Globalization: Major Contours and Implications for the Imagining of Identities

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This is the first in an envisaged series of three papers being written to coincide with the start of the Global Studies program within the newly established School of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Musashi University. The series aims to provide an interdisciplinary overview of three key concepts in global studies—globalization, cosmopolitanism, and posthumanism—and, since my own research and teaching is in the field of literary studies, also to explore the relevance of literature in understanding and articulating these concepts. This first paper rehearses work by scholars to survey and interrogate the somewhat sprawling concept of globalization across various disciplines. Emphasis is placed on the symbolic as well as the material aspects of multidimensional processes of globalization. Literature and other signifying cultural practices are thus considered to play an important role in shaping the ethical and political discourses surrounding globalization. Storytelling, in particular, is seen as a potentially transformative practice, in which ideals of global civility and transnational normativity can intersect with more localized accounts of belonging and interspecies entanglement to motivate new subjectivities and to challenge existing orthodoxies.

1. Defining globalization: multidimensional interconnectedness

Globalization is a slippery concept. Viewed as an inescapable transmutational force impinging on all aspects of cultural, social, economic and political life, it can seem strikingly similar to some omnipotent and terrifying deity of yore—imposing its malevolent will on the world as it rides roughshod over state sovereignty, democracy, and individual agency, spreads war, terror, pestilence and environmental disaster, entrenches poverty and inequality, polarizes societies, and leaves in its wake fragmented, rootless selves. For Hardt and Negri, the "irresistible and irreversible globalization of economic and cultural exchanges", powered by technological change, has been accompanied by the emergence of "Empire"—a "single logic" of global rule that is different from the territorial empires of the past because its power is decentralized and unrestricted by boundaries. Instead, it operates through the administrative and ideological structures of global wealth creation, through the operation of Foucauldian biopower, to totally determine social life across a coercively integrated world (xi~xv). This is globalization in many-headed mythological monster form: self-replicating and beyond control, ubiquitous yet impossibly elusive, and gorily bespattered with the half-chewed remains of its innumerable victims.

Such dystopian perspectives on today's world provide food for thought but offer frustratingly totalizing views of globalization. It is worth recalling James Rosenau's demand for conceptual clarity in this area: "Does globalization refer to a condition, an end-state, or to a process? Is it mostly a state of mind, or does it consist of objective circumstances? What are the arrangements from which globalization is a departure?" (qtd. in Holton, 293). Manfred Steger helpfully disaggregates and labels some of the key concepts active in discussions of globalization, and in doing so goes some way toward providing answers to these questions. Globality, according to Steger, is a future condition where social relations are "characterized by tight global economic, political, cultural, and environmental interconnections and flows that make most of the currently existing borders and boundaries irrelevant" (*Globalization*, 9). Teleology is avoided by emphasizing that this is a possible not inevitable future: it can be variously imagined and realized. The shift or departure that must be achieved for such a future to be realized has both objective and subjective, both material and imaginary aspects. In particular, it involves a shift from the "national imaginary" to the "global imaginary"—in other words, the decentering of

the nation as the predominant symbolic unit for social and political belonging and its gradual replacement by the awareness of global interconnectivity. Globalization, meanwhile, describes the processes that accompany this shift. While unpacking these processes is not a trivial task, Steger like many commentators emphasizes two aspects: their multidimensionality and their unevenness (Steger *Globalization*; also *Rise of the Global Imaginary*, and "Political Ideologies").

The multidimensionality of globalization is a recurrent theme in most discussions of the phenomenon. Economic aspects are unavoidable: the integration of worldwide markets, the extent of accompanying trade and capital flows, technology transfer and regulatory convergence, along with the polarizing issue of economic migration – such matters cannot help but be central to discussions of globalization. Yet as J.S. Mill pointed out during an earlier phase of globalization, the benefits of open economies are not restricted to the static and dynamic gains from the exchange of material goods but also include the "moral" benefits accruing from the exchange of ideas (qtd. in Wolf, 80-82). Needless to say, exchanges of ideas are not limited to the transfer of technological expertise and corporate best practice, but include philosophical, political, aesthetic and religious interactions from which may spring not only new material cultural products and practices, but also new symbolic understandings of ourselves and indeed reconfigurations of the "us" that underlies such understandings. Along with the economic dimension of globalization, therefore, there are also cultural, social and political dimensions which must not be neglected. The boundedness of the earth and the concomitant interconnectedness of human life, never more evident than in today's environmental and epidemiological challenges, were seen by Kant as a teleological feature of human existence driving us towards the resolution of conflict and the recognition of our mutual obligations in a cosmopolitan order (Brown, "Kant's Cosmopolitanism", 53-4). Regardless of whether we share Kant's optimism about end-points, we must acknowledge the salience of his observation: globalization requires every polity, every ethnic or civil community, to confront the extent of its interconnection with and hence obligations to others. Culture and politics are at its core.

The other aspect of globalization which must be stressed in any introductory survey is its unevenness. Kant's observation on the boundedness of the earth reflected unfolding scientific and technological developments that were making the globe seem smaller and more connected. Recent innovations in information and communications technology (ICT) have of course accelerated this process of compressing time and distance while deepening the mutual implication of the global and the local. Processes of globalization are thus often described in terms of the "intensification" and "stretching" of economic, social, political and cultural relations in ways that spill across and challenge established boundaries, especially those of nation-states. Flows of people, goods, capital, information and power move through multi-centered networks in which links are not only among nations but also among regions and cities, individuals and communities, the offices of corporations and the Twitter accounts of activists. Movement through these networks is channeled and intermediated not by state actors alone but by evolving supranational institutions, global cities, transnational corporations, NGOs, global civil activists and the algorithms of Meta or TikTok. For the inhabitants of what Castells terms the "space of flows", social, cultural and economic lives are no longer determined solely by the contours of the nation-state but can explore new cosmopolitan configurations. Yet the "knowledge-poor" and relatively immobile who find themselves outside these networks are still likely to be bound by old territorialities and local identity politics—inhabitants of a contrasting "space of place". Commentators (for example, Scholte; Snowdon) point to the digital and educational divides between North and South; the differential access that individuals enjoy to financial credit which market forces, sensitive to credit risk, tend to allocate to those most able to repay, just as FDI and portfolio investment flow predominantly to advanced economies; the resilience of trade barriers protecting domestic Northern producers from the agricultural and textile exports of the South; and of course the fierce determination with which rich world politicians compete to defend their borders against incursions by economic migrants. Comparable dividing lines are visible within individual nations, which critics see as

becoming increasingly polarized between the footloose, LinkedIn beneficiaries of globalization and their less mobile or networked compatriots. It is scarcely surprising that the transformations that accompany globalization are not viewed equally positively everywhere (Castells; Steger, *Globalization*; Holton; Held and McGrew).

In closing this section, rather than offering a pithy but question-begging definition of globalization, it is perhaps helpful to recap the significant features of this complex phenomenon that will be relevant in the discussion that follows. At its heart is the idea of global interconnectivity identified by Kant as both a challenge to the state-based international political and legal order and as a regulative force guiding its evolution; this interconnectivity has recently been felt with increasing urgency across multiple dimensions of social relations as a result of accelerated technological change, not to mention the vectors of the COVID-19 pandemic. These multidimensional processes of growing connectivity have both material and symbolic aspects. They affect not only the material conditions of our lives, the physical circumstances in which we live and interact with others, but also the symbolic structures through which we understand those lives and connections. Crucially, processes of globalization also manifest themselves and are experienced differently depending on situation. For all the singularity of the planet, neither globalization nor globality is singular. Multiple visions of our global future both can and do coexist. Global imaginaries (*pace* Steger's singular) are stubbornly, and beneficially, plural.

2. Economic globalization

2.1 Definitions & distinguishing features

The most vituperative rhetoric from those hostile to globalization is generally reserved for its economic aspects: worldwide market integration driven by regulatory changes and ICT advances, together with the accompanying convergence in standards, practices and prices, and the power of transnational corporations (TNCs). These processes are seen by critics as having negative outcomes for the majority of the planet's inhabitants, yet as being unresponsive to issues of justice and impervious to demands for more accountability and democratic control. For many activists, this is the main site of contest. Indeed, in the popular press (as among economists) globalization is simply shorthand for these processes of economic integration, which are often considered the deterministic driver of the other dimensions. Brian Snowdon offers a representative definition of globalization as: "the historical process of increasing international economic integration via reductions in the barriers to trade, and increased capital flows, foreign direct investment, technology and knowledge transfer, and migration. It also embraces political, cultural and environmental dimensions" (3). Though they might word it differently, few economists would offer a substantially different description.

Importantly, however, even if there is broad agreement on what economic globalization entails, there is less agreement on the extent to which it is happening, the extent to which it is new, and its implications for nation-states. Those who argue that the world has entered a new post-industrial phase of global "turbo-capitalism" (whom Held and McGrew term "globalists" regardless of whether they see these developments positively or negatively) tend to see an emergent global economy in which international trade has reached unprecedented heights in response to liberalization and ICT advance, while domestic prices, including wages for labour, have become increasingly set in world markets. Meanwhile, the deregulation and opening up of international financial markets has freed capital from its national base and sent it scurrying across the world in search of opportunity, but in the process has also raised the risks of financial contagion. This new economy is not restricted to the advanced economies. Developing economies have increased their shares of world exports, FDI and other financial flows compared to the past, but with this they have also increased their exposure to market volatility and to the policy decisions of international institutions such as the IMF. At the same time, TNCs account for a growing proportion of world production and trade; they enjoy an increasingly strong bargaining position and play a decisive role in shaping the employment conditions attending the global division of labour. Faced with footloose capital and international regulatory institutions which tend to reinforce the grip of market forces, national governments have experienced a significant erosion of their freedom to set their own

tax and welfare policies (Held and McGrew 24-28; Steger *Globalization*, ch.3).

By contrast, other commentators are far more skeptical of the above idea that everything has changed in the brave (or terrifying) new global economy. They point out that trade flows, net capital flows, and migration are all less than in the previous age of globalization during the last quarter of the 19th century up until the First World War. Data on price convergence similarly suggest that it was the earlier globalization that witnessed a greater degree of market integration. Meanwhile, current trade and capital flows show evidence of regional concentration, in particular among groups of major OECD economies, indicating that economic interdependence is better described by regional than global models. The vast bulk of capital, especially FDI, continues to flow between rich countries. There is also skepticism about the rampant power of TNCs and their ability to undermine the policies of nation-states. TNCs operate within institutional and regulatory frameworks of which national governments remain the major architects. Capitalism takes diverse forms, reflecting the different priorities of polities across the world; the persistence of such institutional differences thus indicates that states retain considerable room for policy manoeuvre and that "footloose" capital remains rather less mobile than the globalists suggest (Hirst and Thompson; Snowdon). As Martin Wolf argues, technology can never reduce transport and communication costs to zero; nor will cultural differences, reflected in the different institutional preferences of states, ever disappear. Space remains important, and hence so does control of the territory that demarcates its boundaries. States, therefore, will continue to matter: "Indeed, the policies and capabilities of states remain central to any understanding of how economic globalization works" (Wolf 14-17).

2.2 Driving forces and evaluation of impact

Given such disagreement over the extent and distinguishing features of economic globalization, it is unsurprising that the gaps only widen further when considering its driving forces and evaluating its impacts.

The charge sheet against economic globalization certainly makes for ugly reading, and not all the protestors are card-carrying members of the Occupy Movement. Development economist Dani Rodrik is critical of the current period of what he calls "hyperglobalization", in which deep integration of markets for goods and capital (but significantly not labour) takes priority over other policy objectives (76). He observes that where the basis of market governance is national, it has firm institutional foundations and corresponding democratic legitimacy. By contrast, global markets have no such foundations: "no global antitrust authority, no global lender of last resort, no global regulator, no global safety net, and, of course, no global democracy" (Introduction, xvii). The result, he points out, is governance that is weak and lacks legitimacy.

It is this weak global governance that lends credence to activist narratives of an unaccountable bureaucracy at international economic institutions (the IMF, WTO and World Bank) which, subscribing to the dominant free market ideology and heavily influenced by powerful TNCs and the governments of major economies, favours corporate and rich country interests over the will of democratic electorates and the welfare of the many. The declining terms of trade for poor countries exporting primary commodities, the loss of tax revenue when following the structural adjustment programs pushed under the Washington Consensus, and the double standards characterizing WTO policy on tariff regimes for poor country exports such as agriculture and textiles compared to those for manufactures and intellectual property—all have undermined the notion of a fair and mutually beneficial international trade regime. Global institutional frameworks that seek to tear down the barriers to global capital mobility while simultaneously strengthening those restricting global labour mobility are seen as similarly hypocritical. The relentless accumulation of debt in the South, mostly unpaid interest, along with the volatility of financial markets, the real economic costs of financial crises, and the division of the pain in bearing these, have generated the perception that the liberalization of international finance is a rich world plot. The perception was reinforced by the 2008 bailout packages following the global financial crisis, when the costs of risk-taking by large multinational banks were passed on to the world's taxpayers and the resulting recession was exported to the developing world. Meanwhile the global division of labor drives down

costs, boosting not only global consumption but also environmental degradation—the former disproportionately enjoyed by the North, the latter disproportionately suffered by the South (See, for example, discussions in Scholte; also Steger *Globalization*).

On this accounting, therefore, the case against economic globalization can be bleakly summarized. Driven by free market ideology and vested interests, it promotes growth not for the many but only for the few: rises in per capita income obscure the fact that incomes remain stubbornly low in the bottom half of the distribution (Steger *ibid.*, 112-114). Poverty persists, and inequality has risen both between the richest and poorest countries and within rich and developing countries alike. Wages for unskilled workers in high-income countries have fallen, while the erosion of national governments' policy discretion has reduced their ability to provide social insurance through the welfare state. At the same time, economic globalization fosters environmental destruction and exports financial instability. Little wonder that, on this reading, it is seen as a malevolent demon stalking the planet.

While there is plenty of criticism of the Washington Consensus as well as debate about the handling of domestic trade policy and especially the appropriate sequencing of financial liberalization (e.g. Stiglitz; Rodrik; Bhagwati; Snowdon), mainstream opinion among economists rejects the above narrative and comes down in favor of greater economic integration across the globe. Its benefits are considered to vastly outweigh its costs. Martin Wolf's spirited defense highlights some key arguments.

To begin with, Wolf rejects the misleading caricature of free market capitalism as being inherently opposed to states. From Adam Smith's "night-watchman" state to the larger and more activist states that emerged from the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century, states have provided the institutional infrastructure that allows markets to function. Even Smith's minimalist state provided the rule of law necessary to secure freedom of contract and property rights, as well as other public goods such as national defense and transport infrastructures. Advanced market economies have since developed different capitalist models and much larger states offering a greater range of public goods, with varying intensities of welfare and social insurance, education and health provision, antitrust regimes, and countercyclical monetary and fiscal policy. States thus provide the bulk of the institutional foundations that create, regulate, stabilize and legitimize markets. These institutions give people the means and opportunity to participate in markets, as well as the confidence to make long-term investments or innovate without fear of subsequent predation by the politically powerful. Though they can and do take a variety of forms in response to historical factors and the social preferences of particular electorates, it is these state-supported institutions that underpin the functioning of market-based capitalism. In Wolf's words, to be effective "markets need states, just as states need markets" (xvii).

This leads to the next major platform in Wolf's argument, which is the importance of these institutions in determining prosperity. There is now an extensive literature supporting the links between strong institutions, successful economic integration and growth.[1] Wolf emphasizes that the huge divergence in long-run per capita growth across countries is closely correlated with integration into the world economy. Successful integration, meanwhile, is highly dependent on institutions. Like other commentators, Wolf points to the "Lucas Paradox". This is the observation that, in contrast with the predictions of standard neoclassical economic theory that capital will flow to under-capitalized developing countries where returns ought to be higher, actual capital flows are mostly to other rich countries. The apparent paradox is explained by adjusting expected rates of return for the risks attendant on poor institutions: corruption, ineffective legal systems, insecure property rights, danger of state predation, unsound fiscal and monetary policies that worsen exchange rate risk, and so on. By contrast, countries with solid institutions and greater human capital investment are more likely to benefit from the effects of skill clustering, which may even generate increasing returns. The result is "path dependency": successful economies raise their productivity and grow faster, while those that fail tend to continue to fail. (Wolf 83-87;

[1] This is surveyed in Snowdon 105-108; see also his interviews with Acemoglu, 189ff, and Rodrik, 352ff.

Snowdon 21-22)

This is of course to explain, not to justify. Wolf's aim is not to justify the gaps between rich and poor countries, but to explain that they are not caused by economic globalization. This is clearest in his discussion of inequality (ch. 9). Noting that globalization has driven down the proportion of people in absolute poverty and been "unambiguously" good for human welfare according to capability measures (life expectancy, infant mortality, literacy, hunger, fertility, and child labor), he is nevertheless forced to admit that the picture is more nuanced for inequality. Inequality within countries has undoubtedly risen. This is true both for developing success stories such as China, where there is substantial regional variability in growth, and for developed countries where higher inequality results from the widening relative pay gap between skilled and unskilled workers in the face of global competition. Yet Wolf's preferred measure of inequality is global inequality among individuals, which he considers "the only sort of inequality which matters" (142). On this measure, after rising from the early 19th century to a peak in 1980, inequality has since fallen, largely thanks to rapid growth in Asia and especially China. Significantly, these movements have been driven mostly by the relative success of individual countries in achieving economic growth. Since, as noted above, growth is correlated with integration into the world economy, which in turn depends on having solid institutions, Wolf's (initially counterintuitive) deduction is that global inequality is caused by "non-globalization". As he puts it, "The problem of the poorest is not that they are exploited, but that they are almost entirely unexploited: they live outside the world economy" (172).

In the end, Wolf offers a qualified optimism regarding globalization. On the one hand, he sees economic integration as a force for good. Echoing Adam Smith, he sees man as a commercial animal who seeks to prosper and thrives through trade. Market-based capitalism, driven by the preferences of such commercially minded individuals, is unrivaled as a system for meeting these needs through the fostering of innovation and wealth creation. The spread of markets encourages the spread of the institutional practices that support those markets, including the spread of liberal democracy (which is seen as sharing common institutional needs and values). Increased opportunities for trade and investment spur creativity and growth, and this in turn reduces poverty and generates the societal wealth that funds welfare states, the protection of human rights and environmentalism. On the other hand, as the preceding paragraphs indicate, Wolf emphasizes that this process is far from inevitable. The institutional practices that foster and legitimate markets do not emerge spontaneously but as a result of government policy and history. They can fail to emerge, as among today's poorest "non-globalizing" countries; or they can go into reverse, as happened during the protectionist inter-war period. Globalization requires good governance, and this leads to Wolf's identification of the "great dilemma" facing efforts to reduce global inequality and poverty: the world's political fragmentation into a "multiplicity of independent sovereigns" (313). Geography and states matter. Global inequality among individuals persists because of "inequality in the quality of states" (316). There is indeed a birth-place lottery determining each individual's life chances. Meanwhile, the fragmented nation-state system and the belief in state sovereignty that underlies it present an obstacle to the provision of global public goods whose benefits are unevenly enjoyed. Coordination requires commitment strategies that cannot be enforced without strong international governance. Though Wolf balks at a world state (competition crushing and lacking democratic legitimacy), he recognizes the need to beef up international institutions if economic globalization is to be made to work (Wolf, chapters 3 & 14).

The underlying trade-off implicit in the above discussion is made explicit by Rodrik: the gains from economic globalization are won at a democratic cost. Rodrik's argument can be outlined as follows. Markets require institutional governance, so the pursuit of more deeply integrated world markets necessitates stronger international institutional governance of those markets. Since, however, peoples have different preferences regarding the appropriate shape of such institutions, the search for a more robust international governance structure comes up against what Rodrik terms "the fundamental political trilemma of the world economy": democracy, national determination, and economic globalization may all be desirable, but it is only possible

simultaneously to pursue two of the three. Like Wolf, Rodrik is a methodological nationalist in his approach, so he directly rules out "global rulemaking by democracy" as a "chimera": social preferences are aggregated and diversity conceived at the national level, so that Rodrik effectively assigns nation-states a special status as the only feasible locus for the meaningful expression of democratic voice. Given this assumption that democracy is only possible in the context of the nation-state, the latter cannot be by-passed and the trilemma is resolved in practice into a straight trade-off between democracy and economic globalization. Faced with this trade-off, Rodrik's own recommendation is that the gains from economic integration should give way to the protection of the nation's democratically-expressed preferences regarding social and economic institutions (including its taxation, welfare and redistribution, health and safety, and labor policies). This does not mean doing away with economic globalization and its accompanying governance altogether, but rather designing global economic governance so as to secure the "considerable benefits of a moderate globalization" while leaving nation-states sufficient policy discretion to preserve their own (democratic) social choices. This also ensures that institutional arrangements for implementing capitalism remain plural—there is regulatory competition between capitalisms, not the tyrannical imposition of a singular system. Rodrik envisages this minimalist international governance as an "updating" of the Bretton Woods system (less integrated, more leeway for domestic barriers and restrictions): a "thin" set of normative transnational "traffic rules", as he calls them, geared towards facilitating travel by different vehicles towards different objectives at different speeds, and specifically not imposing uniformity either of social goals or the means of achieving these (Rodrik, xvi~xix, chs. 9 & 11).

There are some significant parallels between Rodrik's vision for a system of thin global rules for economic governance implemented through culturally differentiated local institutions, and views of human rights as universal rules that are variably appropriated into local legislatures through processes of "democratic iteration" (Benhabib). For the present, it suffices to note that Rodrik's proposal for "smart globalization" rests on substantive normative commitments, in particular to national democracy and the procedures that safeguard its practice. This issue of normative commitments provides a suitable point to conclude the current section on economic globalization, since it highlights the inadvisability of thinking about globalization purely in economic or deterministic terms. While much economic thinking, as well as standard textbook models of the world economy, exhibits methodological nationalism (it imagines a world split up into autonomous and sovereign nations each pursuing its own self-interest and subject only to its own self-determined laws), this constitutes a normative political presupposition that is available to challenge. The same is true of the normative commitments to democracy and to liberal principles of civil and political rights that are prior to Rodrik's global economic "traffic rules". Transnational normativity, actualized through institutional frameworks of governance and rules that simultaneously enable and police the functioning of global markets, requires political agreement not only on what constitutes the global public interest (peace, health, environmental and resource security, predictable and transparent law enforcement, stable monetary, trade and financial systems, educated workforces, etc.) but also on how such goods can be best achieved. While such discussion cannot be divorced from economic concerns, neither can it be reduced to them. It can proceed only to the extent that it acknowledges its foundations in moral discourses and allows inflection by different local understandings of the good. This brings us to the importance of culture in shaping processes of globalization and how these are manifested at the local level, the topic of the next section.

3. Cultural resistance and "glocalization"

As Guilanotti and Robertson rightly observe, the debate surrounding the cultural dimension of globalization centres on issues of agency and determination. For those worried about globalization as a force that flattens out world cultures producing a dull and homogenous conformity, George Ritzer has coined the term "grobalization" to describe how the standardized production and well-financed marketing of predominantly American brand products tightly controlled through franchises enables transnational corporations to extend their power and

generates a similarly standardized global consumer culture ("McDonaldization") in which indigenous products have great difficulty surviving (Ritzer; discussed in Guilanotti and Robertson; Holton; Steger *Globalization*). We may compare Benjamin Barber's description of capitalism's "ethos of infantilization" (qtd. in Steger, *ibid.* 77) – the idea that homogenous products are pushed on both children and adults, who are infantilized through advertising and so unable to resist the urge to buy.[2] There are, however, two significant problems with this view: first, it assumes passive consumption on the part of consumers, who are denied the capacity to exercise their agency; and second, it subscribes to the economically dubious notion that producers can simply conjure up markets for their products at will. A more detailed look at the ways in which even the popular bête noire of standardized product franchises, Macdonald's, has in fact diversified its product offerings and the experience of eating in its restaurants so as to fit in with local cultural sensibilities indicates the falseness of this notion (Crothers). Globally-active firms very often tailor products for local markets – a practice known in 1980s Japanese management circles as 土着化 (*dochakuka*), the term considered to have given rise to the now widely-used "glocalization" (Guilanotti and Robertson, 188-9). The idea that consumers have no say, that they have been rendered "infants" (literally those who are unspeaking) by firms' marketing strategies, is simply not borne out by the evidence. We may not approve the wisdom of consumption decisions on various grounds (environmental, health, perhaps even the protection of a diverse cultural heritage), but these are separate arguments. The term "infantilization" derides as "childish" consumption decisions which it has prejudged by its own implicitly "adult" ethical and aesthetic criteria. It is this stance, and not the strategies of producers, that denies consumers agency.

There are some parallels here with the constructivist "invention of tradition" school of thought about nineteenth century nationalism. This sees political elites and "intelligentsia" seeking to consolidate power and secure the cooperation of the ruled by constructing a sense of nationalistic belonging via mass education and promotion of shared values (Gellner), as well as through print media and the emergence of new horizontal "imagined communities" (Anderson). Anthony Smith's contribution to this debate, however, displays an instructive skepticism about the idea of elites conjuring nations from the void. Smith argues that nations may be constructed ("imagined"), but not out of nothing; rather, they are grafted upon "ethnic cores" through processes of "vernacular mobilization" and "cultural politicization". Just as consumption products emerge from market-mediated interactions involving both producers and consumers, so concepts of the nation are not simply foist upon a passive populace but spring from dialogic processes that require popular participation. Smith argues that these national imaginaries only survive in so far as they are well-tuned to vernacular traditions and succeed in assuring the continued "collective dignity" of those who subscribe to them. He is, in fact, writing particularly to refute the possibility of a comparable global culture ever emerging since it would lack the necessary shared symbolic building blocks for construction: for Smith, the global offers no such vernacular or cultural material with which to compel popular imaginative engagement. This point will be returned to and challenged in later discussions of literary world-making. At this junction, however, it is sufficient to note how Smith's argument highlights the agency of the populace – whose loyalty to these imagined communities must be won through strong narratives that preserve their collective identity and hence their political willingness to subject themselves to a system of shared rights and obligations (Smith).[3]

Envisaging populations with agency who must be convinced both to purchase products and to buy into political visions takes us away from models of straightforward cultural imperialism/domination and towards

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[2] This is also, incidentally, the thrust of Anglophone Indian writer Chetan Bhagwat's best-selling novel, *One Night at the Call Centre*, in which the protagonists learn to escape the consumerist lifestyle enabled by their menial but relatively well remunerated jobs at the call centre after a timely intervention by a *deus ex machina* teaches them to appreciate the extent to which it has restricted their creative growth.

[3] See Held and McGrew for a more substantial overview of these issues (9-11, 14-18). Smith's 1990 piece is reproduced in their reader.

models of cultural, economic and political interaction and negotiation. While it may be possible to explain such negotiations in terms of soft power – the "winning" of hearts and minds in favor of hegemonic cultural practices through imperialism with a velvet glove – these explanations require distinguishing between an observed choice (made subject to a soft but subtly coercive imperial power) and the hypothetical "free" choice that would have been made in the (counter-factual) absence of any such hegemonic influence. There are accompanying dangers here: first, of benchmarking against an idealized "pure" culture as it supposedly existed before adulteration by contaminating outside influences; second, of condemning any choice with which we are not in political or aesthetic sympathy as the contemptible, depraved (or perhaps just "infantile") result of hegemonic brain-washing – not "real" culture at all, but an ersatz variety. Rather than writing off transnational cultural forms as deracinated, soulless and insipid homages to metropolitan (typically American) power, it may be more satisfactory to recognize them as the negotiated outcomes of processes of cultural syncretism: they demonstrate the emergence of new symbolic structures that utilize both local and non-local building blocks, that are generated by (or in response to the needs of) people who are both locally and globally situated and whose cultural understanding needs to accommodate both aspects. Roland Robertson's notion of "glocalization" provides a helpful conceptual framework and vocabulary for addressing such processes. Rejecting the binary distinctions between the global and the local, the universal and the particular, as falsely limiting the possibilities for interaction, Robertson sees people as situated in a "global field" made up of individuals, nations, world systems, and collective humankind, with syncretic symbolic practices to match. Glocalization, therefore, "registers the 'real world' endeavors of individuals and social groups to ground or to recontextualize global phenomena or macroscopic processes with respect to local cultures"; it "foregrounds the societal co-presence of sameness and difference, and the 'mutually implicative' relationships between homogenizing and heterogenizing tendencies" (Guilanotti and Robertson 189-90). Both the global and the local are fashioned and refashioned within "complex matrices of relativization" where flows of influence are multidirectional and cannot be adequately captured by a core/periphery model of cultural imperialism. Far from homogeneity and economic determinism, the picture drawn is of local cultures with their own logics influencing the forms that processes of globalization (whether economic, cultural or political) may take.

4. Transnational normativity: "global rules"

Having sampled some of the debate surrounding both economic and cultural dimensions of globalization, it remains to draw out some of the political aspects of these processes, which co-determine and so can never be fully disentangled from them.

A consistent feature of much of the discussion above has been the resilience of the nation-state and the symbolic structures on which it bases its legitimacy. Indeed, this is the position of the global "sceptics" identified by Held and McGrew. Such sceptics argue that, far from being decentred by globalization, competitive nation-states seeking to maximize their national interest and answerable only to themselves remain the major actors in global politics today. Their rise has been one of the dominant narratives of modernity, and even if the strategic choices available to them today are constrained by geopolitics and economic forces, regional and international institutions remain state-centric, and nation-states still guard their sovereignty and autonomy jealously: they are self-determining "national communities of fate" bound together by the choices they make on behalf of their members as part of the "political bargain" that confers their legitimacy (Held and McGrew 121, 9-11).

Yet as the nod to constraints indicates, this is not the whole story. Crime, conflict, environmental pollution, disease, and terrorism have scant respect for borders and demand a cross-border policy response. As discussed above, capital mobility and market integration also put pressure on domestic policy and constrain the range of domestic policy instruments available in practice. Dealing with such transnational issues has been accompanied by a massive rise in multilateralism and transnational cooperation, in which participation has not been restricted

solely to national governments but has also included non-state actors. According to political globalists, these rule-making efforts have already produced “an emerging system of global governance”—new international and transnational institutions that support a “body of regional and international law” constraining the actions of individual states (Held and McGrew 11-14). This normative framework is supranational and emerges from deliberation in a transnational public space on the appropriate moral precepts guiding attitudes to the environment, social justice, democracy and human rights. For proponents of a “global covenant” that would extend a “duty of care” beyond national borders, the current framework of supranational governance is merely a tentative first step. Nevertheless, it constitutes a fundamental change in the notions of sovereignty and legitimacy that are appropriate to an interconnected world. As David Held puts it, “the classic regime of sovereignty” in which a state’s authority was vested in its capacity to exert “untrammelled effective power” over the people under its control has been superseded by the emerging legal and political structures of “liberal international sovereignty" that constrain its freedom to exercise power legitimately (*Global Covenant*, 137ff). On this view, only those states that maintain human rights and practice democracy should be able to claim legitimacy, and it is these standards that are increasingly being applied in emerging transnational norms (see Held 2003; 2004; also Keohane; Rodrik).

Such prescriptivism outrages more relativistic-minded communitarians, and for all its well-intentioned humanism, it is hard to shake off an imperialistic whiff of old-fashioned paternalism; the recurring language of global “civility” can sometimes seem to echo alarmingly the “civilizing” discourses of an earlier era of self-proclaimed enlightenment. Addressing such concerns will be the task of a subsequent paper focusing on cosmopolitanism. For now, it is enough to note that the argument for transnational normativity (scope for global rules) does not rest on the holier-than-thou moralism of the proselytizing enlightened, but rather on an appeal to the mutually-binding (social contractual) constraints imposed by interconnectivity: the idea that the freedom of a state to take decisions on behalf of its citizens should be limited not only by its obligations to those citizens but also by consideration for the implications of those decisions beyond its own borders.

5. (World) Literature and the Shaping of Global Imaginaries

> No philosophy, no analysis, no aphorism, be it ever so profound, can compare in its intensity and richness of meaning with a properly narrated story. (Hannah Arendt, “On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts about Lessing” 1959, 25)

Each of the preceding sections sparks vigorous disagreement, both in terms of its parsing of the ‘facts’ of globalization and in its articulation of how these should be understood and responded to. This is an important aspect of globalization that we should hold on to: it is an evolving and contested process, involving the dynamic interaction of complex systems, in which future outcomes are uncertain and so still very much in play. The above discussion has suggested that theories of economic determinism are unconvincing. Other cultural and normative logics operate interdependently to shape the evolution of globalization (Holton 302), requiring the replacement of reductionist cause/effect explanations with those that focus on relationality and the gestalt properties of systems analyzed holistically rather than as the sum of their parts. John Urry has argued that structural approaches to globalization, which see it as a given structure within which agents are then constrained to act, fail to account for the complexity that is the key feature of how global systems interact dynamically over time. Urry’s notion of “global complexity” draws on twentieth century advances in the natural sciences, on Einsteinian relativity, quantum physics and chaos theory, to emphasize the importance of irreversibility, nonlinearity, and disequilibrium behavior, stressing the relevance to global systems of features such as path dependency and emergent properties, as well as the inextricability of structure from process and the significance of location. The principle of irreversibility is linked to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, requiring that positive entropy (disorder) increase over time in an open system; time cannot simply be run backwards to

achieve a prior more ordered state. Urry, however, draws on the work of physical chemist Ilya Prigogine to show how "islands" of localized order can emerge out of chaos, persisting in temporary equilibrium for a time but always subject to sudden irreversible change. Here, systems are seen as "unstable, dissipative structures" that can achieve greater structural complexity (lower entropic state) by absorbing energy from their environment while exporting entropy.[4] System behavior is ultimately unpredictable since it is subject to such sudden, complexity-increasing reorganization: "points of bifurcation" where autopoietic processes reconfigure themselves in multiple possible futures (28). As a result, far from being universal, "laws of nature are thus to be treated as historical" (21). Natural equilibria, ideas of "nature's balance", need to be reenvisaged as contingent phenomena that emerge, persist, and dissipate in the dynamic interaction of multiple systems, both "natural" and "social": new human cultural forms coproduce new forms of Anthropocene nature along pathways characterized by nonlinearity and discontinuity, dynamic interaction and feedback loops, as well as simple randomness (12-13; 33-34).[5] The nature/culture binary is thus repudiated; culture and its material referents are co-constitutive. It is not simply that our grasp of an objective nature is subject to our apparatus of enquiry, although that is certainly the case: in Heisenberg's words, "What we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning" (qtd. in Urry, 37). Rather, implicit throughout Urry's analysis is the stronger claim that the substance of reality itself, the particular path our universe's complex dissipative structures trace out during the evolution of the entropic two-step, is also a product of symbolic processes of meaning-making. As emphasized so productively in material feminism (Alaimo and Hekman), the material and the symbolic are co-implicated, each exerting agentive force upon the other; in Haraway's terms, our existence is "material-semiotic". Contests over how globalization and global interconnectivity are imagined thus have high stakes. The stories we tell about the world have real effects on material futures; literature has world-making force.

At a high level of generality, the role of literature and the representational arts is acknowledged by theoretical physicist Brian Greene in his wide-ranging investigation of cosmological meaning, *Until the End of Time*, though in a way that restricts their influence to the phenomenological realm. Greene's physicalism sees human beings as "nothing but constellations of particles whose behavior is fully governed by physical law" (147) and thus denies the existence of free will in a conventional sense of autonomous self-originating actions. Greene states that free will exists only at the level of subjective experience. Like consciousness, it is no more than a "sensation" of reality, overlying and obscuring the "quantum mechanical marching orders" that actually drive physical processes (153). Yet he observes that this illusory sense of free will is also like consciousness in having a firm evolutionary basis: as a "human-level story" for understanding and interpreting reality, it has evolutionary value in facilitating our interactions with the world and with each other, including through the related concept of moral responsibility for our actions, with clearly advantageous consequences for survival (139-41, 153-157). In a related move, Greene rehearses arguments regarding the evolutionary role of storytelling. While the human predilection for stories may be a mere "by-product" of other evolutionary pressures (just as a sweet tooth is the by-produce of an earlier era when calories were in short supply) or, like other forms of play, a means of "rehearsing" for life's real conflicts, Greene stresses that the crucial advantage conferred by storytelling is its role in forcing awareness of other minds while strengthening the foundations of sociality through the sharing of both experience and interpretive frameworks for those experiences (173-187). It is in this search for and sharing of affective meanings, in the shaping of values and purpose through "human-level stories", that literature and the representative arts find their raison d'être. At the cosmological level, Greene is quite emphatic, there is no escaping the physics of increasing entropy, with its harrowing

[4] This export or dissipation of entropy ensures a net gain for the open system and hence that the Second Law holds, in what Brian Greene engagingly terms the "entropic two-step".

[5] Childs and Green also discuss Urry's work and the significance of complexity in a literary context (20-22).

implications for the long-term prospects of complex life and, indeed, of thought itself: “As we hurtle toward a cold and barren cosmos, we must accept that there is no grand design. Particles are not endowed with purpose” (325). Since purpose has no objective existence, empirical science cannot find it for us. Science remains mute on questions of meaning; we cannot turn to scientists to tell us how to live our lives. Such questions, Greene admits, remain the stuff of human phenomenological experience and the purview of the stories through which we attempt to make sense of that experience.

So how does this broad discussion of the role of storytelling in human sociality and of material-semiotic processes of autopoiesis in complex systems connect to the specific challenges thrown up by globalization? How can literature help us to imagine the world in ways that are productive in these debates? I would like to conclude by touching briefly on three areas, overlapping in important ways, which will be explored in more detail in the subsequent papers in this short series of overviews.

One key area is that of the environment. As Jedediah Purdy aptly points out, just as politics and economics were previously thought to reflect natural orders that have come to be seen as “artificial, fragile, and potentially self-immolating”, so too must the ecological order now be recognized, in the Anthropocene, as something shaped, willfully or accidentally, by human action: “we have to add nature itself to the list of things that are not natural” (3). Purdy’s book focuses on the U.S., demonstrating how the ethics and aesthetics of the evolving American environmental imagination have informed and motivated its politics and resulting laws, with profound implications for the shaping of its landscapes and ecologies. However, his conclusion and the significance of his title, “after nature”, hold more widely: the fantasy of nature as a stable and self-equilibrating outside environment that we merely inhabit, at its most “natural” in its Romantic wilderness form in which humans are absent, is no longer tenable; it must be discarded in favour of a recognition of the complex ways we and our environment are imbricated in systemic processes of mutual transformation in which environmental imagination itself plays a powerful agentive role. At the global level, Purdy insists on the primacy of “radical and generative” democratic debate open to all (46-48); and while he acknowledges that the idea of a “democratic Anthropocene” with its premise of a global “we” that constitutes its demos is “to write fiction, imaginative literature”, nevertheless it is precisely such “productive fictions” that are required in taking responsibility for current environmental crises (267-270). An expanding body of ecocritical literature seeks to answer precisely such calls and to steer us towards more environmentally enlightened forms of existence in ways that challenge and reconfigure the national imaginaries of the past.[6]

A second key area concerns global justice and, more specifically, the (re-)imagining of belonging entailed by conceptions of global ethics and the cosmopolitan ideals that underlie them. Here, Pheng Cheah provides a helpful entry into the literary aspects of the debate. Cheah is basically sympathetic to the humanist tradition of world literature illustrated by Goethe, who saw it in universalist terms as expanding humanity’s intellectual horizon, or by Auerbach, who held a similarly progressive if more “historicist” view of world literature as “the history of mankind achieving self-expression” (qtd. in Cheah, 25). Yet, at the same time, he remains aware of the Eurocentricity that characterizes this tradition and its blindness to issues of power in the formation of its imaginaries. He thus provides a postcolonial corrective that mobilizes the work of Arendt and especially Heidegger. While Arendt also subscribes to a humanist view of what Cheah terms the “world-constituting power” of narratives (151), which operate as a means by which “meaningfulness springs into and illuminates human existence” (*Human Condition*, 324), her emphasis on the formation of the self through intersubjective processes of action and communication under conditions of plurality places a premium on the ability to recognize and inhabit other perspectives (enlarged thinking); this complements a Marxist sensitivity to those who suffer “world alienation”, or loss of world, under the hegemony of capitalist modernity (Cheah, ch. 5, *passim*). Cheah’s main tool, however, is Heidegger’s temporal notion of “worlding”—being in the world with others as

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6 Hilter provides a useful selection of readings on ecocriticism, and Clark an accessible introduction.

ontologically prior to the discursive construction of any given subjectivity—which he deploys to claim a "normative force" for world literature in its power to disrupt existing teleologies and enact new possibilities for being. Rejecting as too "reactive" views of world literature that see it as merely the product of global markets for literary goods, Cheah shows how literature from the global south writes back against the neoliberal global imaginary, exerting normativity "as a modality of cosmopolitanism that responds to the need to remake the world as a place that is *open* to the emergence of peoples that globalization deprives of world" (19; italics in original). On this reading, literature lays claim to a normative cosmopolitan force. The centrality of normativity to theories of cosmopolitanism and how far literature can alleviate postcolonial concerns about the cultural and epistemological imperialism that potentially accompany cosmopolitan identities will be addressed in the next paper in this series.

Since cosmopolitan approaches to the challenges of globalization are fundamentally humanist in their ethical orientation, a final area that demands attention is that of posthumanism. Posthumanism, which, in its "critical" formulations (Wolfe; Nayar; Braidotti), aims to deconstruct humanism to expose how the latter's assumptions and biases have limited its potential to generate the kind of radical new ethics and politics needed to address the crises of the current global age. Here, the emerging imaginary is one that draws on Foucauldian and poststructuralist epistemologies to see agency as always compromised—by the operation of biopower and the intersubjective structures of language and identity—but, at the same time, that also recognizes such compromised, entangled agency to be present in the non-human as well as the human, and so to demand a corresponding respect. Suzanne Simard, after decades of research on interspecies networks of communication and symbiotic support in the Canadian forests, expresses this sentiment in her call for the "transformative thinking" needed to admit the significance of non-human cognitive behaviours, including cooperation, decision-making, learning and memory, "qualities we normally ascribe to sentience, wisdom, intelligence": "By noting how trees, animals, and even fungi […] have this agency, we can acknowledge that they deserve as much regard as we accord ourselves" (294). Underlying such posthuman demands for egalitarianism across species and even inorganic life forms is a cybernetics perspective that sees life in terms of autopoiesis—i.e. as a system that produces itself, including cognition and meaning-making, during the continuous informational feedback processes through which it engages with and co-constructs its environment. On this view, consciousness is an epiphenomenon that emerges in environmentally networked interactions; and, if autopoiesis is the distinguishing feature of life, then life need not be organic. Also at work in posthuman thought are insights from systems biology, where the idea of independent organisms acting competitively in an external environment is displaced by emphasis on co-evolution, symbiosis and collaborative entanglement (Nayar; Wolfe; Haraway *Staying*; *When Species*). As Haraway puts it, in a way that sums up the challenge posthumanism poses to the autonomous, self-determining subject that continues to dominate cosmopolitan thought and many human rights-based approaches to global justice: "Poiesis is symchthonic, sympoietic, always partnered all the way down, with no starting and subsequently interacting 'units'. […] The partners do not precede the relatings" (*Staying* 32, 63). To "stay with the trouble" is Haraway's phrase for the necessary response to today's globalization, the "scandal" of the Anthropocene. Abjuring both the irresponsible optimism of "a comic faith in technofixes" and the apocalyptic despair of giving up on humanity as a lost cause, it demands precisely that re-imagining of the "hot compost piles" of our situated, fleshly, multi-species entanglements that is offered in speculative fiction—storytelling that combines the empirical insights of objective science with fantastic, transformative, fully-embodied and affective thinking to conjure into existence new ways of "making kin" across peoples and species, new practices for "becoming with" each other in the world (*Staying*; *When Species*). New stories about the shape, boundaries, and relationality of the human subject must be part of our ongoing engagement with globalization.

This paper has reviewed the major contours of globalization as they are mapped across different disciplines, emphasizing the relevance of its symbolic aspects in contradistinction to accounts of deterministic economic

forces. The final section has adduced some of the ways literature can impact the discourses shaping globalization and contribute to emerging global identities. The aim of the remaining papers in this envisaged series is to substantiate the commitments of such cosmopolitan and posthuman visions, to trace the contours of their accompanying imaginaries and the role of literature in their articulation, and ultimately to consider the feasibility of a less anthropocentric "posthuman cosmopolitanism" in guiding ethical, political, cultural and personal responses to globalization.

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