritized persons’ lives by positioning their bodies as resources in the world-system. For the moment however, we can elucidate how this gives rise to gender roles which become naturalized through social reproduction.

Judith Butler (1988: 125) most succinctly argued that gender is “tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*.” In other words, “becoming a woman is thus ‘the acquisition of a skill’” (Watts 1992: 83). In more contemporary commentary, Walton and Luker (2019: 9) argue that “identity can certainly often be experienced as work: the work of maintaining your outward performance of self and inward sense of self, as well as the work of identifying the inner with the outer;” and Kathi Weeks (2011: 10) points out that, conversely, “as a result of these activities, work plays a significant role in both the production and reproduction of gendered identities and hierarchies: gender is re-created along with value.” Indeed,

women are not, in fact, subordinated or oppressed by our bodies. We do not need to be liberated from our chromosomes or our ovaries. It is core male-dominant ideology that attributes the source of women’s inequality to our nature, our biological sex, which for male dominance makes it inevitable, immutable, unchangeable, on us. As if our bodies, rather than male dominant social systems, do it to us. (MacKinnon 2023)

Gendering ourselves—and claiming an identity with full agency—nevertheless involves skills that must be learned, adapted, and maintained; for instance, when one cheers on a drag queen to “werk” when she is performing, perhaps we are acknowledging these everyday performances as they are reflected in the work of drag. The availability of ever newer modes of gender expression represents

a reckoning of what these acts actually mean: they call for more feminist work about what it means to be a woman, a project that can only bring us closer to liberation for all. As Federici (2004) points out,

if “femininity” has been constituted in capitalist society as a work-function masking the production of the work-force under the cover of a biological destiny, then “women’s history” is “class history,” and the question that has to be asked is whether the sexual division of labor that has produced that particular concept has been transcended. (P. 14)

If you are looking for a Special Issue devoted to the question “what is a woman?” you will not find it here as such questions are a distraction from the material conditions of work, the work of negotiating a world-system of capitalism, the work of surviving a modernity which is not made by and for women, that women find themselves in.

The “historical marginalization” (Center for Reproductive Rights 2023) that describes the enclosure of reproductive labor is understood in contemporary feminist scholarship as social reproduction. According to Tithi Bhattacharya’s (2017) excellent scholarship on social reproduction,

the worker produces surplus value at work and hence is part of the production of the total wealth of society.... The corpus of social relations involving regeneration—birth, death, social communication, and so on—is most commonly referred to in scholarly as well as policy literature as care or social care; (P. 9)

which is unwaged but maintains the waged worker. In other words, capitalism relies on the free emotional and physical labor of marginalized populations, often women in the home, in order to produce and maintain a waged workforce.

The title of this issue, and presumably Bush’s song, also emerges from the idiom “A woman’s work is never done,” which comes from a ballad from c. 1654, which

recounts a day of unremitting housewife’s work, from the first moments of wakefulness (“Before that I my head with dressings adorn, / I sweep & cleanse the house as need doth require / Or if that it be cold, I make a fire”) through to a restless night interrupted by the work of breastfeeding and sex. (Walton and Luker 2019: 6)

Bhattacharya (2017) expands on this notion over 350 years later, arguing that,

if workers’ labor produces all the wealth in society, who then produces the worker? Put another way: What kinds of processes enable the worker to arrive at the doors of her place of work every day so that she can produce the wealth of society? What role did breakfast play in her work-readiness? What about a good night’s sleep? (P 1)

Of interest to this Special Issue is not just the material realities of who generates the conditions for a good night’s sleep, but how art, reading, writing, and creativity might also be considered a form

of social reproduction; and if so, does it always maintain the capitalist world-system, or reveal its systemic gaps?

For instance, in 1976 the See Red printing collective released a monochromatic red Lino-cut poster of a woman between her factory job and domestic labor, with the large caption “A Woman’s Work Is Never Done,” commenting on the “Double Day” that was a crucial claim of 1970s feminism. What is interesting about the See Red workshop, however, is that they never attribute the designs to an individual. Aside from working together to produce these posters, they also “lived in shared households where everyone took responsibility for childcare and all domestic chores” (Stevenson et al. 2016: 4). Their way of working challenged:

the cult of the artist – a uniquely creative individual’ by having ‘all of the ideas for our posters were discussed at length, someone would work up a design, bring sketches back for comment, someone else would then take it, make changes and so on until we were happy with the finished design. This was a way of working that some male artist friends found incomprehensible both as a concept and in practice: “how do you do it? How do you all design something? Surely someone must hold the pencil.” (P. 4)

Sheila Rowbotham (2016) suggests that:

they were not selling a product...they were up to something far more complex and far more difficult, they aimed to convey ideas about a transformed society in which relations of gender, race and class would no longer be marked by inequality and subordination...making those posters appear so simple and self-evident must have been agonizingly hard to accomplish. It is not actually that difficult to perplex with layer upon layer of words; To clarify abstraction with just a few constitutes a rare skill. (P. ix)

This is an excellent example of how not only the message and content of this cultural object is of course responding to the world-system, the medium itself is also the message; skills are diffused across the collective, and these skills are taught and passed on between individuals to continue this collective artistic work. Rather wryly, Rowbotham (2016: xiii) comments on how “a new crop of younger researchers are revisiting a maligned era and rediscovering its creative vitality. Much strength to their elbows,” ending her foreword to a volume dedicated to the See Red Workshop “for there is indeed a great deal that needs to be done” (Rowbotham 2016: xiii).

To get to the crux of the Special Issue, what the world-literature method of reading shows us is that women operate both within and beyond the world-system, or more specifically exchange value. Weeks usefully problematizes this, noting that Social Reproduction does not encapsulate all activities within capitalist patriarchy. Weeks (2011) writes that:

The specific problems that this more limited notion of reproduction serves to highlight the invisibility, devaluation, and gendered division of specifically domestic labors could, for example, be responded to (but not, of course, remedied) through an expanded reliance on marketized versions of such services. As the refusal-of-work perspective suggests, the problem with the organization of social reproduction extends beyond the problems of this work’s invisibility, devaluation, and gendering. (P. 28–29)

Weeks (2011) acknowledges that domestic labor is, as it currently stands, unevenly gendered and racialized, but points out that if it were properly remunerated by a wage, would the problems that we see around dignity and social value actually be solved? Instead, she asks:

what happens when social reproduction is understood as the production of the forms of social cooperation on which accumulation depends or, alternatively, as the rest of life beyond work that capital seeks continually to harness to its times, spaces, rhythms, purposes, and values? What I am in search of is a conception of social reproduction of what it is we might organize around that can pose the full measure of its antagonism with the exigencies of capital accumulation, a biopolitical model of social reproduction less readily transformed into new forms of work and thus less easily recuperated within the present terms of the work society. (Weeks 2011: 28–29)

In other words, what happens if we were to recognize, on the one hand, how capitalism relies on unwaged labor, but to also organize around “social cooperation” (Weeks 2011: 28–29) that cannot be waged or indebted precisely with equal value on the other? At present, gendered labor demonstrates not only the oppression inherent to capitalist exchange-value based on the wage or some other ledger; but this also suggests to me that there are opportunities to work outside of it— if the solution is not in wage/exchange-value, we must turn to our creativity, imagination, and fiction to see what might.

bell hooks (2000: 104) asserts that “by learning housework, children and adults accept responsibility for ordering their material reality. They learn to appreciate and care for their surroundings,” and that boy children and girl children are taught this differently to leave men reliant on women’s domestic know-how. This leads to

women, like other exploited and oppressed groups in this society, often have negative attitudes towards work in general and the work they do in particular. They tend to devalue the work they do because they have been taught to judge its significance solely in terms of exchange value. (hooks 2000: 105)

Is there a possible way of rethinking feminist relationships to work? What might it look like to eschew exchange-value, and synthesize anti-capitalism with agential choices about how women spend our energies? To implement this, we might turn to indigenous concepts of the commons and working for common prosperity, as opposed to the scarcity/hoarding models that capitalism engenders. For instance, Kerstin Knopf (2015) describes the “Common Bowl” practice of the Nisga'a Nation, where:

the commons, but also the profits generated from the use of the commons will be shared, and that for communal or individual problems, cooperative solutions will be found. In contrast to Eurocentric cultures, which, according to a capitalist ideology, generally strive for prosperity and accumulation of wealth, Indigenous cultures (Trospen uses the Nisga'a and the Cherokee as examples) traditionally espouse ideologies of generosity and sharing. (P. 190)

Knopf (2015: 191) goes on to point out that skepticism over whether such a model might work in the west or the Western academy is the belief that “human being are basically selfish,” but proposes that the Nisga’a’s “Common Bowl” model works because “sharing can secure high social status,” which does evoke a certain kind of social exchange value (or cultural capital). In many ways this aligns with the principles of the Wages for Housework feminist movement of the 1970s, during which Mariarosa Dalla Costa suggested that communities of care are hindered because of capitalist work schedules. She writes that:

to “have time” means to work less. To have time to be with children, the old and the sick does not mean running to pay a quick visit to the garages where you park children or old people or [sick or disabled people]. It means that we, the first to be excluded, are taking the initiative in this struggle so that all those other excluded people, the children, the old and the ill, can re-appropriate the social wealth; to be re-integrated with us and all of us with men, not as dependents but autonomously, as we women want for ourselves; since their exclusion, like ours, from the directly productive social process, from social existence, has been created by capitalist organization. (Dalla Costa 1972: 53)

I share Dalla Costa’s vision that a feminist world would not exclude those who cannot or do not work; but I would argue that social wealth is also a form of exchange-value that has not liberated women due to the social and material devaluation of care labor as it stands today.

Care-based work, usually caring for or spending time with those who cannot or do not work is aligned with the list of devalued jobs that hooks alluded to. Leading to the consequence that “they [women] do not develop an attitude towards work that sees it as an expression of dignity, discipline, creativity, etc” (hooks 2000: 106). What the analysis in this Special Issue, which considers the world-system writ large across cores and peripheries, might be able to do to is amend some of the above flaws; to reimagine what work is, what it means, and therefore be able to claim a dignified use of our time and efforts. To do this, we might look at the

black feminists and women of color organized in the UK [in the 1980s], they rejected the idea that feminism was merely about the self, the body or personal liberation. They were working towards collective improvement in material conditions. As well as understanding the need to know themselves as individuals, they identified the social, political and economic structures that oppressed them and targeted this in their campaigning. (Olufemi 2020: 15)

The task of this Special Issue is to synthesize improving material realities with being able to imagine alternatives to the frameworks that we exist within and slip between.

Unwaged Work: Problems and Possibilities

According to Wilma A. Dunaway (2001),

despite the vast literature about the unpaid labor of women as a primary mechanism in the maintenance of laborer households, the tendency in world-system analyses is

to speak about the reproduction of laborer households as though these entities are ungendered. (P. 4)

If her claim that “women are only a faint ‘ghost in the world-system perspective’” is true, maybe we can instrumentalize such a position to be the ghost in the machine” that denies the world-system its power (Dunaway 2001: 2). Readers of this issue will most likely be familiar with *Wages Against Housework* by Federici (1975: 74) in which she argues that women’s domestic labor has been framed as “love. [But] We say it is unwaged work.” Her call to recognize how capitalism relies upon the unwaged work of women in the household, alongside Second Wave feminist campaigns for recognition of women’s unwaged labor, is naturally pertinent to the discussions in this Special Issue. Namely, that “to ask for wages for housework will by itself undermine the expectations society has of us [women], since these expectations – the essence of our socialization – are all functional to our wageless condition in the home” (Federici 1975: 80). This is to say that domestic labor becomes naturalized and reified by gender roles and gendered expectations; and thus becomes peripheralized in the world-system. Federici’s *Wages Against Housework* is obviously an anti-capitalist manifesto which, crucially, delegitimizes the concept of the wage; I also would argue that some labors exist beyond wage-labor and exchange value. According to Bhattacharya (2017):

social reproduction theory...is not simply an attempt to explore the relationship between social relations established through the market and extramarket social relations...[it] is primarily concerned with understanding how categories of oppression (such as gender, race, and ableism) are coproduced in simultaneity with the production of surplus value. In this aspect, it seeks to overcome reductionist or deterministic representations of Marxism while at the same time creatively exposing the organic totality of capitalism as a system. (P. 14)

Such totality has been naturalized to such a degree that it becomes very difficult to imagine how any of our actions or relationships might exist outside of reproducing the worker or the conditions for work; but I posit that thinking about creativity might be a way to do so. Walton and Luker (2019) point out in their scholarship on work in poetry, and poetry as work, that:

even though the possibility of repayment seems to be inherent in the nature of a debt, it also seems feasible that debts exist “that *cannot* be paid.” When two people are close, they usually owe each other a million little things that don’t cancel out. (P. 53)

How many of us have been done a favor for a friend and almost instinctually asked what can be done in exchange? Yet, can one favor be entirely equal to another, how do we measure such value? Instead, I ask if we even should attempt to measure this? What this alerts me to is the way that women’s relationships to one another, crafts, and joys, our “erotic energies” as Audre Lorde (1984) might put it, are due a reconsideration beyond the scarcity/wage/exchange-value systems thinking engendered by world-systemic capitalism.

Dunaway (2001: 5) points out how, despite seemingly being aligned, “world-system analysts have tended to disregard the work of radical feminists, even when those writers embrace a world-

system conceptualization of capitalism;” consequently, this “sends the political message to women all over the world that we do not consider the problems of their lives worth knowing or worth telling.” “Knowing” and “telling” are arguably the key ingredients of literary analysis, which is to say that in order to know we need to be told, but how we are told often comes in the form of art, metaphor, and entertainment. Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989: 121) asserts that “the world’s earliest archives or libraries were the memories of women. Patiently transmitted from moth to ear, body to body, hand to hand.... The speech is seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and touched. It destroys, brings into life, nurtures.” Minh-ha links the curious relationship between care labor, such as childcare and eldercare and all the tasks within those tasks, to the “nurturing” of each other, and of our cultures, that storytelling offers us. One of our key tasks as feminists in this Special Issue, then, is to consolidate materialist analysis of the “combined and uneven” (WReC 2015: 9) modernity of the world-system, with the work of imagination that literature represents. To turn to a Western feminist forbearer, Virginia Woolf (1994: 7–8) famously asserted that “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction,” but the second half of that phrase does not appear quite so frequently, which is that this “leaves the great problem of the true nature of woman and the true nature of fiction unsolved.” Woolf’s famous gambit is that women, like men, require both time and money to engage in artistic practice; we would do well to be critical of this, however, inasmuch as asking what her money buys her? It buys her someone else to do the laundry, to do the dishes and make her meals and so on, returning to Week’s supposition that paying for domestic tasks to be done also invisibilizes them to the capitalist elites. Her private room and money enough each month buys Woolf a specifically racialized and classed admission to the world of intellectual pursuits that patriarchy already constructed. The “true nature” of womanhood was also questioned by Federici (1975: 78) when she argues that capitalism’s framing of domestic labor as naturally feminine lead to “the magic words: ‘Yes, darling, you are a real woman.’” Ergo, Woolf’s raced and classed assumption that writing fiction is work, being a woman is work, and both are work which requires dignity and time, but that the fiction *itself*, the artistic result, in Woolf’s mind, is beyond the realms of exchange value. She is not asking to sustain herself through the sale of her writing work (although she praises Aphra Behn for being one of the first women to do exactly this), but the imagined monthly income comes from some other invisible mechanism. The point is this: the “true nature of woman and the true nature of fiction” is, I argue, “unsolved” in the capitalist world-system when we look at the question of work solely through exchange-value: there are other artistic endeavors and responsibilities which are not produced solely for money, or possible social wealth. At the same time, survival within the patriarchal capitalist system is simultaneously an issue for this same art. Our job, using world-literature as a lens, is to synthesize these concerns.

But what actually counts as “work”? Walton and Luker (2019) pithily point out that in English, the term “work” has multiple meanings:

You work in an office.... Or you work on a poem.... You are worked up. You are working off whatever you did to hurt your friend, but you wish you could work out what it was. The two of you really need to work on your communication. You are

working your way through those biscuits. You made quick work of them. You are working on the assumption that the bar is this way.... You are working the room.... You are on the dancefloor working your butt. You are at work working your butt off.... You are working on your relationship. You don't think this is working anymore.... The popular or folk-theoretic understandings of work, as expressed in everyday idiomatic language, form a useful complement to the various theoretical taxonomies. (P. 6, footnote 11)

To return to Federici's (1975: 74) opening gambit, that "they say it is love. We say it is unwaged work" alongside the assumption that most efforts are in some ways work opens up our analysis beyond the fact that capitalism manages to invisibilize the social reproductive labor on which it depends. We might go beyond this by asking: if the labor is unwaged, does the presence of unwaged labor, and even more so the voluntary labors of friendship, kin-making, community building, and artistic endeavors go unwaged, does this not in itself upset capitalism's insistence on wage-value systems of relating to one another? As feminists, is there something to be said about deliberately working in these gray areas that are not accounted for by world-systems, whilst simultaneously working on rejecting how we are exploited through them? If Dunaway's (2001: 2) assertion that "women are only a faint ghost in the world-system perspective" is true, maybe we can instrumentalize that to be the "ghost in the machine" that denies the world-system its power.

hooks (2000: 103) argues that part of the psychological exploitation that women experience is to "believe that they work solely out of material necessity...not to contribute to society, to exercise creativity, to experience the satisfaction of performing tasks that benefit oneself as well as others." I argue that more art and much feminized work, especially care work, if genuinely performed freely, perhaps even with affection, may closely align with Audre Lorde's (1984) theorization of erotic energy as a spring from which women may be able to realize themselves. An example of this might be found in informal networks which are not easily recorded on the ledger of equal and opposite exchange that capitalism demands, such as the informal writing groups that several authors in this volume did together, or community activities such as community vegetable gardens and mutual aid groups. Walton and Luker (2019: 35) highlight queer world-making as "activity [that] enables and supports queer subjectivities and queer lives. Queer worldmaking...might be loosely thought of as a kind of reproductive labor," they point out, but a form of reproductive labor which reveals a "tension;" given

the fact that reproductive labor is transformative and oppositional as well as conservative. While reproductive labor may be devoted to reproducing the social order, it is also devoted to destroying it. The values implied by the continuous work of care and replenishment are not the values of the social order that is actually being cared for and replenished. (Walton and Luker 2019: 36)

As feminists we might exercise this in a variety of ways, from mentoring to more formal care organizing. Lola Olufemi (2020: 1) identifies that "feminist work is justice work," and that feminism itself

must be crafted.... Theory can be *lived*, held, shared. It is a breathing, changeable thing that can be infused in many political and artistic forms. Learning requires the

patience and empathy of those around you and an investment in the importance of radical education. This radical education comes in many forms. (Olufemi 2020: 7, emphasis in original)

This is to say that if women's work remains unrecorded in the world-system writ large, might academic thinking on this topic follow the example of our queer, indigenous, and Black siblings who reject scarcity mindsets in order to generate strong relationships with others as communities, as well as material prosperity? Can we bring the principles of mutual aid into our thinking in the academy and our practices, as well as into our literary analysis?

The Witch: Making Something Out of Nothing

Federici's *Caliban and the Witch* (2004) explains that the grab for women's bodies and knowledges were part of the primitive accumulation which served to instate capitalism in Europe. This suggests that women's agency has always been counter to capitalist accumulation, and that there are ways of relating to one another that forgo exchange-value and the wage relation in our histories which may be lost to us. An example of such an imaginative relation, I think, emerges in Federici's historical study of the witch. Most strikingly, we should attend to how witchcraft was a refusal of work, and the generation of value out of nothing (Federici 2004). According to Federici (2004),

it was in times of need the devil appeared to them to assure them that from now on they should "never want," although the money he would give them on such occasions with soon turn into ashes and detail perhaps related to the experience obviously preparation common at the time. (P. 186)

The lesson being that debts have to be paid and cannot be bargained away through the supernatural—you have to "work it off" as Luker and Walton might suggest. Federici (2004) goes on to elucidate how,

the diabolical crimes of the witches...appear to us as nothing more than the class struggle played out at the village level: the "evil eye," the curse of the beggar to whom an alm has been refused, the default on the payment of rent, the demand for public assistance. (P. 186)

In other words, this was a time where one couldn't get something for nothing—any more at least—and there were moral values attached to this.

Historically, women have found strategies to renegotiate systems which never were meant for them. Take, for instance, how during the period of the witch trials,

female friendships became an object of suspicion, denounced from the pulpit as subversive of the alliance between husband and wife, just as woman-to-woman relations were demonized by the prosecutors of the witches who forced them to denounce each other as accomplices in crime. It was also in this time that the word "gossip," which in the Middle Ages had meant "friend," changed its meaning,

acquiring a derogatory connotation, a further sign of the degree to which the power of women and communal ties were undermined (Federici 2004: 205).

We might reapproach who became the witch then as a woman who did not participate in the early stages of the wage/value relation “correctly;” the witch is someone who, perhaps, understood and exercised Walton and Luker’s (2019: 53) point that “a million little things that don’t cancel out” between friends, and they may have extended this beyond relationships with one person, but to whole communities and environments. As such, gesturing a little to the “Common Bowl” framework, the figure of the witch is a distillation of the “modernizers”’ “fear and repulsion at the communal forms of life that had been typical of pre capitalist Europe” (Federici 2004: 184). To refer back to queer communities and queer world-making and the See Red workshop, it seems that these strategies of moving between the moorings of the world-system may still be available to us.

This Special Issue also suggests that some of these strategies may be available in the reading and writing of literature. The witch herself is a fiction—we of course use stories and fictions to naturalize social norms. For instance, Federici (2004) points out that:

the witch hunt was also the first persecution in Europe that made use of a multimedia propaganda to gender a mass psychosis among the populations. Alerting the public to the dangers posed by the witches, through pamphlets publicizing the most famous trials and the details of their atrocious deeds, was one of the first tasks of the printing press. (P. 180)

It follows that the appearance of the printing press allowed for this fiction to traverse national “boundaries, the witch-hunt spread from France and Italy to Germany, Switzerland, England, Scotland, and Sweden” (Federici 2004: 182), echoing later theorizations of world-literature as a commodity which not only exists on the marketplace, but shapes it. As such, the importance of fiction as a world-making, world-systemic commodity cannot be overstated: a good enough fiction, a good enough document, can change how we relate to one another. After all, what is fiction if not magical thinking? We suspend our disbelief, while at the same time not truly thinking that the characters, events, and impressions that we are reading about are actually real. In this Special Issue, Madeleine Sinclair engages with Caribbean folklore as a form of women’s work at world-making, and sense-making. As Olufemi writes (2020):

art is powerful, but it is not powerful enough to undo centuries of colonial domination or climate catastrophe. It is only as effective as we allow it to be. We give art its agency and healing ability: we enable it to speak to the painful, shameful and most delicate aspects of our lives. That is a responsibility, one that we all have a role in upholding; (P. 85)

going on to say:

instead of assuming that art helps overwrite difference, we might pay attention to the way it enables us to articulate how difference underscores our lives. The specificity of artistic creation reveals something about the injustice that is deeply embedded in the way we live. It is also a lifeline for others who are attempting to journey through a world characterized by oppression. (Olufemi 2020: 86)

In other words, art is not about flattening the “combined and uneven” way that we live in the modern world, but it does offer spaces in which “mine and thine” might mingle in ways that do not hold to exchange value.

We might also think about how reading literature as a pleasure activity reflects the fears about the witch’s midnight sabbath; that:

the nocturnal dimension of the sohbath was a violation of the contemporary capitalist regularization of work-time, on the challenge to private property in sexual orthodoxy, as the night shadow blurred the distinctions between the sexes and between “mine and thine.” (Federici 2004: 194)

Although not all reading takes place at night, it is something that blurs the boundaries between “mine and thine”—even now you are reading my thoughts in your own voice and with your own frame(s) of reference. The written word allows us to step in and out of the lives and voices of others. In so doing, the imaginative leap of care, empathy, and the pleasure of being entertained by literature offer to us a framework of resistance. At the same time, crafting and artistic endeavours such as “making poems, making music, making art: while these can be social activities, they are also certainly activities that are often sequestered in spaces in-between the drudgeries of the working day, spaces of relative secrecy and security” (Walton and Luker 2019: 19), taking on the visage of the witches’ sabbath.

For one thing, the production of literature is work, but Walton and Luker (2019: 15) argue that “not all work is capitalist work... poetry-making might provide a model of an activity at the very edge of the wage relation, and a model of labor free of capitalist logic.” They suggest that poetry—and I would argue other literary or creative endeavors—could be recognized as unalienated labor, which

would imply a world where everyone would be laboring because they wanted to do so, rather than because they were being forced to do so...but also a world where everyone’s labor involved a strong consideration for the lives of others. (Walton and Luker 2019: 19)

However, women’s labor, both paid, unpaid, and in-between these systems, may already hold “a strong consideration for others,” especially around care-labor and domestic work on top of paid labor; as Federici (2004) points out:

in the [sixteenth] century... the new organization of work *every woman (other than those privatized by bourgeois men) became a communal good*, for once women’s activities were defined as non-work, women’s labor began to appear as a natural resource, available to all, no less than the air we breathe or the water we drink. (P. 109, italics in original)

How to reconcile this? I would suggest that the answer is not for women to do more affective labor, but, instead, to recognize that unalienated forms of work might allow for more pleasure in the

“common bowl.” Olufemi (2020) writes that to be moved by an artistic work is to be awakened to a new way of imagining the world that belies work's place within it:

what happens when we consume a piece of art? We might feel emotional, nostalgic, inspired—a space is opened up where feeling those things isn't silly or self-indulgent but instinctive. The conditions of our lives: the need to work, the expectation of domestic, manual and emotional labor, mean that there is rarely time or space for artistic reflection. But art can abstract us from the demands placed on our bodies at any given time.... Every time we engage our creative faculties, we are going against a logic that places work and the nuclear family at the center of our existence. Art is threatening because when produced under the right conditions, it cannot be controlled. (P. 84)

While creativity is also work, when we take into account Walton and Luker's (2019: 61) question “why has the world of work become an impediment to happiness, rather than a means of realizing it?” perhaps we might align some women's work outside of exchange-value and the wage to perform liberating world-building; like the witch, we might make something out of nothing, for no other reason than “to exercise creativity, to experience the satisfaction of performing tasks that benefit oneself as well as others” (hooks 2000: 103).

On benefitting others, Walton and Luker (2019) point out that:

many acts of affective labor involve shielding somebody else from forces which would act on their subjectivity, and creating a space in which they can more freely express, explore, and process emotion.... All poetry can certainly be thought of as affective labor. (P. 12)

Indeed, many of us turn to art for comfort and for entertainment, artists do provide others with such a space for processing our lives in one way or another. Here we should turn to Audre Lorde's (1984) concept of the erotic once again as an animating energy; more recently Olufemi (2020) has argued that:

feminism is interested in finding new ways to make our lives worth living and while things like food and fashion have often been dismissed as frivolous, they are modes of expression. One day, we might be freer to use food to tell stories about ourselves: our cultures, histories, and memories. A liberated future means a future predicated on pleasure: more love, more good meals shared together in new and exciting ways. (P. 128–29)

The production and preparation of food with pleasure and being together in mind, and without the coercion of wage/value-exchanges, suggests that this would be unalienated labor. Walton and Luker (2019) argue that under capitalism,

you are alienated from your *Gattungswesen*—from your species-being, species-essence, or loosely speaking, from your human nature.... Becoming a commodity that can only produce other commodities, Marx thinks, tends to tear us out of this mesh, and suppresses and degrades our human creativity, our expressivity, our deep connectivity with the needs, hopes, and experience of others, and—crucially—our capacity to picture and to pursue alternative realities. (P. 18)

In which case, can a world-system of women's work be geared toward unalienated labor, toward abundance, towards the human network whilst moving away from the current value exchanges that engender it? The witch herself was driven by needs and desires that did not align with, or reproduce, social order. Olufemi (2021: 7), in her recent *Experiments in Imagining Otherwise*, writes that "all those political promises we make to one another...all the serious study and strategy, theorizing and making anew...all that is the work of another realm that is not-here." World-making, the world-system, and fictions are closely enmeshed in the essays in this Special Issue.

In other words, we have to "imagine otherwise": to turn to the witch and fiction "magic seemed a form of refusal of work, of insubordination, and an instrument of grassroots resistance to power. The world had to be 'disenchanted' in order to be dominated" (Federici 2004: 189). As such, is "reenchanting" what women's writing is really doing? By registering and narrating the world-system "we begin to imagine" by refusing "to remain silent about how our lives are limited by heterosexist, racist, capitalist patriarchy. We invest in a political education that seeks above all, to make injustice impossible to ignore" (Olufemi 2020: 6). Here we turn to women's role in literary production to reenchant and revitalize the pleasures and pains of the world-system as it pertains to women's real lives.

Women's Work in World-Literature/ Literature is Women's Work

The question then becomes how feminists begin to reimagine work distinctly from exchange-value and the wage, whilst obviously acknowledging that we all have to survive within a world-system of capitalism. This issue is especially preoccupied with how "the gendered division of labor implies gender-based differentiation of the apparatuses that define, motivate, monitor, recompense, and extract value from work" (Walton and Luker 2019: 8–9); inasmuch as

when two workers have separately undertaken a given piece of work, there are no guarantees of how much, if any, lived experience they share of it, since such work is highly sensitive to whatever other work they were carrying out alongside, around, and within that work. (P. 8–9)²

In other words, the world-system relies on labors which may not even fall within the contexts of the "Double Day" and care labor—the gendering of the world-system demonstrates how capitalism and patriarchy both reify and ignore the underpinning efforts which it requires to continue. Including, for instance, leisure. Is art-making, reading and the consumption of art not only *of* the

² To take writing this introduction as an example, whilst composing it I have: cared for myself, cared for others, grown plants, performed housework, done laundry, made laundry, cooked for myself, cooked for others, shopped for food, shopped for fun, planned to move to a new area, comforted myself, comforted others, thrown a party, worked out, caught up with friends on the phone, done handicrafts and art for my own enjoyment, repaired other people's clothes, volunteered, written for other projects, edited the work of others; all this and more is work in one way or another that informs, adds to, or detracts from, the mosaic of work time that is set before you in linear form as this article.

world-system, but already beyond what capitalist exchange-value is able to weigh, measure, and label with a price?

Weeks (2011) argues that:

the problem with work cannot be reduced to the extraction of surplus value or the degradation of skill, but extends to the ways that work dominates our lives. The struggle against work is a matter of securing not only better work, but also the time and money necessary to have a life outside work. (P. 13)

By integrating the critique of surplus value with a critique of exchange-value and the validity of the wage itself, we come to an intellectual impasse: how can we really live, how can all of our work become unalienated? We have to start thinking a little creatively: one of the most exciting aspects of *Imagining Otherwise* is Olufemi's (2021: 8) weaving together of imagination, narrative, and the material in order to "*inflate the material*" (emphasis in original). The literary, then, offers to us an exciting arena to examine these discourses. One of the most pressing issues in world-systems analysis and world-literature is the distribution of cultural capital, and the movement of novels and art around the world: books become objects of capital, and the writing and artistry within them, wittingly or not, registers this. The very act of writing itself might be understood, or reapproached perhaps, in some contexts as unalienated labor. We might be able to reclaim gendered unwaged labor, if certain conditions of freedom and dignity are met, as with unalienated labor. As described above, there are certain kinds of social reproduction which, actually, undermine the oppressive aspects of the patriarchal capitalist world-system, especially but not limited to queer world-building, artistic endeavors, and mutual aid and collectives; Weeks (2011) argues that:

freedom is also a creative practice, what Zerilli describes as a collective practice of world building.... Though freedom is, by this account, a relational practice, it is not a zero-sum game in which the more one has, the less another can enjoy. (P. 22)

Weeks suggests several things here, partly that freedom, as Olufemi (2020) also argues, requires an imaginative leap, but it also requires a material insistence on abundance in new world-building. We see this all the time in feminist artistic production where it, often beyond the wage/exchange-value system, activates us:

when women and non-binary people make art with the intention of raising consciousness, they are not only contributing to the feminist fight, they are demonstrating that feeling is a way of knowing and a powerful starting point for building a political framework. Affect, the ability to be moved, should never be underestimated. It is what brings us to feminist politics and what sustains us. (P. 86)

Despite this, aligning with Weeks, Olufemi (2020: 86) notes "the project of building a new world and combating the harm produced in this one is rarely viewed as creative." As such, the engagement with the world-system here requires a reconsideration of women's creative works, and how work itself is registered and sometimes reimagined in such texts.

This is where our interventions as feminists imbricate with the WReC, if we use Olufemi's concept of justice work, or Della Costa's vision of reinstating the dignity of the "unproductive" members of our community—the witch's coven might offer us a framework in the meanwhile of how to commune in the fault lines of the world-system, to be "the ghost in the machine" of capitalist exchanges; what is more, is this issue alerts us to the fact that this is already happening. For example, the "telling and knowing" important to the pre-#MeToo movement engenders a form of world-making that happened in secret in Hollywood. Ironically, fears around stepping forward around sexual harassment often emerge from fears that one is "making something out of nothing." Further, writing is another way of "telling" that, if reproduced in the world-system, allows us to commune with those well beyond our localities. Writing offers a way into the subjectivity of others, both real and imagined, mingling "mine and thine." The unacknowledged labor-power of women is not solely in the realm of care and reproduction, but is also dedicated to producing and reproducing cultures and cultural forms, often out of nothing. As Minh-ha (1989) points out, storytelling has been the purview of women:

if we rely on history to tell us what happened at a specific time and place, we can rely on the story to tell us not only what might have happened, but also what is happening at an unspecified time and place. No wonder that in old tales storytellers are very often women, witches, and prophets. (P. 120)

Paper Summaries

The essays in this Special Issue engage with a variety of ways that women work within and beyond the world-system, and how their writing registers the "combined and uneven" modernity that we share (WReC 2015: 9). We begin with Bushra Mahzabeen's "Containers of 'Meat, Blood, and Madness': Exploitative Labor and Disposable Bodies in *Lullaby* and *Still Born*," where, building on the tradition of Federici's (2004) *Caliban and the Witch*, she examines the commodification of women's bodies as producers of future workers. Engaging with questions of emotional, physical, and sexual labor in *Elena Knows* as the titular figure's body is controlled by Parkinson's disease, registering the unevenness of wealth in the modern-day Buenos Aires as there is minimal support and healthcare. Mahzabeen compares this text to *Still Born*; set in a Mexican society plagued by violence on feminized bodies, this novel portrays two women, Laura and Alina, struggling with the burdens of motherhood and affective labor. Both texts address the authoritarianism and gender violence rife in the Latin American commodity frontier and the way women experience constant socio-economic pressures to submit to the misogynistic ideologies in place. Drawing on the social reproduction and feminist theories Mahzabeen critically examines the exploitative reproductive labor and the body politic as depicted in the two texts.

We then continue with the theme of how bodies intersect with capitalist enterprise with Charlotte Spear's essay "'What Will Set Yuh Free is Money': Sex Work, Debt and the Dynamics of Exploitation in *Here Comes the Sun* and *The Immortals*." In the wake of the scandal of aid workers engaging in transactional sex in Haiti following the 2010 earthquake, studies have noted

the frequent dependency on sex work to “make do” in economies ravaged by foreign debt creation through international loans and trade controls (Harrison 1991; Obregón 2018). In this sense, both private and global forces of economic inequality are registered on the gendered body (Jeffreys 2008), making it vital to view the dynamics of sex work in these regions through the frame of a globalized system of enforced debt. This paper proposes a comparative exploration of sex workers’ rights in post-quake Haiti and the sex tourism industry in contemporary Jamaica, through an examination of Makenzy Orcel’s *The Immortals* (2020) and Nicole Dennis-Benn’s *Here Comes the Sun* (2017). Like global debt systems, the exploitation of sex workers relies on a politics of dependency and assumed victimhood. This results in the refusal to recognize sex work as autonomous labor, meaning sex workers do not possess the protections of labor rights (Mgbako 2019). Orcel and Dennis-Benn register these tensions between victimhood and autonomy through their narrators, reflecting the WReC’s (2015: 49) suggestion that world-literature registers the “single but radically uneven world-system” in both its form and content. Through this mode of reading, we can scrutinize the violence of enforced victimhood to create dependency and show the importance of creating a space for racialized and gendered autonomy within a global labor system.

Hendrikje Kaube then engages with how other kinds of feminized affective labors have also worked in the fault lines of the capitalist world-system in “Compassion as Commodity: Middle-Class Women and Care Work in the Long Nineteenth Century” by examining the historic figure of the “Ladies Companion.” The governess as the most common representative of the Victorian working lady has long been the subject of scholarly research. While it was common and socially accepted for female members of the working class to be in paid employment outside of the home, leaving the domestic sphere for an occupation that was financially rewarded spelled the end of gentility for their bourgeois counterparts. Scholars of the nineteenth century rely to a great extent on numbers—census data, population statistics, percentages. Not all of these figures, especially those in occupational tables listing the various employments and the quantity of people performing them give an accurate or reliable account of the respective household constellation; this is particularly true with regards to women. Looking at these numbers, we are also looking at numbers accrued with certain assumptions about the role of women in society. There existed a group of women from the middle classes in either paid employment or a form of servitude that fell outside of the common categories. From Charles Dickens to Neo-Edwardian literature, there appear “odd women” working in private households as caretakers, companions, and assistants, with their duties ranging from the ornamental to the organizational, in marginal and central roles. Unlike the New Woman of the *fin de siècle*, who is a typist or clerk, they occupy positions that escape clear definition. By broadening the scope of investigation into women and work in the long nineteenth century beyond considerations of manual and educational employment into the realm of emotional labor, we can obtain more information on the restrictions of contemporary ideology and the power dynamics of affective care.

The next essay continues the theme of affective care; however, Madeleine Sinclair engages with how storytelling as affective labor becomes embodied in “‘When the Skin Comes Off, Their True Selves Emerge’: Folkloric Irrealism and Gender Politics in Twenty-First Century Caribbean

Short Fiction.” In the short-story “Erzulie,” Guyanese writer Pauline Melville describes the metamorphosis of the eponymous Afro-Caribbean deity, describing her shapeshifting body as a resistant witness to the concealed violence of toxic exposure following the Omai gold mine cyanide spill, where “A revolution broke out all over her skin.” Staging in stark corporeal terms the “body-as-battlefield” through the “limbo” Caribbean folkloric imaginary, Melville’s description of dissident corporeality resonates with the renewed conceptualization of “body-territory” in communitarian feminist imaginaries. Shapeshifting aesthetics provide the metaphoric frame for Melville’s short-story collection *The Migration of Ghosts* (1998), which presents folkloric corporeality as a site where the multiple violences of the patriarchal capitalist world-system are registered and subversively re-inscribed. Applying a method of world-literary comparativism, this chapter examines the revitalization of folk orality in selected short-stories from Pauline Melville’s *The Migration of Ghosts*, Leone Ross’s *Come Let Us Sing Anyway* (2017), and Breanne Mc Ivor’s *Where there are Monsters* (2019). Firstly, this chapter unpacks the significance of short fictional forms to Caribbean cultural production by women, tracing the short-story’s dialogic interconnection with folk orality. Secondly, it considers how each of these writers revitalize oral poetics in their explorations of women’s bodily sovereignty, offering a folkloric reconceptualization of what Silvia Federici describes as the enclosed “periphery of the skin.”

We continue to consider women’s storytelling and cultural work in Federica Lupati’s “The Brazilian Indigenous as an Uneven Identity: Reading an Indigenous Woman’s Voice in Márcia Wayna Kambeba’s Poems.” This essay considers how orality has always been the main channel through which indigenous culture and knowledge has passed onto generations of Indigenous peoples. Yet, today, the need to resist against cultural assimilation or, even worse, annihilation, has led to the creation of new, written materials where indigenous people can speak for themselves by relating their history, defining their identity and their cultural territory. Among these, Brazilian geographer, poet, and activist Márcia Wayna Kambeba, of the Omágua/Kambeba people, uses literature as a space where decolonial thought and traditional knowledge meet to build a philosophical, political and poetic view on indigenous identity in general, and on the experience of Indigenous women in particular. This paper discusses Kambeba’s works and underpins the relevance and need to examine the specificity of the experience of Brazilian Indigenous women writers as fundamental participants in the fundamental periphery that resists the core of the world-literature, in order to discuss the postcolonial configurations of identities in present-day Brazilian society.

Finally, given that the world-system feminizes poverty, with “trends over the last three decades show that peripheral girls suffer a higher incidence of chronic hunger than males” (Dunaway 2001: 4), we end with Hannah Gillman’s essay “Reading Hunger and Exhaustion in Clarice Lispector’s *A Hora de Estrela*: Exploring the Ecology of Women’s Work and Literary Production.” First published in Karl Marx’s *Capital* (1867), the “metabolic rift” or “ecological rift” consists of nature’s exploitation under capitalist regimes and is figured as an ecologically unequal exchange, producing underdevelopment. In World-Literature, the Metabolic rift has been a useful tool in identifying irrealist modes of writing in peripheral regions. Michael Niblett’s essay

“World-Economy, World-Ecology, World Literature” (2012: 21), makes the convincing argument that “moments of the emergence or intensification of the metabolic rift will coincide with [an] eruption into a text—even if otherwise broadly realist—of irrealist elements.” The article maps the model of the Metabolic rift onto Clarice Lispector’s *A Hora da Estrela* (1977). By reading this Brazilian novella with this theory of ecological crisis under a capitalist system, it demonstrates how an application of the metabolic rift can elucidate the treatment of bodies in peripheral areas as waste, and how the irrealist aesthetics they present in simultaneously engage with literary markets. Since meta-narrational characteristics in particular engage with authorial voice, Gillman argues that the emphasis of labor in the metabolic rift adequately engages with literary production and ownership (Brouillette 2014). Consumption of commodity products, cannibalism, and waste all become essential for understanding the physical peripheral body and literary body as they exist in peripheral extraction zones. The novella’s secondary layer of narration is able to translate the protagonist’s redundancy and lack of social reproductive value into an issue of truly peripheral literature in literary markets. Ultimately, the article connects literal and literary extraction by drawing parallels between the exploitation of nature, exploitation of human bodies and exploitation of peripheral stories under the same colonial-capitalist modes of production.

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